

## *Bed and Breakfast for Ducks*

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On a crisp, clear fall day, it's awe-inspiring to look up and see those beautiful V-formations as thousands of water birds make their annual migration to warmer climes. But like an airliner at a higher altitude, those ducks are burning fuel and need to stop regularly to rest and feed. Vast swaths of urban development have dramatically shrunk the natural layover spots increasing the stress and fatigue on the birds.

Sponsored by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary plan that offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The goal of NRCS is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat on every acre enrolled in the program.



*Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS*

The program helps landowners establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection and provides technical and financial support for their wetland restoration efforts.

The program has been overwhelmingly popular, to the point where, in Iowa, a backlog of projects was piling up with no way to get them done. The NRCS determined that the backlog should be cleared so they issued several RFPs. Ducks Unlimited, the popular conservation group whose mission is to conserve, restore, and manage wetlands and waterfowl habitats, won the RFP for construction. To get the job done they sought assistance from a number of engineering firms, including WHKS.



*Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS*

Guided by designs prepared by the NRCS, WHKS worked on five projects with Ducks Unlimited to review the design, perform construction observation, conduct field surveys, prepare record drawings and, when necessary, make field modifications.

With a concerted effort, the backlog of wetland restoration projects was completed and this fall the ducks have more options for resting and feeding as they wing their annual way south.