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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Wildlife Refuge System

Friends *Forward*

SPRING 2007

Design Concepts Bring Down Costs

New facility concepts for design of visitor centers at national wildlife refuges will reduce costs, save energy and produce "green" visitor centers. The seven floor plans—including versions for one- and two-story buildings—combine administrative and visitor areas that can be enlarged and adapted to site conditions, staffing and visitation needs.

The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is expected to approve the design concepts this summer.

The floor plans recommend a broad range in square footage. The smallest model, at about 6,850 square feet, is a combined administration/visitor facility designed for refuges with fewer than 10 staff members and less than 70,000 annual visitors. The largest, a two-story administration/visitor facility, would be about 15,700-square feet, with a third of the floor space specifically devoted to visitor contact. The largest facilities are envisioned for refuges with more than 20 on staff and more than 200,000 annual visitors.

Janis Hepshinsky/USFWS

The two-story Kettle Pond Visitor Center, which includes the administrative offices for the five-refuge Rhode Island Refuge Complex, opened in October 2005. It was named a Federal Energy Saver Showcase by the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Management Program for its sensitive site selection, durability and longevity of materials, and energy conservation.

A model for a stand-alone visitor facility, at about 6,450 square feet, is designed for refuges that serve more than 200,000 visitors a year.

Whether it is the smallest facility or the two-story model, each plan allocates from 50 percent to 75 percent of the floor space to visitor contact areas. In every model, there is space for Friends book sales, ranging from display cases in the blueprints for the smallest facilities

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"America the Beautiful Interagency Pass" Is Key to Refuge Travel

Volunteering has benefits beyond the satisfaction of doing important work and doing it well. Volunteers who contribute at least 500 hours of work, accrued since January 1, are eligible for free Interagency Volunteer Passes, good for 12 months, as part of the "America the Beautiful—The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass."

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From the Chief

Refuges are Great!

When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's top management—the Directorate—began setting priorities this year, they asked some probing questions: What will the Service be known for? On what can we stake our reputation?

The National Wildlife Refuge System was identified as one of the Service's highest priorities, and with good reason. I've been to well over half of our all refuges over my 30-year career, and they never fail to impress me. I stopped at several recently when I was driving back to Washington, DC, after spending time with my family in Albuquerque.

Geoff Haskett

At Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, I saw how the refuge is a winter home for some of the millions of ducks and geese that use the Mississippi Flyway. The refuge is a magnet for local schools because it is a perfect outdoor classroom.

While I was in Arkansas, I stopped at Wapanocca Refuge, just four miles from the Mississippi River. Because it's in the heart of the Mississippi Flyway,

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Reading Rachel Carson

To mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rachel Carson—author of *Silent Spring* and considered by many to be the mother of the modern-day environmental movement—the Friends of the National Conservation Training Center has launched the *Rachel Carson Online Book Club.* Continuing through November, the book club will be a good chance for people to discuss not only her written works, but also current environmental issues in light of Carson's legacy.

Each month, a prominent facilitator will moderate the online discussion at http://rcbookclub.blogspot.com. The moderator will start the book discussion with an opening statement. Then, in dialogue with book club participants, the moderator will provide weekly installments and add comments throughout the month.

The following schedule has been planned:

- **May:** Middlebury College Professor John Elder and Houghton Mifflin Senior Editor Deanne Umry, *Courage for the Earth*

- **June:** Writer Maril Hazlett, *Always, Rachel*
- **July:** Rachel Carson Homestead Association Executive Director Patricia DeMarco and Bard College History Professor Mark Lytle, *Under the Sea-Wind*
- **August:** Duke University Marine Laboratory Director Cindy Van Dover, *The Edge of the Sea*
- **September:** Boston University Environmental Health Professor H. Patricia Hynes, *Lost Woods*
- **October:** Author Jim Lynch, *The Sea Around Us*
- **November:** Historian Tom Schaefer, *The Sense of Wonder*

During the 15 years that Rachel Carson worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, she authored numerous publications. Perhaps the best known was the "Conservation In Action" series that explored wildlife and ecology on national wildlife refuges.

"This online discussion will be a fabulous way to engage and bring together people from many different communities to focus on the life and legacy of Rachel Carson," says Anne Post Roy, NCTC conservation librarian. "The discussion should be incredibly interesting given the stature of some of our moderators."

From the Chief
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the refuge is a major stopping place for migrating warblers. Bald eagles, great blue herons, great egrets and anhingas nest on the refuge. Just one staff person takes care of the whole refuge, which offers fishing from mid-March through the end of October and a six-mile nature drive that takes you to an observation pier over the 600-acre Wapanocca Lake.

Named in honor of a Native American who invented a Cherokee alphabet to make sure his tribe could preserve in writing their traditions and history, Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma is a great place to see thousands of mallards that travel the Central Flyway. The bass fishing is terrific. Families take the Horton Slough trail to an observation pier that looks over Sally Jones Lake, where they can see herons and egrets.

I made my first visit ever to Great Dismal Swamp Refuge in Virginia. The refuge is magnificent, huge—about 111,000 acres—and full of history. George Washington visited the swamp in 1763 and organized the Dismal Swamp Land Company that drained and logged portions. During the Civil War, slaves used Great Dismal Swamp as a route of escape from that abomination. Although the area is becoming urbanized, the refuge is a place of beauty and rest, with more than 100 miles of trails that let people explore the swamp.

My recent trip reinforced what I already knew: National wildlife refuges connect people with nature every day. We help visitors understand the importance of conservation and what wildlife refuges means for the future of conservation.

Each of our 547 national wildlife refuges has it own compelling story. The National Wildlife Refuge System is awe-inspiring!

Geoffrey L. Haskett

National Honors Bestowed on Friends Group and Volunteer

Hats off to the Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges in Colorado, and Marion Sansing of the Friends of the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi. They are, respectively, the 2007 Friends Group of the Year, and the 2007 Volunteer of the Year.

The awards were presented by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. They honor exceptional contributions toward protecting the National Wildlife Refuge System. The honors were presented at a ceremony during the Refuge Friends "Beyond the Boundaries" workshop March 2–5 in Washington, DC.

Here are the stories behind the winners:

Friends of San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges, which started in 1999, support the Baca, Alamosa and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges. "The Friends keep the community and visitors informed about the wildlife in the San Luis Valley through an imaginative Web site, quarterly newsletter *The Avocet*, and participation in monthly work days and annual festivals such as the Kids' Crane Festival held during National Wildlife Refuge Week," said the official award announcement.

Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges in Colorado won the 2007 Friends of the Year Award. The organization, launched in 1999, supports the Baca, Alamosa and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges.

Being a relatively small group with about 100 members—and the limited resources that go with its size—hasn't stopped the Friends of San Luis Valley from being effective. "They are extraordinarily committed to their mission and have the benefit of strong and insightful leadership, as well as being imaginative and sophisticated in their approach," according to San Luis Valley Refuge Manager Mike Blenden.

The Friends raised funds to create a wildlife observation trail at Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, giving visitors their first chance to observe wildlife from outside a car. They were important partners in converting part of Alamosa Refuge into a Wetland Learning Center, providing a substantial amount of volunteer carpentry and remodeling, and assisting in artwork.

At http://www.slvrefuges.org/, the Friends' Web site, visitors can read about the group's current projects, upcoming events and membership sign-ups. Newsletters are posted, as are links to the refuges supported by the Friends. In addition, the group has posted a K-5 wetlands curriculum for teachers.

Marion Sansing

"As spokesperson for Friends of Noxubee and outdoor recreation planner for the refuge, Marion Sansing has astounded refuge staff and fellow volunteers with the amount she has accomplished in her relatively short time at Noxubee," said the official award announcement. She is behind the Friends' successful billboard advertisement (for more information, see page 5), and partnered with Mississippi State University to develop a native plant garden for the Visitor Center.

She has organized the annual Noxubee Refuge Photography contest. Additionally, she organized the partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation to host "Women in the Outdoors," enabling women to learn outdoor skills from expert instructors.

USFWS

Marion Sansing of the Friends of the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi was honored with the 2007 Volunteer of the Year award.

Design Concepts

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to book stores that could top 400 square feet in the larger buildings. Options for environmental education modules have also been designed.

The floor plans also meet standards of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of "green" buildings. The Department of the Interior requires that any DOI construction that costs more than $2 million obtain LEED certification.

The Northeast Region was the first to try out the standardized design when funds were simultaneously approved for facilities at Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge in West Virginia and Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, which spans four states.

After the standardized design process is officially issued, the new floor plans will be used to create an up-to-date list of Service construction project priorities. The construction priorities will be used in the formulation of the fiscal year 2009 budget.

From Friend *to* Friend

Friends Support Florida's Winter Whooping Cranes

When endangered whooping cranes raised at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin land in Florida for the winter, the Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge have already worked for a year to help with their arrival.

Whooping cranes, North America's tallest birds, are bred each year at Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland and then transported to spend the summer at Necedah Refuge, where they are trained to follow an ultra-light aircraft for their first migration south. Each fall, the aircraft guides them for 1,250 miles to Chassahowitzka Refuge, where they arrive in November or December.

The Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge start planning each January to support the migration, according to Friends President Lace Blue-McLean. "We give presentations, raise money, write news releases and keep the issue in the limelight," she said. "The Friends are ready to do whatever it takes to keep this program moving forward."

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The Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge start planning each January in anticipation of the fall migration of young and endangered whooping cranes from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. "The Friends are ready to do whatever it takes to keep this program moving forward," says Friends President Lace Blue-McLean.

The group organizes a "flyover" when the cranes arrive, so the public can see the cranes when they fly over the refuge to land for the winter. Friends also sell crane T-shirts and other gifts at festivals through the year. Blue-McLean represents the refuge on the communications and outreach team of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership.

Launched in 1998, the Friends group has grown from 13 to 240 members, and is lucky to have "a very active nine-member board, and good volunteers," according to Blue-McLean. "We've raised enough money during the last few years that we can really make a difference for the refuge," she said. The Friends' premier fundraiser is the annual spring "Wood, Winds and Water," a silent auction, gourmet dinner and woodwind trio concert that will be held for the sixth year.

Blue-McLean attributes much of the Friends' accomplishments to great relationships with refuge manager Jim Kraus and his staff. She also has learned to be patient. Friends "may not see the fruits of their labor right away"—but success will come.

Walk on Winn Dixie: A Monthly Promenade

The Florida Keys Friends And Volunteers Of Refuges (FAVOR) wants everyone to know that their monthly Walk on Winn Dixie is "a promenade, not a protest." The Walk on Winn Dixie is actually an innovative open house that introduces the community to the Visitor Center for the National Key Deer, Key West, Crocodile Lake and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges, as well as businesses at the Winn Dixie Plaza in Big Pine Key.

FAVOR

The Walk on Winn Dixie, organized by the Florida Keys Friends And Volunteers Of Refuges, is a hugely innovative open house that introduces the community to the Visitor Center for the National Key Deer, Key West, Crocodile Lake and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges.

On the first Friday of every month from 6 to 8 p.m., the Visitor Center and newly named Key Deer Bookstore invite the public to come to the plaza for information, snacks, extended shopping hours, and special events such as exhibits by local artists and musical performances by local bands.

FAVOR Florida Keys launched the monthly "Walks" last year to draw more residents to the Visitor Center and bookstore. They invite all the businesses in the plaza to offer something new that evening, thereby increasing the publicity and attendance.

"We've generated a lot of interest among the locals," said Sandy Brown, a member of FAVOR's board of directors, and the group's editor, publisher and Webmaster. "The walks have been a great benefit in educating the public." The Friends have found great enthusiasm from the plaza's profit-making neighbors, including stores that have decided to stay open late, offer food and drinks, and feature one-day

special deals. Several have offered gift certificates that were raffled off on those Friday evenings.

The Walks on Winn Dixie have proven successful not only for the Visitor Center and the Winn Dixie Plaza, but for FAVOR as well. Many residents and business owners didn't realize that FAVOR supports four national wildlife refuges—including Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, whose butterfly garden is the only place open to the public. The Friends have signed up new members at every Walk on Winn Dixie, including 20 new members in January.

Writing a Newsletter? Here Are Some Tips

Most Friends groups, veterans and beginners, want to communicate with their members through an informative, easy-to-read, and visually interesting newsletter. If your organization isn't already publishing a regular newsletter, here are some tips from Mike Blenden, a member of the National Friends Mentoring Program and manager of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex:

- Start simple, and build upon what works for you.
- Have people "on deck" to act as newsletter coordinators. Newsletters are a lot of work, and one person will tire of the job after a year or so.
- Consider including articles about your group and its activities, the refuge management/staff, and regional and national U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service news.
- Use lots of photos. Color photos are best but color printing may be expensive. Show your members in action.
- Be flexible on the publication schedule. Try for one per season. Focusing on a specific date may put too much pressure on the newsletter coordinator. You may have to give up the flexibility of publicizing time-sensitive events.
- Distribute your newsletter to members and others you want to keep in the loop, which could be "anyone you can imagine." Consider including elected officials, and regional and headquarters Service and Refuge System offices.
- Continue to send newsletters to people for some time after their dues have lapsed. The point is to keep them informed, and hopefully, they will become active members again when their circumstances change.
- Consider posting an online version on your group's Web site.

Noxubee Friends Advertise Refuge on Free Billboard

The Friends of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi may be the first Friends group to advertise their refuge on a billboard—and for free. Working with Refuge Recreation Planner Marion Sansing, Lamar Advertising offered the Friends group free space on a vacant billboard in nearby Starkville if the Friends paid to print the billboard's graphic material. The group's board of directors approved spending $500 to print the 4-foot by 14-foot vinyl poster billboard, which can be easily moved and is expected to last two to three years. If and when Lamar Advertising sells the space, the Friends billboard would be moved to another vacant location. Renting billboard space would cost more than $600 a month.

Sansing designed the billboard with Adobe Photoshop, using a winning photo from the group's Amateur Nature Photography Contest. The photo was created by James Bryant of Starkville.

Sansing chose a photo that did not compete with the text. She used as few words as possible so passing motorists could read it easily. "Using a photo with high resolution (30 MB file at 300 dpi, or dots per inch) makes for a crisp-looking billboard," she said. If there's no one in your Friends group who could do the design, Sansing recommends asking a local advertising agency to create a design pro bono.

"We have had only great responses to our billboard," according to Sansing. "People love it, and the Friends are proud of it." For more information about the billboard project, contact Marion Sansing at marionsansing@aol.com.

The Friends of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi may be the first Friends group to advertise their refuge on a billboard—and for free.

Send Us Your Stories

This is your newsletter, so we would love to hear from you. Please send your story ideas and questions to National Friends Coordinator Trevor_Needham@fws.gov. We would love to feature your Friends group.

Glacier Activity at Togiak National Wildlife Refuge

Biologists at Togiak National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska are using aerial photographs from the 1970s for a long-term study of glaciers in the Ahklun Mountains. Already, they have identified a dozen that have disappeared.

The refuge is working in partnership with adjacent Wood-Tikchik State Park, home to two-thirds of the glaciers, and climate scientists at Northern Arizona University, one of five campus-based regional centers affiliated with the National Institute for Climatic Change Research. They are measuring changes in the glaciers as part of the world-wide data collection on climate change, said Wildlife Biologist Patrick Walsh.

Because of their small size—none is more than six square kilometers—the glaciers are regarded as especially sensitive to climate change. Yet the 100 or so glaciers remaining in southwestern Alaska thus far have gone essentially unstudied.

The glaciers were originally mapped in 1979 by the U.S. Geological Survey, which identified 116 individual glaciers. Last summer, Walsh and Togiak Refuge Manager Paul Liedberg toured the glaciers by plane. Before cold weather and dense clouds set in, they found 97 of the original 116 glaciers identified by the USGS, which is not involved in the re-survey, and determined that 12 had disappeared. They also discovered two glaciers that apparently had been previously overlooked.

This year, after the return of warm weather, Liedberg and Walsh plan to search for the seven other glaciers previously mapped by USGS. A state park air crew will join the hunt and provide other support, Liedberg said.

He and Walsh said their 2007 goals also include more sharply defining the existing boundaries of the Togiak glaciers. Ground crews will establish photo monitoring stations.

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Togiak National Wildlife Refuge has launched a study of several dozen glaciers especially sensitive to warming trends because of their relatively compact structure. The study includes the first detailed photographic record since 1979 of the glaciers, scattered around 200 square miles of the Ahklun Mountains.

Global warming researchers will be closely watching the Togiak study, whose findings will be included in reports circulated by the regional office and made available to other government agencies and independent researchers. The Togiak Refuge study does not have a specific end date.

Are the glaciers that have disappeared gone for good? Probably not, Walsh said. "They come and go with changes in the climate. Sooner or later the glaciers that are melting away will begin expanding."

Because of their small size, the glaciers are especially sensitive to climate change.

FAQ *Frequently Asked Questions*

Question: How can a Friends organization recruit new board members?

Answer: Finding new board members and people to help can be as simple as recalling who you talked to in the supermarket checkout line, who you sat next to at the high school football game, or who you saw at the post office. With a little group brainstorming, a network of prospective board members can emerge seemingly effortlessly.

Molly Krival, a national Friends mentor with the Ding Darling Wildlife Society, suggests using an Acquaintance Map (diagram below). Assemble your current board members and as many refuge staff as possible. Provide each with 20 or more 3 x 5 lined cards. Ask everyone to put the name of someone they know on a card and write why this person should be considered for the board or a committee. Use a different card for each person to be considered. Have someone read each card aloud and ask the group to add comments, positive and negative. Record all the comments.

Then, sort the names into likely, maybe and not likely candidates. Invite the "likely" group, and perhaps the "maybes," to a guided tour of the refuge and a short program about the Friends activities. All board and staff should make a point of meeting every candidate. The board then decides who to ask to be nominated for the board or to become a committee member.

Acquaintance Map*

Religious Organizations

Work

Neighborhood

Cultural Activities

Vacations

Sports

YOU

Other Nonprofits

Schools

Fraternal Organizations

Charities

Shops

Card Games

Car Pools

Retiree Groups

Professionals

**Adapted from Dr. Terri Temkin, Non Profit Management Solutions, Inc.,1997*

Question: What are some hallmarks of a solid and sustainable Friends and refuge partnership?

Answer: Here are seven points to remember:

- The refuge manager provides leadership and takes a personal interest in the Friends organization. While day-to-day activities may be delegated to staff, the manager attends most Friends meetings and events, and is readily available to the Friends leaders.
- The Friends leaders, refuge manager and refuge staff create a culture that enables everyone to get to know each other on a personal level.
- The Friends/Refuge partners trust each other. Everyone feels honored, valued and respected. Partners work hard to build trust and respect.
- Expectations created together are clear and realistic.
- Everyone in the relationship (manager, all the staff, the board and committee members) takes responsibility for making the collaboration succeed.
- Roles and responsibilities are clear and respected.
- Good communications systems are in place.

Send us your questions and suggestions: *Because this is your newsletter, we want to hear from you. Please send your questions to the National Friends Coordinator Trevor_Needham@fws.gov.*

Calendar *of Friends and National Events*

April 13–15: Northeast Region Friends Workshop at John Heinz at Tinicum National Wildlife Refuge, PA. For more information, contact Julie Study, 804-829-5285.

April 21: Spring Refuge Workday, 8 a.m., sponsored by Friends of Squaw Creek (MO) National Wildlife Refuge. For more information, call the refuge at 660-442-3187.

April 27–30: Balcones Songbird Festival, sponsored by the Friends of Balcones Canyonlands (TX) National Wildlife Refuge. For more information, e-mail contact@friendsofbalcones.org.

May 12: International Migratory Bird Day celebration sponsored by Friends of Wertheim (NY) National Wildlife Refuge. For more information, e-mail longislandrefuges@fws.gov. For information about International Migratory Bird Day, see www.birdday.org.

May 14–16: Grant Writing for Conservation course will be held at National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. For more information, contact Ora Dixon: ora_dixon@fws.gov, 304-876-7314.

May 30–June 1: "Developing and Working with Friends Organizations," National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. For more information, contact Trevor Needham, 703-358-2392.

If you have events to publicize, write to Martha_Nudel@fws.gov. Space will limit the number of events that can be publicized. Please provide information for events that will take place in the second half of 2007.

"America the Beautiful Pass"
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The Volunteer Pass—as well as the other three passes in the program—gives you entry to any national wildlife refuge or any other federal site that charges a fee.

Under the program, an Interagency Annual Pass costs $80. The Interagency Senior Pass, for U.S. citizens 62 and older, costs $10. An Interagency Access Pass is available at no charge for U.S. citizens who are permanently disabled. The Senior and Access passes are good for the lifetime of the holder and make available (to the pass holder only) 50 percent discounts on some expanded amenity fees.

Each national wildlife refuge that manages a volunteer program has someone who tracks the hours a volunteer donates and issues Volunteer Passes. Once 500 hours are clocked, the tally is reset to zero and the count begins again to another Volunteer Pass. A volunteer cannot earn more than one pass within a 12-month period, but the additional hours will be counted toward a second pass when the first year expires.

Existing Golden Eagle Passports and National Parks Passes will be honored until their expiration dates. Paper versions of the Golden Age or Golden Access Passports should be exchanged for the new Senior or Access passes. However, plastic Golden Age or Access passes are valid for the pass holder's lifetime and do not need to be exchanged.

For the first time, decals and hangtags are available. Decals are for those who park open-topped vehicles (like Jeeps) or motorcycles at unstaffed federal recreation sites; hangtags for those who anticipate parking closed vehicles at unmanned facilities.

The passes are available at any U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service or Forest Service site that charges an entrance fee or standard amenity fee. Additionally, Interagency Annual Passes are available at some national retail outlets and via e-mail at fedrecpass@usgs.gov or online at http://store.usgs.gov

Friends groups may sell the Interagency Annual Passes if they have a Local Third Party Agreement with the Service. Organizations interested in a Third Party Agreement should discuss this with their refuge project leader. The refuge is responsible for providing the annual passes. Friends groups can take the passes on consignment or prepay for the passes at a discount.

The new "America the Beautiful—The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass" is a series of four passes that provide entry into federally-owned lands that charge an entry or other fee. A volunteer can earn a free Interagency Volunteer Pass with 500 hours of donated work.

Friends *Forward*

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This newsletter is published on recycled paper using soy-based ink.