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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish & Wildlife News

Spring 2004

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Wild Condor Chicks Hatch in Southern California Back Country

Three California condor chicks hatched in the back country of southern California in Ventura County. The first of the chicks to emerge from its shell was reported by observers on Friday, April 9; the second chick on April 11; and the third chick on April 22, Earth Day. These wild-born chicks represent a great milestone in recovery efforts for the California condor.

"To have an original wild condor reproducing again in the wild after 17 years is very gratifying, we have come full circle," said Steve Thompson, Manager of the Fish and Wildlife Service's California-Nevada Operations Office. "When this same bird was captured in 1987, and no California condors soared free, we faced an uncertain future."

The parents of the chicks have varied backgrounds. Two of the females were released in Big Sur, and while most of the Big Sur birds travel back and forth between southern and central California, these two have stayed south more than three years. The other female and 3 males were released in southern California through the Service's Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex. One of the males, AC9, is 24-years old, and was the last condor taken from the wild for recovery efforts in 1987. After fifteen years in the captive breeding program he was released back into the wild in May 2002.

Ventana Wilderness Society has been releasing condors in Monterey County's Big Sur region since 1997. This is the first year that Big Sur birds have reproduced. "We couldn't be more thrilled to have reached this significant milestone," said Kelly Sorenson,

With more wild chicks born, North America's largest bird faces better chances for recovery.

Ventana Wilderness Society Executive Director, "All of our hard work and donor support is now finally paying off."

Both parents will care for the chicks. Only one parent will be in the nest at a time. One parent looks for food while the other broods and feeds the chick. This will continue until the chick fledges (makes its first flight) at about six months of age. The parents will stay with the chick for up 18 months.
Last year only one chick was produced in southern California and the chick died after four months. This year those same parents again produced a chick, on Friday June 25, a team that consisted of a veterinarian, a condor zookeeper, a researcher and a Service biologist went into the nest to examine it. The team was relieved to find the chick in excellent health and at the expected level of development for a chick two months of age.

The first wild chick to survive past fledgling was hatched last year in Arizona. That chick is over a year old and beginning to integrate with the main flock. Two condor chicks hatched in late May.

There are 99 condors now living in the wild in California, Arizona and Baja, Mexico and 145 in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Wild Animal Park, the Oregon Zoo and the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate populations, one in California, and the other in Arizona, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs.

The largest birds in North America, condors are scavengers that have soared over mountainous areas of California since prehistoric times, but their numbers plummeted in the 20th Century. Condor numbers declined in part due to loss of habitat and food, and from shooting, lead poisoning and toxic substances used to poison predators. Condors were listed as an endangered species in 1967, under a law that pre-dated the existing Endangered Species Act. In 1982, the condor population reached its lowest level of 22 birds, prompting biologists to start collecting chicks and eggs for a captive breeding program. By late 1984, only 15 condors remained in the wild. After seven condors died in rapid succession, it was decided to bring the remaining birds in from the wild for the captive breeding program. In 1992, the Recovery Program began releasing California condors back into the wild.

Denise Stockton, Mike Stockton, & Marc Weitzel, Hopper Mountain NWR

Coordinated Conservation for the Condor

The Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for coordinating conservation of the California condor, working with the Los Padres National Forest, California Department of Fish and game, and several private partners. Private organizations and institutions are active and essential participants in the implementation of the recovery program, contributing personnel, expertise, institutional support, and funding. California condor captive breeding programs are operated at San Diego Wild Animal Park, Los Angeles Zoo, The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey and most recently the Oregon Zoo. Release programs in California are managed by Ventana Wilderness Society, the National Park Service at Pinnacles National Monument and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge; the Arizona release is managed by The Peregrine Fund: and the Baja release site by the Zoological Society of San Diego.

Interior Proposes Broader Gray Wolf Management Authority for Idaho, Montana

The Service has been working with Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming as they develop the state management plans that are required under the Endangered Species Act before a species, like the grey wolf, can be delisted. FWS photo: J&K Hollingsworth.

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton announced a proposal to give Idaho and Montana more authority to manage wolf populations in their states, consistent with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

"Wolf populations now far exceed their recovery goals under the Act in the northern Rocky Mountains, and Idaho and Montana have both crafted responsible wolf management plans for their states," Norton said. "Although we are unable at this time to continue with the process to delist the wolf population in the region because we do not have approved plans for all three states, we believe that it is appropriate for us to pursue as much local management for this recovered wolf population as we can."

The Service has been working with Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming as they develop the state management plans that are required under the Act before a species can be delisted.

The Service's proposal recognizes that both Montana and Idaho have developed wolf management plans that have been approved by the Service. Under the proposal, landowners would be able to take additional steps to protect their livestock and pets from attacks by problem wolves, and the state would be able to issue permits to allow landowners to control wolves that consistently pose a threat to domestic animals.

The population of wolves in the Northern Rockies now stands at 761.

Under the proposal, Idaho and Montana could take wolves determined to be causing unacceptable impacts to elk and deer populations. In addition, the states could petition the Service to take over the lead role in managing and conserving wolves within their states.

The proposed changes would only have effect in the experimental population areas established in Montana and Idaho when wolves were reintroduced. It would have no effect in Wyoming because that state does not have an approved wolf management plan. The proposal also would not apply to wolf populations in the Great Lakes region or in the southwestern United States.

Hugh Vickery, DOI Public Affairs, Washington, DC

On the cover:
Condor chick. *In 1978, Topatopa was a favorite feature at the Los Angeles Zoo as the only captive condor at the time. This prehistoric scavenger is the largest bird in North America with a wingspan that can range to nearly 10 feet. Hopefully, with more condor chicks born into the wild through collaborate recovery efforts, the sight of a California condor will become less rare. Photo: Spenser Weiner.*

Science Advisory: Town Hall Meeting on Science

"What was billed as a conversation with employees about the role of science in the Service achieved what its sponsors wanted," said Director Steve Williams, after a two-and-a-half hour telecast to discuss about the agency's scientific capabilities and the needs of its field biologists.

"I am trying to cultivate a culture where people feel they are truly participating in the management of the agency, and are comfortable asking the tough questions," Williams said. "It was worthwhile from my perspective, but I'd like an honest assessment from the people who watched."

Williams and a panel of senior agency managers fielded 31 questions from field callers during what was billed as the "Director's Town Hall Meeting on Science" May 5 from NCTC. He was joined by science advisor Dan Ashe; Mamie Parker, assistant director, fisheries and habitat conservation; and Rick Lemon, NCTC director, serving as moderator.

"We accomplished what we wanted to do, which was to start a dialogue. These weren't fluffy or softball questions," said Ashe, who serves as the agency's point person on scientific matters.

The transfer of much of the Service's scientific capability to the USGS a decade ago continues to weigh heavily on the minds of some Service employees, and the loss of research functions sparked the first question of the broadcast.

One caller asked why the Service conceded to the transfer of much of its scientific capacity. "I don't know that we stood by and watched it happen," said Williams. "We just now need to find a better way, and get over it. The U.S. Geological Survey is now the owner of our research component, and we need to match up what we need with what it can provide."

A revitalized relationship between the Service and USGS is a major component of this organization's recently unveiled science initiative, and Williams credited the broadcast with successfully conveying the importance science leaders are placing on a strengthened relationship between the two Interior Department agencies.

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Science Advisory: Town Hall Meeting on Science (continued)

A panel discusses the importance of scientific integrity at NCTC's broadcasting studio. Pictured (from left to right) are Dan Ashe, Steve Williams, Mamie Parker, and Rick Lemon. FWS photo: Ryan Hagerty.

Callers from Wisconsin and California, however, probed the existing relationship between the agencies, citing inability on the part of USGS to meet the Service's current research needs and perceived high overhead charges that divert budgets away from research and into administrative functions.

"Are they (USGS) meeting all of our needs?" Ashe asked. "No, but they are meeting more of our needs. We need to build our own capacity to support and acquire our own information. And while we've certainly had our own challenges in the Service in funding our administrative overhead, we need to challenge USGS on containing their administrative costs."

The integrity of the process by which scientific data is used in policy decisions concerned one Colorado caller, who asserted that science is discarded when it is not compatible with political ideology. Recent decisions involving subjects as diverse as the northern lynx, Klamath basin water allocation, and Missouri River flows, were the basis for related questions from other employees.

"This debate has gone on for many years: what's the role of science in decision-making?" Williams asked. "Science must always provide the firm foundation, the framework on which decisions are made. Other things come into play, under the label of politics, societal demands, impacts on the economy. Science leaves open the opportunity for disagreement. Stay in the debate," Williams counseled his employees.

"The lynx issue in the Pacific Northwest happened, Williams said, because research protocols were not followed. "I'm not sure why that happened, whether intentional or unintentional, but the appropriate action is to make it clear, through our video, and in directions we've put out to the field, that questions (about scientific procedures) should be directed to the principal investigator or supervisor. None of us should go outside the research protocol."

Among other topics raised during the free-ranging televised discussion were questions about membership in professional societies and attendance at technical and scientific meetings, peer review guidelines for research, resumption of a scientific publications series, classification standards for research biologists, and the role of the public and interest groups in the review or supplementation of scientific studies.

The May 5 broadcast was preceded by the premiere in April of a 30-minute Service video, *Science and the Service: A Tradition of Excellence*, that employees were encouraged to view in advance as a lead-in to the Q&A session.

David Klinger, senior writer-editor, NCTC, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Blasting a Dam!

The 22-foot high concrete Embrey Dam, which stretched across more than 1,000 feet of the Rappahannock River in Fredericksburg, Virginia, became rubble when Senator John Warner pushed a button that detonated explosive charges that had been set in place by an Army demolition team.

The dam has long blocked fish such as American shad and striped bass from reaching their historic spawning and rearing grounds. With the dam removed, the Rappahannock River is now completely free of obstacles from its source at Chester Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains, to its mouth on the Chesapeake Bay, a distance of 184 miles, for the first time in 95 years.

Service Director Steve Williams applauded the Army Corps of Engineers' recent demolition, calling the removal "one of the most significant fish passage efforts in recent memory. Fish passage is a tremendously popular program that has attracted partners from every corner of the private and public sectors—and everybody wins. The Corps has done a tremendous job here, and I thank them for their work."

The Service provided the Corps with an assessment of environmental benefits related to the removal of Embrey Dam, which helped justify the structure's demolition.

On the Decline

American shad was once the most plentiful fish in Virginia and other eastern rivers; George Washington was counted among the shad's early anglers. But harvests gradually declined, from more than 11 million pounds in Washington's time, to a point where Virginia placed a moratorium on shad fishing in 1993. The Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries both point to blockages by dams as a critical problem for fish migration.

A river runs through it…finally. *Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams chats with U.S. Senator John Warner of Virginia at the demolition of Embrey Dam on the Rappahannock River, near Fredericksburg, Virginia, in February. Warner said he grabbed "an old fishing hat" out of his closet to commemorate the day. He was invited to push the plunger by the Army Corps of Engineers to breach the 95-year-old abandoned dam, making the Rappahannock the longest free-flowing river in the Eastern United States. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.*

Torpedo the dam! *A joint U.S. Army-U.S. Air Force Reserve demolition team packed 640 pounds of C4 into Embrey Dam; the resulting explosion brought a cheer from 6,000 spectators. The Army Corps of Engineers will clear away the rest of the dam later this year. Photo: Tami Heilemann/DOI.*

"Along with the Corps, The Nature Conservancy and Virginia Commonwealth University, our agency has been involved with Embrey Dam for years," Williams said. "We have backed the Corps in their efforts to remove this dam for a long time. We're going to continue to help with riparian restoration and with other work to reduce erosion and maintain stable channel banks as the water is drawn down. This is an exciting project. We're very glad to be a part of it."

Embrey Dam, originally constructed in 1909 to supply hydroelectric power to the City of Fredericksburg, was abandoned as a power source in the late 1960s. The dam has subsequently developed cracks in its concrete and significant leaks and has long been viewed as a maintenance and safety liability by Fredericksburg officials. The dam's demolition and the restoration of the shad run were featured extensively in Washington, DC area news media, helping raise public awareness of fish passage.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Ospreys and Farmers Battle Over Fish in Colombia

As the sun sets behind Colombia's Andes Mountains, thousands of North American ospreys make their way to roost in trees growing along the Magdalena River. The migrating birds are drawn to this place because of what lies below—a fish farm, one of about 600 throughout the country.

Of course, these fish farms are not intended to serve as feeding grounds for hungry ospreys. The farms are part of a burgeoning industry. The fish are a cash crop, sold to both domestic and foreign markets. As a result, the fish-eating ospreys are at odds with farmers trying to protect their source of income.

Research funded by the Service's Winged Ambassadors Program indicates as many as 14,000 ospreys are killed by fish farmers each year within the seven Latin American countries surveyed. When these findings are applied to the 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries that have fish farms along the birds' migratory route, the actual mortality rate for ospreys is most certainly much higher.

One farmer surveyed, admitted to shooting about 200 ospreys each year. And, ospreys aren't the only birds being shot. Large numbers of green kingfishers, common egrets, snowy egrets, great kiskadees, striated herons, cattle egrets and black-crowned night herons are killed as they attempt to feed on this abundant supply of fish.

Osprey kills are highest in southern Colombia where farms specialize in the production of surface-feeding red tilapia, which are raised in large, open impoundments. Fish farms typically are small, family-owned operations consisting of five to 10 freshwater ponds. Farmers surveyed said that fish predation by birds like the osprey cost each small farm as much as $350,000 Colombian pesos annually, and large operations can lose several million pesos in profit each year. Colombia's Ministry of the Environment reported a significant economic loss due to fish consumption by birds. Additionally, results show that farm owners spend millions of pesos each year trying a variety of bird deterrents such as noise-making devices, scarecrows, dogs and hired-man patrols.

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Ospreys and Farmers (continued)

None of these methods has proven to be effective. All of the farm owners surveyed showed concern over their losses to bird predation and wanted to learn more cost-effective methods of discouraging birds from taking fish.

During the research period, Colombia's National Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture and The Alexander von Humboldt Institute organized a meeting of fish farm operators to discuss the issue of fish losses to bird predation. Researchers who attended the meeting were encouraged by the farmers' interest. Farmers openly shared ideas and designs for deterrents they had tried and found effective.

A few farmers reported successful results after installing overhead lines of nylon twine. These farmers said the overhead lines were inexpensive and seemed to be effective in reducing fish losses without killing birds. Other farmers surveyed, especially those running large scale farms in Ecuador, have been able to decrease fish losses by covering their ponds with nets. The nets seem to be effective as long as they are well maintained.

Since 1998, when an alarming number of wounded birds were brought from fish farms to Colombian rehabilitation facilities, the Winged Ambassador Program has funded two phases of research to document the threat to North American ospreys wintering in Latin American countries. The research clearly shows that the threat is significant. As importantly, the research shows a heightened interest within Latin American government agencies and among fish farm owners to work together to find ways to solve the problem. It is only through partnerships like these, coupled with collaboration across international borders, that problems such as those encountered by the osprey can be effectively addressed to the benefit of both birds and humans alike.

Christine Bruske, International Affairs, Washington, DC

Great Dismal Swamp Refuge Dedicated as Underground Railroad Site

Family descendants of Moses Grandy attended the ceremony dedicating Great Dismal Swamp Refuge as an Underground Railroad Site.

The Great Dismal Swamp NWR has been officially dedicated as a site on the historic Underground Railroad, the hidden network of people and places that provided refuge for African-American slaves on their long journey to freedom. Located in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina, it is the first refuge to be included in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program administered by the National Park Service.

Four other Great Dismal Swamp sites outside of the refuge were also dedicated as part of the Underground Railroad program, including the Dismal Swamp Canal, North Carolina's Dismal Swamp State Park, Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center and Elizabeth State University's Dismal Swamp Boardwalk.

The swamp, which straddles the border between Virginia and North Carolina, offered runaway slaves an opportunity to purchase their freedom by either working on the Great Dismal Swamp canal or by producing shingles and timber from cypress trees. Others found refuge deep in the swamp, living off the land as best they could. The swamp also served as a stopping point on the road to nearby ports where passage could be secured on ships traveling north.

During the Civil War, Union Army regiments of the United States Colored Troops under Brigadier General Augustus Wild marched down the Great Swamp Canal bank from Deep Creek, Virginia to northeastern North Carolina to liberate and recruit enslaved African Americans.

Descendants of Moses Grandy, a slave who helped construct the Great Swamp Canal, were in attendance at the ceremony in Chesapeake, Virginia. His autobiography can be found at <docsouth.unc.edu/grandy/menu.html>.

Julie Rowand and Terri Edwards, Public Affairs, Hadley, Massachusetts

A Refuge and a Park

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program was established in 1998 to provide technical assistance to organizations in their attempts to identify, document, preserve and interpret sites, approximate travel routes and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad. It also recognizes sites that are developing or operating interpretive and educational programs and facilities. For further information visit the program's web site at <www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr>.

One Nest, Two Nests,… 440,000 Nests!

The Laysan albatross makes Midway Atoll a favorite breeding ground. FWS photo.

A group of volunteers recently completed the huge undertaking of counting every albatross nest on Midway Atoll, near the northwestern end of the Hawaiian Islands archipelago. It was the fourth such endeavor in the past eight years. And with hundreds of thousands of nests, that's quite an accomplishment for a team of 21 individuals. Beginning on December 14, teams of two people each worked their way through assigned plots on all three islands armed with a mechanical counter and a can of spray paint to mark already counted nests. Dodging the underground burrows of other seabirds and struggling through alien vegetation, the volunteers worked at least 10-hour days and completed their task a full week earlier than expected.

Since the male and female albatrosses take turns incubating their eggs, all active nests are counted and the census is stated in terms of the number of breeding pairs. Nonbreeding individual birds are much more difficult to count and are not included, so actual albatross numbers on Midway are far higher than reported.

Census numbers are definitely up for both black-footed and Laysan albatross this year, though biologists caution that breeding can vary from year to year for a variety of reasons. "We just don't know enough yet about albatross population dynamics to conclude that their total numbers are increasing," explained wildlife biologist Beth Flint. "It could be that numbers have been down in recent years because of climate conditions, lack of available food, human impacts, or any of a number of other reasons."

Whatever the reason, the counters can't help but smile when reporting they counted a total of 441,178 Laysan albatross pairs, the highest number recorded since the censuses began in 1992 and an increase of almost 54 percent since 2001. The number of black-footed albatross pairs, which have been counted every year since 1992, has increased to 20,393, only a 7 percent increase over 2001.

Midway Atoll hosts the largest population of breeding Laysan albatross in the world, and the second largest population of breeding black-footed albatross, behind Laysan Island.

Barbara Maxfield, External Affairs, Honolulu, Hawaii

Turkeys Return to Pueblo Lands

On the count of three… *Santa Ana Pueblo staff from the Department of Natural Resources release wild turkeys to their land. FWS photos.*

It has been more than four decades since any member of Santa Ana Pueblo has heard the soft sounds of turkey wings beating the air as the birds settle into the bosque for the night.

The first ever tribal wildlife grant was awarded to Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico to establish a self-sustaining population of Merriam's wild turkey within the Pueblo's restored bosque (riverine forest) along the Rio Grande just north of Albuquerque. A grant of $210,301 was awarded on March 11. Less than a week later six turkeys were released on Pueblo lands with the promise of several more to come.

A small group gathered at dusk near the Rio Grande to watch Pueblo staff from the Department of Natural Resources release the first turkeys previously captured in southern New Mexico from the Mescalero Apache reservation. Before the containers were opened, the Governor of Santa Ana said a blessing over the turkeys. Then the container doors swung open and the birds flew up to the great cottonwood trees that line the river.

It is spring in New Mexico and the mating season has begun. "Timing was critical," said John Antonio, Native American Liaison for the Service's Southwest Region. "The Pueblo was very organized. With assistance from the Division of Federal Assistance, we were able to turn the paperwork around quickly and get the birds on the ground to take advantage of the breeding season."

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Turkeys Return to Pueblo Lands (continued)

Fly, be free. *The Santa Ana Pueblo welcomes the return of turkeys to their land. FWS photos.*

Congress authorized the Service to use $5 million of its FY2002 appropriation to establish a competitive wildlife conservation grant program for federally-recognized Indian tribes. Grant funds can be used for the development and implementation of programs for the benefit of wildlife and their habitat, including species that are not hunted or fished. Another tribal grant program (Tribal Landowner Incentive Program) was also established the same year with $4 million allocated from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Santa Ana Pueblo has been getting ready for turkeys long before their grant application was approved in the initial offering of the Tribal Wildlife Grant Program. The Pueblo has been busy replacing non-native vegetation along the Rio Grande with native willows and cottonwoods as well as encouraging natural regeneration of cottonwoods through flooding. More than 700 acres of salt cedar was cleared along six miles of river corridor. "We've restored our bosque and now it is an ideal place for turkeys," said Governor Armijo.

Turkeys are important to the Pueblo both spiritually and culturally. "This grant is very beneficial," said Governor Armijo. "We use turkey feathers for ceremonial and for traditional uses. The feathers are used in our prayers in much the same way that others would use lighted candles (for their prayers)."

"This grant is a true partnership between the Service and Santa Ana Pueblo," said Regional Director Dale Hall. "By signing this grant, we enter into an exciting new program with which we can continue to fulfill our federal trust responsibilities."

The National Wild Turkey Federation and the New Mexico Game and Fish Department have been assisting in various aspects of this turkey restoration effort. Altogether about 60 turkeys will be released under the grant. The Pueblo's Department of Natural Resources has established a long-term monitoring plan to track the birds. The goal is to manage for a self-sustaining population.

Elizabeth Slown, Public Affairs
Albequerque, New Mexico

Kern NWR Conducts First Successful Flood in 40 Years

For the first time in its 40-year history, the Kern National Wildlife Refuge—the most important wintering area for waterfowl in the southern San Joaquin Valley—was able to flood all 6,500 acres of its wetland habitat this past winter. In prior years, the refuge in northern Kern County, California, has flooded between 2,200 acres and 5,600 acres.

The increased water supply has provided more abundant food and improved nesting conditions for many bird species. That has meant a marked increase in bird populations and species diversity.

"The population of wintering and nesting birds has increased dramatically," Refuge Manager David Hardt said. More than 5,000 white-faced ibis, a species of special concern rarely seen at Kern just a decade ago, are successfully nesting in the wetlands.

Along with the ibis are large populations of ducks, geese, shorebirds and wading birds, including avocets, egrets and great blue herons. Also present are tri-colored blackbirds, a rare species in the Central Valley.

"The last few months offered a wonderful opportunity for the public to see the spectacular migratory bird populations that migrate through the southern San Joaquin Valley," Hardt said. Visitors were able to see much of the wildlife on a 6.5-mile self-guided automobile tour that begins at the refuge headquarters.

Service, Navy and The Aleut Corporation Complete Land Exchange

Steve Thompson, manager of the Service's California/Nevada Operations Office, encouraged people to take advantage of this opportunity to enjoy the thriving bird population during the spring months.

The landmark achievement of having enough water to flood all 6,500 acres of wetland habitat in Kern NWR is the result of a decade of increased cooperation between agricultural water districts in the Valley and Federal program managers, Thompson said. Kern NWR was established without enough water and conveyance facilities to fully flood its wetland habitat. However, the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act directed the Bureau of Reclamation and the Service to secure a full and reliable water supply for eight federal refuges (including Kern), five state wildlife areas and the private ducks clubs within Merced County. The Act also required the construction of conveyance facilities to transport full water supplies to these refuges.

"Valley farmers and water districts, along with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service, have built an increasingly supportive partnership to improve Kern NWR and other wetlands in the San Joaquin Valley," Thompson said.

Al Donner, Public Affairs, Sacramento, California

The Interior Department recently transferred 47,291 acres of land on Adak Island, Alaska, including the former Adak Naval Air Facility, to The Aleut Corporation in exchange for equal acreage of their Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act entitlement lands, mostly in the Shumagin Islands. The transfer was the culmination of a complex land exchange agreement among the U.S. Navy, The Aleut Corporation, and the Service that began almost 10 years ago.

The first problem was that the Adak Complex was listed as a Superfund site in May of l994. Cleanup operations were managed under an agreement with the Navy, the State of Alaska, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Cleanup operations were quickly extended when archival evidence of unexploded ordnance was discovered. Five years later, in December of 2003, the Navy determined Adak suitable for transfer from the United States.

The land transfer was unique for both the Navy and the Service, because the former Adak Naval Air Facility was a military withdrawal on top of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Once the base was cleaned, closed and the Navy gone, the Refuge would have inherited a small, vacant city. Instead, The Aleut Corporation, an Alaskan Regional Native Corporation, offered their claims to undeveloped islands (and better wildlife habitat) within refuge boundaries to the Service.

At a ceremony, The Aleut Corporation first accepted transfer of the northern portion of the military withdrawal from the United States and then promptly reconveyed the airport to the State of Alaska and other public roads and facilities to the City of Adak. They intend to create a viable community on a previously isolated military base.

Beautiful Mount Moffett stands behind the city of Adak. FWS photo: Karen Boylan.

A Brief History of Adak Island

Adak Island was first declared a wildlife preserve in 1913, and then designated as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1940. A military base and airstrip were developed on the Island during World War II. Primary jurisdiction of the base, airstrip, and northern portion of the island was given to the Navy in 1959 for use as a cold war facility. In its heyday, the Naval Air Facility supported a population of 6,000 people and was the 6th largest city in Alaska. Facilities included a high school with an Olympic size swimming pool and a McDonalds. The base was ordered closed in l995 under the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act and operationally closed on March 3l, l997.

"This is truly a win-win situation for all of the involved parties," said Rowan Gould, the Service's Alaska Regional Director. "The Aleut Corporation receives valuable land and infrastructure that they have been seeking for some time now; the Service's Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge gains the benefits of some valuable wildlife habitat, the Navy successfully closes one of its bases, and Alaskans will see a revitalized city of Adak in the western Aleutians."

Danielle Jerry, Chief of Division of Natural Resources, Alaska

Athabascan Tribes to Work with Yukon Flats NWR

Yukon Flats NWR is internationally noted for its abundance of migratory birds (at left). Meandering waterways and seasonal flooding make the refuge a robust haven for moose, bears, wolves, and more than a million annual ducks, shorebirds and other waterfowl. Service staff band waterfowl at the refuge (above). FWS photos.

The Service and the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) have reached agreement on a proposal that will enable the Council to perform some of the Service's work on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska during 2004–2005.

Under the agreement, the Council will perform activities including: 1) locating and marking public easements across private lands within the Refuge boundary; 2) assisting with environmental education and outreach in local villages; 3) monitoring wildlife harvest; 4) surveying moose populations (in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game); and 5) maintaining Federal property in and around Fort Yukon. Public use (including sport and subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping) will not be affected by this agreement, and management authority will remain with the Service as required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act.

This agreement is the product of almost two years of negotiations. It was modified after a 60 day public comment period which included public meetings in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Under provisions of the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act, qualifying Indian Tribes and consortia of tribes may request to perform activities administered by the Department of the Interior which are of geographic, historic or cultural significance to the participating tribe making the request. Five of the tribal villages of the CATG are within the refuge boundary.

Secretary Norton said, "This landmark agreement provides the Service with another tool to better engage local Alaska residents in refuge management activities and to build enduring relationships between refuge staff and local residents, including tribal members.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge has a long history of working cooperatively with the Native people of the region. Refuge staff have great respect for tribal members' knowledge of the area and for their desire to protect its wild resources for future generations of all Americans, a goal which reflects the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System."

Anna Huntington-Kriska, the Council's Executive Director said, "We are honored to begin this unique step in our government-to-government relationship with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This historic agreement is one of the first of its kind, and we look forward to an on- going relationship that will continue for years and will ultimately improve the management and operation of the Yukon Flats for future generations."

Randy Mayo, Chairman of the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments; and Ted Heuer, Manager, Yukon Flats NWR

Consortium Member Tribes

The CATG is a qualified tribal consortium composed of Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Canyon Village, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government of Fort Yukon, Rampart, Stevens Village, and Venetie. Members of these tribes live near or within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, the third largest unit in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Refuge was established in 1980, and includes more than 8.5 million acres of wetland and boreal forest habitat along 300 miles of the Yukon River, north of Fairbanks, Alaska.

Scaling Up on Capitol Hill

One of the basic tenets of fishing is keeping quiet. A successful angler generally does not reveal his or her favorite fishing location, favorite lure or fly, or even the most favorable weather conditions that mean fish will be biting.

This year, the Service's Fisheries program is taking a different tack. We are celebrating the "Scaling Up…Conserving America's Fisheries" initiative, a product of our strategic planning process, thanking partners for their help in promoting past fisheries accomplishments, and most importantly showcasing what fisheries is going to do in the future.

The primary goal of the initiative is to build internal and external support to achieve the full potential of the Service's Fisheries program, as articulated in the program's Vision and Strategic Planning documents. A large part of building this support is letting people know about our programs and the important work our staff does day in, day out.

Early planning between Fisheries and External Affairs ADRS' last December helped prepare the efforts on Capitol Hill. The first lures of the outreach portion of the Scaling Up initiative were thrown out during the final week of March, when Service staff from all levels and all Regions congregated in Washington, DC to travel to Capitol Hill as a unified group to meet with Congressional offices. Among the group were all of the Assistant Regional Directors for Fisheries, and Dr. Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation.

The week began with a Leadership and Partnership Forum featuring comments by Deputy Director Matt Hogan, Dr. Mamie Parker, and Assistant Regional Directors Gerry Jackson and Jaime Geiger. Michael Hickey, the Budget Examiner with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) who handles the Service's accounts, provided a rousing presentation on the Fisheries program's accomplishments, and where the program needs to head in the future.

By the end of the week, Service staff had met with 103 Congressional offices to talk about the draft *National Fisheries Strategic Plan* and provide an overview of the Fisheries program. During the meetings, staff focused on the economic impact and recreational opportunities afforded by healthy fisheries, current challenges facing fish and their habitat, the Service's national priorities—invasive species, national fish habitat initiative, national fish passage program, native species restoration and recovery, and national fish hatchery operations—and the important role partners continue to play in the program's success. Highlights of the meetings included a panel discussion with Appropriations Committee majority and minority staff from both the Senate and

In March, Service staff met with 103 Congressional offices to provide an overview of the Fisheries program.

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MBNA supports NWRS. *Interior Secretary Gale Norton praised a recent announcement that MBNA Financial Services is contributing $200,000 to be used for the National Wildlife Refuge System and to support beneficial conservation projects. This initial gift was made with a pledge of an additional $300,000 before the end of September.*

The donation is being made possible through a partnership between the financial company and the National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial Commission, which was established in 2002 to assist in planning and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Refuge System.

"This generous donation," said Norton, "will help support a strong partnership effort with State agencies, refuge friends groups and volunteers to help shape the refuge system in coming years." The contribution will also help fund refuge habitat conservation project grants that benefit refuge lands and adjacent lands over the next five years.

"I am grateful, encouraged, and excited to see the refuge system being ushered into its next century with so much promise and support," said Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Photo: Tami Heilemann/DOI

Scaling Up on Capitol Hill
(continued)

House of Representatives, and meetings involving the Director and Dr. Parker with Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Service's authorizing Committees.

The week of Congressional meetings was a success, made so by the Fisheries program's strong message and the enthusiastic participation of Service staff. Even so, this is just the first part of the "Scaling Up…Conserving America's Fisheries" initiative. There are a number of media and Congressional events in Washington, DC, including the "Hook and Cook" Fish Festival reception which took place on Capitol Hill on May 6th, and Regions will be hosting events throughout the summer to get our partners and other stakeholders more involved in the Service's Fisheries program.

As with many great days of fishing, it is much more enjoyable and productive if you don't go it alone. Sometimes talking about the good things that have been done and the great things that can be accomplished is the best way to go. This is the direction the Service's Fisheries program is headed as it works toward *Healthy Fish, Healthy Habitats, Healthy Economy, and Healthy People.*

Matthew C. Huggler, Legislative Affairs Specialist, Washington, DC

Thank yous all around

The Fisheries Program had some special thanks for almost two dozen members of Congress and members and officers of several non-government organizations as well as volunteers who have served on the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council at the program's "Hook and Cook" reception at the Library of Congress on May 6.

Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, cited Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, Senator Conrad Burns of Montana, Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho, Senator Ernest Hollings of North Carolina for their support and work on behalf of conservation and fisheries. Also cited were Representative John Dingell of Michigan, Representative Wayne Gilchrest of Maryland, Representative Jim Saxton of New Jersey and Representative Clay Shaw of Florida.

Senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming, Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas and Representative Robin Hayes of North Carolina and Representative Mike Thompson of California, the leadership of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, all were thanked for their organization's support of the Fisheries Program.

Awards also went to Bill Taylor, Robin Knox, Gary Myers and Jim Martin for their work on the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council for "their invaluable guidance, devotion and commitment to helping write and implement" Fisheries' new Strategic Plan.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

55 Years on the Job and Still Loving It

Maintenance Foreman Edwin "Drum" Drummond has called Wichita Mountains NWR, OK, home for 74 years. He is celebrating 55 years working on the refuge. FWS photos.

On March 29, Edwin "Drum" Drummond celebrated his 55th year of working at Wichita Mountains NWR in Oklahoma, the land he has called home for all but two of his 76 years.

"He knows every rock here," said Forestry Technician Mike McKenzie. "He is as much a part of this refuge as Sunset Peak."

The son of a ranger who worked on Wichita Mountains Refuge for 31 years, Drum, maintenance foreman, is part of the refuge's history. He worked for four summers during high school and was credited with a year of service. Since he joined the refuge staff fulltime in 1949, he has seen visitation grow from 150,000 to 1.7 million last year.

He played a role in the creation of the "excess program," in which extra buffalo and Texas Longhorn calves annually are sold to private owners. Indeed, his father helped re-establish the pure strain Longhorn herd that is the only cattle herd on any refuge. Each year, Drum is stationed at the same gate at the end of the sales arena, a place informally known as Drummond's Gate. Wichita Mountains Refuge was also the first federally owned land to re-establish the nation's buffalo herd.

Drum worked on the refuge as its management passed from the Forest Service to the Bureau of Biological Survey, to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife and finally to the Service. Indeed, both of his

The Greatest Time in the World

Edwin Drummond (left) grew up on Wichita Mountains Refuge with Lynn Greenwalt (right), whose father was refuge manager. Greenwalt ultimately became a Service director. FWS photo archives.

children grew up on the refuge, as he did along with his childhood friend, Lynn Greenwalt, who became director of the Service.

Today, he is responsible for a maintenance staff of eight who keep 100 miles of road, parking lots, bridges and other facilities safe for visitors. He and his staff are also responsible for keeping the large visitor and environmental education center in top shape, maintaining 90 miles of fencing, and operating heavy equipment.

"I've been over most of the refuge, one time at least, and most of it several times," recalled Drum of the 59,000-acre refuge. "There's no one season that I like the most. I like to see the changes that go with each season, to see how the animals change their ways." The refuge staff recognizes that his insights and experience are priceless. "Drum's commitment to the refuge is unstinting," said Refuge Manager Sam Waldstein. "His passion for this place is boundless. His understanding of the landscape is total. He once told me, "There's no such thing as an expert. You can always keep learning."

Drum agrees. The nicest thing about working on the refuge, he says, is that everyday is a new experience.

Martha Nudel, Division of Visitor Services and Communications, National Wildlife Refuge System

From birds to beds. *Former Chincoteague refuge manager Denny Holland has managing in his blood. He now runs a B&B with his wife, Kathy, not far from the Service veteran's last duty station on Chincoteague Island.*

Refuges are Denny Holland's life. Holland, now retired and running a bed and breakfast with his wife Kathy, still lives near the refuge he last managed, Chincoteague NWR.

Holland grew up on a refuge. His late father, Ernest Holland, started as a laborer in 1939 with the Bureau of Biological Survey at Carolina Sandhills NWR, and then at Santee, Kentucky Woodlands—now "the Land Between the Lakes" operated by the U.S. Forest Service, and Wheeler NWR. Young Denny spent most of his youth with his family at Carolina Sandhills,

"In those days, managing a refuge was a family affair," said Holland. "Everyone in the family was involved."

Holland began "working" Carolina Sandhills when he was 10 years old. The refuge was adjacent to a bombing range.

"Those were the war years," said Holland. "There was no labor force. The refuge was staffed with three 70-year-old men and my father, the refuge manager. Every time there was a new class of bombardiers, fires were set everywhere."

Part of young Holland's "job" was to help operate the 1936 WPA International truck with a 500 gallon water tank and pumper.

"It was made of steel. You could hit a tree and not put a dent in it. We would fill the tank from the many fresh streams in the area."

"When the fires started, they were really bad in the spring before the forest greened up. The men from the Army camp, a few from the State of South Carolina and the few of us from the refuge would gather up friends and children to fight the fires."

After literally growing up on refuges, Holland spent 18 months in Korea and continued to think about land management. When he returned to the states, he earned a degree in wildlife biology and started as a temporary maintenance man at Santee NWR and then as a GS-5 trainee. "I accrued annual leave but was not allowed to use it," said Holland. "But I didn't mind. I was having a great time at work."

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The Greatest Time in the World (continued)

Holland's career took him through many refuges in the Southeast. He became the assistant manager at Cape Romaine NWR and then refuge manager at Hollabend and Eufaula NWR.

"I hated to leave each of these stations," said Holland. "They were in small towns where the public really supported refuges, especially at Eufaula where I followed my friend and former co-worker, John Eadie. He was a super manager and the public support he developed made it easy for me."

Later, as manager of Back Bay NWR, he worked with many challenging issues such as beach access and development.

"That is where I was tested. Instead of living in a nice community where people like you, I stepped into a hornets' nest near a metropolitan area. We shut off beach access through the refuge. I realized that only time would resolve this issue; we had to outlive it." Holland ended his career at what he terms a "great success."

"Chincoteague NWR is an excellent example of wildlife and humans co-existing," he said. "Intensive management of wildlife and providing opportunities for visitors to view wildlife is what refuges are all about. A million and half visitors come through the refuge each year, but they only see about 10 percent of it. Management of wildlife and people is a matter of zoning the uses. We successfully managed visitors in cars in the same area inhabited by the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel and piping plover."

As Holland reflects on his career he offers the following comment to Service employees; "Be patient. Working for the refuge system is the greatest time in the world."

Although none of the Holland's children have gone on to work for refuges, Holland speaks of former director Lynn Greenwalt, he refers to him as "my grandson's other granddad." Maybe there is still a chance their grandchildren will work for the Service.

Nicholas Throckmorton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Denny Holland now volunteers with the Service's Heritage Committee and can be reached by e-mail at <Denny_Holland@fws.gov>.

Paddlefish: Long Distance Run Around

When coal beds were still forests and ferns, paddlefish swam about the inland waters of North America. This ancient fish, big and odd looking, has survived 350 million years since the Devonian period. Today, when you look at a map of the fish's range it might remind you of veins on a leaf. The paddlefish lives in the big rivers from Montana to Louisiana, all across the Mississippi basin. When you overlay the artificial political boundaries over the dendritic pattern, you can readily see why there's a need for coordinated management of a big river behemoth that wanders far and wide.

And wander they do. Paddlefish tagged at Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery in Yankton, South Dakota took a trip down the Missouri River, down the Mississippi, then up the Kaskaskia in Illinois where commercial fishermen caught it Fish tagged in Texas, have been caught by shrimp trawlers in the Gulf of Mexico off the Louisiana shoreline.

That's where the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) comes in. MICRA is an association of 28 states, tribes and federal agencies in the Mississippi basin that exists solely to promote effective management of natural resources, including the paddlefish. Service biologist, Jerry Rasmussen is MICRA's coordinator. Rasmussen says a coordinated effort is absolutely essential to manage a fish like the paddlefish, and the states look to the Service for leadership with inter-jurisdictional fisheries.

Part of that help comes in the form of database management. Biologists at the Service's Columbia and Carterville Fisheries Resources Offices located in Missouri and Illinois, keep up the National Paddlefish Database that's stored all of the data from tagging studies from across the Mississippi basin since 1995.

It's the biggest fish mark-recapture project of its kind in an inland water system. And the results from recapturing fish are big, leading to a new understanding about habitat, behavior and movement. The database yields trends in growth rates and condition of fish, as well as population sizes over time. Moreover, the database helps state fish and game agency partners development informed paddlefish management plans.

Those plans often call for augmenting rivers with hatchery-reared paddlefish to offset the damage dams have in blocking spawning migrations. Poaching from the illegal caviar trade has an impact, too. A number of federal and state hatcheries fill the need.

Paddlefish populations in the upper Missouri River have benefitted from Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery, working with state fish biologists from South Dakota and Nebraska. They raise about 25,000, 15-inch

Eric Leis of the La Crosse Fish Health Center is pictured with one of 26 paddlefish sampled on the Black River, near Piedmount, Missouri. FWS photo.

long paddlefish each year. In the southern states, Mammoth Spring National Fish Hatchery in Arkansas, and Private John Allen NFH in Mississippi rear large numbers of paddlefish that go into the White River system in Arkansas, and the Tombigbee and Mississippi rivers in Tennessee. Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery in Oklahoma has returned paddlefish to waters above dams on the Arkansas, Red, and Verdigris rivers, in some cases where they were absent for half a century. Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery spawns paddlefish from Louisiana's Mermentau River and Bayou Nezpique. Working in concert with the Booker Fowler State Fish Hatchery, young fish are divvied up, grown out, and planted in formerly occupied waters in Louisiana.

Finding the right habitat for paddlefish to spawn can be difficult. Swimming 200 miles in a month is not unheard of, and over the course of the fish's 30-year life span, they can cross a number of times those artificial boundaries that lay over their large native range. To do an effective job, biologists need the coordinated management facilitated by MICRA and the National Paddlefish Database.

Craig Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Fallen Firefighters Monument. *Service Director Steve Williams pauses in front of a statute of a sawyer in wildland firefighting gear at the fallen firefighters monument at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. Among dozens of firefighters honored there are the only three to ever die in the line of duty on national wildlife refuges—Richard S. Bolt, Okefenokee NWR, 1979; and Scott Maness and Beau Sauselein, Merritt Island NWR, 1981. The monument is characterized by a naturally landscaped memorial park with a waterfall, numerous engraved granite markers, and bronze sculptures of firefighters with various tools. Chainsaws are used in fire suppression operations, as well as for fuels reduction to reduce fire hazard. Williams visited the Service's national Branch of Fire Management, headquartered at the Center, to address current issues and activities in the diverse program.*

Restoring Tropical Environments, or Is That Coffee Shade-Grown?

Sun or shade grown? The coffee beans on the left were grown in full sun, the right, on a restored shade plantation. FWS photos: L. Miranda-Castro.

Is your coffee habit destroying tropical habitat? If you're not drinking shade-grown coffee, then the answer is YES! Traditionally, coffee was cultivated under a shading canopy of native trees in tropical areas of the world. Modern coffee plantations are often monocultures grown in direct sunlight, creating conditions that cause increased stress on coffee plants. Their response to these conditions is to "reproduce before dying," producing more coffee beans per plant, but only for five to seven years. The plants then rapidly drop their production of coffee beans, are increasingly vulnerable to insect and disease damage, and soon must be replaced. The remaining soils are nutrient poor and easily eroded.

Within the U.S., coffee is commercially cultivated only in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Shade coffee plantations are a simple but stable agro-ecosystem that can be an important wildlife management tool. A shaded canopy provides most of the ecological functions of the natural environment, including soil conservation, nutrient recycling, habitat for native, endemic and migratory birds, and shelter for many plant and wildlife species. As an added bonus, recent studies have demonstrated that net yields and profits from shade coffee plantations are higher than modern cultivation methods.

Of the approximately 90,000 acres of coffee grown in Puerto Rico, less than 40 percent is shaded by a canopy of native trees. The Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program in the Caribbean is the only shade coffee restoration effort currently occurring within the U.S. Through this voluntary, private landowner-Service partnership, simple habitat restoration techniques were developed that allowed farmers to improve production, reduce the application of fertilizers and pesticides, and reduce labor costs. In addition, secondary crops, such as citrus fruit, bananas, plantains, coconuts, pineapples, cut flowers, and other products diversify the farmers' products, making farming more sustainable way of life.

In its first four years, Partners for Fish and Wildlife has restored more than 1,000 acres through this innovative tropical habitat restoration partnership. Working with the

One of the restored shade coffee plantations in Ciales, Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Agricultural Extension Service, and Organization Envirosurvey, Inc., has led to great success. Even local schools got involved – working with the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources, they provided more than 10,000 native legume trees. The primary benefit of the restoration was habitat enhancement for many Neotropical migratory birds, endemic birds, such as the Puerto Rican vireo, endangered Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned hawks (Accipiter striatus venator) and the Puerto Rican boa (Epicrates inornatus).

So next time you go in search of a Cup-A-Joe, consider where those coffee beans came from and all the benefits of shade grown coffee—better yet, remember that the Service is making a difference by restoring tropical habitats. And make that next cup of coffee shade-grown!

Congratulations to Leopoldo Miranda-Castro who has been selected as a finalist in the 2004 Service to America Medals "Call to Service" award competition for developing this innovative restoration program. He is a Biologist in the Fish and Habitat Conservation Washington Office, Branch of Habitat Restoration.

Leopoldo Miranda-Castro,
Fish and Habitat Conservation Office,
Arlington, Virginia

Fish & Wildlife Honors

Sam Hamilton (right) with Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

Sam D. Hamilton, Southeast Regional Director, Receives Presidential Rank Award

During a special White House ceremony on March 25, 2004, Sam Hamilton was honored for his long-term commitment to leading change and people, his results-driven business acumen, and his dedication to building long-term coalitions through effective communication with stakeholders, as well as federal, state and local agencies. A native of Starkville, Mississippi, and a career Service employee, Hamilton is responsible for overseeing the management of 120 national wildlife refuges comprising more than 3.2 million acres, 14 national fish hatcheries, five fishery assistance offices, and 16 ecological services field offices in 10 Southeastern states, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. One of Hamilton's most notable accomplishments includes championing the innovative concept of sequestering carbon dioxide gas on national wildlife refuges by planting native, hardwood trees. The Service has partnered with major power companies throughout the Southeast to replant wildlife refuges in native hardwoods that provide carbon credits to the companies and increases habitat for wildlife.

Frank Pfeifer and **Herb Bollig** have been selected as the co-Project Leaders of the Year for Calendar year 2003 by Region 6. Pfeifer has been the complex manager of the Vernal Fisheries Office, which combines the Colorado River Fisheries Project and the Ouray National Fish Hatchery, for the past two years. He has guided improvements on all of the infrastructure and fish rearing methods to ensure that the razorback sucker propagation program is contributing to the overall Colorado River Recovery Program. His leadership on the river studies, habitat restoration, and nonnative fish removal programs has helped the Service and the multi-agency Recovery Program keep the razorback sucker in a "serious but stable" condition.

Bollig is the hatchery manager at the Gavins Point Dam National Fish Hatchery. While continuing his complex sport fish mitigation program involving perch, walleye, paddlefish, crappie, bluegill, and bass, he has established his station and staff as nationally and world renowned experts on pallid sturgeon propagation. Bollig and his staff maintain the broodstocks from eight year-classes of pallids that have been spawned during recent years and they produce, tag, and release large numbers of yearling pallids into the Missouri River for population enhancement. Aging wild pallids will soon die and the recovery of the pallid sturgeon will depend on flow modifications and habitat restoration and the young fish that Bollig and others in the Missouri River basin have established in the wild and maintained in captivity for refugia and future spawning.

Julie Thompson, Chesapeake Bay Field Office, Coastal Program, received the EPA Bronze Metal for work on the Asian oyster Issue. It was presented on April 15, 2004, at the EPA Regional Office in Philadelphia. The Bronze Metal is the highest award given at the EPA Regional level and is generally given to EPA employees. Thompson is one of nine scientists who received the award for work on the oyster issue. Seven awards went to EPA personnel. The other award went to a NOAA representative.

The dramatic decline of the native oyster due to disease and over-harvesting has caused economic and ecological harm. In response, the Virginia Seafood Council proposed introducing a non-native oyster into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay for aquaculture production. No clear process for regulating and evaluating the introduction of a non-native species exists. The team used ingenuity and creativity to accomplish the following: requested a National Academy of Sciences Study on non-native oysters in the Chesapeake Bay and worked with NAS to outline ecological, economic, social, and regulatory issues; achieved agreement on permit conditions which reflected the findings of the NAS study; established a group of experts from across the watershed to evaluate the proposed introduction and provide recommendations; achieved consensus on a joint statement by the federal agencies cautioning against introduction before a thorough analysis; and succeeded in reaching agreement by the states and federal agencies to develop, voluntarily, an environmental impact statement.

Transitions…Who's Coming and Going

Carey S. Smith has decided to retire from Federal Service after 30 years on January 2, 2004. Smith started his Federal career as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force and became a Fish and Wildlife Service employee upon completing his Master's degree at the University of Montana.

As a pilot/biologist for the Office of Migratory Bird Management, he flew waterfowl surveys from the Yucatan to the Yukon, trapped and banded over 10,000 ducks, and coordinated inter-agency waterfowl surveys throughout major portions of the West.

In 1982, Smith transferred to Region 1 to become the Regional Refuge Biologist and later the Chief of the Division of Biological Support in Refuges. During his tenure, he implemented a system of biological standards and inter-agency biological reviews of refuges, both programs now have been adopted nationally. In 1990, Smith became the Pacific Coast Joint Venture Coordinator. During the first five years of the Joint Venture Smith built a strong coalition of partners despite the fact that he had no operational funding. Since the beginning the Joint Venture, this partnership has grown to include Alaska and Hawaii. The joint venture partners have acquired over 300,00 acres of habitat for migratory birds and anadromous fish and restored another 130,000 acres of wetlands at a total cost of about $500 million. Smith has received numerous awards for his accomplishments as Joint Venture Coordinator including the Department of the Interior's Superior Service Award in 2000. More recently, he was a recipient of the 2004 Ducks Unlimited Conservation Achievement Award.

Carey Smith releases a pintail duck in August 1970. FWS photo: Ron Reynolds

Smith and his colleague Ron Reynolds worked here, on the Horn River near its confluence of the McKenzie River west of Fort Providence, at an is isolated two-man banding station to help determine waterfowl migratory routes. "We had a slow start that year catching no birds the first two weeks and fighting with recedeing water levels," remembers Smith. "However, the fishing was great so we didn't want to tell anyone how poorly we were doing for fear we would have to move to another location. Fortunately, the birds finally arrived and we banded more than 5,000 in the last two weeks."

Smith's Federal career may be ending but he will remain active in many of the same activities. In recognition of his accomplishments, the Pacific Coast Joint Venture Management Board has retained Carey to continue as Pacific Coast Joint Venture Coordinator. His office will remain at the Columbia River Fisheries Program Office in Vancouver, Washington and his email address and telephone number will be unchanged. He can be reached at 360/696 7630 or <Carey_Smith@fws.gov>.

Nancy Gloman was named the new Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs for the Southwest Region. Gloman began her career in 1976 at the Ecological Service Field Office in Bloomington, Indiana. She transfers to Albuquerque from Arlington, Virginia where she most recently served as Chief of the Division of Conservation Planning and Policy for the Refuge System.

Region 3 Federal Assistance Division Chief **Brad Johnson** retired April 2 after serving admirably in this position for eight years.

John Hartig has been selected as the first full-time refuge manager at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. He will begin his duties on July 10. Hartig brings more than 25 years of experience in environmental science and natural resource management to his new position. For the past five years, he has served as River Navigator for the Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative. As River Navigator he worked with Detroit River communities and businesses to identify and implement high priority projects that foster environmental stewardship, promote environmentally sustainable economic development, and celebrate history and culture. Prior to becoming River Navigator, he spent 14 years working for the International Joint Commission on the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Fish & Wildlife…In Brief

New Hunting and Fishing Coordinator for the National Wildlife Refuge System

Tom Reed has been appointed the first Hunting and Fishing Coordinator for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In this position, Reed will develop and analyze hunting and fishing policies on refuges. He will identify needs for visitor services facilities including boat docks and launches, educational kiosks, and interpretive signs. Reed is also involved in launching a new training course for visitor service professionals, entitled, "The Role of Hunting in Wildlife Conservation and Management."

"My goal is to promote ethical hunting and fishing opportunities on refuges that compliment the mission on the National Wildlife Refuge System and gain an understanding and appreciation for the differences in methodology and culture of hunting and fishing across the system," Reed said.

Reed's career is already rooted in the National Wildlife Refuge System. He served as the Refuge Manager/Refuge Officer of three San Diego coastal refuges (Tijuana Slough, South San Diego Bay and Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuges). Prior to that, he served as the Assistant Manager/Officer at Red Rocks Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana for four years, and worked in the Division of Ecological Services including as a private lands coordinator.

New Fishing Coordinator for Fisheries

Service Director Steve Williams announced the appointment of biologist **Richard Christian** to the new position of Partnership Coordinator and said he wants his agency to "reconnect" with anglers across the country.

Christian, who is assigned to the Division of the National Fish Hatchery System in the Washington, DC, Fisheries Program, brings 20 years of experience working with non- government organizations, State and Federal agencies and the fishing industry to his new post.

"Richard Christian will be working with the whole range of private groups, organizations and public agencies at every level, as well as related industry representatives, who have an interest in recreational fishing and boating," Williams said.

Christian will be involved in the Fisheries Program Evaluation being carried out by the Sport Fish Boating and Partnership Council, the Mitchell Act, coastal fisheries coordination with NOAA Fisheries and the Marine Fisheries Commissions, and will contribute as well to National Fishing and Boating Week.

2004 Refuge Manager and Employee of the Year and Guy Bradley Law Enforcement Awards

The National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation named Mike Bryant the recipient of the Paul Kroegel Refuge Manager of the Year and John Taylor is the Refuge Employee of the Year. Special Agent Scott Pearson received the Guy Bradley Law Enforcement Award.

Refuge Manager of the Year: **Mike Bryant** stood out for his leadership in the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. The Bonner Bridge travels through Pea Island NWR and is the only transportation corridor that links the mainland to Hatteras Island for over 4 million visitors annually. The 2.5 mile bridge spans one of the most dynamic marine environments in the world. Working with North Carolina's Department of Transportation, Bryant encouraged them to alter the location of the replacement bridge to conserve wintering waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, and loggerhead sea turtles.

Refuge Employee of the Year: **John Taylor** is a wildlife biologist for the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, NM. He is the first Land Management Research and Demonstration site biologist in the country. He is being recognized for his pioneering and innovative techniques for conserving river water during severe drought while managing the conversion of salt cedar monocultures back to native vegetation; as well as his efforts to fine-tune the management of sandhill crane and other migratory bird populations and feeding resources to minimize damage to neighboring private croplands.

The Guy Bradley Award, named after the first wildlife law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty, is a national honor presented each year by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to recognize individuals for outstanding lifetime contributions to wildlife law enforcement.

Special Agent **Scott Pearson** was recognized for his accomplishments as an investigator, supervisor, and mentor over the course of a 30-year career with the Service. As the Service's Resident Agent in Charge in Sacramento from 1980 through September 2003, he directed a field enforcement operation that was one of the agency's largest in terms of number of officers; geographic area covered; variety of protected species; acreage of wildlife habitat; and scope, complexity, and quantity of investigations. Notable successes included securing $9.4 million in fines from the company responsible for a 1997 oil spill near San Francisco that killed endangered pelicans and a $10 million settlement agreement signed in 2002 with the State's largest utility company that will help protect eagles from being electrocuted on power lines.

A Blueprint for Migratory Birds

I am pleased to announce that the Service has released the Migratory Bird Program's ten-year strategic plan entitled, A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds.

The Service is responsible for the conservation and management of more than 800 species of migratory birds. During their seasonal movements, these remarkable species travel hundreds, in some cases thousands of miles, traversing State and national boundaries and broad landscapes and seascapes. Ensuring the continued survival of such mobile species transcends the management capabilities of any single agency or Nation and depends upon cooperation among all governments that share this magnificent resource.

I am confident that the development of the Migratory Bird Program's strategic plan will help the Service remain poised to play a continued and significant leadership role in the conservation of migratory birds in this country and beyond.

I encourage you to familiarize yourselves with this document whether you are in the Migratory Bird Program or not, Appendix 6 covers the migratory bird conservation responsibilities of other Service programs. To see the plan and additional supporting resources, please visit the following web site: <migratorybirds.fws.gov/mbstratplan/mbstratplan.htm>. A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds charts the Service's direction in migratory bird conservation over the next ten years while building on its successful legacy.

Over the past year we have worked with a wide range of partners and the public to develop the Blueprint and so it reflects a great deal of input from the many individuals and organizations in this country that care deeply about migratory birds. With their help, we are ready to confront the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead to build on our successful history of accomplishments.

Each of us has unique contributions to make to the broad goals of migratory bird conservation and we must work together to achieve them. Ultimately, the plan may affect the habitats that a migratory bird depends upon for an entire season, or merely a matter of days. In either case, together we will work to ensure a promising future for these species. The conservation of migratory birds is clearly one of the Service's highest priorities, and it will continue to receive our best efforts.

Steve Williams

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