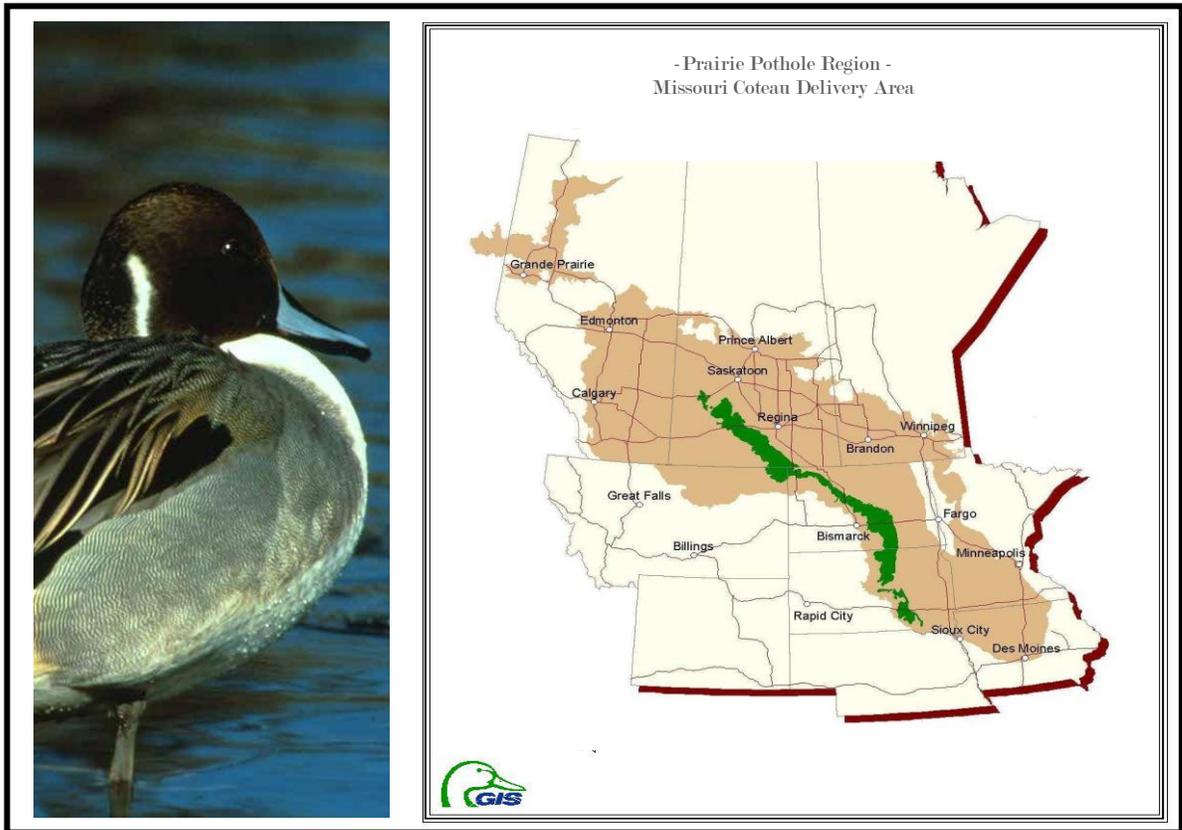


**Final Report:
April 2003 – March 2004**



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



submitted by:

**The Saskatchewan South Field Office
of Ducks Unlimited Canada**

and

**Southern Regional Office
Ducks Unlimited Inc.**

June 2004



Target Area: Missouri Coteau “Hills of the Prairie”



During 2003 the Missouri Coteau remained one of the critical areas of focus for Ducks Unlimited Canada's (DUC) waterfowl habitat conservation programs. Generous contributions from State Fish and Wildlife agencies and Ducks Unlimited Inc, in conjunction with U.S. Federal funding through the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), has allowed DUC's Saskatchewan Southern Field Office (Regina) to accelerate its efforts to conserve and restore valuable acres of wetland and upland habitat.

The leveraged funds drive programs on Crown lands and private lands alike, and promote extension messages that foster good land stewardship ethics among private landowners. This report highlights DUC's accomplishments within the Missouri Coteau during the period April 1, 2003 through to March 31, 2004. DUC wishes to acknowledge the continued generous financial support from the State of Louisiana.

Coteau Diversity

At the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region is the Missouri Coteau or “hills of the prairie”. The Missouri Coteau is a 25,700 square mile band of recessional moraine, 10 to 50 miles wide, which stretches from Saskatchewan southeasterly into North and South Dakota. The Missouri Coteau is a broken escarpment characterized by gently rolling to rugged hills that generate high wetland densities. During wet years these highly productive prairie wetlands in concert with an abundance of native grassland collectively contribute to some of the very best waterfowl habitat in North America. The Missouri Coteau is a last vestige of prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands that once dominated the Prairie Region.

Waterfowl values of the Coteau have long been recognized due to the high densities of waterfowl that (Figure 1) are drawn to these breeding grounds annually. Bill Leitch worked in this area from 1947 to 1951, and referred to it as “highly desirable duck breeding habitat” (Leitch 1952). The Coteau however, is subject to regular periods of drought as occurred during the summer of 2002. During wet years this landscape is critically important to the



High wetland densities and abundant native grasslands dominate the Missouri Coteau

recovery of waterfowl populations. The frequency of drought and dynamic changes within wetlands creates highly productive habitat for breeding waterfowl. Although attractive to many species of waterfowl, the Coteau supports some of the highest breeding densities of pintails in the prairies. The Coteau is also important breeding habitat for Mallards, Gadwall, Blue-winged teal and Northern Shoveler.

Waterfowl and Habitat: 2003 - 2004 Conditions



The Saskatchewan portion of the Missouri Coteau is situated within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Waterfowl Survey Stratum # 32, which is one of the six USFWS survey strata that over lays the key program areas of Saskatchewan.

The Province of Saskatchewan experienced near average spring pond conditions, due to late winter and early spring precipitation. Provincially, pond numbers were 9.3 % above the long-term average and 237.5 % above the 2002 pond numbers (driest conditions since 1981). Stratum 32 experienced some of the best spring pond numbers in years with pond numbers 74.3 % above the long-term average and 339.2 % above the 2002 pond numbers.

Stratum 32 attracted an estimated 3.9 million waterfowl in 2003, up 2.9 million from 2002.

Fifteen species of waterfowl were recorded on the May breeding grounds of Stratum 32 during 2003. The USFWS July waterfowl brood counts indicate that Stratum 32 contributed the highest percent (43.2%) of the overall duck production within agricultural Saskatchewan.

The 2003 waterfowl production year was characterized as: Spring runoff conditions ranging from below average in the northern areas (60-85% of normal precipitation) of the Missouri Coteau to above average in southern most areas (115-150% of normal). These spring conditions were followed by average to below average precipitation during the summer of 2003. This combination resulted in near average conditions throughout the Missouri Coteau for the period from fall 2002 to fall of 2003.

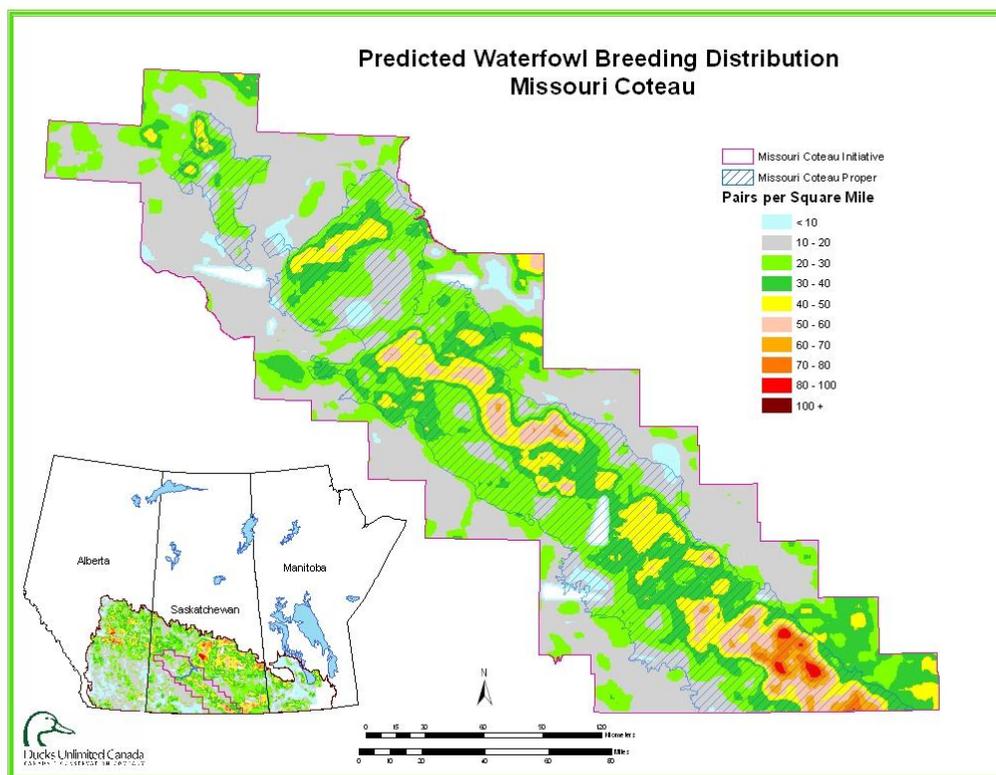


Figure 1. Breeding waterfowl density and distribution within the Missouri Coteau.

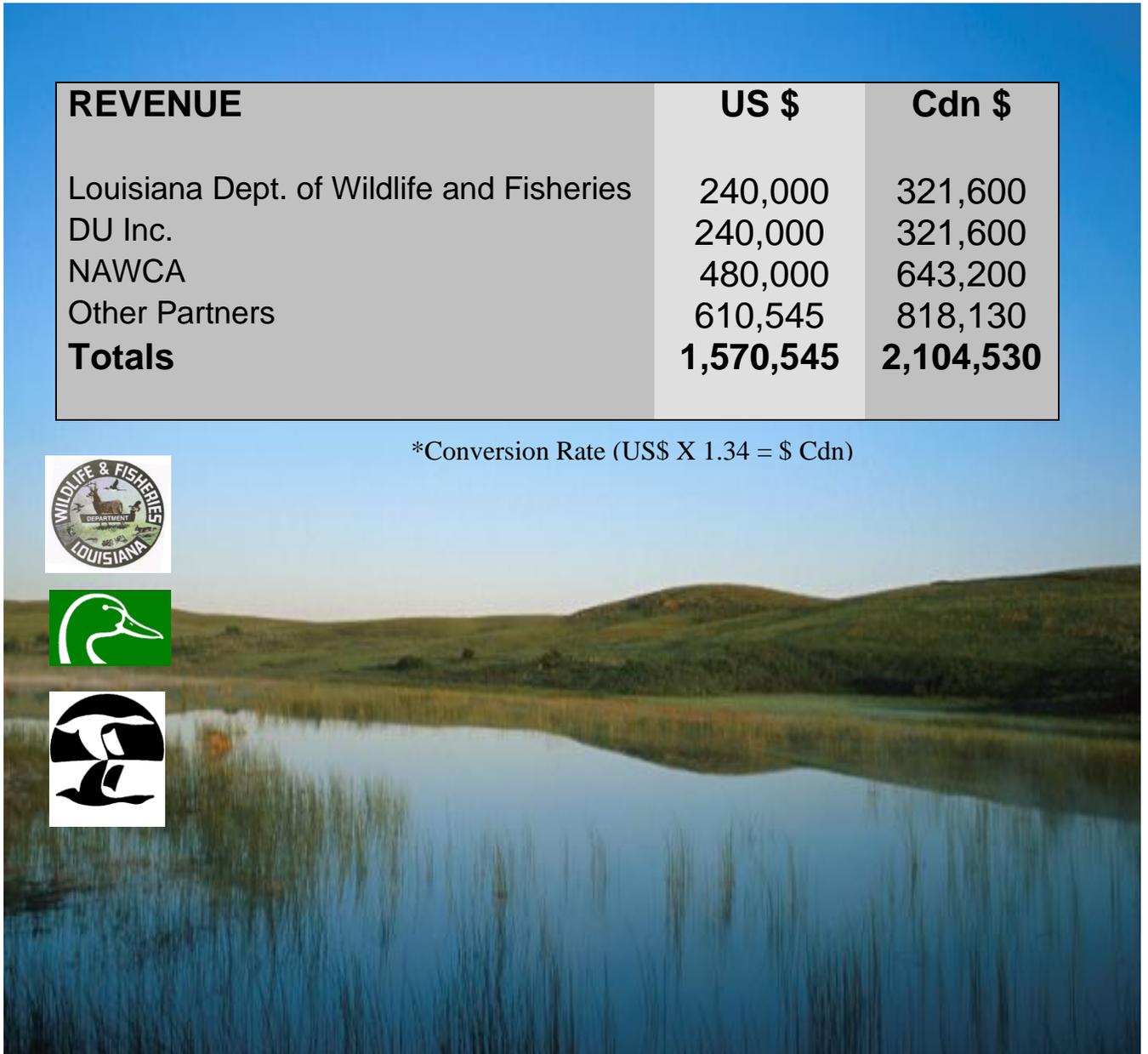
Funding and Partnership



Missouri Coteau / Saskatchewan South Field Office

REVENUE	US \$	Cdn \$
Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries	240,000	321,600
DU Inc.	240,000	321,600
NAWCA	480,000	643,200
Other Partners	610,545	818,130
Totals	1,570,545	2,104,530

*Conversion Rate (US\$ X 1.34 = \$ Cdn)



Program Accomplishments: FY2004



Secretary, Dwight Landreneau and Assistant Secretary Philip Bowman tour the Missouri Coteau landform with hosts from DUI and DUC, May, 2004. Top left: tour stop at previous dedication site “Les Amis des Canard” in which the State of Louisiana’s Department of Wildlife and Fisheries was recognized for their financial contribution. Top right: tour stop illustrating waterfowl nesting cover available as a result of DUC’s Winter Cereals program. Center: Secretary Landreneau investigates the nest of a Blue-winged teal.

Consistent with the three primary goals of the “Coteau Legacy Conservation Plan” (Protection, Improved Ecological Function and Compensation for lost habitats) as indicated in the FY2004 proposal to Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, conservation funds were pooled to provide maximum impact on the landscape.

These pooled resources permitted DUC to protect 94,242 acres of native habitat; improve the ecological function of 321,408 acres of native grasslands and; Compensate for lost grassland habitat on 9,700 acres of annually cropped lands. The following table illustrates individual program accomplishments toward the goals.

Program Accomplishments: Continued



“Coteau Legacy Plan” Accomplishments April 2003 to March 2004

Conservation Goals/Programs	Proposed Program (Acres)	Actual Program (Acres)	FY04 Actual (Costs)
Protection of Existing Habitat			
Paid Perpetual Easements	1,410	2,475	345,373
Land Purchase	0	0	37,161 ³
Tax Credit Program ¹	91,767	91,767	146,499
Improved Ecological Function			
Grazing Extension ¹	110,000	110,000	37,884
Tours, Workshops ¹	21,000	45,000	53,382
One on One Contacts ¹	57,000	93,880	102,388
Stock Watering Development	-	-	50,244
Deferred Grazing	3,000	7,500	45,453
Provincial Pastures	0	0	126,645 ²
Federal Pastures	31,545	61,545	107,018
Cooperative Pastures	1,280	3,483	103,179
Compensate for Lost Habitats			
Conservation Forages	330	500	423,957
Winter Cereal Core Grower ¹	3,700	3,700	106,787
Winter Cereal Intensive Program ¹	1,500	1,500	104,591
Winter Cereal Extension ¹	2,000	4,000	95,441
Land Purchase	0	0	218,528 ³
Totals	324,532	425,350	2,104,530

¹ Extension program – Programs whereby DUC extends technical advice mutually beneficial to producers and waterfowl habitat.

² No new agreements signed during FY04 but includes costs for previously signed agreements on 18,000 acres of native habitat.

³ Includes annual costs associated with land ownership and development of previously secured lands.

Summary of Accomplishments – Performance Measurables as per Agreement

Measurables	Acres
Purchased	0
Easements	2,475
Restored/Enhanced	73,028
Technical Assistance	349,847
Total	425,350