

LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY JOINT VENTURE

MBCC Approves Nearly \$7MM for Conservation within the LMVJV

The Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture is a self-directed, non-regulatory private, state, federal conservation partnership that exists for the purpose of sustaining bird populations and their habitats within the Lower Mississippi Valley region through implementing and communicating the goals and objectives of relevant national and international bird conservation plans.



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Three North American Wetlands Conservation Act proposals and an additional two National Wildlife Refuge acquisitions within the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture region were approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission on 20 April. In sum, these projects will conserve over **11,000 acres** of habitat, significantly contributing to the needs of priority birds, other wildlife, and ecological function of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (MAV) and West Gulf Coastal Plain (WGCP). Federal funds made available to these projects total **\$6,866,455**, with partner **match of \$6,150,649** contributed on three NAWCA projects. All the partners involved are to be congratulated and commended for their efforts in conserving important wildlife habitat within the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture region.

Approved NAWCA Projects

Lower Mississippi Delta Wetlands - This project focuses on restoration, enhancement, and acquisition of **3,092 acres** of palustrine emergent, palustrine forested, and palustrine scrub-shrub wetland and other habitats with significant benefit to birds in the MAV of Mississippi. The project will provide high biological benefit to Waterfowl through the restoration and protection of 1,037 acres of palustrine emergent marsh habitat and 1,025 acres of forest wetlands. Shorebirds will benefit from the 1,037 acres of palustrine emergent marsh habitat. At least 50 acres will be managed by Delta Wind Birds, a partner organization that focuses on shorebird habitat. Waterbirds will benefit from palustrine emergent marsh and forested wetlands in addition to enhancement of 28 acres of palustrine scrub-shrub habitat. Benefit to Forest-breeding Songbirds includes protection of 725 acres of high priority, mature bottomland hardwood forest and reforestation of 300 acres within one of the LMVJV's high priority reforestation zones. The project provides a mix of habitat types, will contribute significantly to enhancement of management capabilities on public lands, and will specifically promote shorebird habitat on private lands. Public land positively impacted by this work is on **Mahannah WMA**.

The proposal was submitted by the **Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks**, with partners including **Bradshaw Tree, Inc.; Ducks Unlimited; Delta Wind Birds; Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; Wetlands America Trust; and private landowners.**

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MAV Wetlands Conservation I - This project will achieve restoration and enhancement of **1,885 acres** of palustrine emergent, palustrine forested, and palustrine scrub-shrub wetland in the MAV of Mississippi (and acquisition of **2,262 acres in the East Gulf Coastal Plain**). Restoration and enhancement of 1,779 acres of bottomland hardwood forest (1,644 acres as a green-tree reservoir) may directly benefit priority Forest-breeding Songbirds. Waterfowl will benefit the second most of any proposal from 1,644 acres of green-tree reservoir and 80 acres of palustrine emergent marsh habitat; Waterbirds may benefit from the above acres and additionally 16 acres of scrub-shrub habitat. The potential loss of bottomland hardwood habitat from hydrology issues is important to address. The proposal provides a good balance of protection, restoration and enhancement activities and will contribute significantly to enhancement of management capabilities on public lands. Public lands improved through this work include **Delta National Forest, Hillside NWR, Mahannah WMA, Morgan Brake NWR, and O'Keefe WMA**.

Ducks Unlimited submitted the proposal, through partnership with **Cypress Brake Tree Farms; Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks; Mississippi Land Trust; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service;** and private landowners.

White & Cache Rivers Wetlands Conservation Project II - This project is focused on the acquisition, restoration and enhancement of **2,177 acres** of palustrine emergent, palustrine forested, and palustrine scrub-shrub wetland in addition to other habitats in the MAV of Arkansas. Protection of 1,467 acres of high priority bottomland hardwood forest will provide excellent benefit to priority Forest-breeding Songbirds. Waterfowl will benefit from 1,467 acres of bottomland hardwood forest and 115 acres of moist-soil habitat; Waterbirds will benefit from the above acres and additionally 443 acres of scrub-shrub habitat. Shorebirds benefit through acquisition of 115 acres of palustrine emergent marsh. The Cache/White River area is recognized as a **globally Important Bird Area** with the Audubon Society because it is a key location for wintering waterfowl and represents one of the larger tracts of extant bottomland hardwood forest. It is also a **wetland of international importance** through the **Ramsar** convention (contributes to "the conservation of global biological diversity and sustaining human life"). Public lands improved through this project include **Cache River NWR** and **Wattensaw WMA**.

The **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** submitted the proposal, with partners including **Arkansas Game & Fish Commission; Operation Wounded Warrior Support; RiverOaks, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy; Wetlands America Trust;** and private landowners.

Approved Refuge Acquisition Projects

Neches River National Wildlife Refuge (Texas) – Acquisition of 952 fee title acres for \$1,476,351. Neches River NWR lies in the heart of the LMVJV Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network's Upper Neches River Priority Area. This ecologically important region includes significant areas of bottomland hardwood, shortleaf pine, and longleaf pine forests that are globally important for migratory and resident birds, various other important wildlife species, and a host of rare or declining plants. Nearly the entire length of the main stem of the Neches River has been designated as ecologically significant by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Cache River National Wildlife Refuge (Arkansas) – Acquisition of 978 fee title acres for \$2,391,000. Cache River NWR serves as an important ecological anchor for the Cache-White River forest complex that supports an abundance of ducks, songbirds, shorebirds, wading birds and other wildlife and fish populations. As such, it is key to the health of a globally-recognized important wetland, and provides the backbone of the LMVJV Arkansas MAV Conservation Delivery Network's Cache River Focus Area. This acquisition will work in concert with the NAWCA-funded activity (White & Cache Rivers Wetland Conservation Project II) described above.