

# STRATEGIC PLAN

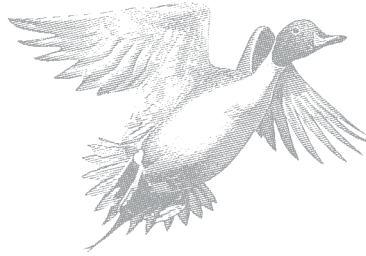


Fiscal Years 2023 through 2028



— OUR MISSION —  
Ducks Unlimited conserves,  
restores, and manages wetlands  
and associated habitats for  
North America's waterfowl.  
These habitats also benefit other  
wildlife and people.





**T**hreats to North America's wetlands and associated waterfowl habitats have never been greater than today. Fortunately, governments and corporations are embracing widespread public demand to do more to protect the environment with growing recognition that wetlands are a primary bellwether for environmental health.

Key public concerns are centered on water quality, sustainable water use, and extreme weather events that cause flooding, coastal erosion, and other types of storm damage. Elected officials, government/tribal agencies, and corporations are increasing funding of programs to offset these threats to society. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU) is uniquely positioned to provide natural infrastructure solutions to meet government and corporate objectives while also retaining core focus on waterfowl habitat landscapes.

There are six areas key to the strategic growth and success of DU:

- 1. Habitat:** Grow the scale, accelerate the pace, and strengthen the impact of wetlands and waterfowl habitat delivery.
- 2. Money:** Grow, expand, and diversify financial sources and assets.
- 3. Supporters:** Grow and expand the involvement of DU volunteers, members, contributors, and wetland stakeholders while maintaining DU's waterfowling culture.
- 4. Organizational Capability:** Enhance, adapt, and align internal capabilities.
- 5. Public Policy:** Expand efforts and fully leverage DU policy capabilities to fuel funding and influence administrative regulations.
- 6. Branding:** Broaden public awareness of the DU brand and leverage the Wetlands America Trust (WAT) brand.

By focusing on these key areas, DU will dramatically increase the rate of habitat restoration and protection, capital expansion for conservation work, and support from contributors and stakeholders. DU's current business plan (Fiscal Years 2021 through 2024) provides a yardstick of results that can be used to measure progress toward DU's larger strategic goals:

- 1 million acres annually of restored and protected habitat in the US
- \$500 million annual operational support and revenue
- 1 million total annual supporters



## GOAL 1 HABITAT

### Grow the Scale, Accelerate the Pace, and Strengthen the Impact of Wetlands and Waterfowl Habitat Delivery

This is fundamentally what DU has been doing for decades. The difference today is the pace at which DU must work to respond to the rapid loss of wetlands and other waterfowl habitats. Moreover, there is now a clear public mandate for governments and corporations to fund natural infrastructure solutions for the most pressing environmental problems, many of which align well with DU's expertise and capabilities. With greater support and funding, DU can do much more, faster. All the other goals in this strategic plan support this fundamental work of DU.

**1.** Increase the pace of continental conservation delivery in important waterfowl habitats and on other landscapes that enhance mission-focused support, capabilities, and organizational growth.

**2.** Be responsive to the implications of drought conditions on the breeding grounds; significant changes in waterfowl habitats; and shifts in waterfowl population distribution through effective communications and by expanding our continental habitat portfolio to maintain the resiliency of waterfowl populations.

**3.** Be positioned to capitalize on emerging funding opportunities derived from sustainability investments associated with climate-related risks and changes in energy delivery.

**4.** Build on DU's strong footprint in the energy space leveraging a clear advantage over other conservation nonprofits.

**5.** Own the natural infrastructure and corporate sustainability spaces by working across the organization to design and implement integrated communications strategies that will engender broad-based alignment with and support for wetlands, water, and waterfowl conservation.

**6.** Implement DU's Agriculture Strategic Plan by working closely with the agriculture sector, farmers, and ranchers in support of cooperative conservation solutions across America's working lands.

**7.** Accelerate the pace of growth across DU land conservation programs to meet mission-oriented growth goals, strategically grow the financial position of DU, and ultimately enhance mission-focused support and capabilities.

## GOAL 2 MONEY

### Grow, Expand, and Diversify Financial Sources and Assets

The waterfowl hunting community has long been the backbone of DU and wetlands conservation. We must maintain this support but with a greater sense of urgency. Today's elevated public environmental awareness has presented us with the opportunity to greatly expand our base of financial support and drive organizational growth. Environmental resilience, natural infrastructure, and water sustainability are of high public importance and can lead to greater financial resilience and sustainability for DU. These funding growth trends and opportunities are emerging now, and unprecedented funding levels are being advanced through grants, contracts, and partnerships with government agencies and foundations.

**1.** Grow annual revenue to \$1 billion by leveraging and increasing current revenue streams in Fundraising, Habitat Delivery, and Public Policy, and by broadening revenue streams from innovative, nontraditional sources and utilizing the WAT brand to access corporate and foundation funding.

**2.** Farm Bill programs and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) have been of vital importance to DU for decades, and our policy and development

efforts have been oriented toward these important funding sources. DU should extend focus and resources toward opportunities that will access emerging revenue streams by capitalizing on unprecedented increases in funding (e.g., through natural infrastructure projects, Land and Water Conservation Fund programs, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grants and contracts, expanded state-based funding, etc.) for environmental resilience.

**3.** Invest in donor stewardship to position DU to be the beneficiary of the pending intergenerational wealth transfer in the United States. Grow endowment portfolios to more than \$400 million over the life of this strategic plan.

**4.** Develop a fourth significant revenue stream by identifying and beta testing several new fundraising enterprises that have the potential to replace revenue streams from programs that are maturing or may decline. Some of these new funding sources should have potential to eventually equal the size of our existing major revenue streams (e.g., events, memberships, philanthropy, and government funding).



## GOAL 3 SUPPORTERS

### Grow and Expand the Involvement of Our Volunteers, Members, Contributors, and Wetland Stakeholders While Maintaining Our Waterfowling Culture

Supporting and expanding DU's foundation of existing volunteers, members, and contributors is crucial to achieving broader growth of DU supporters. This ambitious growth can best be accomplished through greater engagement of volunteers building on DU's strong foundation with well coordinated efforts to attract wetland stakeholders, new financial partners, and younger members who view conservation as a top-tier issue. Heightened public interest in conservation offers a huge opportunity to grow the DU supporter base, particularly among younger age demographics that can be reached through expansion of DU's youth and education programs. Success in growing DU supporters will open doors to new growth opportunities and marketing of DU's capabilities to a broader audience, while maintaining an unwavering commitment to DU's traditional waterfowling heritage.

**1.** Maintain DU's waterfowling heritage, grow DU's core base of current supporters, and leverage this support toward advancing DU's conservation mission.

**2.** Grow and strengthen volunteer support by promoting diversity among DU volunteers at all levels of the organization.

**3.** Increase supporters through creative and innovative outreach, marketing, and communication efforts.

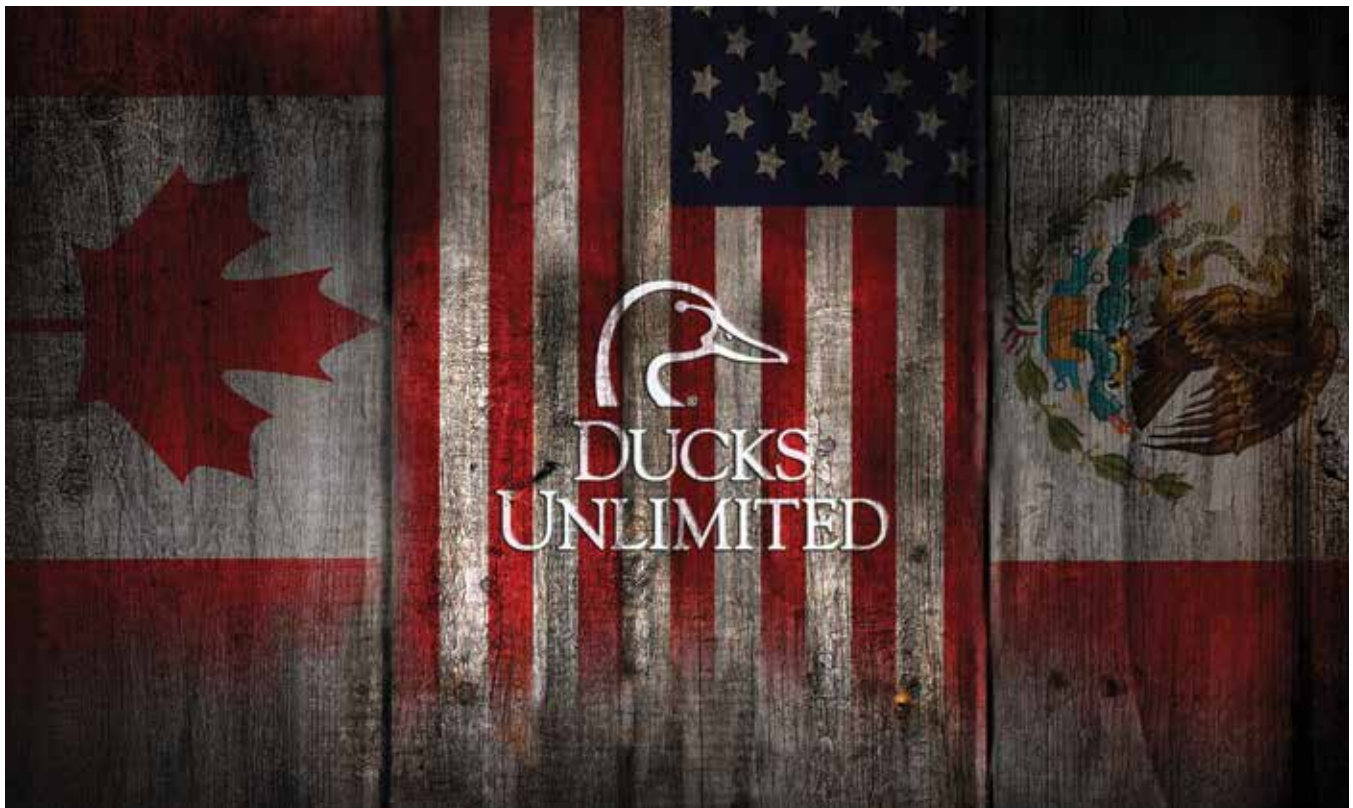


This includes recruiting family units, expanding youth and education programs, connecting with urban communities, and reaching those who appreciate the outdoors and clean water resources. New lines of communication and messaging will attract more diverse groups of potential members, event participants, volunteers, and contributors.

**4.** Develop processes to motivate stakeholders to become members, volunteers, and ultimately financial supporters.







## GOAL 4 ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

### Enhance, Adapt, and Align Internal Capabilities

An organization's ability to adapt and grow quickly requires an investment in people and processes. It is crucial for DU to set ambitious goals and adopt a culture of continuous improvement. Disciplined review of processes to reduce costs and cycle time improves results. This continuous internal "push" will result in steady growth. The greatest opportunity lies in engaging the talents of every supporter to meet DU's goals and increasing the diversity of DU staff and volunteers. It should be the goal of every DU employee and volunteer to work toward achieving shared goals by highlighting DU results and success at every opportunity to promote the DU brand, gain members, and ask for financial support.

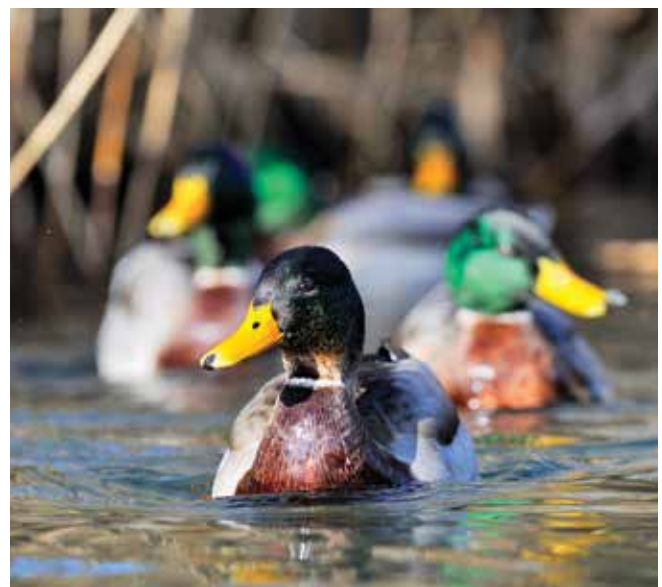
**1.** Build on staff effectiveness through professional training and leadership development and by actively increasing the diversity of DU's workforce.

**2.** Build on the effectiveness of DU's volunteer leadership and Board of Directors by actively recruiting, training, and developing future leaders, including strategies focused on enhancing state-level leadership and increasing diversity.

**3.** Build science capability and expertise needed to support strategic growth in habitat delivery and corporate/foundation sustainability partnerships.

**4.** Leverage IT systems to integrate collaboration among Habitat Delivery, Policy, Fundraising Events/Membership, and Development to enhance organizational effectiveness and maximize member involvement.

**5.** Continue to strengthen collaboration with DU Canada, DU de México, and WAT.





## GOAL 5 PUBLIC POLICY

### Expand Efforts and Fully Leverage DU Policy Capabilities to Fuel Funding and Influence Administrative Regulations



Since DU's earliest days, Public Policy success has driven DU funding. Current public interest in the health of the environment demands action by the government and may present DU with unprecedented, large scale funding opportunities. It is clearly the role of the government to "provide for the public good." DU's strong history in working effectively with government agencies domestically and internationally to deliver results on the ground is a strength unmatched by others. The NAWCA model works for DU and for the public good. Now is the opportune time for expanding this model to achieve even broader conservation benefits, lead the effort to redefine our nation's commitment to wetlands, and move from a defensive position

(e.g., "no net loss") to actual gains in enhancing the function and value of wetlands throughout North America.

**1.** Funding through the NAWCA is vital to DU, DU Canada, and DU de México. Working with elected officials and partners, funding and delivery of NAWCA projects will be maximized to protect and enhance wetlands in priority habitats.

**2.** Support and promote access to America's public lands for hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation that support conservation.

**3.** More fully engage DU volunteers in conservation policy efforts, both at the grass tops and grassroots levels. This will require increased staff focus and improved communications and education.

**4.** Partner with Agriculture to grow and expand programs that incentivize landowners to conserve and enhance wetlands and associated upland habitats, such as grasslands, on working agricultural lands. Support shifting from a regulatory focus to an economic focus.

**5.** Develop federal, state, tribal and local programs, which are designed with the DU mission in mind and for which DU is uniquely positioned to deliver, including natural infrastructure solutions that support environmental sustainability goals such as outdoor recreation, flood and storm attenuation, carbon storage, water quality and quantity, and biodiversity. In doing so, increase DU public revenue to at least \$300 million annually.



## GOAL 6 **BRANDING**

### Broaden Public Awareness of the DU Brand and Leverage the WAT Brand

Educating and marketing to the public, elected officials, and governmental agencies about all the benefits of DU's wetlands conservation work has potential to generate significant revenue streams from governments and corporations, which are actively investing in natural infrastructure and sustainability programs. For decades, DU has quietly delivered effective wetlands conservation that provides significant value and benefits to the public. These results will be highlighted to elevate the awareness and profile of DU and to grow DU's base of stakeholders and supporters.

WAT allows DU to present an image or "brand" that is broader in scope than our historical image focused on wetlands, waterfowl, and waterfowl hunters. This new WAT brand is aimed primarily at corporations concerned about sustainability, foundations concerned with people, and people concerned with the environment in general.

**1.** Aggressively promote the DU Brand at every cost effective opportunity. Highlight our experience and expertise to gain membership and financial support. Develop an effective marketing and communications



Wetlands America Trust

campaign to promote the DU and WAT brands and partnership through our magazines, digital content, and Public Service Announcements. This campaign should highlight diverse accomplishments and strategic growth.

**2.** Elevate the WAT brand to be widely recognized as a leading land trust and major partner in the sustainability arena.

**3.** More fully engage WAT Trustees in conservation policy efforts.

**4.** Advance the WAT brand as a marketing tool to corporations and foundations. Promote and monetize the sustainability values associated with DU's wetlands conservation work.

**5.** Leverage the business expertise, reach, and network of WAT Trustees.





— OUR VISION —  
The vision of Ducks Unlimited is wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow, and forever.





DUCKS  
UNLIMITED

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[www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)

