

“During the '80s and '90s, Fred and I would use Richdale Ranch to help steward possible contributors and those who care about the waterfowl resource. You'd be amazed at how passionate people become about ducks and DUC when you show them through your eyes at the camp.”

– Bill Turnbull
DUC president, 1994-1995

Turnbull believes that the “show me” aspect of the fundraising dinner is an angle that seals the deal for many of the invitees. And, he says, it is his firm belief that the template he and Mannix are using can be picked up, adjusted and used by others right across the country.

“People are blown away by Eaglesham and what we are doing there,” he says. “There is a huge stewardship role in bringing major donors on board. But the tighter you steward, the more information you provide, the bigger they tend to give.”

Chinook Downs hosted its first special dinner in 1995 when, says Turnbull, 22 guests raised \$275,000. Since many of the attendees, such as Calgary businessmen Stan Grad, Doc Seaman, Harley Hotchkiss and Dave Bissett among others are repeat invitees, Turnbull says the dinner has been held only three times – 1995, 1998 and 2004 – with plans to hold another one in 2007. That is great news for DUC. According to Turnbull, the 2004 dinner raised \$975,000, by far the single largest fundraiser ever held in Canada.

“Bill and Fred have a natural love of the migratory birds,” says Grad. “Through their passion and promotion for waterfowl conservation, they make everybody take notice and feel good about helping out.”

Mannix, a firm believer in mentoring, hails the template as a surefire winner for waterfowl and wetland conservation.

“All we have to do is open their eyes,” he says of the great potential for their project to continue to grow. “Once you get them on track and they see the mindset, they come on board.”

And it helps that every one of the invitees has something in common.

“This has direct ties to the passion for a lot of these guys,” says Turnbull. “The common denominator for all of them is a passion for hunting, a desire to help conservation and an appreciation for wildlife.”

It all sounds really good. In fact, it sounds just like something two duck-fancying guys in a duck blind would spend hours talking about. ✕



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