**Benefits of Publicly Owned Wetlands**

Wetland restoration in the Rainwater Basin (RWB) requires many different things including soil surveys, engineering, and sometimes land acquisition. Acquisition of playa wetlands within the RWB can cause concerns for local residents. Although, the purpose and function of the land may change these properties can still provide a significant number of other benefits.

One misconception is that these properties are “taken off” the tax rolls and thereby significantly impact the property tax revenue for that county. In most counties, lands under public ownership make up less than 1% of the county. But in the case that a state or federal entity purchases a tract of land, the agency continues to pay in-lieu of tax on the property. The property stays at the same tax classification that it was purchased under. The tax levy remains the same and is adjusted each year as it is for all other property owners in the county. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, via the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act, requires that payments to counties and other units of local government be based on the greater of, 1) ¾ of 1 percent of the market value, 2) 25% of the net receipts derived from the property such as grazing leases, or 3) $0.75 per acre. The payment cannot be less than the fiscal year 1977 payment for the land.

As highlighted above, these public areas (state Wildlife Management Areas and federal Waterfowl Production Areas) continue to provide a tax benefit and they also provide a whole host of other benefits to the local community including:

1. Groundwater recharge to the underlying aquifer.
2. Vegetative communities that clean pollutants from runoff.
3. Reduces flooding frequency and impacts by storing excess precipitation and slowly releasing it.
4. Provides habitat for many species of wildlife such as waterfowl, pheasants, deer, endangered species, and others.
5. Open spaces for people to hunt, fish, trap, hike, bird watch, and other outdoor recreational activities.
6. Increased revenue to local counties through spending on food, fuel, lodging, etc. by visitors to these areas.
7. Outdoor classrooms used by local schools and colleges.
8. Preservation of the natural amenities of the county and region.
9. Provides grazing lands for local livestock producers.
10. Restoration of these wetlands provides jobs and income for local contractors.
11. The willing seller is able to re-invest the proceeds on more productive cropland and remove less productive wetland acres from their operation.

*The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture helps landowners with the cost of infrastructure needs as well as connecting cooperators with landowners seeking grazing tenants via the cattle grazers network located on the web at* [*https://www.rwbjv.org/rainwater-basin-programs/cattle-grazers-network/*](https://www.rwbjv.org/rainwater-basin-programs/cattle-grazers-network/)*. If you are interested in grazing, or finding a cooperator to graze your wetland, please visit the website.*