

## **Black Duck Action Team Update**

### **HGIT Spring Meeting – April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

We received updates on habitat conservation work towards reaching the black duck habitat outcome from Virginia DWR and the Maryland DNR.

In Virginia on the land protection front, with the help of many other partners Virginia DWR recently acquired over 8,000 acres of land which has become the Coastal Forests Wildlife Management area. While most of the land is currently in upland habitat there are several hundred acres of marshes, tidal creeks, ponds and other wetland habitats beneficial to black ducks. Also over 90% of the property is classified as prior converted wetland which should provide ample opportunities for future wetland restoration.

On the restoration side Virginia DWR is currently working on a project to enhance roughly 147 acres of habitat at Doe Creek WMA on the Eastern shore of Virginia. This is in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, a NFWF Small Watershed Grant and Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Stamp Grant. Also in partnership with Duck Unlimited, a NAWCA proposal has been recommended for approval for a project on Mattaponi WMA in Caroline county just south of Fredericksburg which will include road/dike maintenance, ditch cleanout, and the installation of water control structures. This project will result in the enhanced management of approximately 85 acres of wetland habitat.

In Maryland, DNR has several restoration projects going on including recently completed 25 acres of restored wetlands and 4 acres of enhancements at Wye Island Natural Resource Management Area, a 5 acre restoration project at Cedar Point WMA in Charles county and 2 miles of berm enhancement to combat sea level rise that was compromising 2 coastal impoundments at Fairmount WMA. For 2023 they have 40 acres of restoration planned at Wellington WMA and a potential dredge spoil project at Deal Island WMA in Somerset County. Where dredge spoil from the Wicomico River shipping channel is being used to restore marshland on the Manokin River shoreline on the southern edge of the WMA. Restored marsh will protect an important coastal impoundment from the effects of sea level rise as well as utilizing dredge spoil in a beneficial manner. Preparatory work for this large and complicated project is underway.

I will also give an update on the Atlantic Flyway wide black duck telemetry project which is currently in year 3 of 4. The objective of the project is to outfit female black ducks with backpack gps/gsm transmitters which not only track migratory movements but provide information on other life cycle dynamics such as nesting and brood rearing success of black ducks on the nesting grounds with a specific focus on birds nesting in the boreal forest region of Canada which waterfowl managers know little about the reproductive metrics in this area due to the inaccessibility of the habitat. This research will hopefully identify factors that are limiting the growth of black duck populations that winter in the Chesapeake Bay outside of wintering habitat. To date over 500 tracking units have been deployed from Quebec to Virginia.