



Celebrating a Record Year

Delta's UHP sets new marks, First Hunt surpasses 100,000 participants

A stable, healthy hunter population is required to solve all of the challenges facing waterfowl and waterfowl hunters today.

North America has lost an alarming number of waterfowl hunters since the 1970s. The United States has about 1.26 million active waterfowl hunters, down 38% from more than 2 million in 1970. Meanwhile, the number of Canadian waterfowlers is around 127,000, down more than 70% since 1978. Hunters fund conservation, so a strong base of waterfowl hunters throughout North America is critical to sustain waterfowl habitat, produce ducks, and maintain access to quality hunting opportunities. Unless we recruit and foster the next generation of waterfowl hunters, the duck hunting traditions we cherish are in peril.

We must make sure hunter numbers remain strong today to ensure a brighter future for duck hunting tomorrow.

Delta's HunterR3 programs are designed to deliver that bright future by ensuring we continue to recruit new hunters, retain those currently in our ranks, and reactivate people who have drifted out of hunting.

Hunters fuel North America's conservation engine. Sales of hunting licenses and duck stamps, excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and donations to groups such as Delta Waterfowl support wildlife management, public land, and hunting access.

Creating more hunters provides more support for waterfowl conservation, more habitat, more ducks and geese, and more access and opportunities to hunt.

The role of mentors and teachers is just as crucial to the success of wildlife conservation in North America. Delta's HunterR3 programs — First Hunt, University Hunting Program, and Defending the Hunt — serve as a

What Is HunterR3?

Delta uses science-based solutions to produce ducks, conserve prairie wetlands, and ensure the future of waterfowl hunting. Our key HunterR3 pillar programs — First Hunt, University Hunting Program, and Defending the Hunt — aim to recruit, retain, and reactivate waterfowl hunters, which strengthens waterfowl hunter numbers and ensures a bright future for ducks and duck hunters.



multifaceted approach to recruit, retain, and reactive waterfowl hunters through education, advocacy, and mentorship.

First Hunt is North America's largest waterfowl-specific hunter recruitment program. Since 2003, Delta's volunteer chapter leaders have introduced more than 100,000 people to waterfowl hunting. Delta's University Hunting Program provides students in wildlife management or biology fields an opportunity to experience hunting firsthand, with the goal of connecting future wildlife managers to hunting while teaching them the benefits of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Delta serves as the "voice of the duck hunter" in North America. Defending the Hunt takes action to repel threats to hunting, and plays a major role in recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters by removing barriers to participation and increasing access to quality waterfowling.

Importantly, when we have more hunters, we have more people who serve as stewards of hunting. After decades of budget cuts, national wildlife refuges and state wildlife management areas across the country are in dire shape. Delta's Restoring Our Refuges initiative brings awareness to the issues plaguing our public lands, advocates for the reinvestment in federal and state refuges, and works to improve duck hunting. Every new or returning hunter adds to our collective voice to make progress restoring the vitality of our public lands.

Delta's HunteR3 efforts are made

possible thanks to Delta's partnerships with major donors, corporate sponsors, agency partners, and chapter volunteers.

University Hunting Program Expands

Delta Waterfowl's University Hunting Program, designed to ensure that tomorrow's wildlife managers get a hands-on waterfowl hunting experience, continued its tremendous growth during the 2025-2026 program



**DELTA DELIVERED UHP AT
146 INSTITUTIONS TO
876 STUDENTS ACROSS
NORTH AMERICA DURING THE
2025-26 PROGRAM YEAR.**

year. Delta delivered at 146 institutions to a total of 876 students across North America. UHP events were conducted in 44 states, 10 provinces, and the Yukon Territory. An average of six students per institution participated in UHP, up from 5.2 in 2024-2025.

UHP's growth depends on the support of donors, agency partners, chapter volunteers, and educational institutions across the continent. In Alabama, the number of participants more than doubled, made possible through partnerships with Alabama wildlife officials and mentors from three local chapters. In Pennsylvania,

participation nearly tripled, as mentors from six Delta chapters supported UHP events.

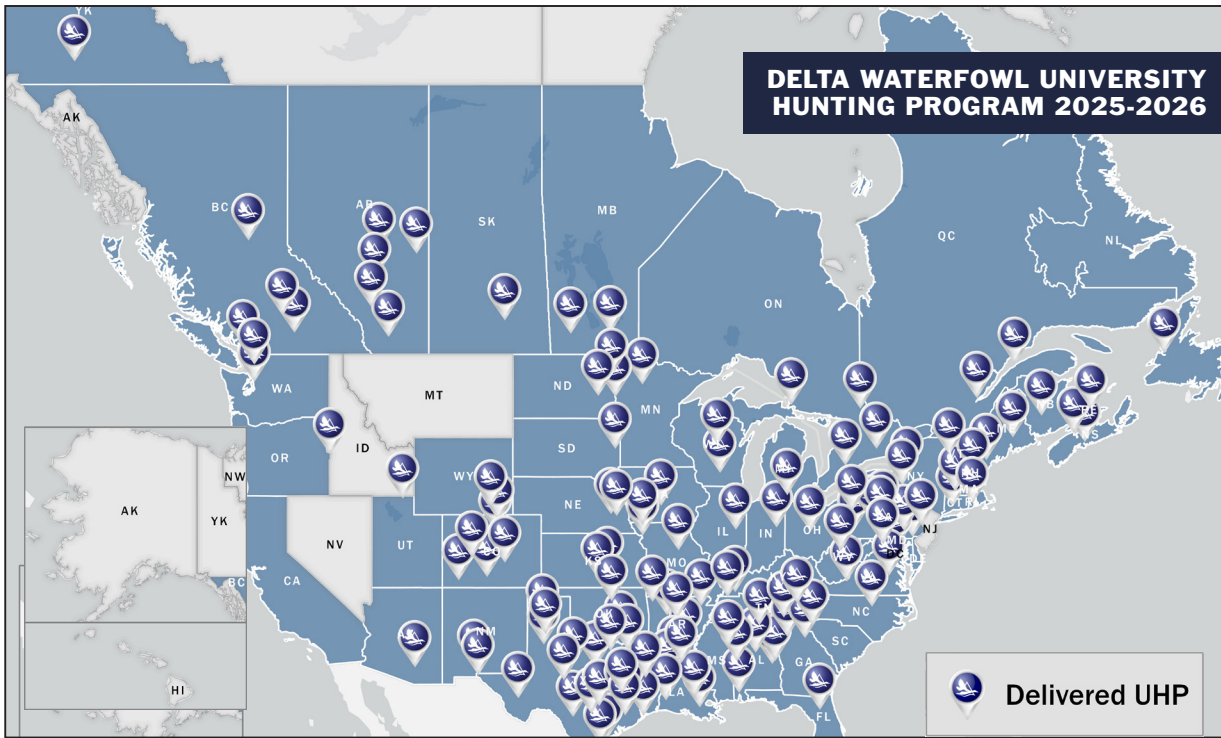
This sustained growth is possible thanks to Delta's partners, in addition to our commitment to exposing future wildlife management professionals to waterfowl hunting to display its role in conservation.

Delta's UHP was born in the wake of a shifting conservation landscape where today 70% of students seeking a degree in wildlife management and biology have little to no exposure to hunting. In the past, most students pursuing these degrees came from households with a connection to hunting or the outdoors. Delta recognized the trend and seized the opportunity to introduce our future wildlife managers to hunting and its role in local, state, and continent-wide wildlife management.

Participants in Delta's UHP learn through first-hand experience in the field. They're taught safety through a hunter education course, followed by a shooting range day to familiarize themselves with firearms and shooting tips. During a mentored hunt, students harvest ducks and geese, then clean and cook them. The full circle experience at the core of UHP is a multifaceted approach to educate future wildlife managers and bring more duck hunters into the fold who will serve as stewards of waterfowl hunting.

Delta's HunteR3 team is led by Joel Brice, chief conservation officer, and Stephen Sowell, R3 program manager.





Alan Cattrysse is the R3 coordinator in Canada and Ryan DePietro, Aidan Flores, and Joey Searcy are regional R3 coordinators in the United States.

First Hunt Hits 100,000 Participants

First Hunt, the largest waterfowl-specific hunter recruitment initiative in North America, reached an incredible milestone in the 2025-2026 program year. Since being formalized as a program in 2003, Delta’s chapter-driven First Hunt has hosted more than 100,000 participants.

The achievement is a testament to Delta’s commitment to introducing people of all ages to waterfowl hunting. First Hunt outings serve as formative experiences for participants who become stewards of waterfowl hunting and wetland conservation.

Delta chapters held 280 events in the 2025-2026 program year. More than 2,000 mentors throughout North America instructed 7,651 participants about the basics of waterfowling, including duck calling, shotgun safety, duck identification, decoying strategies, and field dressing ducks.

First Hunt events are open to participants of all ages, made possible through the efforts of Delta chapters and their volunteers. Over the program’s

history, more than 26,000 mentors have made First Hunt a success.

First Hunt continues to build a legacy of hunter recruitment that boosts waterfowl conservation for all hunters. Every new hunter adds one more voice to ensure the future of waterfowl hunting in North America.

Defending the Hunt

Delta’s Policy Team works on behalf of waterfowl hunters across North America to ensure sound science guides policy decisions, to speak up when threats to duck hunting arise, and to push for funding to protect the wetlands that serve as crucial duck habitat. This fight for the future of duck hunting starts at the local level and extends across North America from Washington D.C. to Ottawa.

John Devney, chief policy officer, leads Delta’s policy team. Cyrus Baird serves as vice president of government affairs and Jim Fisher is vice president of Canadian policy. Brian McRae is director of government affairs in Canada, Jeff Wardlaw is senior manager of government affairs for the Central and Mississippi flyways, Christopher Hoon serves as senior manager of government affairs for the Pacific Flyway, and Clay Smith is the policy external affairs manager.

- 2025 DELTA WATERFOWL UHP SUPPORTERS**
- Beau Turner
 - Bryan K. Harlan
 - Camp Fire Conservation Fund, Inc
 - Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
 - Glen E. Rumpel
 - The Buchanan Family Foundation
 - Jake and Lisa Taylor
 - James M. Hood
 - Jerome Katchin
 - John A. Key III
 - Joseph and Torri Carlson
 - Luke Parkhurst
 - Manitoba Habitat Conservancy
 - Scotty Searle
 - Mark and Becky Augustine
 - North Dakota Game and Fish Department
 - Pennsylvania Game Commission
 - Richard King Mellon Foundation
 - Rob and Tammy Springer
 - Safari Club International Foundation
 - Scott A. Wolf
 - State of Alabama
 - Thomas G. Henning
 - Thomas M. Hamilton
 - Tom Stephenson
 - Wildlife Habitat Canada



As The Duck Hunters Organization™, it's incumbent upon Delta Waterfowl to maintain and increase hunting access and opportunities in North America.

Delta's led the charge on Capitol Hill regarding several initiatives. Delta successfully advocated reintroducing the Habitat Enhancement Now Act in the 119th Congress, which would authorize funding for Hen House nest structures and conserve and enhance critical nesting habitat in California. Working with partners in the American Wildlife Conservation Partnership, Delta provided a copy of "Wildlife in the 21st Century" for the incoming Trump Administration as well as members of the 119th Congress. Additionally, Delta supported the confirmation of Brian Nesvik to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and once he was confirmed, had several productive conversations with him and his staff about expanding access and opportunity through the Hunt-Fish Rule.

Delta's policy team reviewed, analyzed and weighed in on more than 150 bills across the United States, while also coordinating and bringing volunteers and duck hunters to 10 state lobby days to meet with lawmakers. When Delta needed to mobilize volunteers around specific issues in their areas, more than 6,000 emails were sent to lawmakers through our Duck Hunters Action Alert System.

Delta led efforts to repeal laws prohibiting hunting on Sundays in Nova Scotia and Pennsylvania. Nova Scotia hunters celebrated their first full year of Sunday hunting opportunities this past season, a process that began in 2015 with the allowance of two

Sundays. Pennsylvania was one of only a handful of states with a blanket prohibition against Sunday hunting, and this victory represented years of work by Delta and our partners.

In Louisiana, Delta worked with policy makers to secure critical funding to support waterfowl habitat projects across the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. The proposal allocates \$29 million for levee restoration to prevent saltwater intrusion, improve flood protection, and preserve key marsh habitat for wintering waterfowl.

Delta continues to make progress on expanding sandhill crane hunting opportunities in North America. In Wisconsin, following a Delta-supported legislative study committee that recommended and reviewed options to manage the state's sandhill crane population, legislation was introduced to establish a regulated season for sandhills. Although the bill wasn't taken up in the Senate for this current session, it advanced farther than previous legislation. In Ontario and Quebec, Delta supported proposals for limited sandhill crane hunting, in addition to an effort to expand late Canada goose hunting in Ontario.

Delta spearheaded the launch of the Canadian Wildlife Conservation Partners, a coalition dedicated to protecting Canada's outdoor heritage and ensuring a strong future for waterfowl, wildlife, and hunting traditions. The CWCP unites organizations in a collaborative effort to defend science-based wildlife management, safeguard biodiversity, and protect the rights of hunters and trappers across the country.

Securing a Strong Future

Delta's HunteR3 programs provide hunters with practical solutions to the issues facing hunting and waterfowl in the years to come. With your support, we're able to continue hunter recruitment to bolster our ranks, educate future wildlife management professionals, and defend hunting traditions in North America. These tenets are crucial to the future of waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Thank you for supporting Delta Waterfowl.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and for you to make sure we always have abundant ducks and endless opportunities for all waterfowl hunters.



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