Press Releases

Ag Sec. Perdue, Iowa Gov. Reynolds tour DU, Purina project

DES MOINES, Iowa – Sept. 3, 2020 – A successful water quality and wetland conservation project completed through a partnership between Ducks Unlimited and Nestlé Purina PetCare Company played host to several federal and state leaders north of Des Moines, Iowa.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, U.S. Senator Joni Ernst, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and others toured the 56-acre farmstead of Heath Stolee in Radcliffe, Iowa. Also taking part were Ducks Unlimited CEO Adam Putnam and Purina President Nina Leigh Krueger.

“An extraordinary loss of wetlands requires an extraordinary response from us all,” Putnam said. “The conservation machine gathered today is committed to improving the water for all Iowans by working with federal organizations, state leadership, corporate partners like Purina and eager landowners who can make a true difference.”

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and DU are restoring the Stolee site through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a federal-state program between IDALS and U.S. Department of Agriculture. DU has partnered with IDALS on CREP wetlands or with the Iowa Water Quality Initiative for three years.

“Farmers are conservationists. This is a visual example of what’s happening here to help nutrient load reduction all across Iowa,” Perdue said at the project site. “This is the partnership that we’re proud of, the USDA partnering with state partners, local partners … great NGOs like Ducks Unlimited … and corporate citizens like Purina.”

“We’re going to keep making a difference, nobody knows the land better than those who make a living from it,” Gov. Reynolds said. “Every time we invest in water quality, soil health and conservation practices it is an investment in the next generation.”

“Not only are you creating sustainable projects that will … make our water cleaner, we’re also creating a beautiful landscape that can be recreational, as well as provide for wildlife and wildlife opportunities,” Ernst said.

Ducks Unlimited, with funding support from Purina, worked with Stolee to enhance his working farm to benefit water quality. The project includes the establishment of a 56-acre conservation easement and includes a 16-acre wetland. This wetland will reduce nitrogen from 1,893 acres of agricultural land, and over its design life, the wetland will remove more than 1,744 tons of nitrogen from the drainage tile in the watershed.

This work is part of Ducks Unlimited’s Living Lakes Initiative in Iowa, which Purina began supporting in 2018. The program will protect and improve 1,600 acres of wetland and grasslands across Iowa over the next three years, promoting healthy soil, healthy crops and healthy wildlife habitat. Purina’s support has directly contributed to the construction of four CREP wetlands, and the partnership has impacted eight total wetlands that treat 16,215

acres. The projects have restored 129 acres of wetlands, 323 acres of upland buffer and remove about 198,000 pounds of nitrogen per year from entering waterways.

“Purina has been making high-quality pet food in Iowa for nearly 100 years, and we want to continue to deliver nutrition and innovation for pets for many more years to come,” Krueger said. “We also source many key pet food ingredients from Iowa farms. That’s why it’s critical that we support projects across the state with conservation partners like Ducks Unlimited, and with farmers, government agencies and others to address challenges including water quality, biodiversity and soil health. We understand that healthy farmlands grow quality ingredients for our pet food recipes, so we’re committed to these public-private partnerships and taking care of the land now and for future generations of people and pets.”

Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 80,000 acres of wetlands and grasslands in Iowa since the mid-1980s.

Ducks Unlimited Inc. is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved nearly 15 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. For more information on our work, visit www.ducks.org.

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