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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish & Wildlife News

November/December 2000

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Marshall P. Jones Named Deputy Director

Marshall P. Jones was named deputy director of the Service in October, replacing John G. Rogers, who retired in May.

Jones had been serving as acting deputy director since Rogers' retirement and also served as acting deputy director from June to September, 1999. During his 25-year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Jones has held a number of positions in regional and Washington offices and in several Service program areas. Most recently, he was assistant director for International Affairs starting in 1994.

"Marshall Jones has extensive knowledge of national and international conservation issues, as well as experience working with our partners in the states and the conservation community, other federal agencies, and the conservation programs of other nations," Clark said. "I know he will serve as deputy director with great professionalism and tremendous personal dedication to our employees, to our partners, and to our mission."

As assistant director for International Affairs, Jones administered the Service's involvement in conservation efforts such as the U.S. Management and Scientific Authorities for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Ramsar Wetlands Convention, and the listing of foreign species and administration of international wildlife permits under U.S. conservation laws.

Deputy Director Marshall P. Jones. FWS photo: Tami Heilemann.

He also administered programs that assist conservation efforts for elephants, tigers, rhinos, migratory birds and other species around the world.

Jones majored in zoology and English at the University of Michigan, received an M.S. in vertebrate ecology from Murray State University in Kentucky, and did additional graduate work at Cornell University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971.

In previous positions with the Service, Jones served as chief of the CITES Management Authority from 1988-94; as acting chief of the Division of Ecological Services in 1987; in the Southeast region as chief of the Endangered Species Division from 1984-87 and as a comprehensive planning specialist in the regional Division of Federal Aid; and as acting chief of the Endangered Species Division in the regional office in Denver in 1978.

He began his career as a biologist and technical writer in the office of Endangered Species in Washington, D.C., in 1975.

Megan Durham, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

New AD for External Affairs Brings Alaska Experience

Robyn Thorson is the Service's new assistant director for external affairs. She began in her new position in August, and she oversees the Public Affairs and Congressional and Legislative Affairs offices, the Native American Liaison, the office of Research Coordination, and the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Thorson started with Service in 1985 and has worked in three regions and the Washington Office. She comes to External Affairs after 18 months with the U.S. Geological Survey in Seattle, Washington, serving as associate regional chief biologist for the Biological Resources Division.

From 1995 to early 1999, she was Service deputy regional director for the Alaska region, and she worked in Alaska from 1989 to 1993 as associate regional director responsible for issues related to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"I look forward to continuing the Service's emphasis on outreach as a vital component of our natural resources work," Thorson said. "Our efforts to work with Congress, the public and conservation organizations yield high returns for our mission to conserve and protect fish and wildlife."

Thorson served two years as the assistant regional director for Budget and Administration for the Southwest region, from 1993 to 1995. She was special assistant to the deputy director of the Service in 1988 and 1989, and before that she worked in the Region 1 regional office in Portland, Oregon, in Endangered Species and in Contracting.

A native of Seattle, Thorson received a bachelor's degree from Colorado Women's College and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Oregon School of Law.

Compiled by Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

On the cover:
He did it again! *Robert Hautman of Minnesota took top honors in November's Federal Duck Stamp Contest for a second time—he first won in 1996—with his acrylic painting of a northern pintail. Hautman's brother Joe, also a previous contest winner, took third place. For details, see article on page 17. FWS photo.*

Congress Releases Guidelines for Funding Federal Aid

After more than a year of scrutiny by legislators, the General Accounting Office, private and public sector auditors, consultants and others, Congress provided the Service with clear guidance on administering the costs of the Federal Aid program.

"This bill has given the program a direction that will bring greater efficiency and effectiveness," noted Tom Melius, assistant director for Migratory Birds and State Programs. However, he acknowledged that the bill will also require the Service to change some of its funding practices in a way that Division Chief Kris LaMontagne characterizes as "a new way of living."

Under the old program, the Service was allowed to use up to 6 percent of the funds from the Sport Fish Restoration Program and up to 8 percent from the Wildlife Restoration Program for administration of the program. This amounted to about $30 million every year.

The law no longer sets a percentage. Instead, it authorizes $18 million annually for FY 2001 and FY 2002. After that, the level of funding drops to $16.483 million and is subsequently adjusted by a cost of living factor. This means funding for administration of the program is nearly cut to half of its FY 2000 level.

All of these Federal Aid management funds are to be spent only for 12 specific grants-related activities, and personnel funding is restricted to employees who work a minimum of 20 hours a week for Federal Aid.

The law places a restriction on any assessments for activities not directly related to the administration of the program and prohibits the use of administrative funds to supplement any programs that receive appropriations. It also bans cash awards to non-Federal Aid employees and payment of travel costs to non-Federal Aid employees — except where Realty, Engineering or other program staff provide direct assistance in administering the grants program.

Although biological training for state employees by Service experts in areas like wildlife surveys and electro-fishing is increasingly popular, such initiatives fail to meet the law's "grants administration only" requirement and would need to be paid through other mechanisms if they are to be continued.

The law also provides for an additional $6 million "multi-state" grant program managed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Among a number of other projects that have been conducted by the Service in the past, the Management Assistance Team, the survey of wildlife-related recreation, and the library reference service, have been included in the International's list of recommended grants for this year. Under the law, the Service may receive a grant only to conduct the survey.

The Service is still working to iron out some of the more technical questions regarding what the regional directors can and can't do for program administration.

"We don't have all of the answers, but we're moving in the right direction," Melius added.

LaMontagne agreed with this assessment.

"Will it be easy? No. Can we do it? Yes," LaMontagne affirmed.

In a related development, the Center for Organizational Excellence presented its evaluation of the program structure and processes, as well as the capabilities and performance of the program's workforce. The report seeks to lay the foundation for systematic, sustainable improvement within the program, LaMontagne said.

The COE report demonstrated that the program had operated well and was continuing to perform well under pressure.

"Our main finding is that despite all the turbulence that has been hammering the [Federal Aid] program for the past several years, FA's employees in the regions are continuing to do an effective job of processing grants and meeting the expectations of their state agency customers," the center said.

The report did recommend that Federal Aid implement a process for addressing regional differences in staffing levels, grade distribution, and specialist assignments so that all regions have the staff needed to successfully carry out their core responsibilities.

LaMontagne said that the program is looking to build "consistency and balance" across the regions in the program's core functional areas.

Mitch Snow, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Landmark Legislation Highlights Refuge System Centennial

The world's largest network of lands dedicated to wildlife conservation received a strong boost in November when President Clinton signed into law the National Wildlife Refuge Centennial Act of 2000.

Intended to strengthen and highlight the 93-million-acre refuge system for its 100th birthday, the legislation names 2003 as "Year of the Wildlife Refuge," charges the Secretary of the Interior with recruiting a commission of distinguished citizens to rally public support, and requires the Interior Department to develop new benchmarks for Congress to evaluate progress on the system's maintenance, operations and construction backlog.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt praised the legislation, saying it will "serve as the cornerstone for our efforts to use the centennial milestone to strengthen the system for the benefit of future generations."

Finding that the system "has an unacceptable backlog in critical operations and maintenance needs" approaching $800 million, and that "visitor centers and public use facilities must be properly constructed, operated, and maintained," the legislation calls for the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a long-term plan by March 2002 to address the priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the refuge system (operations refers to all efforts to protect wildlife, improve habitat, and serve visitors).

The Secretary of the Interior must report annually on progress towards meeting this backlog and priority transition costs for newly acquired refuge lands.

The legislation also requires the Interior Secretary to recommend a National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commission to President Bush, who must appoint the commission within 90 days after taking office. Modeled after a similar distinguished group that oversaw the National Park System's Centennial celebrations in 1972, members will include the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Congressional leaders and up to ten distinguished private citizens.

Strong boost. *Wildlife such as caribou will ultimately benefit from legislation intended to strengthen the National Wildlife Refuge System. Photo: FWS.*

This commission is charged with developing and coordinating a plan to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the system, and to host a major conference in 2003.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000 was introduced and shepherded through Congress by a bipartisan coalition including Senators Bob Smith of New Hampshire and Max Baucus of Montana, and Representatives Jim Saxton of New Jersey and Eni F.H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa. It is the third major piece of legislation intended to strengthen the system since 1997.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, signed in 1997, is the system's first-ever organic legislation, and ended decades of debate over the system's role by unequivocally naming wildlife conservation as the sole mission of the refuge system, and giving wildlife related recreational and educational uses—such as hunting, fishing, birdwatching and environmental education—priority over all other public uses on refuge lands.

The 1998 National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act has enabled the Service to expand a volunteer network that already accounts for 20 percent of all work performed on refuges.

The refuge system has also benefitted from the support of an unusual alliance of conservation and outdoor groups known as the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement that has rallied around the refuge system's budgetary needs. Thanks in part to the efforts of these groups, which range from Defenders of Wildlife to the Safari Club International, the system's budget for operations and maintenance has more than doubled since 1990, exceeding $260 million for FY 2000.

Eric Eckl, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Compatibility Policy and Regulations Announced

After considering and responding to more than 500 public comments, the Service published its final Compatibility Policy and Regulations in October, giving uniform direction and procedures for making decisions regarding wildlife conservation and public use to managers of units of the 93 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System.

The policy provides a strong framework to continue to manage refuge lands sensibly in keeping with the general goal of putting wildlife first, while providing recreational and educational opportunities for a growing number of visitors.

"Compatibility is a powerful tool that refuge managers use to ensure that recreation, educational activities, and other uses are in keeping with their refuge's wildlife conservation mandates," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark.

The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act required the Service to update the compatibility policy, first issued in 1966. Under the new policy, a refuge manager must determine whether any proposed or existing public use will "materially interfere with or detract from" the refuge's conservation mandates; and all compatibility determinations must be made in writing after following uniform procedures. This includes providing notice to the public and inviting comment on pending determinations.

"During these reviews, refuge managers will take steps to notify and involve the public such as posting notices at the refuge visitor centers and in local newspapers," Clark said. "Using a more coordinated approach with our neighbors and partners will strengthen our ability to conserve wildlife on a much broader scale."

The 1997 act also established "priority public uses"—compatible uses involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation—that are especially welcome on refuges and receive preference over other uses.

Eric Eckl, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

A Legislative Wrap-Up

President Clinton signed the Interior Appropriations Bill (PL-106-291) on October 11. The following summarizes action on legislation of interest to the Service.

Conservation and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 701, S. 2123):
CARA passed the House and was reported from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee; however, it did not come to the Senate floor for a vote. After it became clear CARA would not come to a Senate vote, the Appropriations committees created a six-year Land Conservation, Preservation and Infrastructure Improvement Program as part of the Interior Appropriation bill (H.R. 4578), with many elements similar to those in the CARA bills.

Title VIII of the Interior Appropriation Act provided authorization and appropriations for a number of these elements. The program is not mandatory and does not guarantee annual appropriations. The House and Senate committees on Appropriations have discretion in the amounts to be appropriated each year.

Included was $50 million for the Service to develop a cost-shared, competitively-awarded, project-based grant program for states, to assist in the conservation of wildlife and habitat, with emphasis placed on those species conservation efforts that are most underfunded and have the greatest conservation need.

The Commerce-Justice-State appropriation bill contains another program element, a $50 million grant program for the Service, as a sub-account of the Pittman-Robertson program. Unlike the Interior Appropriation bill competitive grant program, these funds are allocated by formula (⅓ land area, ⅔ population) with fractions of a percent for territories. Tribes are not included. The priority for these funds is to address unmet needs for a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats, including species not hunted or fished.

Revision of Federal Aid Administration (H.R. 3671):
Also known as the Fish and Wildlife Programs Improvement and National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000, this bill was signed by the President on November 1. It represents the first significant change to administration of the Federal Aid program in many years (see article, page 3).

As passed, the bill not only amends the Federal Aid programs administered by the Service, but also reauthorizes the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (S. 1653) and reauthorizes the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (S. 1119).

The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commemoration Act of 2000 (S. 2878) establishes a commission to promote awareness of the refuge system as it celebrates its centennial in 2003 (see article, page 4).

Water Resources Development Act (S. 2796):
This bill provides for the conservation and development of water and related resources, authorizing the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States. The conference report would authorize 30 new major projects.

The bill directs the corps to study, and undertake if feasible, 120 smaller projects for flood damage reduction, stream bank stabilization, navigation, environmental quality, aquatic ecosystems, shoreline protection, snag and sediment removal, and shore damage repair.

Alaska small hydropower bill (H.R. 2884):
The Energy Policy Conservation Act reauthorization was signed by the President. The bill includes the exemption for Alaska hydro projects of less than 5 megawatts from FERC licensing and regulatory authority. The Service—along with the Department—has strongly opposed past versions of the exemption. The President objected to the exemption, but signed the bill.

Continued on page 6

A Legislative Wrap-Up
(continued)

The exemption would remove federal jurisdiction for these hydro projects, create a new regulatory program under the state of Alaska, and fragment federal hydropower regulation. This legislation gives FERC authority to certify Alaska's program and oversee aspects of compliance of the state's program.

Estuaries and Clean Waters Act (S. 835):
The Senate passed, by unanimous consent, a conference report on a bill to boost estuary protection by establishing a national program to promote the restoration of estuaries. It would establish an interagency council to coordinate federal, state and local activities. The bill would authorize $275 million over five years for the Army Corps of Engineers for restoration projects.

Coastal Barriers legislation (S. 1752):
This legislation reauthorizes and amends the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, authorizes appropriations to implement the act for FY 2001 through 2005 and codifies guidelines to be considered by the Interior Secretary when determining whether a coastal barrier is considered "developed" and whether or not to recommend removal of areas from the refuge system.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (H.R. 1934):
A bill to establish the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program has been included in a number of different Senate and House packages, none of which have passed the full Congress or been sent to the President for signature. This provision sets up a grant program aiding groups that assist in the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living and dead stranded marine mammals for scientific research.

Currently, H.R. 1934 is part of H.R. 2903 (now named the Striped Bass Conservation, Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Management, and Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000), which passed the House of Representatives on October 31 and awaits Senate action.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation (S. 148):
The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, which would make grants to assist in the conservation of neotropical migratory birds by supporting conservation initiatives in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, included several technical amendments agreed to by the Administration.

Great Ape conservation (H.R. 4320):
The Great Ape Conservation Act provides funding for the protection and restoration of great ape species in the wild.

Junior Duck Stamp Program (H.R. 2496):
Congress reauthorized the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act of 1994, extending the program through fiscal year 2005 and extending the program to the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.

National Wildlife Refuges
The president signed several bills establishing new national wildlife refuges, including:

- Cat Island NWR (H.R. 3292) in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana—part of a larger legislative package to authorize the addition of land to Sequoia National Park;

- Steens Mountain Wilderness (H.R. 4828) in Oregon; and

- Shemya NWR (The Department has approved legislation to transfer Shemya Island to the Department of the Air Force; this language has been added to the Labor /Health and Human Services Appropriations bill).

Fisheries Mitigation (H.R. 1444):
The Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act establishes a voluntary cost-share program in cooperation with irrigators to design and construct fish screens for irrigation diversions. The Service would serve as the lead agency in implementing the bill's provisions. The Administration has taken no position on the legislation.

Striped Bass (H.R. 4408):
A bill to reauthorize the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act has been included in a number of different Senate and House packages, none of which have passed the full Congress.

The bill reauthorizes the Striped Bass Conservation Act through FY 2003 and includes a new population study with an associated authorization for appropriations of $250,000 for the Secretary of Commerce. Currently, H.R. 4408 is a part of H.R. 2903, which passed the House of Representatives on October 31. H.R. 2903 is awaiting action in the Senate.

Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Washington, D.C.

A Snapshot of the Service's 2001 Budget

(Dollars in thousands)

Activity	*FY2001 Appropriation**
Endangered Species	$ 121,214
Habitat Conservation	$ 78,463
Contaminants	$ 10,668
Refuge Operations & Maintenance	$ 281,339
Salton Sea	$ 996
Migratory Bird Management	$ 25,741
Law Enforcement Operations & Maintenance	$ 47,692
Hatchery Operations & Maintenance	$ 48,124
Fish and Wildlife Assistance	$ 39,608
Central Office Administration	$ 15,103
Regional Office Administration	$ 24,233
Administrative Support	$ 52,145
International Affairs	$ 8,218
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	$ 14,224
National Conservation Training Center	$ 15,327
Resource Management (total)	$ 783,095
Federal Infrastructure	
Improvement	$ 25,000
Construction	$ 63,015
Construction Supplemental Funds	$ 8,500
Land Acquisition	$ 121,455
State Wildlife Grants	$ 50,000
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	$ 40,000
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	$ 104,925
Other	$ 14,736
Overall FWS Appropriations	**$ 1,210,726**

**with effect of FY2000 reprogramming*

Wild Atlantic Salmon in Maine Given ESA Protection

Protection needed. *Wild Atlantic salmon populations Maine have become perilously low. The Service will protect salmon in seven Maine rivers and streams as endangered. FWS photo.*

Wild Atlantic salmon in Maine rivers are at an all-time low and face a number of threats that could drive them to extinction. As a result, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service in November announced they are listing the species as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The listing covers the wild population of Atlantic salmon found in rivers and streams in Maine from the lower Kennebec River north to the U.S.-Canada border. These include the Dennys, East Machias, Machias, Pleasant, Narraguagus, Ducktrap, and Sheepscot rivers and Cove Brook.

Although significant progress has been made under the state of Maine's conservation plan, disease and other threats remain, and the act's protection is critical to ensure the survival of these salmon, said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark and Penny Dalton, administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"Less than 10 percent of the fish needed for the long-term survival of wild Atlantic salmon are returning to Maine rivers," Clark said. "Without the protection and recovery programs afforded by the Endangered Species Act, chances are this population will die out completely."

Federal biologists have found that small numbers of adult salmon are returning to spawn, and young salmon in Gulf of Maine rivers are surviving at a lower rate than expected. Spawning stocks of Atlantic salmon remain low throughout much of their northern Atlantic range and are not expected to improve rapidly.

"The Services have a responsibility to extend Endangered Species Act protection to Maine's wild salmon," Dalton said. "The State of Maine Conservation Plan provides a foundation for the recovery effort, and, together with the act's protection, will assist recovery of this Atlantic salmon population."

The State of Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission halted salmon fishing nearly a year ago in response to the low number of adult fish returning to Maine rivers.

Several fish diseases threaten recovery efforts. Interbreeding with and competition from escaped farm-raised salmon from Maine's aquaculture industry also threaten the wild salmon population in the Gulf of Maine.

In addition to the continuing escape of sub-adult salmon from sea pens near the mouths of wild salmon rivers, there is evidence that farm-raised juvenile salmon have escaped from private hatcheries located on rivers supporting the wild salmon population.

Continued on page 8

Wild Atlantic Salmon (continued)

The Services proposed to list the Atlantic salmon as endangered in November 1999, after a biological study, the "Status Review for Anadromous Atlantic Salmon in the United States," concluded that Atlantic salmon in several Gulf of Maine rivers—the last known naturally reproducing Atlantic salmon population in the United States—had reached dangerously low levels.

Protection under the act means it is now a federal violation to take salmon in the eight rivers. "Take" means to harass, harm, pursue, trap, capture and collect. While the Services expect the listing to have an overall minimal impact on most Maine residents, they will continue to work closely with those affected by this decision.

The wild population of Atlantic salmon found in the eight rivers in Maine are referred to as the Gulf of Maine "distinct population segment." The act permits listing of a population segment if it is discrete and significant, and found to be endangered or threatened.

The Services will develop a recovery plan to rebuild the wild Atlantic salmon population so the species no longer needs Endangered Species Act protection. The recovery plan will address threats such as disease, competition from or interbreeding with aquaculture escapees (especially non-North American farmed fish), predation and modification to salmon habitat.

"We expect the recovery plan to grow out of the existing State of Maine Conservation Plan," Clark said. "It will be developed in partnership with state officials, Native American tribal officials, watershed councils, conservation organizations, Maine industries, and others in Maine who have an interest in the fish and the rivers. While the recovery plan is being developed, we will continue to work with state, tribal and local experts on a variety of salmon recovery strategies."

Diana E. Weaver, External Affairs, Hadley, Massachusetts

George Liles, National Marine Fisheries Service, Gloucester, Massachusetts

Final Steps Completed for Plan to Reintroduce Grizzly Bear in Montana and Idaho

The Service recently completed the planning process for the reintroduction of grizzly bears into the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana and central Idaho under the management of a 15-member Citizen Management Committee.

In November, Ralph Morgenweck, regional director for the Mountain/Prairie Region, formally selected the preferred alternative identified in a final environmental impact statement. Under the plan, the Service would introduce a minimum of 25 bears over five years into 5,785 square miles of wilderness area surrounded by more than 15,000 square miles of public land in the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

Bears will not be relocated into the area for a year or more. The reintroduced bears will be designated as a nonessential, experimental population under a special rule published in the November 17 *Federal Register*. This special designation allows more flexibility in the management of reintroduced species — for example, if removing a bear from the area is necessary.

"The exhaustive planning process for recovery of grizzly bears in the Bitterroot is now complete and we are prepared to go forward in partnership with the citizens of Idaho and Montana," Morgenweck said. "There is still a lot of work to be done before any bears can actually be reintroduced, however, including the creation of the Citizen Management Committee."

The Service will start a year of planning and preparation prior to the actual reintroduction of grizzly bears. The first year of the recovery program will involve three simultaneous activities: formation of the Citizen Management Committee; initiation of public outreach and information and education programs; and initiation of a sanitation program to ensure bear-proof garbage storage containers are made available and installed in campgrounds and facilities in and around the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness area.

Second chance. *A 15-member committee of public agency representatives, private citizens and tribal members will be an integral part of the grizzly reintroduction process in Montana and Idaho. FWS photo: Bob Stevens.*

The Citizen Management Committee will be composed of a cross-section of local citizens and agency representatives from federal and state agencies and the Nez Perce Tribe. The committee's mission is to facilitate recovery of the grizzly bear in the Bitterroot ecosystem while accommodating the needs of the public. Decisions by the committee will serve as guidance to the agencies involved in grizzly bear management.

Establishment of a grizzly population in the remote Bitterroot wilderness would contribute significantly to long-term conservation and recovery of the species. The recovery goal for the Bitterroot ecosystem is approximately 280 grizzly bears, which is expected to take a minimum of 50 to 100 years to achieve.

An estimated 50,000 grizzly bears lived in the contiguous United States prior to European settlement. Grizzly bears have been eliminated from about 98 percent of their historic range in the lower 48 states. Today, 1,000 to 1,100 grizzly bears remain in five scattered populations in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Washington.

Annual Report Celebrates the Spirit of Cooperation

The Service's annual report for fiscal year 1999 is more than merely an account of the agency's accomplishments over 365 days. It shows the Service as a dynamic organization committed to conserving natural resources through sound management of fish, wildlife and their habitats. Moreover, the report represents a cooperative effort by diverse contributors from all program areas—from administrative assistants to wildlife biologists, from Engineering to Realty.

The Office of the Inspector General audits the report's contents; audit results are scrutinized by the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress. The FY 1999 report marks the fifth consecutive year in which the Service has received unqualified or "clean" audit opinions from the Inspector General.

This report is becoming more complex to prepare under the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board standards requiring the integration of financial and operational information, combined with management's discussion of the future impact on Service operations based on its currently displayed financial and operational status.

Annual reports allow the Service to tell our customers—the American people—how we achieve our mission to conserve fish and wildlife resources, how we provide stewardship for trust resources and how we account for the costs of performing our work.

The report also highlights the important work of our partners and volunteers that help the Service on a daily basis. Without such strong alliances, the Service could not achieve the ambitious goals that its sets for fish and wildlife conservation throughout the nation and the world.

The Service's report provides program and financial information used to prepare the Department of the Interior's annual report. Copies of the FY 1999 annual report were distributed throughout the Service and to other agencies and partners. For a copy of the report, contact the Division of Finance at 703/358 1742.

Pam Matthes, Division of Finance, Arlington, Virginia

A Compassionate Gift to Last Generations

You might think that a lawman whose work ranged from undercover investigations in Oregon and Colorado to five years with the CITES Secretariat in Switzerland, to assistant regional director for Alaska's Law Enforcement division would not be the type who'd show compassion and sensitivity. But you'd be wrong.

John Gavitt always wondered how he could make a more permanent contribution to conservation during his lifetime. In July, he met this goal by placing a conservation easement on his 437 acres in Hampshire County, West Virginia. The easement, which was recorded with the deed, allows only two homes to be built on the property and protects valuable wildlife habitat for future generations. The following letter was recorded with the easement.

Karen Boylan, External Affairs, Anchorage, Alaska

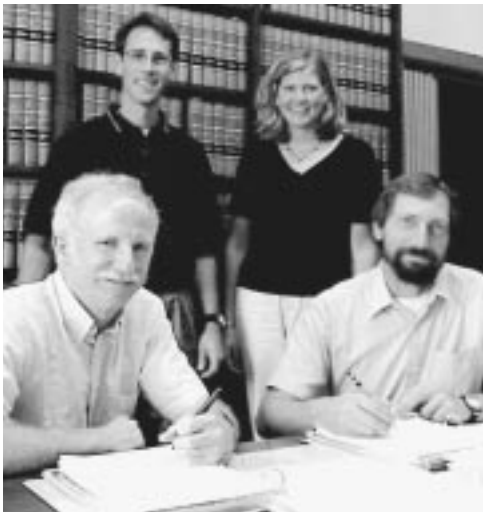
Sacred Ground

To the future owner of my property,

Congratulations. You are the new owner of land that I once loved and cared for. Because our time on this earth is very short and our life spans may not cross, it is important that I pass on some of my thoughts to you about its importance, not only to you but to others, as well. You see, I am the original grantor of the conservation easement that you agreed to abide by when you purchased this property.

Like me, you have the privilege of protecting and enjoying this wonderful land. Yes, just in case you haven't thought about it, owning this property is truly a privilege. It has only been loaned to us by our Creator to enjoy and protect during our lifetimes. Therefore, it should be passed on in an undamaged state, so that future generations may also reap its benefits.

The property isn't just woodland and fields that haven't yet been subdivided into squared-off sites for trailers or suburban homes and lawns. Actually, it's a small part of a great watershed that is essential to the health of local communities and to the survival of many wild plant and animal species. Just taking time to walk over the property through the seasons of the year will help you understand the importance of preserving its open spaces for the future. Travel through the woods and fields in the spring, and you'll see May apple, spring beauties, bluets, and other wildflowers in full bloom. In the summer there will be lush green pastures to lie in while watching thunderstorms light up the sky. In October, leaves from maple, hickory and oak will change the woods into striking blends of red and yellow. Winter will come quickly, and you'll be a witness to the quiet beauty of snow falling on the bank of the North River. March will finally arrive, followed by high winds and new beginnings of growth on the stark landscape. The cycle of life and death in the natural world of this property continues year after year, as it will when you and I are gone.



Before It's Too Late. *North River property owner John Gavitt (front, left) recently entrusted over 400 acres in a conservation easement agreement with the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust and Potomac Conservancy. Pictured with Gavitt are Matthew Logan and Meredith Lathbury of the Potomac Conservancy and Dave Warner (front, right) with the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust. FWS photo: courtesy of Michael O'Brien,* Hampshire Review.

Continued on page 10

A Compassionate Gift to Last Generations (continued)

Take time to listen to the land. Have you been down to the field by the river and felt the wind coursing through the pines in the evening? Have you heard the sound of the pileated woodpecker in the early morning near the cabin in August? Have you been up early to listen for the snort of a deer in the woods below "High Knob" in October, or the gobbling of a turkey in April, near the walnut opening? Have you heard the sound of the North River in the summer, beckoning you to shed your clothes and jump in?

This property is about people, too. It's about friends and family enjoying the companionship of a day in the woods and open air. I hope you will be able to share experiences and friendships similar to those that I have enjoyed as a result of owning this wonderful piece of West Virginia, of our country. Times sitting with my parents at the bottom of the hill below the cabin, watching for a glimpse of a deer…visits from my brother and his family and with my sister, hunting, fishing, or just hiking…the wide-eyed wonder in the eyes of my friends' children as they reel in their first fish from a pond or the river, and watching these same children come back every year, all of a sudden growing into young adults…endless discussions with friends about work, religion, hunting, fishing, the state of the world and the future.

It's been such a pleasure getting to know and share with my Hampshire County neighbors who have contributed so much to my joy of being on the land. Open up your heart to your neighbors and to the people in the surrounding area and you'll be richly rewarded….

This "sense of place"—I suppose that's what it's all about for me and for others who believe so strongly in a particular chunk of this earth. It becomes so much a part of us that we will do everything possible to ensure that it will not be harmed when we're not around to care for it. Above all, I thank God for the opportunity to provide a permanent home for the wildlife that inhabits and visits this property. I don't believe I would ever be able to leave this world in peace, knowing that someone was just around the corner, waiting to cut up and destroy something that is such a part of me.

As far as I'm concerned, what you're protecting is sacred ground. Treat it in that manner and it will give you back everything you've ever hoped for, and more. Treat it poorly, and you'll have to appear in court to explain your betrayal to the land that could have embraced and nurtured your soul. I know people who feel exactly the way I do about protecting this property—people who work for the land trusts to which this easement has been entrusted. As time passes on, I am confident that others will replace them with the same dedication….

Because this land has added so much richness to my life, protecting it through this easement is a way to pay back a debt that I've owed for a long time.

I have spent my entire career in wildlife law enforcement. Although it has been very satisfying work, I have always wondered how I could make a contribution to our natural world that would last beyond my lifetime. Knowing now that future generations will enjoy the comforting silence from this land on evenings when the stars seem to go on forever closes this chapter in my life.

John D. Gavitt
July 28, 2000

Postscript: John didn't "retire" for very long. In November, he began working with Wild Aid, a non-governmental organization that addresses threats to wildlife in the developing world. He will work with other Wild Aid team members and Service special agents on enforcement issues on national parks in Cambodia and Thailand.

FacMIS Provides Easy Access to Facilities Data

The Service recently completed the first phase of FacMIS—the Facility Management Information System, available to Service employees online at http://facmis.fws.gov.

Developed jointly by the divisions of Refuges, Hatcheries, Contracting and General Services, Realty, Information Resources Management, Finance, and Engineering, along with regional and field station representatives, this powerful new tool provides immediate access to the facility data such as:

- Refuge and hatchery deferred maintenance projects
- Construction projects
- Federal Financial System—FY 1999–2000 targets/obligations for all Service funds
- Real property inventory
- Leased space data
- Vehicles data
- Environmental audit findings

Users may select pre-formatted "management" queries to access data quickly or prepare customized or "advanced" queries to obtain more complex information. Future phases of FacMIS will link dam safety, bridge safety and seismic safety data. Federal Financial System data for FY 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2001 will also be available in the near future.

Comments and suggestions on FacMIS will be incorporated into future system changes. Please forward comments/suggestions to the FacMIS system administrator, Marshall Wright, at marshall_wright@fws.gov.

FacMIS may only be accessed on a computer with a Service IP address (ending with @fws.gov) using Internet Explorer 4.0 or greater. First time users will be prompted to download a plug-in when working with Management Queries, and should follow the on-screen directions or contact the FacMIS HelpDesk for assistance with this one-time procedure.

The help desk is available at 303/275 2433, weekdays, 5 a.m. to 5 p.m., MST.

Service Remains Proud Partner with American Fisheries Society

Service fisheries biologists have been promoted to new prominence in the American Fisheries Society, the oldest and largest professional society representing fisheries scientists in North America.

At the society's August meeting in St. Louis, the 9,000-member group elevated a Service fish technology center director to president; heard Service fisheries biologists present more than 100 research papers from all seven Service regions; watched a Service fisheries manager receive a major diversity award and a Sport Fish Restoration Program grant administrator receive an award of merit; saw a National Conservation Training Center presentation on leadership; and selected a Service biologist as co-chair of presentations during the society's 2002 meeting.

"The extent of involvement by Service people, and by our fisheries biologists in particular, in the American Fisheries Society is impressive and exciting," said Cathleen Short, the Service's assistant director for fisheries and habitat conservation. "For fisheries people, this is the pre-eminent organization. This organization has published some of the world's leading fishery research journals and has promoted important research and enlightened management since its founding in 1870.

"I'm terribly proud of all of these people," Short continued. "This is a very impressive credit to the Service and the agency's level of professionalism."

Carl V. Burger, director of the Abernathy Fish Technology Center in Longview, Washington, will serve as society president through August, 2001. He said he wants to focus on three priorities during his term—leadership, greater visibility for the society and reaching beyond "traditional constituencies." (See sidebar)

Burger said the leadership element is already underway: over the past two years, instructor Lisa Deener of the National Conservation Training Center has presented a number of leadership workshops to society members. He said the training is designed to help members hone leadership skills and principles that can help at work and in officer positions.

Burger wants to underscore the successes and challenges of society partner agencies and organizations by highlighting those accomplishments in the society magazine, *Fisheries*, as well as visiting congressional staffs to raise awareness of the "tremendous knowledge base that members have developed in conservation and management over the past century."

He also wants the society to broaden its traditional dissemination of technical information in user-friendly versions for students, public school educators, angling groups and conservationists, among others.

Also at the August meeting, Hannibal Bolton, chief of the division of fish and wildlife management assistance and habitat conservation, received the society's Mentoring for Professional Diversity in Fisheries Award, which recognizes a member "who has contributed to increasing the diversity of the profession by assisting with the professional development of fisheries students or new fisheries professionals from underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic groups and people with disabilities." (See sidebar, page 12.)

Continued on page 12

Burger Installed as Fisheries Society President

Carl V. Burger, a 26-year Service veteran and director of the Abernathy Fish Technology Center in Longview, Washington, is enthused about his installation as the new president of the 9,000-member American Fisheries Society, one of the most prominent sources of peer-reviewed fisheries science in the world.

The Service and the society, which was founded in 1870, "have enjoyed a long and fruitful history of cooperation in aquatic resource conservation efforts," said Burger. "It's where science and its partners—states, federal agencies, tribes and those in the private sector—find common ground."

At Abernathy, Burger oversees the center's work on innovative fish culture techniques and on ways to retool hatchery facilities as conservation tools to restore and recover Pacific Northwest fishery resources. His staff conducts applied research in fish genetics, nutrition, pathology and behavioral physiology.

Carl Burger. FWS photo.

"Serving as the society's president is one of the most exciting opportunities to promote aquatic resource stewardship and the professional level of our membership," Burger said. "It's an enormous honor, and it's also a reflection on how the professionalism and work of the Service are regarded by others in the field."

Burger already has developed a three-pronged program, involving leadership, visibility and educational outreach.

"To some extent, each of these depend on the other," he said. "With the right kind of leadership, we can do a better job; with better visibility, we can in turn begin to reach people who are not scientists and explain how we all have a stake in maintaining the health of America's aquatic resources."

Burger will preside over the society's next annual meeting in Phoenix, August 19-23, 2001.

Ken Burton

American Fisheries Society
(continued)

Michael Vanderford, a Sport Fish Restoration grant administrator in the Minneapolis regional office, received the American Fisheries Society-Fish Management Section's 2000 Award of Merit for his work as the North Central regional editor for the AFS-Fish Management Section newsletter.

After working for several years gathering fisheries news, Vanderford began searching for a fresher approach. After polling state fisheries staff in his area, he was intrigued by a suggestion from Gary Isbell of the Ohio Division of Wildlife Fisheries to develop an "issues forum."

Vanderford liked the idea and since then has used fisheries chiefs in 12 Midwestern states and the Service regional fisheries chief in his area as a panel, sending them one issue three times a year and asking for their comment. The forum, titled "Issue Feedback," has become a popular newsletter feature.

Morgan McCosh, a fisheries biologist with the office of fish and wildlife management assistance in Washington, D.C., was tapped to be a co-program chair for the society's 2002 meeting in Baltimore.

Program chairs provide leadership in planning, developing and administering the technical programs and plenary sessions for the society's annual meetings.

"This is ambitious, extensive and detailed work," said McCosh, "but it's a tremendously exciting assignment. I'm flattered to be a part of the ground-floor planning for one of the society's major conferences."

Finally, Service biologists from all seven regions presented nearly 100 papers at the St. Louis meeting, touching on a wide range of fisheries issues, including aquatic nuisance species, fish health, fisheries management, restoration and more.

"That our science was so fully represented at this meeting is enormously satisfying," said Assistant Director Short. "There are few honors that come close to respect from your peers. The participation and honors reflected on our men and women this year clearly show that the Service's fisheries program is indeed well-respected. And so are they."

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Bolton Honored for Promoting Diversity in Fisheries

Hannibal Bolton has a couple of ideas about the American melting pot.

One is that it can't work unless there is something to melt. And the second is that few things happen without help.

"One of the great things about this country is that it's not finished," Bolton said. "A great country — a great democracy — is always a work in progress. Our history shows that pretty clearly.

"The next great thing is that one person can make a difference. I've seen it happen. I've had terrific opportunities to make things happen," he continued. "And I've been fortunate to work for an agency that encourages that kind of action. It can be tremendously rewarding."

It has been repeatedly rewarding for Bolton; in 1994, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt handed him the Secretary's Annual Equal Opportunity Award for Long-Term Achievement. Among other things, that award cited him for his "history of active support and dedication to equality" and his efforts to recruit women and minorities into entry level and professional positions in the Service.

This year, the American Fisheries Society gave Bolton its Mentoring for Professional Diversity in Fisheries Award for "increasing the diversity of the (fisheries) profession by assisting with the professional development of fisheries students or new fisheries professionals from underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic groups, and people with disabilities."

Hannibal Bolton. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.

"You can never underestimate the real power of just a few words," Bolton said. "Sometimes all it takes is a little encouragement. Sometimes it's just righting a misperception. Sometimes it might even be a lot of words. Believe me, all of it works. And I've been so grateful to have a chance to make it work."

Throughout his career, Bolton has worked with a number of universities to encourage more representation and careers in the biological sciences, and has brought former students and women into the Service who now serve as role models to other students.

He has worked as a tutor, as a vigorous partner and supporter of Native Americans. He currently serves on the Native Peoples Section of the American Fisheries Society.

"It's always nice to have your work recognized," said Bolton, "and these awards are not unappreciated. But they are icing on the cake. When you help someone change their life, and then watch it happen — there isn't anything better."

Ken Burton

FWS Information Portal Brings Service News Right to Your Desktop

Are you tired of wearing out your mouse searching the Web for Fish and Wildlife Service information?

Have you ever deleted an all-employee message that you should have kept?

The solution to these problems will soon be right in front of you—on your PC's desktop.

The FWS Information Portal features one-click access to Lotus Notes e-mail—and much more—in the form of a collection of information and World Wide Web links designed with the Service employee in mind. The form and function of the FWS Information Portal promotes a sense of community and once it is installed, its intuitive design will make it easy to use.

The FWS Information Portal will put local, regional and national news such as all-employee messages and links to Service Web sites at your fingertips to make your search for information easier and more efficient. For example, from the information portal's hotlink to the FWS Resource Center on the Internet, you will have one-click access to the Corporate Information Center, Service intranets and national applications.

The FWS Resource Center is a collection of Web links providing easy access to Service information and national applications. It serves as the "anchor site" for Service information and national applications and is organized in a way that is easy for employees to use and as a convenient starting point for access to information.

If you missed news from previous days, the FWS Information Portal's archives will make it easy to get caught up. It will also provide links to region-specific Web sites.

In addition to the news and Web links, users will still have access to Lotus Notes basics such as the inbox, calendar, to do list, and name and address books.

Users who have created their own welcome page (the first screen seen when Notes is started) will still be able to access it. Even though the FWS Information Portal will become your default screen, you can quickly switch to your customized welcome page with a simple click of the mouse. As the technology matures, the Division of Information Resources Management plans to add links to other portals, along with custom portals specific to regions, programs and even individuals.

Refer to the National Communications Center's FWS-Messaging web site often (http://ncc.fws.gov/messaging) for FWS Information Portal rollout updates and additional information, or call the Notes Help Desk at 303/275 2323 if you have any questions.

Tammie Nettles, National Communications Center, Lakewood, Colorado

Library Seeks Donations

Do you have back issues of prominent natural resource conservation journals?

Maybe your personal library contains some Service publications in series, or older brochures or government publications. Why not donate them to the National Conservation Training Center's Conservation Library?

The library needs the following series for its collection:

- Annual reports of the U.S. Biological Survey
- Biological Survey Bulletins
- Circulars
- Fish and Wildlife technical reports
- Fish Commission Reports, 1872+
- Fishery Bulletins, 1931-1954
- Fishery Circulars, 1931+
- Fish Disease Leaflets, 1966+
- Fishery Leaflets #337-421
- "Fishery Market News"
- FWS/OBS publications since 1976
- Investigations in Fish Control, 1964+
- Market Development Leaflets, 1-61, 1949+
- North American Fauna 1889+
- Progressive Fish Culturist volume 1+
- Resource Publications, 1965+ (need 1-127, 131-134,138-9, 145, 149-50, 152, 155-201)
- Research Reports 1941-1980 (need 3,4, 6-9, 11-80)
- Commercial Fisheries Reviews
- Service Survey (1941-195?)
- Statistical Digests 1-12
- Statistical Lists 1954+
- Technical Bulletins 1-1423 (1889-1928)
- Technical Papers 1966-1985 (need 1-30, 41-55, 57-111
- Test Kitchen #2, 5, 6
- Wildlife Leaflet 1935-1985 (need all)
- Yearbook of Agriculture, 1885-1939

Anne Post Roy, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Cutting-edge Technology Aids Cutthroat Conservation

Ahead of the pack. *This biofilter is part of a water recirculation system at Mora National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center. Mora's cutting-edge technology will help save declining Southwestern fishes. FWS photo: Ronnie Maes.*

New Mexico is steeped in history—both cultural and natural—with many "firsts" to its credit. One of those firsts is the technology development taking shape at the Mora National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center in northern New Mexico. And the Rio Grande cutthroat trout—New Mexico's state fish—will be one of the immediate beneficiaries of this technology.

Last June, as the Santa Fe National Forest burned, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish biologists rescued Rio Grande cutthroats—also known as cutts—from the headwaters of Cow Creek. The Viveash fire threatened this unique trout population and with the nearest state fish hatchery under renovation, the fish went to the Mora Technology Center, where biologists housed them in a state-of-the-art quarantine system to protect other fish species already at the center.

Assistant Center Director Ronnie Maes recognizes Mora's important role in preserving New Mexico's natural heritage.

"Rio Grande cutthroats are an integral part of the ecosystem of northern New Mexico and it's important to protect all the wild populations we can," Maes said. "These cutts will probably be spawned and their offspring, and perhaps some adults, released back into the wild."

Until the cutts are certified disease-free by the biologists at the Service's Fish Health Center in Pinetop, Arizona, the quarantine system assures the hatchery keeps unwanted organisms at bay, assuring the other resident fish species additional security.

Mora Fish Technology Center is two hatcheries in one. It is a coldwater hatchery for trout, and a warmwater hatchery, too, for species such as the bonytail chub. Endemic to the Colorado River basin, the bonytail once occurred in the San Juan River in New Mexico. Today, it may be the most endangered fish in the nation. Dams that segment populations, habitat loss and competition with non-native predatory fish have taken a toll on bonytail populations. Mora Technology Center works with other fish hatcheries to recover this imperiled fish by studying how to preserve good genetics in hatchery and wild fish.

Gila trout, the only other trout native to New Mexico, are also kept at Mora. Spreading disease to this endangered fish could set back restoration efforts now gathering steam. Once beset by fire, drought and flood, Gila trout restoration now is succeeding to the point that the Service may downlist the species to threatened status within two years. Gila trout have been closed to angling since 1956, but an improved conservation status may open limited sport fishing.

The Mora Technology Center plays an integral part in Gila trout restoration, holding a strain of Gila trout unique to Main Diamond Creek, a headwater tributary to the East Fork of the Gila River.

But perhaps the crowning jewel of one of the newest federal fish hatcheries is the station's water recirculation system.

"If you visit us, you won't see a huge expanse of open raceways," said Maes. "We contain our fish rearing operation indoors. And there we recirculate nearly all the water we use."

Back to the wild. *Rio Grande cutthroat trout are a critical part of the northern New Mexico ecosystem. FWS photo: Craig Springer.*

Hatcheries by their very nature tend to use a lot of water. In more humid climates, that's usually not a problem. But in the arid Southwest—where water is limited and fish need help—water conservation is essential.

Special treatment of the water at Mora allows high-density fish culture. Treatment screens out particulates and breaks down ammonia to nitrates that fish tolerate. Ozone injected into the water kills harmful bacteria, parasites and fungus—all this at about 4,500 gallons a minute. The same waters can be treated about 20 times, recirculating around 95 percent of the water.

"Our re-circulation system saves a lot of water and the technology we are developing is transferable to other hatcheries, public and private, in arid lands," said Maes. "The amount of water we save, on an annual basis, would cover about 10 square miles one foot deep."

That's a lot of water saved and Maes expects the technology center to become more involved in Rio Grande cutthroat work in the future. Plans are underway to start a brood stock of cutthroat with the end purpose of expanding the species' range. The technology center will play an integral part in keeping this fish from needing to be listed.

Craig Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Region 5 Makes an Investment That Can't Lose Its Value

It's called Invest in People.

It's a new way of looking at the workplace, and it's unique to the Northeast region.

The Invest in People initiative is dedicated to improving the professional life and productivity of Region 5 employees. The initiative will provide ways for supervisors and employees to work together to build on current strengths and look for new ways to increase job satisfaction.

The effort began with the region's managers asking the questions, "What do we do best?" and "What can we do better?"

Invest in People is providing some answers to those questions, according to Mamie A. Parker, the Northeast regional director.

"In today's professional climate we must invest in our people in order to recruit, train and retain the best employees," Parker said.

As an ongoing and ever-growing program, Parker said, the Invest in People initiative will:

- strengthen employee-supervisor relationships,
- create a new model for leadership within the region,
- foster a more people-oriented organization,
- improve overall employee satisfaction, and
- make Region 5 a place known for its quality of life in the workplace.

A major aspect of the Invest in People initiative is a framework designed to benefit all employees; it is not a top-down program. The initiative is not a mandate, but rather stems from a desire to make Region 5 a place where people want to work and which offers the support and opportunity for each employee to grow.

Much of the enthusiasm channeled into this effort comes from the regional directorate, their dedication to the Service and its mission, and their desire for others to share in this dedication.

"I feel good about working to serve the people of the Northeast region," Parker said. "Now, I want more people to feel like me... going and growing."

Other members of the Region 5 management team agreed.

"The initiative is part of a long-term commitment to the employees of Region 5," said Rick Bennett, assistant regional director for migratory birds and state programs. "Although the program can't solve all of the region's problems and challenges, it will provide new avenues for dealing with existing problems and lay new paths for future growth."

Sherry Morgan, assistant regional director for ecological services, echoed Bennett's emphasis on commitment.

"Employees and managers need to feel respected and valued," she said. "The Invest in People initiative is a commitment to this principle. One way the program will work is by finding mentors and coaches for those people wanting them."

Most members of the regional directorate are helping to get Invest in People off the ground. For example, Assistant Regional Director for Law Enforcement Adam O'Hara is building the team that will design Invest in People's mentoring and coaching program, and a regional version of the "Step Up to Leadership Program" is already underway, led by Tony Leger, regional chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Although in the planning process since Parker's arrival, the program officially kicked off in late September with a short survey designed by Gallup to help the region's supervisors evaluate their relationships with their employees. Building on the polling company's tremendous experience, results and analysis of the 12-question survey will provide the foundation for the initiative's next steps.

One indication of the region's interest in this program was the outstanding participation; 91 percent of the region's employees participated, 15 percent higher than average for a Gallup survey.

The survey is a major cornerstone for the Invest in People program. Its future benefit to the region and its employees grows from its simple, yet powerful approach to workplace satisfaction.

With the implementation of Invest in People, Parker believes Region 5 employees will:

- better understand what is expected of them at work
- have the materials and equipment to do the job properly and safely
- have the opportunity to do what they do best every day
- receive recognition or praise for good work
- know that someone they work with cares about them as a person
- have someone at work who encourages them to grow
- know that every opinion counts
- understand how the Service's mission relates to them and their duties
- know that their fellow employees are committed to doing quality work
- have a best friend at work
- have the opportunity to evaluate their progress twice a year
- have opportunities to learn and grow each year

Parker noted that the Service must invest in its employees in order to progress toward the future and get a strong return.

"No deposit, no return — we must make investments in our people in order to get more return," she said.

Ed Henry, External Affairs, Hadley, Massachusetts

Giant Pandas Arrive at the National Zoo

Playful. *Giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian made their public debut in January. FWS photo: Tami Heilemann.*

Two giant pandas, Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, arrived at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C., December 6.

The Service in November issued a permit under the Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora to allow the Smithsonian to import the two pandas from China.

Under the Service's Giant Panda Import Policy, such imports may be allowed if the requesting institution has fully satisfied the policy's criteria and the long-term loan will contribute to the conservation and survival of pandas in the wild in China.

Pandas are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act and on CITES Appendix I which prohibits any commercial trade. Under these two measures, the Service must make the following determinations before it can issue an import permit:

- the purpose of the import must not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild in China;
- the import must enhance the survival or propagation of the species in the wild;
- the importer must have the necessary facilities and expertise to house and care for the panda; and
- the import cannot be for primarily commercial purposes.

"Pandas are loved worldwide but wild pandas face an uncertain future because of habitat encroachment and loss in China," Clark said. "If they are to survive in the wild, we must work to preserve the disappearing ecosystem on which they and many other creatures depend. The Service's policy aims at forging partnerships with the American zoo community and with the Chinese government to share ideas, information, technology and training that will tilt the balance in favor of wild panda survival."

Under the Service's policy, all monies paid to China by the importing institution as a condition of the loan, must be used for on-the-ground conservation projects in China, specifically at some of that country's giant panda reserves.

The giant panda is highly endangered with probably fewer than 1,000 animals surviving in the wild in China. Currently, there are five other giant pandas in the United States: three at the San Diego Zoological Park in California (the two original pandas and their offspring), and two at Zoo Atlanta in Georgia.

Pat Fisher, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Lost Trail Refuge Dedicated in Montana

Spotted. *A wildlife watcher trains his lens on some of the inhabitants at Lost Trail NWR. FWS photo.*

Under a brilliant blue sky overlooking Dahl Lake in northwestern Montana, the Service dedicated Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge, the 519th unit in the refuge system, last June.

This 9,325-acre refuge is located in Pleasant Valley, a serene and picturesque mountain drainage approximately 25 air-miles west of Kalispell.

Prior to acquisition, the lands that make up the refuge were privately owned and managed as Lost Trail cattle and horse ranch, which had a diverse history dating back to the late 1800s. In 1996, Montana Power Company purchased the ranch to partially satisfy a mitigative settlement order, issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, between the power company, the Department of Interior and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The settlement ordered Montana Power to mitigate for wildlife losses and impacts on the Flathead Waterfowl Production Area attributed to past and future operations of Kerr Dam.

In 1999, the power company conveyed about 3,100 acres of the ranch to the Service. The Agriculture Department's National Resource Conservation Service purchased a wetland conservation easement on the remaining acreage; the Service then purchased this land from the power company under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

The diverse habitat of the Lost Trail Refuge supports a wide variety of wildlife species. At least 14 species of migratory and breeding waterfowl use the wetland habitat on the refuge and various species of marsh and shorebirds are present during the summer months—including grebes, sandhill cranes, dowitchers and black terns. Moose are prevalent in the area, as well.

Upland areas at Lost Trail are a mosaic of prairie grasslands dominated by a variety of cool season native and non-native grasses. The refuge lies within the historic range of the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and is home to raptors such as northern harriers, red-tailed and Swainson's hawks and golden eagles.

Surrounding wooded slopes are composed of various coniferous and deciduous timber species. The threatened grizzly bear and the endangered gray wolf are known to inhabit the Pleasant Valley Area. The refuge is bordered by Montana Department of State Lands, Plum Creek Timber Company and two private ranches.

Besides striking natural features, Lost Trail is home to culturally significant resources such as the Indian petroglyphs carved on rock faces near the refuge's interior. As management of the refuge develops, an archeological and cultural resource survey will be completed. As a federal agency, the Service has a trust responsibility to Tribal governments to identify and protect archeological tribal resources.

Lost Trail NWR is managed as a satellite unit within Montana's National Bison Range Complex, which administers more than 40,000 acres in Flathead and Lake counties.

Pat Jamieson, National Bison Range, Moiese, Montana

Bob Hautman Captures Duck Stamp Win Number 2

Minnesota wildlife artist and Duck Stamp Contest veteran Bob Hautman won the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest November 8.

Hautman's acrylic painting of a northern pintail bested 316 other entries and will become the 2001-2002 Federal Duck Stamp, which goes on sale July 1.

This is the second time Hautman has won the contest; in 1996 his painting of a Canada goose took top honors.

Second place in this year's Duck Stamp Contest went to Gerald Mobley, of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, for his acrylic rendering of a pintail. Mobley won the Federal Duck Stamp Contest in 1984.

Bob Hautman's brother, Joe, captured third place with an acrylic painting of a pintail. Joe Hautman is also a veteran among Duck Stamp artists, having won the contest in 1992.

Bob Hautman said he chose his winning design from among several sketches and spent two months working on the painting. He said he painted the northern pintail because of the species' beauty.

"They're just such striking birds, I thought this would be a nice one to do," Hautman said. "I think they're one of the most beautiful birds, and I thought it would be fun to paint."

Eligible species for this year's contest were the American green-winged teal, black duck, northern pintail, ruddy duck and American wigeon. Next year the only eligible species will be the black scoter; by the year 2002, all North American waterfowl species will have appeared on the Duck Stamp at least once.

All waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase and carry Duck Stamps. Ninety-eight percent of the proceeds from the $15 Duck Stamp goes into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which purchases wetlands for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Duck Stamps bearing this year's winning design will go on sale at post offices, national wildlife refuges, some national retail chain stores, and various sporting-goods stores nationwide July 1, 2001. The Duck Stamp may also be purchased directly from the Federal Duck Stamp Office.

Bob Hautman's winning entry, as well as the second and third place paintings, may be viewed on the Internet at http://duckstamps.fws.gov.

Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Polar Bears Benefit from U.S./Russia Agreement

Conservation measures. *Polar bears will benefit from a conservation agreement signed recently between the United States and Russia. Among other measures, the agreement prohibits harvesting female polar bears with cubs or cubs under a year old. FWS photo: Dave Olson.*

The United States and Russia in October signed a long-term bilateral agreement to conserve polar bears shared between the two countries. Signing the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Conservation and Management of the Alaska-Chukotka Polar Bear Population were David B. Sandalow, assistant secretary of State for Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Science Affairs, and Yuriy Ushakov, Russian ambassador to the United States.

The agreement unifies management programs between the United States and Russia for the shared Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population. Notably, it calls for the active involvement of Native people and their organizations. It will also provide for long-term joint programs such as habitat and ecosystem conservation, harvest allocations based on sustainability, collection of biological information, and increased partnerships with state, local, and private interests.

The new agreement enhances the 1973 multi-lateral Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears between the United States, Russia, Norway, Denmark (for Greenland), and Canada by allowing a sustainable harvest by Alaska and Chukotka Natives but prohibiting the harvest of females with cubs, or cubs less than a year old.

It also prohibits the use of aircraft and large motorized vessels and vehicles to take polar bears, and it focuses on conserving specific polar bear habitats such as feeding, congregating and denning areas.

"We've worked with our Russian counterparts and the native people from both countries for more than eight years to develop this very important agreement," said David B. Allen, Alaska regional director for the Service. "This agreement is a major milestone for the conservation of the Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population. It provides for the long-term unified joint research and management programs involving polar bears and their habitats."

Several joint research and management efforts between the United States and Russia have been successful in the past.

However, until recently, the two nations have each managed the shared Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population independently. In recent years an illegal and unknown amount of harvest has occurred in Russia, in spite of a ban on hunting since 1956. In Alaska, subsistence hunting by natives is allowed so long as the polar bear population is not depleted.

Polar bears live in sea ice habitat considered to be the harshest and most remote anywhere on earth. They typically occur in low densities over vast areas of the Arctic. Approximately 22,000 - 28,000 polar bears exist worldwide. Two populations occur in Alaska: the southern Beaufort Sea population which is shared with Canada, and the Alaska-Chukotka population which is shared with Russia.

Polar bears and polar bear hunting are important to the cultures of Native people and their traditional way of life. Illegal hunting, habitat loss, pollution and global warming pose the most serious threats to polar bears.

Karen Boylan, External Affairs, Anchorage, Alaska

Highlights of the Agreement on Polar Bears

- Subsistence harvest by Native people is the only consumptive use allowed.
- The agreement establishes enforceable harvest limits; prohibits harvesting denning bears, females with cubs, or cubs less than one year old; prohibits the use of aircraft and large motorized vessels for hunting polar bears; initiates coordination on habitat conservation measures; and provides for additional polar bear population studies.
- U.S. and Russian governments support cooperation between Alaska and Chukotka Native organizations. In Alaska, this is done through the Alaska Nanuuq Commission.
- The agreement is consistent with the 1973 international Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and advances the intent of this agreement with on-the-ground programs.
- The agreement implements the Congressional intent of the 1994 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which direct the Secretary of the Interior to "consult with the appropriate officials of the Russian Federation on the development and implementation of enhanced cooperative research and management programs for the conservation of polar bears in Alaska and Russia."
- A joint commission administers the agreement. The commission includes four representatives: a governmental official and a Native official from each jurisdiction. The commission may form a scientific advisory group to provide expertise.

Coffee Diplomacy: How a Cup of "Joe" Can Build Relationships

By Sandy Wilbur
Special to Fish and Wildlife News

I spent over 30 years working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, including working with the National Wildlife Refuge System, overseeing Region 1's endangered species program, preparing a recovery plan for the California condor, and coordinating Wilderness Act studies on a number of Pacific Region refuges.

I learned a lot during those years about natural resources, wildlife and the land. As you might imagine, I also developed some definite philosophies and opinions about public participation in the agency decision-making process.

Support the concept
If your only reasons for seeking public involvement are because it is required, and/or it will help you get what you want, then don't spend a lot of time with the public. Do the minimum and take the flak. Besides, you'll be carrying on a long tradition of government arrogance so you'll give the local folks the pleasure of being able to say that "we knew all along that the government didn't care what we thought."

On the other hand, there are some things you can do if you believe—or would like to believe—that:

- The public has a right to have a say in what their government does;

- The public might have something worthwhile to say that would be helpful to you and to your mission;

- You can help improve public perceptions and the actual workings of the Service; or

- It would be nice to leave your successor with a friendly local populace.

Drink a lot of coffee
When I was refuge supervisor for Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, I would often tell refuge managers to let their employees do the work while they drank coffee with the local folks. This usually got a positive outward response (good joke, right?), but most of them were uneasy with the idea.

But I wasn't joking. The coffee drinking actually represents two important concepts:

- The most meaningful public involvement is the ongoing, daily, informal, grassroots type that occurs before some crisis or new policy forces us to "go public."

- The most "bullet-proof" government actions are those that have developed solidly over time and don't draw attention to themselves because of controversy or a high profile.

Whether a problem occurs quickly or over a period of time, if you have been talking with your publics on an informal, friendly basis, you will have time to: 1) clarify your own thinking, 2) get some free early input, 3) get people used to the idea of change and 4) receive some early reactions to the proposed change, which would then allow you to put forth the proposal in the least upsetting way.

One important caveat: You must be sure that you are "drinking coffee" with all your publics. If you only communicate with one group and ignore the others, you could be in for a big surprise.

Bring the bosses along
Use "coffee diplomacy" on your bosses and elected officials just as you do on a local agency or an Audubon chapter. If they aren't threatened by your proposal, your chances of maintaining government integrity through and beyond the planning process are greatly increased.

Use the least "formal" process
If you need to go beyond "coffee diplomacy," you have many public participation options to ensure broad understanding and engender good input. The methods least likely to get out of control but remain personal are: workshops, field trips, discussion groups, open houses, etc. Problems are solved one-on-one and two-on-two, not at public hearings or major media events.

Enlist your publics
If your "coffee diplomacy" and other interactions have worked, then you have a well-informed group of people who share ownership. Don't be bashful about asking them to defend the plan and the process with your bosses and elected officials.

Don't take the blame
If your good public participation process is sabotaged in any way, your credibility is on the line: Tell your constituents exactly what happened. The first step toward better government-citizen relations is to show that you have integrity and are trying to do things right. Maybe people can't trust "the government," but with planning and effort on your part, they should be able to trust the government's representatives.

Editor's note: Retiree Sandy Wilbur publishes commentaries on public participation on his Website: www.netcom.com/~symbios/pubpartic.html.

This article was reprinted with permission from Out & About, *the Pacific region's award-winning outreach newsletter, volume 6, no. 1.*

CCC Fire Tower Trail and Observation Deck Dedicated

President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression to accomplish road-building and other outdoor projects and put out-of-work Americans on the job.

Men from across the country lived in camps on refuges, parks, and forests. They built roads, fences, canals, dams, barns, and visitor centers, planted trees, and fought forest fires. Much of the work was done by hand for pay of $30 a month, part of which they sent home to their families.

The Service has not forgotten the Civilian Conservation Corps' contributions at refuges nationwide. Last summer an observation deck was built inside the legs of a CCC-constructed fire tower on the refuge. The deck is about 30 feet above the ground and uses the old fire tower for support. In September, more than 100 people turned out for a dedication ceremony for a trail and observation deck at Valentine NWR in Nebraska, including some very special guests—four men who had served in the Civilian Conservation Corps at the refuge. After the official dedication ceremony, they shared some memories of their days at CCC Camp 4722.

Camp 4722 at Nebraska's Valentine National Wildlife Refuge housed up to 180 men in tents. Like most others, the camp was run military-style with curfews, camp cooks, trumpets playing reveille and strict discipline. But the CCC men also enjoyed some of life's comforts.

"Dame fortune has smiled upon us in spite of the lousy weather," one corpsman wrote. "What with coal to burn and eats to eat and smokes to smoke, winter can't expect fear and trembling on the part of the 4722."

A newly-constructed foot trail winds through native prairie to the deck. Visitors hiking the trail and ascending to the deck are rewarded with a spectacular view of the seemingly endless prairie, pristine lakes and productive marshes which make up the 72,000 acre refuge.

"I was just 19 years old, and it felt like we were a long way from home," one corpsman recalled. "I only got home three times while I was working here."

Old and new. *An observation deck was recently added to the fire tower at Valentine NWR. FWS photo: Mark Lindvall.*

Another brought along a banner identifying the Camp No. 4722, as well as a photo album of corpsmen at work and play.

"I was here from 1937 to 1939. I worked for Marvin on the skunk crew," reminisced another Corpsman, showing a picture of himself holding a dead skunk and a stiletto knife. "Skunks were a real problem."

The trail and observation deck were dedicated in honor of another corpsman, Frances E. Crowe, who recently died. Crowe, the chief cook for the camp, eventually bought a ranch adjacent to the refuge and remained a close friend of refuge staff both past and present.

During the ceremony Crowe's widow and their son accepted a plaque for the family. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Fort Niobrara Natural History Association, architect George Newland and Moosman Enterprises were recognized for their contributions to the project.

Mark Lindvall, Valentine NWR, Valentine, Nebraska

No SCEPticism about Success

Give a little, get a lot.

Few things in life really work that way. One exception is the Service's successful Student Career Experience Program.

The program was established to promote education and public service, support equal employment opportunities, and recruit quality employees into federal service. Its benefits stretch far and wide.

SCEP participants represent a new generation of Service employees. While in school, they receive valuable work experience in a Service regional or field office. After receiving a degree, SCEP participants who meet qualification standards for targeted positions may be converted into full time Service employees.

"This agency does great and important work conserving and protecting wildlife and their habitats," said Geoffrey Haskett, deputy regional director for the Southwest region, "and the key to accomplishing much of what we do is knowledge and education."

San Marcos National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center in San Marcos, Texas, is one of many Service field stations that have benefitted from some high-quality student-employees.

"We've had a lot on our plate, studying and maintaining refugia for listed salamanders, beetles, darters and Texas wildrice," said Dr. Tom Brandt, center director at San Marcos. "Our SCEP students have been indispensable—they are helping us achieve our conservation mission."

Indispensable, yes, though unfortunately SCEP tours-of-duty are temporary. But an end point can be just the beginning for many SCEP students.

Take Catherine Nordfelt.

Nordfelt, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University at Kingsville, worked at Mescalero National Fish Hatchery before heading to the San Marcos facility. That tour ended last summer and she headed to graduate school.

Clearing the Air

"At San Marcos I applied the scientific method in a lab setting and worked with graduate students on their research projects," said Nordfelt. "That gave me an idea of what could lie ahead."

With zeal she added, "I started school wanting to be a vet but working for the Fish and Wildlife Service changed my mind—fisheries work is my passion."

What lies ahead in the near future is an important research project at Auburn University, through which Nordfelt will channel her passion for fish into tackling questions related to largemouth bass virus, a disease with potentially devastating ecological and economic consequences.

Another SCEP participant at San Marcos, Val Cantu, a senior at nearby Southwest Texas State University, has been fully immersed in endangered fountain darter work.

"With the guidance of Dr. Brandt, I've made hatchery operations run more efficiently by improving the method of collecting tiny darter eggs," said Cantu. "I also investigated methods to increase egg and fry production of fountain darters. It worked. We doubled the hatch success."

Similarly, SCEP is the vehicle that can increase the success of minorities in the sciences. Cantu said that in most of his science classes, fewer than five percent of the students are minorities.

"The technology center is reaching out to minority students," said Brandt. "The SCEP program has let us bring some highly qualified people to work here, and that portends well for the Service. We give an opportunity and in return we get back great employees in the future."

Haskett echoed Brandt's sentiments.

"These students are our future," said Haskett, "and we want to provide them with all the right tools to do well and progress with the Fish and Wildlife Service."

Craig L. Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ben Ikenson, External Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ushering In a New and Diverse Generation

After two years working in the Southwest regional office through the SCEP program, University of New Mexico Law School student Melanie Ruiz has become familiar with much of the Service's work. But she was surprised and delighted to find herself learning some things she did not know about the Service during a formal SCEP orientation last summer in the Albuquerque office.

Over two days, Ruiz and 17 other SCEP participants from national fish hatcheries and national wildlife refuges around the Southwest learned about various Service programs and divisions, including administrative aspects of the agency in general, the scientific roles of the fisheries and ecological services divisions.

They discussed with the regional Native American Liaison the relationship that the government has with tribes in dealing with natural resource issues, and they also learned about the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Service's law enforcement operations and the Endangered Species Act. And they learned about ethics and employee benefits in the federal government.

This first-of-its-kind program was designed to provide the students with a thorough knowledge of the agency's overall mission and its many functions.

Ruiz felt it accomplished its goals.

"The orientation provided thorough information that has given me a more intimate understanding of specific programs, and, ultimately, an elevated appreciation of the agency," she said.

Ben Ikenson

Air is one natural resource shared by all national wildlife refuges. Refuge managers and staff gathered last summer at the National Conservation Training Center for a two-day course, "Air Quality in the National Wildlife Refuge System," to discuss this important common resource.

The course included sections on air pollution effects on natural resources, air quality monitoring and the Service's responsibilities in air quality management.

Instructors from the Service's Air Quality and Fire Management branches and the National Park Service's Air Resources Division covered a variety of topics in two days, including the Clean Air Act, air quality management planning and smoke management.

Air Quality Branch staff discussed the role of the Service in the review of new air pollution sources, a review that ensures refuge resources will not be harmed by new pollutant emissions such as ozone. Surveys on a number of refuges have documented damage to vegetation from ozone.

The instructors from the Air Quality Branch also addressed haze on refuges, which comes from many sources, including power plants, industry and automobiles. Small air pollution particles cause haze that affects how far and how well visitors and staff can see in many refuges throughout the system.

Wildland fires also contribute to haze, and staff from the Fire Management Branch discussed the importance of good planning and smoke management to minimize pollution from fires on Service lands. Instructors discussed the Environmental Protection Agency's recent regulations to reduce haze and improve visibility and air quality throughout the country.

The Service will have an important role in planning and implementing the pollution reduction strategies required by these new regulations. The new regulations and the Service's role in enforcing them will be the topic of a course at the training center in February.

Ellen Porter, Air Quality Branch, Denver, Colorado

The War on Weeds

At Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern New Mexico, sandhill cranes sail gracefully over wide-open valleys. Eagles glide above the rolling, wind-swept prairie searching for prey. Ducks and geese drift across the surface of scattered lakes, teeming with a bounty of yellow perch.

Through the middle of this picture-perfect scenery, a perturbed-looking man slowly steers an all-terrain vehicle with gaze attentively fixed to the ground. What looks like a day in paradise is, to Dan Dinkler, another day in a botanical hell.

As manager of the 3,000-acre Maxwell refuge, Dinkler has officially declared war on the prolific musk thistle, bull thistle and hoary cress, and the tenacious and stubborn Russian knapweed and Canada thistle. These plants represent a growing threat to wildlife habitat on the refuge as well as to the ecological integrity of the region.

By degrees, non-native plants can take over a landscape and dramatically alter the ecology. Freed from the diseases, insects and other controls in their native habitats, these plants use their energy to grow larger and faster, put down deeper roots, and produce more seeds. Uncontrolled, they quickly outcompete and replace native plants.

Western settlement in the 1800s altered both the landscape and the ecosystem of the New Frontier; over the years, a number of non-native plants such as Russian thistle and musk thistle have gained a foothold and invaded the range. Exotic seeds traveled across the continent as freight in covered wagons. Some were planted as ornamentals by settlers, some were introduced as cost-efficient forage for livestock, others arrived as "hitchhikers" along with food crop seed supplies.

Today, wildlife will not forage on most of the non-native weeds invading northern New Mexico and places like Maxwell NWR. Some of the invaders, such as yellow starthistle and Russian knapweed, are toxic to livestock and can cause a slow death if ingested.

Big problems. *Roy Lee examines a wheat field infested with invasive Canada thistle. FWS photo: Dan Dinkler.*

Back at Maxwell, atop his four-wheeler, Dinkler rides in slow search of the enemy.

"Invasive plants must be detected before they flower or else they will produce seeds," he says without lifting his glance from the ground.

Dinkler uses Global Positioning System and Geographic Information System equipment to locate, map, relocate and monitor weed infestation sites as part of an integrated weed management program. To fight these tenacious invaders, he selects from an arsenal of weaponry and defense tactics, including hand removal, mechanical cultivation, low impact, selective herbicide applications, and planting competitive grasses. Control methods vary by species.

"Additionally," warns Dinkler, "while the annual crop of new plants can be controlled, several years of follow-up is necessary to manage each year's crop of new plants that sprout from the abundant seed bed and perennial root systems."

A Picture That's Worth a Thousand Words

"This photo has numerous stories to tell," said Maxwell NWR Manager Dan Dinkler, of the image (left) of Maxwell maintenance worker Roy Lee in a field of Canada thistle.

"First—and fortunately—the Canada thistle is sprouting from a perennial root system in wheat," Dinkler explained. "This means we can use an effective broadleaf herbicide without killing the crop plants because wheat is a grass. However, if you look in the background, you will notice that we are next to another field, just to the left, and that field is alfalfa.

"This means that the herbicide will kill the crop plants," he continued. "So, I hand-sprayed this a total of three time this year—the last time just two weeks ago—to knock back the health of the infestation and prevent flowering or seeding. However, it appears that most of our thistle spreads vegetatively from roots."

What other stories does this picture tell?

"Well, this infestation is in an otherwise 'clean field,' meaning that this is a first foothold in the field by Canada thistle, and we can likely catch it in a few years of followup," said Dinkler. "Note the infestation is at the corner end of the field, where a tractor would start working… meaning that the infestation was likely brought to this field from another location by farming equipment like a disk or plow and spread by those operations.

"We have to do better! And, we will have to keep the field in an annual, grain crop (grass species) so we can continue to monitor and spray," Dinkler concluded.

Dinkler's motto? "Its a good day to spray!"

Compiled by Ben Ikenson, External Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Some musk thistle seeds, for example, can survive 15 years, though the majority emerge within five.

That is why Dinkler believes in the 3:1 rule: For every year you delay controlling an infestation, it will take three years to regain control.

"This rule may vary with locations, species and environmental conditions," he says, "but as a general rule of thumb, it demonstrates why it is important to jump on weed problems as early as possible."

Jumping on weed problems is a constant challenge, especially since infestations can spread so easily and so unpredictably — on the wind, through wildlife migration and by other means. Today, seeds are no longer transported across the country in slow-moving covered wagons; they cris-cross the continent via interstate highways, in the tracks of truck tires.

In fact, experts estimate that invasive plants already infest well over 100 million acres and continue to increase by 8 to 20 percent annually, causing billions of dollars in lost revenue and control costs. As for public wild lands, 4,600 acres are lost each day to invasive weeds, according to the Interagency Committee for Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds.

Much of this land will never be recovered. If invasions are allowed to spread, wildlife populations will decrease proportionately and some plant species are likely to become extinct.

Although it poses serious management issues at Maxwell, the weed infestation problem does not begin or end at the refuge boundary. Possibly Dinkler's most powerful weapon of defense is outreach.

"We all share, or will share, the same invasive weeds eventually, so it is vital to get as many land owners and agencies on board as possible," he says.

The refuge is just one of several entities in Colfax County, New Mexico, that is developing a systematic plan of attack on invasive weeds.

"Trying to control non-native invasive weeds is like fighting fire or waging war," Dinkler says. "You have to know your enemy, plan and implement an effective, science-based strategy, and stick with it."

According to a Service report, invasive non-native plants and animals in the United States number more than 6,300, with new invasions occurring on a weekly basis. That is why Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark made it one of her priorities to address and resolve the problems stemming from the spread of invasive species. Where possible, the source of those problems should be removed by the roots; consequently, an army of land managers such as Dinkler is fighting the invaders and striving to restore health to their respective landscapes.

As Dinkler says, while grubbing a clump of musk thistle from the earth, "all that is green is not good."

Ben Ikenson, External Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico

A Nationwide Battle Cry

Dan Dinkler's battle cry echoes across the nation, where invasions by alien species—animals as well as plants—are rampant. Battles being waged by warriors from the Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies include:

- In the Southwest, salt cedar continues to spread over the riverbanks to the detriment of native cottonwoods and willows and the species that depend on them.

- Giant salvinia—a floating fern that quickly colonizes, shades water, and depletes oxygen—is rapidly infesting the bayous of the Texas Gulf Coast and threatens to blanket all open, quiet water (see article in September/October 2000 *Fish & Wildlife News*).

- The aggressive hydrilla (often called "devil grass") is choking the life out of Louisiana swamps.

- In the Great Lakes, the parasitic sea lamprey—with its outlandish sucking disk and razor sharp teeth—has wreaked havoc on the native trout population, and zebra mussels are destroying native mussel populations while they clog up industrial and municipal water delivery systems.

- In Guam, the invasion of brown tree snakes has decimated several bird species on the tiny U.S. territory (see article in September/October 2000 *Fish & Wildlife News*).

Ben Ikenson

Cooperation Saves the Day During Southeast Fire Season

Surveying the scene. *Firefighters scout and size up the fire with helicopters. FWS photo.*

The wildfires that ravaged the Southwest, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming last spring and summer were devastating and received much attention, but fire was a problem in other parts of the country as well last year, as Southeast Louisiana experienced its worst wildfire season on record.

A spring drought made the region the driest it had been in the 113 years the National Weather Service has been collecting rain data. Southeast Louisiana usually receives 23.5 inches of rain from January to May each year. In the "La Niña" year 2000, only 9.5 inches of rain fell in St. Tammany Parish from January to May.

This record fire season touched the Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex, which manages seven national wildlife refuges.

In seven days at the end of May, six fires burned on or near the Southeast Louisiana refuge complex. While on these fires, the Louisiana Office of Forestry, which under a memorandum of understanding with the Service responds first to refuge fires, saw three tractor plow units burned over. Both refuge and office of forestry firefighters became fatigued with the frequency and intensity of recent fires in May and two firefighters suffered heat stress.

In June, the St. Tammany Parish Council outlawed all outside burning in unincorporated areas with an emergency ordinance. The state fire marshal outlawed burning leaves, grass and combustible materials and the Louisiana Forestry Commission instituted a burning ban for certified burners and forest landowners in eight parishes.

Southeast Louisiana Refuges detailed in a Type 3 Incident Fire Team from all over the nation to be prepared for a quick response to attach wildfire starts. Firefighters from Oregon, North Dakota, Wyoming, Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida participated in the fire detail, headquartered at the Big Branch Marsh NWR visitors center.

During high fire danger, a fire observer made two daily flights in a helicopter, scouting for wildfires, and quickly deployed firefighters to each fire. In June and July, firefighters fought 11 wildfires totaling 686 acres on or near the refuge. Without their help, the fires would have been much larger and could have burned homes in the wildland/urban interface.

Periodic showers returned in July and August, followed by a more seasonal weather pattern returned. The fire frequency slowed, allowing the detailed firefighters to move on to other fires in the Midwestern and Pacific coast states. The Louisiana Office of Forestry even sent firefighters to Wyoming, and seven firefighters from Southeast Louisiana Refuge went to Arizona, Wyoming and Idaho to assist the firefighters and wildland managers who helped during their fire situation.

Daniel Breaux, Southeastern Louisiana Refuge Complex, Slidell, Louisiana

Busting Barriers

The days get longer, the temperature gets warmer, and the spring runoff subsides—all cues for fish to swim upstream. They need to find the right habitat to spawn. That salmon and steelhead in the Atlantic and Pacific undertake this timeless ritual is storied, but smaller resident fishes across the interior United States make spawning runs, too.

In terms of scale, some small fishes—like minnows and darters—move a long way themselves. And like salmon of the Northwest, they run headlong into barriers.

Impediments to fish passage come in many forms, some more readily apparent than others. Take a box culvert. It may have water in it. It may appear that fish can swim through it. But the flows can be too thin and too rapid and small fish easily tire without a place to rest. Round culverts are even worse.

Regardless of type, where culverts tail out they often erode the stream bed and scour pools, making a small waterfall too large for fish to jump over. The net result is disconnected populations that could inbreed. Sequestered fish may not be able to reach all the habitats necessary to complete their life cycles.

To remedy this type of situation in southeast Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Fishery Resources Office, Tulsa Ecological Services Office, and John Hancock Timber Industries joined in a partnership to open miles of stream on commercially forested land. The threatened leopard darter in the Little River watershed was an immediate beneficiary. Removing barriers such as culverts has connected habitats crucial for an imperiled fish.

"The headwater portions of Little River occasionally stop flowing and barriers stop egress," said Brent Bristow, a biologist at the Oklahoma Fishery Resources Office. "With the barriers gone, leopard darters can now recolonize and get to habitat they really need any time of year."

Finding spawning habitat may not be the only thing minnows and darters need to move about. In small streams, fish find refuge in deep pools to ride out the winter. Getting to the same pools may mean the

Deceptive innocence. *What may look benign—like this box culvert—can keep small fish from reaching all the necessary habitats. FWS photo.*

difference of surviving a summer when flows drop and temperatures climb. Without the access to these necessary habitats, fish populations may suffer. With imperiled fish—such as the endangered leopard darter—access is everything.

The Arizona Fishery Resources Office is similarly engaged. The East Fork White River is important habitat for the threatened loach minnow and provides a recreational fishery for the threatened Apache trout. But a low-head dam that delivers irrigation water also blocked fish movement.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe and the Arizona Fishery Resources Office redesigned the dam to continue delivering irrigation water, but also concentrated water midstream on the natural stream bottom at flows fish can swim through, simultaneously protecting streamside vegetation.

"The fish passage program is about connecting habitats and connecting with partners, getting the work done as a team," said Larry Bandolin, national program coordinator. "These projects in the southwest are good examples of on-the-ground progress."

Craig Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Take an Armchair Journey

The windswept coastline of San Antonio Bay in South Texas is marked by twisted oaks and tidal marshes rising gently into rippling stands of prairie grasses. It is a place of rich biological diversity–salt and freshwater mashes, coastal prairie grasslands, chaparral and live oak communities–all in one 70,504 refuge.

This is Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, on the Blackjack Peninsula, just south of Austwell, Texas.

Aransas is a Basque word meaning "place of thorny bushes." The refuge supports some 400 species of birds as well as deer, javelina, bobcats, coyotes and alligators. But among the most spectacular visitors to Aransas is the rare and magnificent whooping crane. At five feet tall and with a wingspan of almost seven feet, the whooping crane is North America's tallest bird.

Just across the Bay lies Matagorda Island NWR–a narrow 38-mile long barrier island. Matagorda Island is a vital bed-and-breakfast stop for thousands of shorebirds and migrating neotropical birds making non-stop flights across the Gulf of Mexico, going to and from Latin and South America.

The Service recently produced a new video about the Aransas and Matagorda Island refuges. "A Place of Nature" is an armchair journey to whet the appetite of travelers looking for a truly unique outdoor experience.

The video, produced by the National Conservation Training Center, is primarily for use at the refuge visitor center. It provides a tantalizing preview of the wonders that await human visitors when they come to this biological treasure on the Texas coast. Cyber explorers can find additional information about the video at the Service's website at http://info.fws.gov/video/

Nan Rollison, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Mentor Program Sparks a Fire

The recent spate of wildfires nationwide and the increased use of fire as a conservation tool illustrate the importance of a well-trained fire management corps. The Service's Branch of Fire Management now has a formal mentoring program aimed at increasing diversity, helping to fulfill the agency mission and passing valuable knowledge along to those coming up through the fire management system.

Under the direction of a steering committee, which includes fire management officers from around the nation, 28 mentors and trainees spent time last October getting to know their mentoring partners, looking at personal and agency fire management goals, and determining how to get the most out of their two-year commitment to a formal mentoring relationship.

The program originally began with conversations between Joette Borzik, national fire training specialist of the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, and training specialists in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, at the National Conservation Training Center. The program took shape under Borzik's leadership and with the encouragement of Roger Erb, the Service's fire management coordinator.

At an April meeting at Devils Lake, North Dakota, the steering committee created the Fire Management Mentoring Program mission statement, program guidelines and goals, training agenda, application forms, selection criteria, and evaluation needs for the two-year pilot mentoring program.

Organizers would like to see their mentoring concept used far and wide.

"Mentoring has a definite role to play in fulfilling the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service," Borzik said, "and it is the hope of the folks in the Branch of Fire Management that the concept will spread like wildfire throughout the system."

Carrie Costello, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Wage Grade Career Workshop Features Full Agenda

Every day, rain or shine, Service maintenance workers and heavy equipment operators contribute substantially toward refuge and hatchery upkeep—and by extension to the agency's conservation mission. They install and fix fencing; build and repair water and sewer lines; maintain roads and trails; and construct buildings and outfit them with electricity.

These wage grade employees also build levees, dig impoundments and lay pipe to sustain wetlands; steer dozers over encroaching nonnative vegetation; sculpt streambanks with excavators and erect abutments for support; and redistribute soil.

All the while, they maintain the machines that help them accomplish these tasks.

For four days last September in the Southwest region, many of these machines stood still, tools remained inert and refuge workshops were closed, as workers attended the region's first-ever Wage Grade Career Workshop in Marble Falls, Texas

"It was time to address various wage grade employee career issues and work-related concerns," said Maintenance Worker Bill Williams of Bitter Lake NWR, who helped organize the event (editor's note: though he is often asked, Williams assures he is no relation to the eponymous refuge). Nearly 60 maintenance workers and heavy equipment operators—half the region's wage grade employees—attended.

According to post-workshop critiques, an agenda favorite was guest speaker Dick Gilbert. Gilbert, who began his career with the Service as a maintenance worker, currently manages Bill Williams River NWR in Arizona. From the perspective of a former maintenance worker, he provided unique insight into the administrative side of a refuge.

"We don't all view the world the same way," Gilbert reflected. "Even within a small group, such as the staff of a refuge, communication is the key in accomplishing tasks. It is critical that we ask enough questions so we all know the final destination; and a clear picture of the destination is required to plan the route."

Aimed at providing education on career advancement, policy and procedure, field techniques, safety issues, conflict resolution and position description discrepancies, the workshop served as a forum for expressing frustrations as well as triumphs. Dealing with conflict, managers, limited mobility and an influx of new personnel were among popular topics of discussion.

The workshop also offered panel discussions, equipment demonstrations, safety presentations, and team-building activities. Most importantly, many attendees fulfilled long-time desires to be included in Service-sponsored activities. For some, it was the first work-related trip away from their stations in a decade.

"A sense of not being a part of the team has really contributed to low-morale among wage grade employees," Williams said. "By including us in policy and decision-making and by keeping us informed and educated through training opportunities, we will have a significantly higher appreciation for our jobs because we will have a better understanding of the Service."

Williams said that "most wage grade employees feel really good about what the Service represents."

Educators from the National Conservation Training Center attended the workshop to identify areas to improve training for wage grade workers and to make new managers aware of existing issues. Career workshops like this one will likely be organized on a regular basis.

Ben Ikenson, External Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico

A Grassroots Effort

The Region 2 Wage Grade Career Workshop was an "action item" for Regional Refuge System Chief Dom Ciccone and his Refuge System Ambassador Program.

Now in its second year, the Ambassador Program aims to turn all regional and refuge staff—from managers to maintenance workers—into local ambassadors of the agency by allowing them to interact with their communities through outreach activities, public service announcements on local radio stations and other volunteer efforts.

Based on the belief that the refuge system's greatest threat is an uninformed public, the Southwest region's Ambassador Program is a grassroots effort for refuge staff and volunteers to build support from within their individual circles of influence.

Wage grade employees have taken advantage of the program to make themselves and the Service more visible, and to give something back to their communities. Participating in the program also increases employee pride.

Joe D'Arrigo, a heavy equipment operator at Santa Ana NWR, remembered how he enjoyed working with other refuge staff to raise funds for local flood victims.

"Walking into the church…for the drop-off made me feel proud to wear my uniform," he said.

The Wage Grade Workshop is an important component in the Ambassador Program's overall success.

"Through targeted training efforts," said Ciccone, "employees will become refuge champions, ambassadors if you will, within their communities. Ultimately, the program will popularize refuges, and further the mission of the Service by providing outreach and education on its many activities."

Ben Ikenson

Texas Volunteers Talk Trash—4,000 Pounds Worth

Good riddance. *Volunteers help fill a 30-cubic-yard Dumpster during the Trinity River clean- up. FWS photo: Stuart Marcus.*

Some 250 participants took merely 3 hours to bag thousands of pounds of trash at the Trinity River Refuge Cleanup in East Texas last September.

Participants in the clean up—which Refuge Manager Stuart Marcus hopes to make an annual event—included cub scouts and boy scouts; a local 4-H club; students from a local high school; and a number of individual volunteers. This enthusiastic crew cleaned up a half-mile long beach and adjacent wooded areas—on both refuge and state-owned lands—near the Trinity River, filling a 30 cubic yard Dumpster with more than 4,000 pounds of trash.

After seeing yearly cleanup events in other areas along the coastline and lakeshores of Texas, Marcus decided to organize a community-wide effort along the lower Trinity River. He challenged the newly-formed Friends of Trinity River Refuge group and Smokey Cranfill, an outdoor recreation planner recently detailed to Trinity River from Santa Ana NWR, to come up with a cleanup event for National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Forty local sponsors donated items such as Dumpster service, paper goods, food, trash bags and prizes such as store and restaurant gift certificates, hats, and outdoor supplies such as compasses and flashlights. Hungry participants were treated to a hearty donated lunch.

Stuart Marcus, Trinity River NWR, Liberty, Texas

Babbitt Designates Battle of Midway Memorial at Pacific Refuge

From warzone to wildlife refuge. *Now a national wildlife refuge—and soon to be a national memorial—Midway Atoll was the site of one of the most decisive battles of World War II. FWS photo.*

In recognition of the "heroic courage and sacrifice" of those who fought in the Battle of Midway during World War II, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt in September designated Midway Atoll, home of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, as the Battle of Midway National Memorial.

It is the first national memorial designated on a national wildlife refuge.

Home to an astonishing collection of wildlife species, including the world's largest population of Laysan albatross, these islands and reefs are now managed by the Service as Midway Atoll NWR. The Service also protects numerous historic sites portraying human history on the islands since the early 1900s, including several World War II defensive positions that were designated a national historic landmark in 1986.

As a national wildlife refuge, the island is open to the public for the first time since the 1930s. Visitors now arrive on flights from Honolulu to enjoy the wildlife, dive and fish in the lagoon and blue waters of the refuge, and explore the many sites that reflect Midway's rich heritage.

The Battle of Midway, fought June 4-6, 1942, was one of the most decisive battles of World War II, and proved to be the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

"In 1942, those who fought in the Battle of Midway won an incredible victory against overwhelming odds, and turned the tide of the war in the Pacific," said Secretary Babbitt. "This memorial will ensure that their heroic courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten."

In June 1942, the Japanese launched a major invasion effort against Midway in the hope of using it as a stepping stone for an invasion of Hawaii. Unknown to the Japanese, the United States had broken their code, which was verified by sending a fake message that Midway's water system was broken. The U.S. fleet ambushed the Japanese fleet north of the islands, sinking four aircraft carriers and turning the tide of the war in the Pacific.

Secretary Babbitt's order directs the Service to form a planning committee composed of representatives from federal agencies and citizen groups interested in the battle, and to conserve the historic buildings, gun batteries, pillboxes and other facilities in cooperation with the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps.

A celebration of the designation of the new national memorial is planned for June 2001, during the anniversary of the Battle of Midway, on Midway Atoll.

Barbara Maxfield, Pacific Islands Ecoregion, Honolulu, Hawaii

Mexican Students Migrate With the Geese to Spend a Summer in Alaska

For three summers, Service biologists in Alaska have hosted Mexican college students who assist with cooperative studies of geese that migrate across international borders. At the end of their summer field work, the students return to Mexico armed with new experience, research materials, and sufficient funding to begin their own wildlife studies.

The students have completed work aimed at addressing an important waterfowl information need in Mexico, while also providing Alaska biologists with some insight into the ecology of a declining goose population.

A population segment of white-fronted geese that breeds in northwest and interior Alaska appears to be declining. At the same time, more of these geese are spending the winter in Mexico, instead of their usual winter haunts in Texas and Louisiana. Service biologists wanted to improve their understanding of winter ecology of these geese at the southern end of their migration route. They initiated partnerships with the public universities in two northern Mexican states where many geese winter.

The Service invited environmental science students from the universities of Tamaulipas and Chihuahua to volunteer as members of waterfowl field survey teams working on the breeding grounds in Alaska. Each summer, one student was selected competitively and was provided with travel expenses to Alaska.

The volunteers were first stationed at Koyukuk/Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge in Galena, Alaska, for field safety training classes and detailed briefings about refuge wildlife monitoring programs and the habitats, wildlife, and ecology of the region. Once oriented, the students participated in field projects—such as nesting surveys, brood production surveys and banding—to familiarize themselves with waterfowl research methods on the breeding grounds.

For the final part of the summer, the students assisted the Division of Migratory Birds with various projects.

Learning experience. *Manuel Ochoa (right), from the University of Chihuahua, volunteered in the summer of 1999. Last September he began a Master's study of white-fronted goose winter ecology in the state of Durango, about 500 miles south of El Paso, Texas. FWS photo.*

Fabiola Yepez, a student at the University of Tamaulipas, was the first volunteer to complete the exchange program in 1998. Upon her return to Mexico, she began a wildlife research project near her home, about 250 miles south of Brownsville, Texas, monitoring the winter behavior and ecology of white-fronted geese that used local farm crops and wetlands for feeding and resting.

Yepez's study, now in the final write-up phase, showed the importance of small irrigation reservoirs as resting areas for geese in northeast Mexico.

Yepez was impressed with her experience in Alaska.

"I was amazed to see everything, like bears, wolves, squirrels, hares, birds, salmon, and wild flowers," she said. "It was especially interesting for me to be able to see the nests and eggs, and family behavior, of the white-fronted goose, Canada goose, and other migratory waterfowl that come to winter in Mexico."

In the summer of 1999, Manuel Ochoa, a recent graduate of the University of Chihuahua, volunteered for the Alaska-Mexico student program. After field safety training at Galena, Manuel went to the Yukon Delta NWR, helping a team of biologists there monitor the nesting density and success of several goose species.

Ochoa helped refuge biologists in Galena to conduct goose productivity surveys and banding, returning to Chihuahua ready to begin a Master's project aimed at documenting winter ecology and behavior of white-fronted geese in the central highland states of Chihuahua, Durango and Zacatecas. The Service will fund the project for the next two years.

A third volunteer, Hector Hernandez, a recent graduate of the University of Chihuahua, arrived in Galena this past June to assist with a project using satellite imagery to map vegetation on the refuge. After a summer of field experience monitoring geese, studying moose habitat, mapping vegetation, and banding ducks, Hernandez hoped to return to Mexico to assist in a wetland habitat mapping study funded by the Service, Ducks Unlimited of Mexico and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

After being in Galena for just a month, Hernandez was thankful for the field training.

"I'm sure that I will be better prepared for future wildlife projects when I leave," he said.

The Service began the Mexico volunteer program to identify potential cooperators who could foster research on migratory waterfowl resources that winter in Mexico. Most people involved now agree that the program resulted in much more.

When the students returned to Mexico, they helped inform wildlife professionals, other students, and the public about the problems of declining geese and the methods used by the Service to study and conserve habitat in the United States.

"I was really satisfied with my time in Alaska, from the first to the last day," wrote Fabiola Yepez after her summer in Alaska. "....I return to Mexico full of enthusiasm to continue my classes and recount all my experiences to my friends and teachers."

Mike Spindler, Koyukuk/Nowitna NWR, Galena, Alaska

Deliberate Acts of Outreach

Caught Red-handed and Dutifully Reported by Anita Noguera, National Outreach Coordinator

Ever wonder how to find partners for your conservation projects? A new initiative may help!

The Environmental Millennium Initiative, formed last year, is a collaboration among interested companies, nongovernment organizations, state and federal agencies, and environmental and community partners to rededicate environmental stewardship activities in the new millennium. The initiative serves as a platform from which corporations and other partners can showcase special environmental programs and projects to attract public attention and— hopefully—encourage enhanced stewardship by a widening circle of companies around the globe.

Participants at the initiative's first conference included various regional power companies, Bethlehem Steel, National Audubon, Canon-USA, The Nature Conservancy, the Department of Energy, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Here are some points that might come in handy when you are promoting the value of partnering with the Service:

■ Companies with good environmental management programs are better stock performers. According to various stock market analysts, they are a good investment.

■ Customers expect site-based corporations to be environmentally active in their communities especially if the business places heavy demands on the local environment. Environmental credibility is a resource in itself.

Environmental stewardships:

yield positive public relations

reduce future liabilities

establish a positive corporate reputation

offset some of the problems companies may otherwise encounter

educate stakeholders

■ Employees expect the company/ organization they work for to be environmentally responsible and involved. Many joint partnerships are founded based on the hard work of environmentally-engaged employees inside the organization.

■ Companies want projects that will engage citizens so that they feel they are helping to solve a problem.

■ Today, nearly 10,000 environmentally-based nonprofit groups seek funds and/or partnerships, and the competition for money is stiff. The "environment" itself is turning into big business. Many CEOs believe that environmental issues will be the most important challenge facing businesses within the next 5 to 10 years.

The next Environmental Millennium Initiative conference will be in the fall of 2001 and the organizers would like Service personnel to participate. The location has yet to be determined but current discussions lean towards Washington, D.C. For more information about the Environmental Millennium Initiative, point your browser to http://www.environmental-mi.com/.

Centennial Team Reaches Out to Black Journalists

For the first time, Service employees promoted the Service and the upcoming National Wildlife Refuge System centennial at the annual conference of the National Association of Black Journalists. Dan Sobieck, a public affairs specialist from Region 3, and Shawnetta Grandberry, an information and education specialist from Region 1, staffed a booth with a Service exhibit and handed out press kits, refuge system books and other materials.

Attendance at the 2000 NABJ conference provided an exciting opportunity for the Service to reach out to diverse groups and bring a conservation message to varied communities. Sobieck and Grandberry reported that the Service exhibit attracted a lot of attention because it was the only "critter connection" at the conference.

As part of the Refuge System Centennial Campaign, the Service is increasing its efforts to reach a more diverse audience to help celebrate America's rich history of National Wildlife Refuges. One way is through media organizations such as the National Association of Black Journalists, the largest media organization in the world for people of color.

Founded in 1975, the association boasts more than 3,000 members with 74 professional chapters and 51 student chapters. Its mission is to strengthen ties among African-American journalists, expand job opportunities and recruiting activities for journalists and students, and balance the media's coverage of the African-American community and cultural experience.

This year's NABJ conference was attended by a diverse group of newspaper editors, writers, print and broadcast reporters, television anchors, photographers, public information officers, and others who work in media and public relations fields.

Plans are in the works for a larger booth space, better exhibits and materials, and a higher Service profile at next year's NABJ conference in Orlando, Florida, near the birthplace of the National Wildlife Refuge System at Pelican Island.

Shawnetta Grandberry, Ecological Services Carlsbad, California

Ecosystem Approach Initiatives

Special Assistants for Ecosystems Outline Agenda

Regional special assistants for ecosystems and the national ecosystem coordinator met in October at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Minneapolis, marking the first meeting of the individuals in these new positions created after the recent regional office reorganization.

At the meeting the special assistants aimed to develop a strong team in addition to defining specific actions to be taken to facilitate Servicewide implementation of the ecosystem approach. Since these are new positions, the special assistants felt it was critical to establish a clear role for themselves in helping to implement the ecosystem approach. A sense of urgency permeated the meeting as the special assistants drafted the duties and actions to undertake in their regions.

The group reached consensus on two critical issues immediately: ensuring that the special assistants provide a specific service of value to ecosystem teams and helping develop the ecosystem approach as a philosophy throughout the Service. They agreed that these two principles must be the foundation of everything they do.

Getting to know you. *Special assistants for ecosystems at their October meeting. Front l to r: Tony Degange (R7), Charlie Sanchez (R2), Kathy Zeamer (acting R5), Rollie Siegfried (R3), Mike Gantt (R4). Rear l to r: Scott Johnston (R9), Mike McEnroe (acting R6), Elaine Johnson (acting R1). FWS photo.*

Action items the special assistants proposed included:

Define and develop responsibilities of the special assistants

- Build relationships with ecosystem teams, regional management team, flex fund managers and partners.
- Advocate for and promote ecosystem team priorities.
- Recognize ecosystem team efforts through outreach/inreach, rewards and highlighting accomplishments.
- Facilitate the delivery of team training and administrative support to ecosystem teams.

Facilitate ecosystem team planning and priority development

- Ensure ecosystem teams have developed and implemented their planning process and completed an ecoregion plan.

Develop the sources of alternative funding and the understanding of the budget process

- Facilitate the "flex fund" concept to focus on ecoregion priorities, in the appropriate region.
- Develop guidance for ecosystem teams to locate alternative funding opportunities.
- Develop sources of funding through "corporate database."

Involve partners in team activities

- Identify needs and provide tools for ecosystem teams to develop partnerships.
- Develop various case studies of stakeholder/partnership development through videos, courses and satellite broadcasts.

Increase understanding of and support for the ecosystem approach through effective communication

- Focus on internal audiences through specific communication plans.
- Develop variety of media to help deliver communication plans.

The team plans to meet on a quarterly basis and stay in touch via conference calls.

Scott Johnston, National Ecosystem Coordinator, Washington, D.C.

Exploring Our Past

Using New Technology to Trace The Service's Roots

You don't have to travel all the way to the Service's conservation museum in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to find information about the agency's history. In fact, you don't even have to get up from your desk. Just log on to the Internet and point your browser to http://training.fws.gov/history/index.html.

There you'll find an extensive collection of text, photos, historic documents and even motion pictures that form the Service's high-tech heritage collection, "At the Forefront of Conservation." The site is maintained by Mark Madison, the Service's historian.

Currently featured on the history Web site is a special project commemorating the centennial of the Lacey Act and examining the evolution of Service law enforcement over the past 100 years. Visitors to the site can read a biography of Congressman John Lacey, who authored the Lacey Act, and see a timeline of Service law enforcement milestones.

The site also presents a "virtual exhibit" on Olaus and Mardy Murie. Olaus Murie worked for the Service in the 1940s and following his retirement he and his wife, Mardy, were active in a variety of conservation causes. They both were involved with a 1956 expedition that proved key to building support to establish Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In celebration of the upcoming centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System in 2003, the site showcases the first refuge, Florida's Pelican Island. The virtual exhibit includes photos of Paul Kroegel, the first manager of Pelican Island, along with images of his family and of the spectacular birds he so passionately protected.

The Pelican Island online exhibit also incorporates a narrative history of the refuge, a map of the island and surrounding area, and a reproduction of the field notes from the original 1902 government survey of Pelican Island. The surveyor never submitted his notes, preventing Pelican Island from being homesteaded and paving the way for it to become the first wildlife refuge the following year.

The history Web site serves as the virtual archives for the Fish and Wildlife Service with "Conservation Visions," a collection of images from the conservation archives located at the training center. "Conservation Visions" includes a number of historic images and even film footage from 1905 of President Teddy Roosevelt visiting early bird sanctuaries (precursors to national wildlife refuges).

"At the Forefront of Conservation" features more than just history. The site also serves as a bulletin board to announce upcoming history-related events at the National Conservation Training Center. The center will host a symposium titled "Rachel Carson and the Conservation Movement: Past, Present and Future" on August 10–12, 2001; you can find the tentative program for this unique event on the Web site.

In addition, the site lists upcoming installments in NCTC's "Conservation and Community" lecture series.

Those who have not had a chance to visit the poignant Fallen Comrades Memorial at the training center can see a photo of the memorial and access a list of all of the Service employees who died in the line of duty.

The jam-packed history site also contains:

- photos of former Service directors
- a list (with biographies in the works) of conservation heroes
- transcripts of interviews with retirees conducted through the Service Oral History Project
- agency press releases dating to 1914
- information about the Service's Heritage Committee
- links to previous "Exploring Our Past" columns from *Fish & Wildlife News*
- a list of exhibits on display at the conservation museum in Shepherdstown

So take a few minutes out of your busy day... grab a cup of coffee...relax...and take a journey back in time.

Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Fish & Wildlife Honors

Service Employees, Partners Honored at DOI Awards Ceremony

The Service is pleased to announce the following award recipients who were honored at the Department of Interior Awards Convocation in September:

Distinguished Service Award
This is the highest honor bestowed upon employees of the Department who have distinguished themselves through sustained dedication to duty and many significant contributions.

Sharon N. Janis, Region 7 was cited for her expertise and perspective on the laws, regulations, and policies governing Alaska, have provided invaluable information and advice on land issues. Janis' "vision and guidance pioneered the computerization of land status on Alaskan refuges using the Geographic Information Systems which allowed the Service to become a leader among agencies in providing maps and conducting analysis in support of acquisition and management of Federal lands in Alaska," said the award citation. She also implemented the first land acquisition program using the Land and Water Conservation Fund combined with the civil and criminal Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funds, purchasing over 260,000 acres in the National Wildlife Refuge System in Alaska.

Ronald E. Lambertson, retired Northeast regional director, was recognized for a 30-year career which began as a member of the Departmental Solicitor's Honors Program where he became a chief architect for conservation laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Lambertson was instrumental in making the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species an effective tool for the protection of fish, wildlife, and plants, and as Assistant Director for the Service's Wildlife Resources he assisted in developing the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. As regional director for the Northeast region, Lambertson directed a staff of approximately 1,000 employees located at more than 100 field stations, oversaw the relocation of the regional office, and oversaw development and implementation of the Service's ecosystem approach to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources.

Valor Award
This is the highest honor bestowed upon employees of the Department who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger.

On March 26, 1998, **James R. Goldsberry**, Jr., a pilot/biologist for the Office of Migratory Bird Management, was returning from the airport on the Eastern Shore of Maryland after completing a waterfowl survey when he observed a vehicle strike a tree and catch fire. He approached the vehicle with a fire extinguisher in an attempt to put out the blaze. Two other motorists joined his efforts in fighting the fire. When it became obvious that their efforts were futile, Goldsberry continued to fight the fire while the two other motorists attempted to remove the victim from the vehicle. However, the victim's legs and feet were entangled and trapped in the wreckage. Without hesitation, Goldsberry climbed into the front seat of the burning vehicle and freed the victims legs and feet, enabling the victim to be removed and carried a safe distance from the vehicle. Goldsberry then returned to the burning car, removed the victim's dog from the back seat, and placed it in his own vehicle to protect it from further injury. A few minutes after the victim and the dog were removed, the vehicle became completely engulfed in flames. Once State Police and emergency personnel arrived to treat the victim, Goldsberry transported the dog to a local veterinary hospital for treatment of its injuries. The victim's injuries were substantial, but because of Goldsberry's heroic efforts, both he and his dog are alive and well today.

Conservation Service Award
This is the highest honor bestowed upon private citizens and groups for contributions toward the cause of conservation and the mission of the Department.

Senior Master Sergeant **Lloyd French** was recognized for his contributions as a volunteer with the Service that resulted in the acquisition of $3.2 million worth of excess military equipment for distribution at more than 50 national wildlife refuges and several ecological services offices and national fish hatcheries in five Service regions. He devoted a tremendous amount of his time to help the Service field stations acquire needed equipment from the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Offices. French's contributions have allowed the Service to complete many resource related activities without costly purchases of equipment or funding of a contract, resulting in millions of dollars of savings for the Service.

New England Wild Flower Society (sponsored by Region 5), received an award as a regional conservator of the National Center for Plant Conservation's collection of endangered plants and also initiated the establishment of the New England Plant Conservation Program. This program is a voluntary collaboration among botanists, federal and state agencies, and conservation organizations throughout the New England states working to prevent the extirpation and promote the recovery of declining or endangered flora. Efforts of the Wild Flower Society to promote plant conservation have been accomplished through outreach such as providing publications and displays for the general public; courses and field trips in plant identification, conservation and ecology; and the creation of an interpretive garden, which is the first comprehensive collection of New England's rare plant species. As a result of the Wild Flower Society's habitat plant conservation efforts, more than 350 acres of threatened small whorled pogonia have been protected.

Unsung Hero Award
This is an honor designed to recognize employees who have made valuable contributions to the mission of the Service and the Department.

Thomas C. Worthington, chief of the branch of visitor information in Region 3, was honored for "quietly and consistently casting a shadow of customer service and leadership much larger than himself. His behind the scenes impact as a member of two national teams helped produced valuable policy and vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, Worthington was recognized for his willingness to help co-workers and shoulder the extra workload created when his office lost two positions. He also provides outstanding customer service to the field, and he revamped the Duck Stamp and Golden Age Passport sales in the regional office to provide better service to the public.

Secretary's Diversity Award
Nancy M. Kaufman, Region 2 regional director, received the Award for Special Emphasis Achievement. Since Kaufman became the Southwest regional director in 1995, the recruitment of women and minorities has been one of her top priorities. After successfully recruiting five Treasure Lake Job Corps graduating students into permanent developmental positions within the Service, Kaufman received DOI awards for achieving workplace diversity in 1998 and 1999. Her commitment to a diverse workplace continues today. Kaufman has also been an advocate for implementing an MOU that is currently in place between the Service and the National Hispanic Environmental Council; and she has been an active participant at the Council's annual conferences. And currently, the region is involved in an ongoing working partnership with Langston University, the only historically black university west of the Mississippi River. The Service and the University are exploring plans to work with Langston's Center for Outreach Programs to develop a cooperative program to recruit minority students from the University for the Service's work, modeled after Job Corps student recruitment efforts for which Kaufman received her DOI awards.

Customer Service Excellence Award
Karen Malkin of the Washington Office received this award, which the Interior Department established this fall to recognize organizations, teams and individuals who work closely with customers (both internal and external), partners and stakeholders, take the time to ask for feedback, identify opportunities for improvement, and implement actions to improve the way we do business, thus exceeding customer expectations. As the Service's principal representative on customer service and government innovations, Malkin serves on the Department's Customer Forum, where she has helped craft surveys, policies, and solutions to address our needs and uses for customer service feedback. Among other endeavors, she is working with Refuges and the University of Michigan on the Service's first effort to obtain broad customer service information from refuge visitors as part of the nationwide American Customer Satisfaction Index.

Partnership Award
The Marquette and Ludington (Michigan) Biological Station and the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3604, received a 1999 Interior Department Partnership Council Award for Significant Achievement in Partnership. The council cited the absence of any unfair labor practice charges and the filing of only one grievance which was successfully settled through informal negotiation are evidence of the successful relationship between the stations and the union. The citation read, in part: "It appears the partnership understands the importance and value of open, two-way communication and regularly utilizes this tool to promote information sharing throughout the biological station."

Pullen Recognized for Meritorious Service
In recognition of his distinguished service and accomplishments, Larry Pullen, chief of systems development services for the Division of Information Management Resources, was given the Interior Department's Meritorious Service award. The award citation read in part: "During his 9 year career with the Service, Larry O. Pullen... established a sound and effective Information Technology Security program which now serves as a model for other agencies. Mr. Pullen was extremely effective in providing instruction and assistance for users throughout the Service in protecting information systems, computer systems, networks and data from a broad variety of security threats. Through his efforts, the Service has one of the best records in the Department of the Interior for detecting, avoiding, and mitigating system intrusions and other security threats.... Through his leadership and extraordinary capabilities, Mr. Pullen has been invaluable in improving the ability of Service managers and employees to use information technology in the performance of their jobs on a daily basis."

Service Employees, Office Receive DOI Environmental Achievement Awards
Two Service employees and an ecological services field station received 2000 Environmental Achievement Awards from the Interior Department. The honor acknowledges bureaus, offices, employees and contractors for their exceptional achievements or contributions in broad environmental areas such as pollution prevention, waste reduction, recycling, environmental outreach and acquisition of environmentally preferred products and services.

Southwest region migratory bird specialist David Haukos was recognized for his research on the role of playas— small depressional wetlands—in the High Plains ecosystem. Recently, his efforts helped secure a 160-acre Playa and Prairie Nature Center on the campus of Texas Tech University in Lubbock. Through a cooperative arrangement with the university, Haukos received assistance from two professors at Texas Tech's College of Education to develop the environmental education curriculum for activities being conducted on the 160-acre playa and prairie nature center. After they developed a master plan for the outdoor complex—which includes an 18-acre playa basin—and restored some of the degraded habitat, Haukos and team trained 15 public school teachers in how to use the project to educate their students about wetlands conservation. He also solicited grants in excess of $100,000 from the Service's Watchable Wildlife Program, Eisenhower Education Grant Program, Lubbock County, Edwards Ecosystem Team and the Playa Lakes Joint Venture to initiate this project.

Lee Fulton of the North Louisiana Refuges Complex in Monroe, Louisiana, was selected because of his outstanding personal efforts in reducing brine spills and remediating those that occur as a result of gas well operations and recycling of metallic components from orphan wells on refuge properties that total more than 64,000 acres.

Transitions…Who's Coming and Going

The Oregon State Office, located in Portland, Oregon, received an award for its highly commendable pollution prevention program which was initiated in 1990. About 1,000 pounds of paper are currently recycled each month and the office has switched to using process chlorine free paper.

The 2000 DOI Environmental Achievement Awards were presented during a September 27 ceremony at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C.

Albuquerque Biologist Garners Writing Prizes
Craig Springer, a fisheries biologist in the Region 2 regional office, won prizes in the Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers 1999 writing contest at the group's annual conference in Utah. He took first place in the books/scripts category with a Service video, and first place in the newsletters category with a story on Apache trout that appeared in the Endangered Species Bulletin. Springer also won second place in the magazines category with an article on the Southern redbelly dace published in the Santa Fe New Mexican.

Officers Have a Lucky Day
Danny Gomez of Red Rock Lakes NWR and Joe McNally of Sweetwater Marsh NWR were drawn by Ralph Morgenweck, regional director for the Mountain-Prairie states on June 30 as winners of the first raffle drawing of the National Wildlife Refuge Officers Association. Gomez and McNally each will receive a Sig Sauer P229 Commemorative Pistol in the drawing, which capped off the association's annual fund raising efforts. The National Wildlife Refuge Officers Association, established in February 1999, is an organization of current and former commissioned refuge officers of the Service that strives to serve as a unified voice for an enhanced professional law enforcement program. Some 240 of the 640 Service refuge officers are members of the association.

Greg Siekaniec is the new manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Siekaniec previously worked in the Washington office as chief of wildlife resources in the National Wildlife Refuge System. He will replace John Martin who retired in June after 20 years as the refuge's first and only manager. Siekaniec began his Service career 16 years ago at Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Montana and then worked at several other refuges in the lower 48 states before going to Izembek NWR in 1995. In 1998, Siekaniec went to Washington, D.C.

Jon Kauffeld is the new refuge supervisor for the Big Rivers zone of Region 3, overseeing operations on 15 national wildlife refuges along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. He previously served as national water rights coordinator for the Division of Refuges in Arlington, Virginia. Kauffeld began his Service career as a wildlife biologist in 1978, working at the Ecological Services Field Office in Columbus, Ohio. A year later, he became a refuge biologist at Alamos/Monte Vista NWR in Colorado, a position he held for five years. Kauffeld has been with the National Wildlife Refuge System ever since, holding positions at San Luis NWR in California, Arrowwood NWR in North Dakota and Rainwater Basin NWR in Nebraska. While serving as an acquisition biologist in Nebraska, Kauffeld helped launch Boyer Chute NWR, a 10,000 acre refuge along the Missouri River in eastern Nebraska.

A 27-year veteran in Service law enforcement, **Thomas M. Riley**, has been selected as the new assistant regional director for Law Enforcement in the Southeast region. Riley has worked closely with state, federal and private organizations on the reintroduction of three of the Service's most high profile endangered species — the California sea otter, the California condor and the gray wolf —into some of their former habitat in the West. He previously worked in Washington, D.C., as the deputy chief of Law Enforcement. Prior to that, Riley was the senior resident agent for Idaho and Nevada from 1993 to 1998, and he was the deputy assistant regional director for Law Enforcement in Portland, Oregon from 1983 to 1993. He also served as the senior resident agent for the ports of Los Angeles and Houston, and he established the Service's law enforcement program for the border port of El Paso, Texas, in 1975.

A wildlife manager with 17 years of Service experience was selected in June to manage the Eastern Virginia Rivers refuge complex, including the Rappahannock River Valley, James River and Presquile national wildlife refuges. Before returning to his Virginia roots, **Joe McCauley** worked four years in the Service's Northeast Regional office as the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture coordinator. McCauley was deputy refuge manager at Back Bay NWR in Virginia Beach for six years, working on wildlife and habitat management as well as public use of the refuge. Previously, he was assistant manager at Supawna Meadows NWR in New Jersey. He began working for the Service in Cortland, New York and at Great Dismal Swamp NWR in Suffolk, Virginia.

Fish & Wildlife…In Brief

Mary Stefanski is the new manager of Rice Lake NWR near McGregor, Minnesota. Stefanski reported for duty in September, replacing former manager Gene Patten, who retired in June. Stefanski was most recently an assistant manager at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in La Crosse, Wisconsin, a position she held from 1995-2000. From 1993 to 1995, she served as a biological science technician at Minnesota Valley NWR in Bloomington, Minnesota. As manager of the 18,281 acre Rice Lake NWR, Stefanski will supervise six employees and oversee the operations and biological programs at Rice Lake as well as those at the one-half acre Mille Lacs NWR and the 2,045 acre Sandstone NWR. Rice Lake NWR is an important staging area for ring-necked ducks and other waterfowl each fall.

Christine Eustis, formerly a legislative specialist in the Service's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, will be the new assistant regional director for External Affairs in the Southeast region.

In Memoriam:

Patrick Howard Roy, 19, a fireman apprentice on the U.S.S. Cole was killed October 12 in an explosion during refueling in the port of Aden. Roy was the stepson of Anne Post Roy, conservation librarian at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Burial for the western Maryland seaman was at Antietam National Cemetery in Sharpsburg, a historic Civil War battlefield cemetery opened to the Roy family through the assistance of the National Park Service. Events in the Middle East have touched the NCTC campus twice this year; the training facility was also the site of opening and closing ceremonies for the January summit conference between Israel and Syria. Librarian Roy's office was used by President Clinton during the opening day of the summit as his private working office at NCTC.

Unique Habitat Conservation Agreement on Olympic Peninsula

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt participated in an October 13 signing ceremony for a unique new habitat conservation plan with Simpson Timber Company on the Olympic Peninsula near Shelton, Washington. The HCP covers about 262,000 acres and will protect some 51 species of salmon, native fish and wildlife. It is the first habitat conservation plan designed to actively address both endangered species and water quality issues. The Service and Simpson Timber completed the HCP in cooperation with the Department of Commerce's National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. Babbitt joined President Ray Tennison and Chairman Colin Mosely of Simpson Investment Company, and officials from the other federal agencies at the signing event. Tribal representatives and representatives from local community organizations also attended.

A New Tool for Finding Partnership Funding Hits the Web

"Conservation Assistance Tools" is the name of a searchable database of more than 1,100 sources for grants, cost sharing and technical assistance for natural and cultural resources projects. The database was created by a partnership of federal and state agency staff in Colorado. The group realized that as natural resources agencies embrace an ecosystem approach to solving resource problems and issues by forming alliances with local governments, landowners, businesses and other organizations, they needed a "one-stop shopping" tool for funding public-private partnerships. In the past, finding this information meant hours of digging through thick directories and files at a regional library—often requiring a long trip for staff in rural communities to find a library with reference information on grant availability. The Conservation Assistance Tools database is posted on the Web site of the Sonoran Institute at http://www.sonoran.org.

More Condors Living Grand Canyon Area

Thirteen California condors were transported to a new home on public lands on the Vermilion Cliffs near the Grand Canyon on November 8. Seven of the condors (three males and four females) were hatched this year at The Peregrine Fund's breeding facility in Boise, Idaho, and one (female) hatched last year. Condor 186 which was originally released in 1998 and brought back into captivity due to his attraction to humans will be re-released. Also, two pairs of adult condors (hatched in California in 1991 and 1992) will be released with the hope they will start breeding in the wild. These are the first paired condors of breeding age to be released into the wild. After a four to six-week period of acclimation in a specially designed release aviary near Vermillion Cliffs, the condors will be released to the wild. This release will increase the population of California condors in the Grand Canyon area from 15 to 28.

NFWF Announces Conservation Scholarships

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Anheuser Busch announce the establishment of the Budweiser Conservation Scholarship program to support and promote innovative conservation research or study. Ten scholarships of up to $10,000 each will be awarded to cover tuition, fees, books, room and board and other expenses related to their studies, The deadline for applications is February 2. For additional information, visit the foundation's Web site at http://www.nfwf.org and look under "What's New."

Keep On Course

Since the time of Plato, wise people have recognized that the only constant in the universe is change. All of us here at the Fish and Wildlife Service will be experiencing this truth once again over the next few months as we begin the transition to a new administration.

Every new administration brings changes. There will be new faces in the hallways and we will have to adapt to new management styles. But we should not let this change unsettle us or distract us from our conservation mission.

Fish and wildlife conservation is bipartisan. From the days of Theodore Roosevelt, many of our important conservation laws have been written and supported by leaders from both parties. Certainly different leaders may have different interests and priorities, but on most conservation issues there is a middle ground that allows for consensus.

As we look ahead to a new Congress where neither party holds a strong majority in either the House or the Senate, it appears that progress on any issue will require bipartisan efforts. Such a climate can be good for conservation.

We should always remember that our work is indeed "conserving the nature of America." By conserving fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats, we conserve part of what makes America great: the legacy of our past and the creatures that sustained the Native Americans and the early pioneers.

We are preserving the opportunity to participate in outdoor sports and traditions that are part of the American experience. And we are preserving a resource that contributes more than a hundred billion dollars to our nation's economy each year, and that is critically important to many rural communities. These are goals and values shared by members of both political parties.

So as we move into the transition, I would tell you to just keep on doing your jobs as only you know how. Save the dirt! Do the right thing for the critters! Work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people! However you describe it, it boils down to the great job each of you do every day.

As I said in my all-employee Election Day message, I am proud to have served alongside you for more than 12 years. For the past three and a half, it has been my honor to serve as your director. Together, we have accomplished remarkable advances for conservation. I am proud of our record and I am proud of all of you.

Because I have seen your professionalism, your deep commitment to public duty and your heartfelt belief in the Service's mission, I know that the cause of fish and wildlife conservation will move forward. Each of you has the power to make a difference. Let us approach the changes ahead with pride in our accomplishments, confidence in our capabilities, and continued dedication to our conservation mission and our public service responsibilities.

Fish & Wildlife News
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Deadline for March/April 2001 issue:
February 1, 2001

Deadline for May/June 2001 issue:
April 1, 2001

Printed on recycled paper