

# Ed Gordon Point Remove WMA

## ECH<sub>2</sub>O Wetland Renovation Project



The 8,780-acre Ed Gordon Point Remove Wildlife Management Area (WMA) provides critical habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl, as well as deer, dove and other wildlife. An effort is currently underway to enhance wetland management in the WMA, with Ducks Unlimited, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Southwestern Energy Company (SWN) partnering on a renovation and construction project that will improve water use efficiency and expand habitat for dabbling ducks.

The renovation project is targeting 13 existing herbaceous wetland waterfowl habitat units, to allow these units to see the benefits of proper moist soil management. Moist soil management is a practice encouraging the growth of seed-producing native wetland plants by mimicking seasonal wet and dry cycles. This is key to producing large quantities of desired waterfowl forage such as smartweed, millet, sedge and sprangletop on a consistent basis. This form of management also optimizes water levels for ducks. Dabbling ducks feed mainly on vegetable matter by upending on the water's surface, or grazing, with a preferred water depth for foraging ranging from a half inch to 12 inches.

Currently, some of these units include deep borrow pits adjacent to levees with depths of up to four feet. These pits significantly increase the water needed for wetland irrigation and reduce available habitat. Water for irrigation is diverted from West Fork Point Remove Creek and the Arkansas River via the Point Remove Wetlands Irrigation District. The water must first fill the deep borrow pits before spilling over into the wetland. This process currently takes up to a week, and due to the uneven topography in the wetlands, not all areas can be irrigated.

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## Partners

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
Ducks Unlimited  
Southwestern Energy Company

## Demographics

Ed Gordon Point Remove Wildlife Management Area, located approximately five miles northwest of Morrilton in Conway and Pope Counties, is 8,780 acres with 1,027 acres of herbaceous wetland waterfowl habitat, bottomland hardwoods and swamps. It straddles two forks of Point Remove Creek and includes Goose Pond and Lake Cargile.

Originally known as Blackwell Bottoms, the site went into public ownership as the first large North American Waterfowl Conservation Act (NAWCA) project in Arkansas in the 1990s. The WMA has multiple uses, but is largely focused on providing habitat for ducks. Timing of wetland flooding and drawdowns corresponds to the fall and spring migrations of shorebirds and waterfowl.

## Why invest in water conservation?

According to the World Economic Forum, water security is one of the fast-growing social, political and economic challenges we face today. Analysis suggests the world will experience a 40 percent global shortfall between forecast demand and available supply of water by 2030. Challenges are multiplied in watersheds where many users compete for shrinking clean water supplies, which can negatively impact businesses' social license to operate.

Most efforts are focused on water use efficiency and monitoring. However, improving water use efficiency will only close the global supply-demand gap by approximately 20 percent by 2025. (Charting Our Water Future – Economic frameworks to inform decision making. 2009)

There is also a need for investment in natural infrastructure projects that help address supply disruptions. Projects that promote healthy watersheds also provide extra benefits like habitat protection and carbon sequestration.

### CONWAY COUNTY, AR



# Wetland Renovation Area



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As part of the project, these borrow pits will be filled and the wetland units re-graded, reducing the volume of water needed to maintain existing wetland habitat by more than 272 acre feet. This earthwork and grading will also create an additional 103 acres of new wetland.

The project also involves the construction of a more efficient irrigation system. Currently, the wetland units are irrigated by moving water through open ditches to the highest elevation portion of the field. The water then spills into the lower wetland as the upper is filled. This system results in water losses due to infiltration and evaporation.

To replace the current system, a multiple-inlet irrigation system will be installed to direct water to individual wetlands through a closed-pipe system. The water savings benefit from the multiple-inlet irrigation system compared to the current flood irrigation

system is estimated at approximately 29.4 acre feet of water per year.

Within the WMA, there is a 17-acre flume ditch that currently has a capacity of only 5 acre feet of water. By removing accumulated sediment, the flume ditch will be cleaned out in order to capture and store as much as 63 acre feet of floodwater that overtops the banks of Point Remove Creek, which can then be used to irrigate wetlands during the dry season. The flume ditch will function similar to a tail-water recovery pond used in many agriculture operations.

Through the efforts of all partners and their investments, this project has the potential to provide significant benefits to the area through improved waterfowl habitat and enhanced recreational opportunities, from hunting to birdwatching and more.

## Water is an essential resource for life

It also serves a vital role for energy development. At SWN, we understand the importance of water to local communities, the environment and the economy. That is why we are developing operational practices and programs to protect and conserve this most precious resource. We are proud to partner with state agencies, local communities and respected non-profit conservation organizations to enhance water quality and develop conservation projects to improve local watersheds.

