

3-2004

Refuge Update – March/April 2004, Volume 1, Number 2

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"Refuge Update – March/April 2004, Volume 1, Number 2" (2004). *RefugeUpdate (USFWS-NWRS)*. 13.
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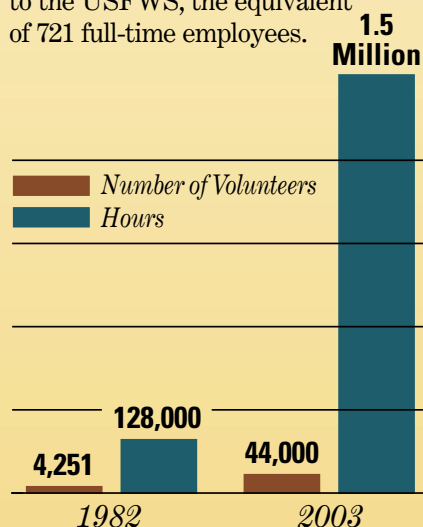
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Volunteers Up Tenfold

Volunteers contribute 1.5 million hours to the USFWS, the equivalent of 721 full-time employees.



RefugeUpdate

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During the first-ever Web chat conducted by the USFWS March 11, Refuge System employees asked questions about the upcoming Conservation in Action Summit. Refuge System Web master Sandra Hodala facilitated the posting of responses to questions posed to Bob Byrne of the Wildlife Management Institute, standing left, Evan Hirsche, National Wildlife Refuge Association, standing center, and Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig. (Dick Cole/USFWS)

Summit Will Identify Measurable Goals

A Shared Sense of Priorities

National leaders, including two Congressmen who have been vitally involved with wildlife refuge issues, have been invited to speak at the Conservation in Action Summit, where strategic, measurable goals will be mapped out for the next 15 years of the Refuge System. Interior Secretary Gale Norton is expected to open the summit. USFWS Director Steven A. Williams will close the summit.

To be held May 24-27 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, the summit will bring together 250 people – half of whom are USFWS employees – to create a

shared sense of priorities with the Refuge System’s conservation partners. The remaining 125 people will be representatives of partners, state agencies, Friends groups and volunteers.

Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), a long-time champion of the Refuge System, may speak at the opening plenary session May 24 on “Supporting Refuges in a New Century.” That same evening, Rep. Don Young (R-AK), an author of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, has been invited to talk about “The Refuge Improvement Act — the Beginning of a Vision.”

Chief's Corner

Make Your Viewpoint Heard



Work on the Conservation in Action Summit is moving at a feverish pitch, but not so fast that your viewpoints cannot be heard about the future of the Refuge System.

The Conservation Summit comes at an opportune moment in the evolution of federal service. First, we face tightening federal budgets. As discretionary spending shrinks and the federal deficit grows, the Refuge System – like so many other programs – is caught in the squeeze. It's like being between trapezes – nothing much to hold on to.

More and more frequently, we have to justify our programs by showing tangible benefits so taxpayers know their dollars are well spent. Luckily, we began identifying goals way back in 1998, when we met at Keystone, CO, to plan the future of the Refuge System.

Now, the Conservation Summit gives us the chance to translate the vision so eloquently and vividly detailed in *Fulfilling the Promise* into reachable and measurable goals. We have the chance to construct the road map to the Refuge System of the 21st century. We need your help to formulate a shared sense of priorities with our conservation partners.

You have many chances to make your viewpoints known. Join one of the Web chats in April and May. Look on our Web site, <http://refuges.fws.gov/CentennialSummit>, for the white papers written by the five Summit Teams.

One question has been asked in many quarters: What will happen to *Fulfilling the Promise*? Simply put, *Fulfilling the Promise* remains the guiding vision for the Refuge System, as it has since it was written in 1999.

The 15 or so Promises teams have racked up many successes. The Land Management Research Demonstration (LMRD) program, for example, is up and running, with knowledgeable biologists on five sites. Our cadre of skilled biologists can discuss and demonstrate broad-scale habitat management restoration. Thanks to our Leadership Development Council, we have more standardized position and research descriptions than ever before, making recruitment easier. And the successes go on.

But, in this era of green eyeshade decision-making, the aspirations and imagery of *Fulfilling the Promise* are not enough to sway budget allocations. Measurable, achievable priorities are.

The decisions we make at the Conservation Summit will take us to a new level of achievements, but always with *Fulfilling the Promise* securely tucked under our arms. Your viewpoints about the Refuge System's future are vital.

Blackwater Completed Mid-Winter Eagle Survey

One hundred three eagles were found in 14 locations Jan. 8 as more than two-dozen staffers and volunteers on Blackwater NWR, MD, conducted the Mid-Winter Eagle Survey. They identified 86 bald eagles – 51 adults, 35 immature – two golden eagles and 15 of unknown species. Although fewer eagles were counted than in the last two years, the count was consistent with those completed in the last decade. Biologist Roger Stone noted that even slight variances in weather affects eagles' willingness to fly. Because it was very cold and somewhat overcast on Jan. 8, some eagles may have been hidden from the observers.

Just two months later on March 13, the refuge celebrated eagles at its 4th Annual Eagle Festival, which featured, among other things, a program on the Salisbury Zoo's 50th anniversary. The day began with a bird walk and included demonstrations with live birds of prey and waterfowl and programs about Native American culture. ◆

RefugeUpdate

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544 Units Now In Refuge System

Two new wildlife refuges – one honoring the father of the Refuge System and the other hailing a legendary African American guide – have brought to 544 the number of units within the Refuge System. The new units became official when President George Bush signed the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act January 23.

The President's action did not increase the acreage conserved by the Refuge System. Instead, both refuges were created from former Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) lands that had been transferred to the USFWS years ago.

The Theodore Roosevelt NWR, MS, honoring the president who launched the Refuge System, spans 6,600 acres of land in Leflore, Holmes, Humphreys Sharkey, Warren and Washington counties. The legislation also renamed Central Mississippi Refuge Complex to the

Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which encompasses the existing Yazoo, Panther Swamp, Hillside, Morgan Brake and Mathews Brake refuges as well as the new refuges. The refuge complex will be formally dedicated in the Fall.

Holt Collier NWR, MS, which spans 1,449 acres, honors a man who was born a slave in 1846, served as a Confederate Cavalry scout and led a life of adventure. News of his skill as a bear hunter reached Theodore Roosevelt, who traveled with him in 1902 to Smede's Plantation, MS, to hunt black bear. Collier captured a bear for Roosevelt to shoot, but the president refused. The media soon picked up the story, which led to creation of the Teddy Bear, still one of the world's most famous toys.

Holt Collier Refuge will expand once a 1,400-acre plot owned by the US Corps of Engineers is transferred to the USFWS.

Additionally, planning is underway to swap scattered FmHA tracts for a contiguous block of land in the vicinity of the 1902 bear hunt. ♦



Panther Swamp NWR is part of the newly named Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex, MS. (John and Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS)

Summit – from pg 1

Others invited to address the summit are:

- Dr. Michael Suk, a White House Fellow, on “The Importance of Refuge Recreation to Health.” Dr. Suk heads Meridan 2004, an initiative that looks at the connection between health and outdoor recreation on public lands.
- Rollin D. Sparrowe, former president of the Wildlife Management Institute, on “Working Together for the Next Century of Conservation: A Shared Sense of Priorities.” The institute is one of two co-sponsors of the summit. The other is the National Wildlife Refuge Association.
- Patrick F. Noonan, chairman emeritus of The Conservation Fund, a nonprofit land conservation organization. He will speak on “Growing the Refuge System Strategically.”

Five teams are working to identify the most pressing challenges as the Refuge System launches its second century of

wildlife conservation. The work of the teams – concentrating on science, wildlife and habitat, wildlife-dependent recreation, strategic growth, and leadership – will provide background information for summit discussions.

Summit discussions will revolve about white papers developed by five teams, which are composed of Refuge System employees, non-government partner organizations, Friends group members and volunteers.

The summit will also give CARE (Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement) an opportunity to identify the Refuge System's needs and explain those needs to decision-makers, noted Bob Byrne of the Wildlife Management Institute, one of three people on the summit executive committee. National Wildlife Refuge Association President Evan Hirsche and Deputy Refuge System Chief Jim Kurth are the other two members.

The Conservation Summit, coming at the close of the Refuge System's highly acclaimed celebration of its centennial year, will build on the vision set out in *Fulfilling the Promise*, written in 1999.

See related stories on page 8-13. ♦



MAY 24-27, 2004 | SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV
Conservation in Action
SUMMIT
A new century of conservation challenges

55 Years on the Job and Still Loving It

He Knows Every Rock

“Drum is an encyclopedia for the refuge,” exulted Forestry Technician Mike McKenzie, talking about Edwin Drummond, who on March 29 celebrated nearly a lifetime — 55 years, to be exact — of working at Wichita Mountains NWR, OK, the land he has called home for all but two of his 76 years.

“He knows every rock here. He is as much a part of this refuge as Sunset Peak,” McKenzie said. To a person, the refuge staff agrees.

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 on the refuge for four summers during high school and was credited with a year of service. Since he joined the refuge staff full-time 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 US Forest Service to the Bureau of Biological Survey, then to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife and finally to the USFWS. Indeed, both of his children grew up on the refuge, as he did along with his childhood friend, Lynn Greenwalt, who became a director of the USFWS.

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. Drum figures he must have moved every rock on the refuge at least three times.

“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 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 every day is a new experience. ♦



Edwin Drummond (Drum), left, grew up on Wichita Mountains Refuge, OK, with Lynn Greenwalt, right, whose father was refuge manager and who ultimately became a director of the USFWS. (Photo courtesy of USFWS archives)



Maintenance foreman Edwin “Drum” Drummond has called Wichita Mountain NWR, OK, home for 74 years. He is celebrating 55 years working at the refuge. (USFWS)

“There’s no 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.”

Refuge System Honors its “Best of the Best”



Wildlife biologist John Taylor is the 2004 Refuge System Employee of the Year. (USFWS)

A pair of volunteers, two employees and the Chincoteague Natural History Association were honored in March by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with awards that recognize their exceptional work to further the goals and mission of the Refuge System.

Employee of the Year

John Taylor, wildlife biologist for Bosque del Apache NWR, NM, and the nation's first Land Management Research and Demonstration (LMRD) site biologist, received the Employee of the Year Award. He is widely respected for his expertise and unwavering commitment to habitat conservation and restoration.

Taylor has pioneered and implemented innovative techniques for conserving river water during severe drought while managing the conversion of salt cedar monocultures back to native vegetation. He has fine-tuned the management of sandhill crane and other migratory bird populations and feeding resources to minimize damage to neighboring private croplands. In the process, he has become an expert in the application of moist soil management techniques.

Refuge Manager of the Year

Mike Bryant, refuge manager of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, NC, received the Paul Kroegel Award for Refuge Manager of the Year. A key

natural resources manager in eastern North Carolina, he is known for his dedication, depth of knowledge, respect for competing interests and diplomatic skills in building consensus on often-contentious issues. Those attributes were evident as he navigated the Bonner Bridge controversy.

Bonner Bridge, due for replacement, crosses Pea Island NWR and is a crucial connector for Hatteras Island. After years of patient negotiations, Bryant secured the agreement of officials to place a new bridge in a location where it would allow routine travel and evacuation in case of hurricanes, but protect Pea Island's fragile habitat.

Volunteer of the Year

Ken and Darlene Fiske have volunteered thousands of hours over the past 20 years to preserve and restore habitat for waterbirds and migratory species in Hawaii and Florida. The Fiskes, recognizing Florida's J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR and Hawaii's Maui NWRC were battling the same woody invasives — Brazilian pepper, Australian pine and Melaluca — they coordinated and monitored work to improve targeted chemical control of these plants. With years of research under their belts, the Fiskes were instrumental in promoting the effective use of large-scale aerial photographs to identify avian habitat and non-native plant species, color-coding the maps to indicate the urgency of projects and optimizing the use of limited funds and manpower.

They have helped create an atmosphere of cooperation between the local communities and the refuge staff, drawing public attention to important refuge needs. Their dedication, thoroughness, and vision continue to produce significant contributions to habitat monitoring and restoration that will be felt far beyond their years of service.

Friends Group of the Year

Winner of the Friends Group of the Year award is Chincoteague Natural History Association, incorporated in 1986, which

provides varied support both to Chincoteague NWR, VA, and Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR. Members of the group have donated thousands of hours and helped secure hundreds of thousands of dollars for interpretive and educational opportunities for refuge visitors along with programs to protect and enhance wildlife habitat. The Friends have partnered with Chincoteague Refuge volunteers to offer bus tours that combine historical background and wildlife interpretation.

Their dedicated support for many years in the development of the Herbert H. Batemen Educational and Administrative Center at Chincoteague Refuge has brought the community a state-of-the-art facility that features interactive exhibits and educational space. ♦



Mike Bryant is the NWRS Refuge Manager of the Year. (USFWS)

Grand Excursion Through the Granddaddy of Refuges

Conservation Message Comes Through



The Blue Goose, worn by Refuge Ranger Pam Steinhilber, poses with Visitor Services and Communications Manager Cindy Samples, center right. Walker and Mary Ellen Robb enjoyed Blue Goose Day on-board the paddle wheeler. A chance to pose with the Blue Goose will be offered again this year on the Delta Queen and the Mississippi Queen. (Photo courtesy of Delta Queen)

At the invitation of President Millard Fillmore in 1854, thousands of business executives and newspaper writers traveled by paddle wheelers through 400 miles of the upper Mississippi Valley on a tour designed to promote business opportunities in America's wild, western frontier.

This year, the Grand Excursion 2004 Flotilla, a nonprofit venture to promote tourism, will commemorate the journey by bringing thousands to the Midwest June 25-July 5. But a conservation message will be clearly sounded, thanks to the work of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Traveling from Davenport, IA, to Chicago, IL, to St. Paul, MN, visitors will go through the 261-mile-long refuge, whose

staff – dubbed Refugelarians for the task – will talk about the refuge's habitat and wildlife on the flotilla's two largest boats, the Delta Queen and Mississippi Queen. That is only the start of the refuge's involvement.

As 50 or so communities in Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa mount celebrations and festivals along the flotilla path, visitors will see a welcoming message, "Your Neighbors on the River: Stewardship Through Partnership," mounted on about 15 locks and dams in partnership with the US Corps of Engineers. Representatives of refuge Friends groups will hand out information in Savanna, IL, the national River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, IA, and La Crosse, WI, Winona and Wabasha, MN.

Among other activities planned by the refuge:

- Students in 800 schools will receive free education trunks that replicate steamer trunks and include conservation information. For those in grades K-5, a video on the plight of freshwater mussels was included. A workbook about invasive species is aimed at grades 6-8 and a critical thinking activity called "Manager for a Day" is geared for those in high school.
- In anticipation of the flotilla, fifth graders from WI, and Minnesota will rotate through themed stations during River Education Days May 11-12 at the Trempealeau NWR, WI, which will use the education trunks to talk about wetlands, prairie/forest habitats, wildlife and river history.
- Two-hour bus tours of Trempealeau Refuge will highlight what President Fillmore would have seen when he passed by the land in 1854.
- A four-page newspaper celebrating the refuge's 80th anniversary will be

available for visitors on the paddle wheelers and at ports, among other places.

Representing Bald Eagles

"When I went to one of the first meetings, I told the organizers that I represent the 120 nesting bald eagles on the refuge, the 20,000 swans that rest and feed here, and that all plans must consider their welfare," said Cindy Samples, visitor services and communications manager. "They cheered. They may not have known that we are the longest refuge in the lower 48 states, but they recognized that the resources that make their communities great exist because of the refuge."

Celebration is only one facet of the refuge's participation in the Grand Excursion 2004 Flotilla. Increased law enforcement considerations are another.

Organizers, who have been planning the excursion for nearly a decade, expect as many as 2,000-5,000 pleasure boats to follow the flotilla. "We can use this opportunity to increase refuge awareness through positive visitor contacts by our law enforcement officers," said Samples. "The event's themes are celebrate, commemorate and educate. We are focusing on the last one.

"There are 70 communities along the refuge's length," explained Samples. "We can tell visitors that if we didn't exist, there would be more than 70 communities. What wouldn't exist are the natural resources that make this a real celebration." ♦

Around the Refuge System

🌿 The Oregon Coast NWR Complex completed a 100-acre tidal marsh restoration at Siletz Bay NWR in November 2003, bringing back about a quarter of the wetlands that had been diked and drained decades ago. About 1.5 miles of dike were removed to create a naturally functioning marsh. A Boeing Vertol 107 heavy lift helicopter placed large Sitka spruce trees in tidal channels within the restoration area to create essential habitat for juvenile salmonids, including the threatened Coho salmon.

“We feel strongly that the Refuge System can showcase how such restoration projects should be built to bring the best outcome,” noted Refuge Manager Roy Lowe. In addition to helping Coho salmon and cutthroat trout, the restoration is expected to increase the bird population and so provide greater foraging for a pair of resident bald eagles that established a breeding territory in the estuary. Oregon Coastal Program, Ducks



Dike was removed on the left bank of Millport Slough at Oregon Coast NWR Complex. The natural reference marsh is on the right bank. (USFWS)

Unlimited and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians partnered on the project.

The refuge complex will be building a tidal marsh restoration project at Nestucca Bay Refuge in fiscal year 2005. The largest tidal marsh restoration project in state history is planned for Bandon Marsh Refuge in the next few years.

🌿 Havasu NWR, CA, bought new greenhouses for two Arizona elementary schools after the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative and the Sonoran Joint Venture approved two grants for the Little Greenhouse Project. The grants will mean that four times as many trees as in past years will be nurtured this school year, when students at Diamondback Elementary School in Bullhead City and Topock Elementary School in

Topock raise about 1,000 honey mesquite trees. The trees will be planted on the refuge this spring.

The Little Greenhouse Project began in 1996 when the refuge bought the first greenhouse for Diamondback Elementary School. Since then, about 350 Diamondback Elementary School students have planted some 750 trees on the refuge. Topock Elementary School joined the program this school year. Students conduct experiments on their trees throughout the year. Data from the greenhouse experiments are integrated into the students' math, reading, and writing curricula. The refuge protects 300 miles of shoreline from Needles, CA, to Lake Havasu City, AZ. One of the last remaining natural stretches of the lower Colorado River flows through the 20-mile-long Topock Gorge. ♦

Don't Fence Me In

Barbed wire fencing on Buenos Aires NWR, AZ, which prevents pronghorn and other wildlife from moving between grassland areas to browse, is slowly coming down, most recently with the help of Boy Scouts, school children and private citizens. About 2.5 miles of fence fell in January when seven members of the Arizona Wildlife Federation removed one mile, 57 Boy Scouts from Phoenix removed another mile, and 20 ninth graders from the Pioneer School of Ft. Collins, CO, took down a portion. More

than 300 miles of fencing have been removed since 1985, when the Buenos Aires Ranch became a refuge. Another 200 miles still need to come down. Pronghorn, reluctant to jump fences, often become entangled as they crawl under the lowest strand. The Sonoran grasslands were once home to great herds of pronghorn. By 1935, the grasslands had been overgrazed and pronghorn were gone. They were reintroduced after the refuge's establishment. ♦



Pronghorn herd (USFWS)

Five Teams Are Central To Refuge System Summit

The teams have defined what successful programs look like and examined central questions that will confront the Refuge System as it formulates a shared sense of priorities during the Summit.

Discussions at the **Conservation in Action Summit** will revolve about white papers developed by five teams, composed of Refuge System employees, non-government partner organizations, Friends groups and volunteers. The teams have defined what successful programs look like and examined central questions that will confront the Refuge System as it formulates a shared sense of priorities during the Summit.

The teams and leaders are:

Science Team, chaired by Chief of Information Technology and Management Ken Grannemann and Region 5 Refuge Chief Tony Leger, developed draft recommendations to improve the Refuge

System's capacity to carry out science-based management to protect the environmental health, biological integrity and biological diversity of the nation's refuges. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 recognizes the complexities of natural resource management on refuges and calls for the integration of sound science in the Refuge System's management. Ultimately, refuges are anchors for biodiversity and ecosystem-level conservation and leaders in wilderness preservation.

Wildlife Dependent Recreation Team, chaired by Visitor Services and Communications Chief Allyson Rowell and Region 7 Refuge Chief Todd Logan,

Refuge System Wins Solid Ratings for Effectiveness

Nearly 75 percent of respondents to an independently conducted survey of US Fish and Wildlife Service employees believe the National Wildlife Refuge System is effectively accomplishing its mission of conserving and managing fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats. KRC Research conducted the survey online Jan. 21-30.

More than 3,950 FWS employees responded to the survey. KRC Research contacted about 9,400 employees. CARE (Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement) conducted the same survey among scores of nonprofit organizations, including Friends groups that provide financial and volunteer support to refuges.

The CARE survey showed a solid majority of respondents from Friends' organizations – 68 percent – believe the Refuge System is effectively accomplishing its mission, although only

56 percent of those responding from nonprofit organizations felt the same way.

The surveys will be considered as the Refuge System maps out a shared sense of priorities with its partners during the Conservation In Action Summit May 24-27.

Among other notable findings of the two surveys:

Three objectives garnered approximately 90 percent support as the most important for the Refuge System among the FWS employees and nonprofit organizations that answered the survey: protecting healthy fish and wildlife populations, effectively managing habitat, and using good science in natural resource management. The findings reflect missions enunciated in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

focused on how best to implement the Improvement Act's mandates to facilitate quality wildlife dependent recreational opportunities for the six priority uses, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. The Improvement Act calls for increased opportunities for families to experience compatible wildlife dependent recreation, particularly chances for parents and children to engage safely in such traditional outdoors activities as hunting and fishing. Using *Fulfilling the Promise* as the benchmark document, the team suggests that the essential elements of work focus on partnerships at the community, state and national levels; researching, designing and implementing opportunities to provide quality wildlife dependent recreation and getting people on the land to enjoy wildlife; ensuring that visitors are safe,

welcome and oriented to the Refuge System and its wildlife work.

Wildlife and Habitat Team, chaired by Natural Resources Chief Tom Stewart and Region 2 Refuge Chief Dom Ciccone, has focused on core issues that occupy the Refuge System – the land and resources conserved on behalf of future generations. The team has looked at the conservation and improvement of marine and estuarine resources, the control and eradication of invasive species, a variety of fire management issues, including the use of prescribed fire where it will benefit Refuge System resources, migratory bird conservation, the means to assure adequate water resources, and assistance in the recovery of endangered and threatened species through habitat management.

Strategic Growth Team, chaired by Chief of Realty A. Eric Alvarez, former Chief of Conservation Planning & Policy Nancy

Gloman and Region 4 Refuge Chief Jon Andrew, has contemplated a nationally coordinated approach to prioritize lands to be conserved within the Refuge System in order to contribute to the conservation of entire ecosystems. The team has considered the financial, political, and organizational constraints impacting the Refuge System as well as how its conservation work will complement that of states and other federal agencies.

Leadership Team, chaired by Conservation Planning & Policy Deputy Chief Barry Stieglitz, has evaluated planning projections for specific leadership abilities and proposed a competency model and other tasks to continue and enhance the Refuge System's legacy of professional leadership. The team has evaluated what a refuge manager will need in qualities, competencies, technical skills and behaviors for future success. ♦

Friends' respondents added "protecting additional habitat through land acquisition" among their top three choices, dropping "effective habitat management" to number four.

Seventy percent of FWS respondents felt the Refuge System was effective in protecting healthy fish and wildlife populations. Nearly 80 percent of the Friends who answered the survey felt that way, although just 57 percent of nonprofit organization respondents rated the Refuge System as "effective" in the area.

Effectiveness ratings fell somewhat when survey takers considered the Refuge System's effectiveness at using good science in natural resource management. While 66 percent of responding employees gave the Refuge System "effective" marks, just 55 percent of nonprofit stakeholders felt the same way and 57 percent of Friends.

Looking at providing visitor safety and natural resource protection, 66 percent of responding employees felt the Refuge System was "effective." The numbers fell among other groups: 63 percent of nonprofit stakeholders who answered the survey gave the top rating, and 53 percent of Friends.

Friends, FWS employees and nonprofit organizations respondents generally agreed that the Refuge System should pursue three management tools to improve its prospects for the future: seek new funds, find better public support and pursue more effective partnerships. ♦



MAY 24-27, 2004 | SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV
Conservation in Action
SUMMIT
A new century of conservation challenges

Friends, FWS employees and nonprofit organizations respondents generally agreed that the Refuge System should pursue three management tools to improve its prospects for the future.

FOCUS ...On Conservation Summit

The Conservation Summit: A New Century of Conservation Challenges

A Meeting of the Minds

By Evan Hirsche

The chances of achieving timely and major conservation successes are greatly enhanced by working with diverse partners to identify priorities. Just that reasoning motivated the National Wildlife Refuge System to invite 125 representatives of Friends groups, partners and state organizations, among others, to the Conservation in Action Summit.

Speaking for the approximately 250 Friends groups and so many other partners, we are thrilled to be part of a process that will propel the Refuge System into its second century of conservation.

That does not mean the Conservation Summit will ignore the tremendous work that has been the hallmark of *Fulfilling the Promise*. The summit will not supplant the Promises vision. Instead, it will build on

By focusing on something that engendered group consensus – operations and maintenance funding – CARE has played a major role in helping the Refuge System secure a roughly 150 percent increase over the past eight years.

Conservation Summit Will Promote Partnerships

By Marge Kolar

With a wildlife refuge in every state and 95 million acres to manage, the Refuge System can't possibly fulfill its "wildlife first" mission alone. A host of partnerships with nonprofit organizations, private corporations and other federal agencies have reinforced and expanded the Refuge System's programs.

Our own programs at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex would be greatly diminished without our partners' support. For example, our Environmental Education Center would be closed on weekends without help from the City of San Jose, Santa Clara Valley Water District and the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society.

Now, at a time of tight budgets and competing demands, our partnerships have become even more important. In fact, partnerships have had a direct dollars-and-cents impact on the Refuge System as a whole.

The 21 conservation and recreation organizations that joined CARE (the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge



San Francisco Bay NWR complex manager Marge Kolar believes the Conservation in Action Summit is key to solidifying many partnerships. (USFWS)

Enhancement) have made themselves heard by the nation's decision-makers: Since CARE's establishment, the Refuge System's budget for operations and maintenance has more than doubled – from \$161 million annually to about \$388 million this fiscal year. In fiscal year 2003 alone – the year of the Refuge System's Centennial – CARE worked with Congress and the Administration to secure a \$48 million increase for operations and maintenance – the single largest annual funding increase ever.



Evan Hirsche is one of three members of Summit Executive Committee. (Maria Cecil)

operations and maintenance backlog and are constantly applying triage to meet conservation needs on refuges.

Promises created an exceptional vision for the Refuge System, but its multitude of objectives present refuge professionals and partners alike with the challenge of identifying what can be realistically accomplished and when.

Laser beam focus on specific goals has meant real change for the Refuge System. Consider the success of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). By focusing on something that engendered group consensus – operations and maintenance funding – CARE has

played a major role in helping the Refuge System secure a roughly 150 percent increase over the past eight years.

The Conservation Summit will go one step further by involving an even more diverse group of partners that, aligned in support of a few, well-defined priorities, will be able to make a significant difference for the Refuge System. Nothing could be more important as the Refuge System enters its second century of service in conserving America's diverse wildlife heritage. ♦

Evan Hirsche is president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association and a member of the three-person executive committee of the Conservation in Action Summit.

the Promises foundation to set into motion an achievable set of short-term goals.

It's a sad fact that most of us are so overwhelmed with competing tasks and requirements, that we rarely have a chance to step back and evaluate what really constitutes a priority. Nobody understands that better than refuge professionals who face a \$2 billion

The Conservation in Action Summit, in recognition of the pivotal role our partners play, seeks to articulate a shared sense of priorities among the USFWS and our partners. And for good reason – the impact of partnerships can be seen on the ground.

Only a strong partnership with the State of California and private foundations, and the support of local governments, private businesses and environmental organizations would have resulted in the recent acquisition of 16,500 acres of endangered species and migratory bird habitat in an area surrounded by 7.5 million people here in San Francisco Bay. No one partner could have accomplished that feat alone.

We will need to continue to nurture such partnerships in order to fulfill our wildlife conservation mission. The Conservation Summit will allow us to enhance this synergy while providing the Refuge System with a shared road map for the future. ♦

Marge Kolar has been manager of the San Francisco Bay NWR Complex since 1994. She has been with the USFWS since 1976, having previously served in Washington, DC, and Michigan and Washington states.

Join a Web Chat about the Summit



MAY 24-27, 2004 | SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV

Conservation in Action SUMMIT

A new century of conservation challenges

Refuge System employees can get their questions about the Conservation in Action Summit answered immediately during Web chats in April and May. These exchanges of typed messages on the Internet, at <http://refuges.fws.gov/ConservationSummit>, will enable any employee connected to the Internet from a FWS network – LAN or SWAN – to get quick answers about how the Summit will proceed and what it will mean for them.

Employees who missed any chat can find the transcripts at <http://refuges.fws.gov/ConservationSummit>. Employees do not need a password to join the discussion. The noon-1 p.m. Web chats will be held:

- 📅 **April 20:** NWRS Natural Resources Chief Tom Stewart, co-chair, Wildlife and Habitat Team.
- 📅 **May 4:** Barry Stieglitz, deputy director of NWRS Division of Conservation Planning and Policy, representing Leadership Team.
- 📅 **May 13:** NWRS Chief of Realty A. Eric Alvarez, co-chair, Strategic Growth Team.

Admiring our Achievements, Anticipating our Future

By Kathleen Maycroft

As the National Wildlife Refuge System plans its Conservation in Action Summit, I will take a moment to reflect on the great accomplishments we have made in the years since our kick-start at Keystone, CO. I will be where the rubber meets the road - not in a conference room, a break out session or a lobby.

I may be listening to the ducks and geese feed in the moist soil units, attracting their migrating comrades. I may be watching new arrivals lock up their wings as they drop altitude to share in the feast. I may be checking water levels, touching base with staff, discussing potential purchases, planning our next accomplishments and

working with partners to accomplish resource goals. I may be talking about the importance and uniqueness of Mingo NWR to a visitor or two, or perhaps working on the next section of our Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

I may spy an otter or swan in Monopoly or Rockhouse Marsh or perhaps one of the partial albino turkeys on the west side of the refuge. I will be preserving, enhancing and protecting our nation's treasures.

There is one thing I will do, as I always do: take a deep breath and marvel at the creation of life and the tenuous balance between man and the resource. I will take the time to reflect on the accomplishments

There is one thing I will do, as I always do: take a deep breath and marvel at the creation of life and the tenuous balance between man and the resource.

Dynamic Start to Shared Priorities

By Mark Musaus

The dawn of our second century finds us atop a unique vista. From this vantage point, the Refuge System looks back on a century of achievements that have fulfilled mankind's greatest promise to wildlife. But we also peer into a future obscured by the well-known impediment of limited funding and the newer threats of invasive species, insufficient water, suburban sprawl, a burgeoning amount of "administrivia" and a public increasingly out of touch with nature.

So, when our vision is obscured, where do we look? We have often looked to the past, remembering the "good old days" fondly. But let's not kid ourselves: we don't really want to return to days of Army surplus desks and 'dozers.

The vision of yore was one of looking inward, focusing on great work within the blue goose signs. It was a more "reactive" mode, responding to the day's



Mark Musaus (USFWS)

of this Centennial year, the on-the-ground improvements made throughout the Refuge System, and the national attention we garnered because of the work of each and every employee, Friends groups and the CARE group. I will be proud of our focus on “wildlife first” and the efforts for system-wide unity.

The summit is a chance to revel in our accomplishments of the past 100 years and focus on our future direction. I would welcome the opportunity to attend the summit, but if I don't, I can still appreciate our accomplishments firsthand, right here on the landscape, where the impacts of our successes are readily visible.

Kathleen Maycroft has been manager at Mingo NWR, MO, for three years. Previously, she was refuge manager at Port Louisa, IA. She has worked for the USFWS since December 1991.



Refuge volunteer Dave Harris and Refuge Manager Kathleen Maycroft on the Visitor Information Center's observation deck at Rockhouse Marsh. (Lisa Ledbetter/ USFWS)

pressing need. But once we recognized that we could no longer make it happen on the ground with limited resources, we learned not only to be managers, but to become leaders, building Friends groups, meeting Congressional staff, and embracing our neighbors.

That leadership has led to unparalleled progress in the last seven years. The Improvement Act clearly told the Refuge System who we are and what we are to do. The historic Keystone gathering provided a forum for discussion, framed by *Fulfilling the Promise*. Our recent Centennial celebrations motivated us to tell others what we do and how well we do it.

Now, we need a focused plan of action, crafted with our partners to create a shared sense of priorities, to lead us into the next century. That is the aim of the Conservation in Action Summit.

The summit is not meant to be a static moment in time, but rather a dynamic beginning. Leadership – in our vision, our passion, and our management – is

required from field staff, the Washington Office, and throughout the regional offices to continue our successes and advance our models of wildlife conservation. Such leadership is developed from the inside.

Many employees have not been pleased with the changes made to the scheduling and size of the summit. But its purpose hasn't changed: This is still an opportunity for all employees to engage, whether or not you are at the National Conservation Training Center. Engage in Web chats when they are scheduled. Give your opinions to your supervisors. Keep up with news about the summit on the NWRS Web site. Once the conference starts, daily updates will be posted.

The challenge for all employees is clear: Do we help chart the next century or do we leave it to others to decide for us?

At the summit, the Refuge System will begin to write measurable objectives and strategies in full partnership with a diverse array of participants. Without our involvement, the commitment embodied



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in a century of conservation could be diminished. With our involvement, we can develop an attainable, united plan of action that makes things happen on the ground for wildlife. Let's capitalize on the opportunity to make Promises come alive, both inside and outside our beloved blue goose signs. ◆

Mark Musaus has been manager at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR, FL, since August 1998. He began his career with the USFWS at that refuge during the summer of 1974, as a student trainee. He has served as assistant refuge manager at J.N. Ding Darling NWR, FL, Piedmont NWR, GA, and Tennessee NWR and as deputy project leader at Savannah Coastal Refuges, GA.

A Corporate Partner for the Land

“Our Future Depends on Conservation”

by Steve Farrell

For the Refuge System, steeped in the stewardship ethic, marketing was a foreign concept – until its centennial plans caught the eye of Bass Pro Shops executives, who had made the retailer of outdoor goods famous with huge, fantasy-like stores that featured waterfalls, trout-filled “lakes” and every imaginable sporting accouterment.

Bass Pro Shops’ partnership with the USFWS, signed in October, 22 months before the March 2003 kick-off of the centennial, has not only translated into a public relations bonanza for the Refuge System, but has put cash into refuge coffers.

“To continue our outdoor traditions, it is important to continually link outdoor enthusiasts to America’s strongest conservation efforts,” said Bass Pro Shops Founder Johnny Morris. “The Refuge System was the perfect opportunity to highlight 100 years of conservation success.”

Under Morris’ leadership, Bass Pro Shops is a corporate leader in conservation. The company helped create the American National Fish and Wildlife Museum (“Wonders of Wildlife”) in Springfield, Mo. It has contributed greatly to grassroots conservation from the Chesapeake Bay to the Ozark Mountains.

Its support of the Refuge System has had tangible results. Bass Pro Shops has worked cooperatively with the USFWS to make the Refuge System visible in its stores, putting the logo and Web site address on its shopping bags and 4 million catalogs.

Appearance at NASCAR

News about the Refuge System has been spread by the written word. Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig wrote “The Best of the Outdoors, Just Around the Corner” for the September 2003 issue of *Outdoor World* magazine, extolling the

Refuge System’s conservation achievements and recreation opportunities. Articles by various well-known outdoor writers, including Scott Bestul, also appeared. USFWS Director Steve Williams was Grand Marshall for last fall’s Bass Pro Shops MBNA 400 NASCAR race at Atlanta Motor Speedway, where he proudly dropped the checkered flag with the words, “In the name of the National Wildlife Refuge System’s Centennial, gentlemen, start your engines!”

Refuges received more than \$200,000 to restore habitat and enhance visitor facilities when Bass Pro Shops donated a portion of their opening day receipts during Evening of Conservation celebrations in Savannah, GA, Oklahoma City, OK, Destin, FL, and Hampton, VA. “We look forward to working with the Refuge System well beyond this centennial year,” said Martin MacDonald, director of conservation, who has directed the events.

“Refuge System visitors are often enthusiastic outdoors people as well as conservationists,” noted Morris. “So are our customers, who are bird watchers, anglers and hunters. Their children are eager to learn. We believe the future of our business depends not only on how we serve our customers, but also on how our nation’s natural resources are conserved.” ♦

Steve Farrell, outreach and marketing specialist in the Division of Visitor Services and Communications, has worked for the USFWS for a decade.



Bass Pro Shops Director of Conservation Martin MacDonald recently met with Refuge System officials to discuss the outdoor goods chain’s support of refuges through Evenings of Conservation events. (Dick Cole/USFWS)

“We believe the future of our business depends not only on how we serve our customers, but also on how our nation’s natural resources are conserved.”

The Latest Studies: Herons, Bog Turtles

A five-year study has found that the nesting behavior of great blue herons on Missisquoi NWR, VT, was not significantly altered by the nearby presence of double-crested cormorants. The University of Vermont and the Lake Champlain Ecosystem Team undertook monitoring in 1999 in partnership with the refuge, whose Shad Island great blue heron rookery has been active for at least 60 years. Monitoring will continue as long as funding is available.

One of the largest heron rookeries in the region — with about 580 nesting pairs — Shad Island first saw nesting cormorants in 1995. Throughout the study, the number of nesting cormorants ranged from 25-144. In 2001, for example, the scientists found no discernible competition between the two species in early season competition for nest sites and sticks. Over the past five years, herons had variable nesting success with a high of 580 nests in 1999 and a complete failure in 2001, most probably due to harassment by a bald eagle at the onset of nest building and egg laying. In 2003, the rookery had 200 successful nests. Except for the failure in 2001, nest productivity has been high, at almost three young per nest.

Cormorants, on the other hand, were unable to fledge young within the heron rookery and had only one successful nest

over the past five years. Scientists theorize that raccoons are preying on cormorant nests but not heron nests. For both species, research suggests that variable nesting success is due to predators rather than interaction with each other. The study's results have implications for any range where these species overlap. For more information, contact Mark Sweeny, 802/868-4781.

Bog Turtle Research

Wallkill River NWR, NJ, has moved into the next phase of a research project that began in 2002 to assemble critical information about the bog turtle and its habitat at the refuge. The research was undertaken in cooperation with the Hudson River/New York Bight Ecosystem Team, the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

To comply with a 2001 recovery plan, the project uses telemetry to monitor the refuge's turtles. As a result, the turtle's hibernacula have been located. The study is focusing on how cattle grazing will reduce the density of invasive, exotic plants and improve the turtles' habitat. In cooperation with a local farmer, cattle will be brought onto a two-acre, fenced portion of the refuge in June.

Biologists hope that the cattle's movement will create a hummock-hollow topography that yields the micro-habitat necessary for bog turtles, federally listed as a threatened species. Wallkill River Refuge is one of just two refuges that protects bog turtle habitat. For more information, contact Kevin Holcomb, 973/702-7266, or go to <http://wallkillriver.fws.gov> ♦



Great blue heron. (USFWS)

A five-year study has found that the nesting behavior of great blue herons on Missisquoi NWR, VT, was not significantly altered by the nearby presence of double-crested cormorants.



Bog turtle and its habitat are being studied at Wallkill River Refuge, NJ. (USFWS)

MBNA Donates for Refuge System Projects

Interior Secretary Gale Norton praised the \$200,000 donated March 24 by MBNA Financial Services to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the Refuge System's Centennial Commission. Some of the donation will be used for the Conservation in Action Summit May 24-27.

The check is the first installment on a \$500,000 donation to support continued planning for the Refuge System and

conservation projects on refuges and adjacent lands over the next five years. MBNA will give an additional \$300,000 by the end of fiscal year 2004.

"This generous donation will help to support the Conservation in Action Summit, an important conference that will bring together USFWS employees, state agencies, refuge Friends groups, volunteers, and other partners to help

establish priorities and measurable goals for the Refuge System," said Interior Secretary Gale Norton in accepting the check.

"I am grateful, encouraged and excited to see the Refuge System being ushered into its next century with so much promise and support," said USFWS Director Steve Williams. ♦



MBNA Financial Services presented a \$500,000 check to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the Refuge System's Centennial Commission in support of the Conservation in Action Summit and conservation projects on refuges and adjacent lands. Pictured from left to right are Frank McEntee, senior executive vice president for MBNA Financial Services; Bill Horn, chair of the Refuge System's Centennial Commission; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board Chair Max Chapman; USFWS Director Steve Williams; Interior Secretary Gale Norton; and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Executive Director John Barry. (Tami Heilmann/DOI)

Captive Breeding to Revive Pronghorns

One of two Sonoran pronghorn does captured in mid-January near Puerto Penasco, Mexico, and transferred to Cabeza Prieta NWR, AZ, may give birth to the first fawns born under a landmark program between the U.S. and Mexico for the survival of North America's fastest land animal.

The Sonoran pronghorn, one of the world's most endangered mammals, was listed in 1967 as endangered in the U.S.

Seven veterinarians and the pronghorn recovery team attended the capture, when the does were sedated and given chilled intravenous fluids for the flight in a Bell Long Ranger helicopter. Rather than being crated, each animal was held between two veterinarians.

The does, housed in a 640-acre, predator-proof natural enclosure, have adapted very well, said USFWS Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Coordinator John Morgart. The Arizona Game and Fish Department and the USFWS monitor the enclosure, which

is protected by two solar-powered electric fences, a visual barrier and a seven-foot mesh fence, secure against such predators as coyotes and mountain lions.

Additionally, a yearling buck, captured on the refuge in April, has socialized well in the enclosure, leading Morgart to hope that captive breeding will produce enough animals in five years to begin reintroducing them into their habitat in Arizona and Mexico. The recovery team hopes to capture 10 more pronghorns in Mexico in the next two to three years to increase genetic diversity in the breeding program.

"Before this program, we knew how to capture pronghorns, put collars on them and how to release them safely," stressed Morgart. "But transporting them long distances was new territory. We put together an extremely conservative approach."

The first day was not successful. Extremely nervous animals, four pronghorns suffered capture myopathy

when they were sedated, blindfolded and placed in padded crates for transport. Although that approach works with many ungulates, the Sonoran pronghorns never calmed down, Morgart noted. New procedures were instituted the next day, including elimination of crates.

The USFWS, the US Air Force, the US Bureau of Land Management, the US Marines each provided \$5,000 for the recovery program. Sonoran pronghorns also make their home on Department of Defense lands adjoining the refuge. The Mexican government gave on-the-ground expertise. The cooperative program includes the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona Department of Agriculture and others.

In 2003, the Sonoran pronghorn population in the U.S. had dropped to 21 animals after years of unusually dry weather when few fawns survived. ♦



Carol Gibson of Prairie View Elementary School (left), Phyllis Kupitz of Lakota Elementary School (center) and Maureen Bertsch of Starkweather Elementary School were among the educators who attended a workshop in December 2003 at Sweetwater Elementary School in Devils Lake, ND. (Cami Dixon/USFWS)

Habitat Trunks Delight North Dakota Teachers

Approximately 7,000 North Dakota students will gain new insights into the importance of habitat thanks to wildlife habitat trunks distributed at no charge to every fourth-grade classroom in the state.

The Education Team of the USFWS North Dakota Outreach Team sent out 350 educational trunks bulging with information: mammal skulls and skins, big game animal hide samples, track and plant replicas, a wing, a turtle shell, wildlife and habitat photos, plant identification cards, posters featuring species found in the state, wildlife activities, craft projects, maps and, most importantly, the North Dakota Wildlife Habitat Educator's Guide.

Distributed in late 2003 and early 2004, the trunks represent the first phase in a campaign to help North Dakota's young people discover the habitats and wildlife that surround them, including the 65 national wildlife refuges. This spring, the Education Team will offer a poster and fact sheets about North Dakota's endangered species. A prairie plant identification tool is being readied for fall distribution.

"The trunk's items reinforce concepts presented in the educator's guide," explained Jackie Jacobson, outdoor recreation planner at Audubon NWR. For example, one activity – dubbed "A Coat for All Seasons" – allows students to examine elk, bison, antelope, deer, moose, badger, muskrat and raccoon pelts, all in the trunk, to understand how wildlife "dresses" for North Dakota weather that can range from blowing snow and 30 degrees below 0 in winter to humid, 95-degree days in summer. The activity can lead to a discussion about how native tribes and pioneers used the skins.

The Education Team conceptualized the trunk project in 2001 when teachers reported difficulty in scheduling the traveling trunks produced by the North Dakota Ecological Service Office. The Education Team includes Jacobson, Karen Kreil, biologist with Ecological Services; Kristine Askerooth, biologist at Tewaukon NWR; and Lynda Knutsen, outdoor recreation planner at the Valley City Wetland Management District Office.

The project cost \$153,000, funded by the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, the N.D. Game and Fish Department, Department of Public Instruction, and Health Department. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, NoDak Sportsmen's Club, the state chapters of The Wildlife Society and Prairie Pothole Partners also provided funding.

Teachers who attended training sessions at 35 locations November 2003 to January 2004 have been thrilled with the trunks' contents. Although they were pilot tested with teachers, the trunks are being evaluated for their overall value and how well students are learning lessons about habitat and wildlife. ♦

“The students enjoy making the refuge come to life,” noted Munroe-Hultman. “They take satisfaction in creating it, and we encourage them to get involved at a real refuge nearby.”



A student adds a volunteer to “the big picture that allowed youngsters to create an illustrated refuge.” (USFWS)

Students Enjoy “Building” Refuge With Classroom Aid

Refuges in Region 3 have a new educational tool from the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, MI, which already got rave responses from more than 2,200 fourth through sixth graders who used it at a Centennial celebration in late September 2003.

Available on loan from the regional office, “Let’s Build a Refuge” enables students to construct their own paradise by applying static cling photos to a large

wetland backdrop. As their classmates narrate the action, students add wildlife, habitat, visitors, staff and volunteers to the scene, getting the big picture of a national wildlife refuge with all its important components.

Regional Outdoor Recreation Planner (Region 3) Lauri Munroe-Hultman developed the idea. Matt Merchlewitz of the Region 3 Sign Shop made it a reality by printing digital photos on

static cling plastic that stick to the laminated backdrop.

Shiawassee NWR, MI, is sending a park ranger to the classroom when an area teacher schedules the activity. “The students enjoy making the refuge come to life,” noted Munroe-Hultman. “They take satisfaction in creating it, and we encourage them to get involved at a real refuge nearby.” ♦



The Prairie Science Class from the Fergus Falls, MN. (USFWS)

Fifth Graders’ Amphibian Study Funded

The Prairie Science Class, a group of 50 fifth graders from Fergus Falls, MN, received a \$1,000 Toshiba America Foundation grant for a spring amphibian biodiversity study at the USFWS Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. Students will work in small groups to develop a research question about amphibians that can be answered through data collection at the Learning Center. Students’ results and conclusions will be shared with the USFWS, the US Geological Service’s

“Frogwatch USA” program and Hamline University’s “A Thousand Friends of Frogs” program.

The Prairie Science Class, a partnership between the USFWS and the Fergus Falls Independent School District 544, allows students to learn about the prairie wetlands ecosystem while developing their science, math and writing skills. For more information, go to http://midwest.fws.gov/pwlc/prairie_school.html. ♦

The Thoughts of a Detailee

By Kate Vaughan

I'd been having visions of a detail at a far off refuge with a booming Visitor Services program for a couple of years. It wasn't until I attended Refuge Academy in April 2003 that I began to consider a detail at the Washington Office in Arlington, VA. Although it wasn't the locale I was hoping for, I knew it would be a great opportunity to connect with Visitor Services folks and learn about our public use policies at the national level.

Waking up at 5 a.m. to take the subway to work took a little getting used to, and I had to buy some "business casual" clothes because my closets held only uniforms and pajamas, but my experience has been amazing.

Since my arrival, I've worked on a variety of projects, including an outline of a partnership presentation, an "electronic" field trip regarding invasive species, definitions for the RMIS (Refuge Management Inventory System) report, and a PowerPoint presentation on environmental education.

Being at the Washington Office is like seeing the inner workings of Big Ben, watching all the parts work together to provide a huge service for wildlife conservation and the American people.



Kate Vaughan helps educate children at Patuxent Research NWR, MD. (Mike Sweeney/USFWS)

The folks in this office have the tremendous duty of bridging the gap between the field and the administration.

At our field stations, it's easy to get caught up in the minutia of our daily grinds and wonder, "where's Washington?" when we need the help. Spending time in Arlington has broadened my perspective on our responsibilities as federal employees, and given me a new

appreciation of all of the hardworking individuals working on our behalf at the Washington Office.

So, before you pack your bags for a detail in a better climate, consider the possibility of working with those who are at the very heart of the USFWS here in Arlington. You won't regret it! ♦

Kate Vaughan is an outdoor recreation planner at Patuxent Research NWR, MD.

Recycling Linked with Habitat Restoration

Boyer Chute NWR, NE, has taken the concept of recycling to a new level, cementing relationships with a handful of partners in the process.

Armed with an \$80,000 budget this fiscal year to restore several farmsteads back to their natural habitat, the refuge donated building supplies or the use of buildings for training before ridding the property of dozens of farm buildings, acquired since

the refuge was established in 1997. Established to recover fish and wildlife habitat in and along the Missouri River, the refuge is restoring floodplain that became less functional when the Missouri River was altered more than 50 years ago for navigation.

Although it has taken nearly two years to coordinate the participation of so many

continued pg 20



Burns are conducted on the refuge as prescribed. (Mindy Sheets/USFWS)

Recycling – from pg 19

partners, the payoff has been spread across many interest areas. Habitat for Humanity, which builds housing for the disadvantaged, collected sinks, toilets, cabinets, door, light fixtures, wood burning stove and countertops for sale at its building supplies warehouse. The used building supplies brought more than \$3,200 to the charity.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in the summer of 2003 simulated a crime scene in one farmhouse, detonating explosives and teaching about 20 students how to identify the type and source. In 2002-2003, the Washington County Sheriff's Department used several homesteads as training areas for drug sniffing dogs, firearms training and a simulated hostage crisis.

“All of the farmstead areas are closed to visitors, so we didn't have to worry about public safety during the exercises,” noted Bryan Schultz, Boyer Chute project leader.

The local historical society took items of interest from some of the 100-year-old farmsteads. Local neighbors, once demolition began in November 2003, took used wood, bricks and windows. One



The Boyer Chute Restoration Project has restored the area to near pre-channelization condition without affecting navigation on the main stem of the Missouri River. (Jerry Grove)

even took away a whole garage. Finally, the Ft. Calhoun Fire Department saved the Refuge System significant demolition money by burning the structures. Seventeen buildings have already been burned. Another half dozen are slated for a spring burn.

Most of the area now being restored will be a sanctuary for migratory birds. The refuge's restoration to near pre-channelization condition hasn't affected navigation on the main stem of the Missouri River. ♦



RefugeUpdate

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