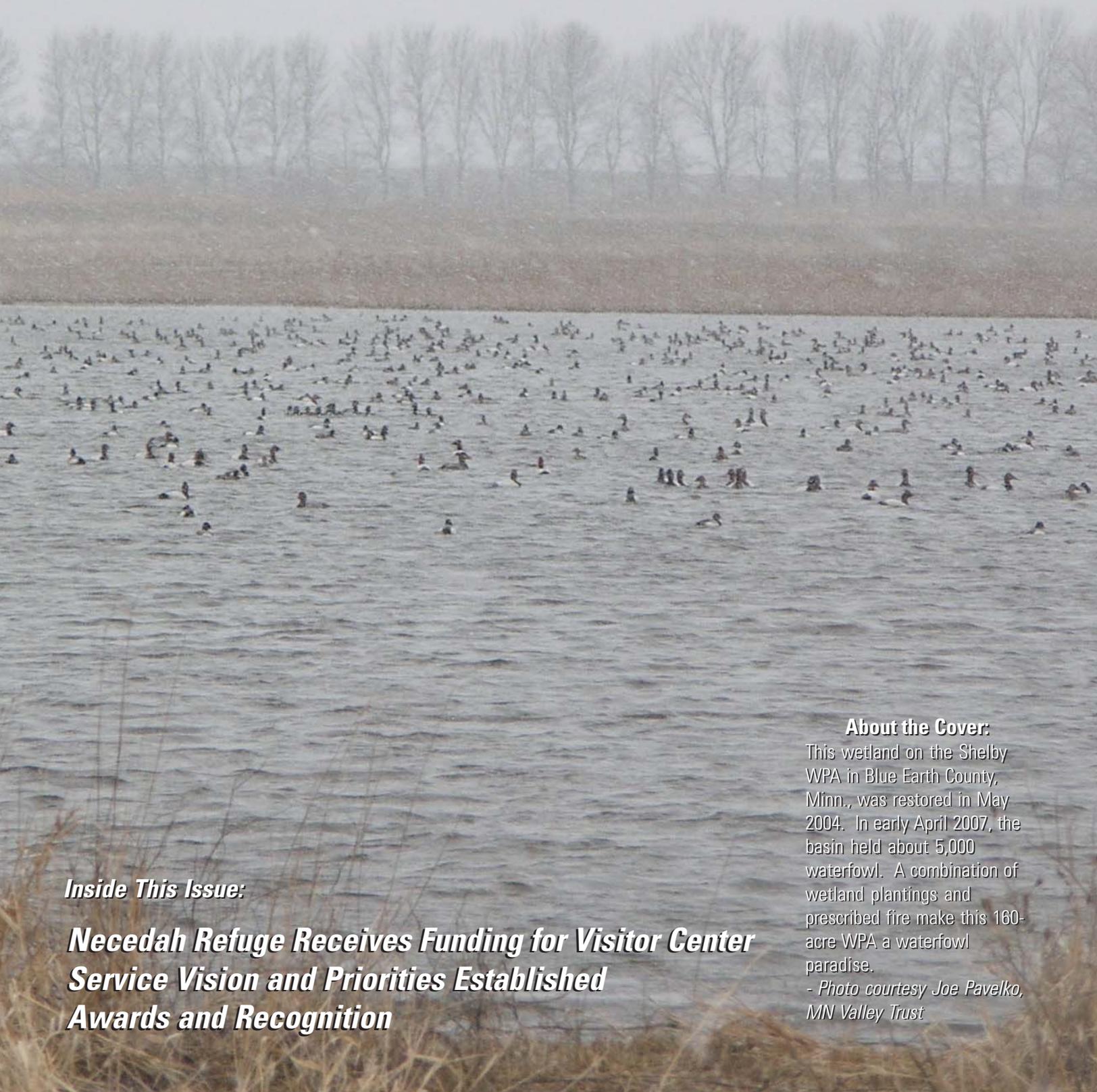




# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Inside Region 3

## *April 2007*



### ***Inside This Issue:***

***Necedah Refuge Receives Funding for Visitor Center  
Service Vision and Priorities Established  
Awards and Recognition***

### **About the Cover:**

This wetland on the Shelby WPA in Blue Earth County, Minn., was restored in May 2004. In early April 2007, the basin held about 5,000 waterfowl. A combination of wetland plantings and prescribed fire make this 160-acre WPA a waterfowl paradise.

- Photo courtesy Joe Pavelko,  
MN Valley Trust

## Necedah Refuge Receives Funding for New Visitor Center

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, located near Necedah, Wis., with \$3.518 million in the fiscal year 2007 federal budget to apply toward the construction of a new visitor center.

At an event held April 4 at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind of Wisconsin presented a ceremonial \$3.518 million check to Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson, Necedah Refuge Manager Larry Wargowsky and Necedah Friends Group President Jan Crosby.

“In tight budget times, the fact that this project is being funded speaks volumes about its value to the community,” said Rep. Kind, a founder and co-chair of the National Wildlife Refuge Caucus.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson expressed her gratitude to numerous partners for their unwavering support of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuge Manager Larry Wargowsky, the Refuge Friends Group, citizens of Juneau County and the Wisconsin Congressional delegation have made this visitor center a priority for many years,” said Thorson. “Thanks to all their hard work and persistence, the Refuge and all of Juneau County can now reap the benefits this premier refuge and new visitor center will bring to the entire area.”

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge Manager Larry Wargowsky extended his appreciation to Congressman Ron Kind, Congressman David Obey, Senator Herb Kohl, Senator Russ Feingold and the numerous groups and individuals who have supported the refuge over the years. “This refuge receives in-



- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler

(left to right) U.S. Rep Ron Kind presents a \$3.518 million check to Necedah Friends Group President Jan Crosby, Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Necedah Refuge Manager Larry Wargowsky.

credible support from our Friends Group, volunteers, local communities and visitors,” said Wargowsky. “All these people played an important role in helping us get a new visitor center. This will be a great addition to the refuge and a tremendous asset to the citizens of Necedah and all the communities of Juneau County.”

Local support for the refuge has been very high. The nearby Village of Necedah and the Necedah Lions Club have played an active role in supporting and celebrating the refuge by hosting an annual Whooping Crane Festival for the past six years. The festival celebrates the refuge’s success as part of a whooping crane reintroduction project. Endangered whooping cranes are raised at the refuge and trained to follow ultralight aircraft on a migration from Necedah to Florida. The cranes then use their natural migratory instinct to return to Necedah each spring.

More than 160,000 people visit the 44,000-acre Necedah National Wildlife Refuge each year.

According to Wargowsky, the refuge’s environmental education and interpretation program will reach an even wider audience with the addition of a new visitor center. “A new visitor center should greatly increase the number of people who come to visit the refuge, and local communities, bringing a boost to local economies and allowing us to highlight the wonderful natural resources of the area to a greater audience.”

Regional Director Robyn Thorson added that funding this visitor center reflects the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s commitment to services that provide people, especially children, opportunities to connect with nature. “This project has remained a priority, even during this time of constrained budgets in the National Wildlife Refuge System, because we recognize the long-term importance of providing services to the American public that help them connect with our Nation’s spectacular natural resources.” *Chuck Traxler; External Affairs*

## Service Sets National Vision, Principles and Priorities

During their February meeting, the Service Directorate finalized a strategic vision and a set of principles that articulate what the Service stands for as a conservation agency. And, after some very difficult, but open discussions, the Directorate identified the priorities this agency must focus on for the future.

**Our Vision - We will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.**

That vision is informed by a set of guiding principles that we all hold as professional resource managers and ethical public servants.

### **Our Conservation Principles:**

**Science** – Our work is grounded in thorough, objective science.

**Stewardship** – Our ethic is to conserve natural resources for future generations.

**Service** – It is our privilege to serve the American people.

**Professionalism** – We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, strive for excellence and respect others.

**Partnerships** – We emphasize creative, innovative partnerships.

**People** – Our employees are our most valued asset.

**Legacy** – We ensure the future of natural resource conservation by connecting people with nature.

The priorities of the Service, together with our vision and our conservation principles, will be what the Service will be known and on which our reputation and credibility will be based. These will be the foundation for shaping our future, and drive decisions about where we should allocate the majority of our people and resources.

**The highest priorities for the Service are:**

\* **National Wildlife Refuge System:** Conserving our Lands and Resources

\* **Landscape Conservation:** Working with Others

\* **Migratory Birds:** Conservation and Management

\* **Threatened and Endangered Species:** Achieving Recovery and Preventing Extinction

\* **Aquatic Species:** National Fish Habitat Initiative and Trust Species

\* **Connecting People With Nature:** Ensuring the Future of Conservation

Service Director Hall emphasized that setting these priorities was not an easy task. It involved making hard choices from among a range of very important work. “We realize that many of you are passionately invested in work that may not be reflected in these priorities,” said Hall. “We respect that and honor your commitment. But over the past year we have heard from our own employees your belief that we must set priorities. We cannot be all things to all people. For the benefit of our employees, our lands, and the natural resources entrusted to us, we must set our own priorities rather than have others set priorities for us.”

From this point forward, the Service will use these areas of distinction, as shaped by our Conservation Principles, to focus our efforts and, to the extent we can, funding. We will implement our strategic vision, guiding principles, and highest priorities through a landscape based, focal area concept of Strategic Habitat Conservation, and we will make greater use of structured decision making.

According to Hall, “For the first time in its long and distinguished history, the Service has established a vision for its future. Framed by a set of guiding principles with focused priorities, we now have the beginning of a way to maximize our ability to shape the future of fish and wildlife conservation for future generations. Now it’s up to all of us to help make sure we get to that future, together. We will continue to need the ideas, energy, and hard work of our employees and partners as we move forward.”

### **Columbia Fisheries Office Adds Satellite Office**

The Columbia, Mo., Fishery Resources Office has expanded. A crew of FRO employees moved a number of offices to a new building between Feb. 5 and 19. The move to the new “Fisheries South” office went smoothly.

Items moved included an elaborate cubicle system and infrastructure for the largest inland fisheries database in the world containing paddlefish information dating back to the mid 1980s.

The move alleviated overcrowding at the Columbia FRO that has been growing over the past year.

Programs moving to the new building include the Fish Passage Program, Habitat Assessment and Monitoring Project, Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association’s National Paddlefish Stock Assessment Project, and fisheries management technical assistance for refuges and Defense Department lands. *Brian Elkington, Columbia FRO*

## Partners Projects Restore Habitat in Northern Wisconsin

Recently completed habitat restoration projects on two northern Wisconsin waterways have helped the Service, private landowners and other partners to restore habitat for the coaster brook trout and other aquatic species. Projects were completed with support from the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

A 50-foot high and 200-foot long eroding bank on the Marengo River in Bayfield County, Wis., had been causing sediment problems to this highly important brook trout water for many years. A wall of exposed and collapsing earth was present at the site. Historic land use practices in the area had previously cleared the existing banks of stable vegetation which protected the site from large scale erosion.

The landowners, Julie and Jeff Vaillencourt, were concerned about

the negative impacts to the fishery and the steady encroachment of the river bend into the adjoining field. To fix the problem they worked cooperatively with the Ashland Bayfield Douglas and Iron Land Conservation Department, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Ashland Fishery Resources Office (FRO).

Construction finished in the fall of 2006. Riparian forest tree species will be planted at the site in the spring to further protect the river banks and reduce sediment, as well as provide additional habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The reduction in sediment which once plagued brook trout spawning habitat, will have a positive impact for many miles downstream.

For the past two years, partners in Douglas County have worked with three landowners to restore

brook trout habitat on upper Ox Creek. The first reach of stream, including one privately owned area, was completed in 2005. The second and third reaches included two separate landowners and were completed in 2006, restoring 1,400 feet of habitat for native brook trout and other species.

Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, County Land Conservation Department and the landowner, the Ashland FRO participated in the project. Through both seasons of field work, a crew from the Gordon Correction Center performed the majority of the labor.

Ox Creek is a spring fed tributary to the wild and scenic St. Croix River and designated as Class II trout water. It supports a population of native brook trout which are expected to benefit from the restored habitat. *Ted Koehler, Ashland FRO*



## First of Its Kind High-Tech Scavenger Hunt on Upper Mississippi River Refuge

Some folks are already versed in “geocaching” others don’t even know how to pronounce it. For those not familiar, it’s pronounced (JEE-oh-CASH-ing). It is a high-tech scavenger hunt using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) unit to find a treasure or cache. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and “treasure,” usually toys or trinkets of little monetary value. However, hiding a treasure on a National Wildlife Refuge is illegal.

Mary Stefanski, District Manager of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge said, “Geocaching is such a popular activity we had to think outside the box to see if there was a venue that would allow this activity on the Refuge.” Refuge Ranger Cindy Samples discovered that there was a twist to geocaching called Virtual Geocaching. Virtual Geocaching still allows the participant to experience the thrill of the hunt but doesn’t involve leaving a cache on-site. It uses landmarks and features already on the Refuge.

Samples worked with Rory Ballard, a recreation student at Winona State University and together they created the first Virtual Geocaching Series on the Refuge. Once Ballard had marked the waypoints, photographed the sites, and created the clue worksheet Samples contacted teachers Jamie Harper and Leslie Lehnertz at Riverway Learning Community. She needed volunteers to test the activity and their students were up for the challenge. Jamie Harper remarked, “This was a great activity for our students. They were able to learn how to use a GPS unit. They were outside on the ground

learning exactly how GPS units function.” In addition, they took their cameras along and took some fantastic shots of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Samples still didn’t think the activity was ready for the general public. Samples commented, “I thought we needed to test this out with experienced geocachers.” She located three experienced geocachers willing to put their skills to work at testing the Virtual Geocache. Samples added, “I learned that experienced geocachers record their finds just like a serious birdwatcher records birds – they have life lists.” The three of them provided the insight into what an experienced geocacher expects to find on a website and how to find the hidden treasures.

Refuge Manager Don Hultman commented, “This a way to link young people, their love of technology, and the refuge to get them out and connected to the refuge.”

Although the Refuge has not actively promoted the geocaching opportunity, already several people found the information on the Refuge’s website and completed the route. To verify their finds, cachers print out a clue sheet with cache coordinates and then answer questions about each site. When



- USFWS photo by Cindy Samples

Winona District Refuge Manager Mary Stefanski certifies John Banicki as the Refuge’s first Virtual Geocacher.

they have found all the locations, they can take their sheet to the Winona Headquarters to verify their finds, sign the geocaching logbook and collect their reward.

One visitor who recently completed the virtual geocaching route had this to say, “Awesome string of caches. I never would have ventured down to these areas marked pretty much only by a “boat ramp” sign because I don’t have a boat. I found more than boat ramps - most spots had awesome paths, trails and viewing platforms. I even saw a muskrat at Riecks Lake Park.”

You can visit the Refuge’s Geocaching website at: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/vg.html>.  
Cindy Samples, Upper Mississippi River NWR - Winona Dist.

## Watershed Group Begins to Take Shape

The Menominee River has long been considered a valuable resource by Native Americans, timber companies and natural resource managers. It forms a portion of the boundary between Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and is one of the largest watersheds in the Lake Michigan basin, with a combined drainage area of more than 4,000 square miles. Six of its tributaries are classified as Michigan Blue Ribbon Trout Streams – more than 75 miles of high quality trout habitat.

The Green Bay Fishery Resources Office has been working to address environmental concerns and conservation priorities within the Menominee River watershed, and recently took the lead in organizing a meeting to identify conservation professionals working in the watershed and determine the best way to form partnerships to protect the area.

The Service works in the Menominee River watershed on

projects such as sturgeon research, fish passage and activities related to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and hydroelectric dams. Several watershed groups exist on a few small streams, but there is no broad support for the entire basin.

The demands on the watershed are complex and involve a variety of resources and user groups. Similar to watersheds across the country, the Menominee faces ongoing concerns such as runoff, municipal use, hydropower and exotic species, to name a few. One emerging area of concern is development of remote areas for recreational land use.

In the near future, large tracts of land including lake, reservoir and stream frontage will be developed and how this land is developed will affect the entire watershed. Past logging practices continue to plague current stream function and contribute tons of sediment to streams annually.

Over the past decade, fishery managers have become concerned about the upstream migration of higher water temperatures and the potential loss or degrading of cold water habitat. Even though it is located in a remote area, the Menominee River watershed has a real need for a coordinated approach towards conservation and restoration.

A wide array of agencies attended the initial meeting, including the Michigan and Wisconsin DNRs, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, county conservation districts, River Alliance of Wisconsin, The Forestland Group, Plum Creek Timber Company, Iron River Wa-

tershed Council and Trout Unlimited.

Attendees express broad support for developing an advocacy group for the watershed. A steering committee will proceed with two immediate goals: disseminating information and developing a framework with clear objectives for the watershed group.

The Green Bay Fishery Resources Office will be involved with this process and assist partners as needed. The benefits of a watershed group are already being realized, with several agencies exchanging watershed-related data.

*Stewart Cogswell, Green Bay FRO*

### Crane Meadows NWR Honors Volunteers at Recognition Dinner

At an awards dinner on January 23 in Little Falls, Minn., Crane Meadows NWR recognized 33 individual volunteers and eight groups for the 1,863 hours of service given to the refuge during 2006. *Paul Soler, Crane Meadows NWR*



- USFWS photo

Rick and Sam Beam receive Volunteer Hour Milestone Awards at the Crane Meadows NWR Volunteer Banquet.

## National Fish Hatchery Saves Money with a Little Elbow Grease

Maintenance needs at U.S. Fish and Wildlife national fish hatcheries are ever present and of growing concern of staff and managers.

This ever widening maintenance funding gap—\$132 million dollars in FY 2007 alone—puts constant pressure on hatcheries to come up with solutions to meet basic production goals for a vast array of species provided by national fish hatcheries.

### The Ohio State's Dr. Roy Stein Receives Silver Eagle Award

Dr. Roy Stein received the Silver Eagle Award to acknowledge his long and outstanding career of service dedicated to natural resource science and management. During his 30-year career at Ohio State University, Dr. Stein has promoted science-based resource management through a unique combination of applied ecological research, a successful research partnership with the Ohio Division of Wildlife, mentoring students, and service to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

The Silver Eagle Award is the Midwest Region's most prestigious award given to individuals outside the Service. *Sarena Selbo, Reynoldsburg ESFO*



- Photo by Tim Daniel, OSU

The Midwest Region Silver Eagle Award is presented to Dr. Roy Stein by RD Robyn Thorson and DRD Charlie Wooley.

For years hatchery managers have had to make difficult decisions as to what maintenance needs to fund on an annual basis. Genoa National Fish Hatchery is no exception.

The hatchery, which is currently in its 75<sup>th</sup> year of operation, is the second oldest in the Midwest Region, and one of the oldest active hatcheries currently operating in the federal system. Initially constructed in 1932 as a warm water species production facility, Genoa has morphed over three-quarters of a century into a highly diverse hatchery that annually produces 14 species of finfish and up to eight species of freshwater mussels.

With this added complexity, aquatic species culture systems have evolved to include a wide array of technologies and real property infrastructures. All of the systems need constant maintenance and care, putting further stress on a static maintenance funding system.

In order to meet many of the maintenance needs of the facility, the Genoa staff has had to be creative, motivated and skilled to keep many of the older infrastructure systems viable. A recent example of this “get it done” work ethic is demonstrated in a system wide rehab project to upgrade the hatchery's lake sturgeon culture operation.

Genoa NFH is currently the largest producer of lake sturgeon for restoration purposes in the United States. The hatchery annually produces between 30,000 and 40,000 fall fingerlings of three distinct strains, as well as yearling fish, to meet restoration goals for this unique species across the Midwest.

The project requires multiple large volume tanks, raceways and fry-rearing equipment. Because of budget constraints, much of this equipment includes converted fish culture equipment from other Genoa NFH programs and salvaged national wildlife refuge excess property, all of which require periodic maintenance to meet the annual needs of the project.

The most recent maintenance demands for this system included refurbishing six large production tanks for the coming summer grow-out season. This “rehabilitation” project, when bid out to private contractors, came in at more than \$38,000, which represented more than 50 percent of the hatchery's annual maintenance funds.

Given the extensive needs of a 75-year-old hatchery, this was just not feasible. Maintenance staff took on the project, and with limited assistance from biological staff, completed the repairs for under \$8,500—including labor and supplies.

Without this commitment from the hatchery staff the production of lake sturgeon at Genoa NFH would most certainly have been affected in the immediate future, with long term ramifications to the restoration program a certainty. *Roger Gordon, Genoa NFH*



- USFWS photo

Genoa National Fish Hatchery Maintenance Mechanic Dan Kumlin gives the final touches to a restored lake sturgeon culture tank.

### Awards and Recognition

The employees of the Midwest Region continue to excel in their efforts to support the Service's mission. There have been numerous awards and recognition for these efforts over the past several months. In an effort

to shed some light on the good work we are all doing, here are a few examples of the accolades our employees have received. These awards were collected using the Region's Accomplishment Reporting System.

### Two Midwest Project Leaders Win National Awards

Two field managers from the Midwest Region were honored March 1 in Washington, D.C., during Fisheries and Habitat's "Hill Week," a national gathering of Service employees.

Craig Czarnecki, head of the East Lansing, Mich., Ecological Services Field Office and Doug Aloisi, manager of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Genoa, Wis., were each presented with a "Project Leader of the Year" award by Director H. Dale Hall at a reception at the Library of Congress.

Czarnecki and Aloisi were honored for their leadership in the Service's efforts to conserve imperiled species and their habitats.

As project leader of the East Lansing ES Field Office, Czarnecki has supported efforts by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to develop a state-wide Habitat Conservation Plan for the endangered Karner blue butterfly, and spearheaded development of a landscape-level prescription for habitat restoration for copperbelly water snake recovery. Through Czarnecki's initiative, project leaders in Michigan now hold recurring meetings to enhance collaboration among agency program areas.

Czarnecki helped foster a precedent-setting negotiation with the Federal Communications Commission and Michigan State Police that resulted in consultation with the Service about the operation and maintenance

of police communication towers and impacts on the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered bird.

He was also instrumental in the 2006 reauthorization of the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, which has built partnerships for cooperative conservation, enhancement, and restoration of Great Lakes fish, wildlife and habitat. He has helped lead the Service's National Ecosystem Assessment Team to produce the business model called Strategic Habitat Conservation, which will assist the Service with landscape approaches to habitat conservation.

Doug Aloisi was honored for his contribution to recovery and restoration efforts for imperiled native mussels and lake sturgeon in the Upper Midwest.

When Aloisi arrived at Genoa NFH in 2001, endangered Higginseye pearly mussel recovery was in its infancy and the hatchery was participating in two lake sturgeon restoration programs. Under his leadership, Genoa has expanded beyond traditional hatchery programs to make significant contributions to restoration and recovery efforts for non-traditional aquatic species.

Under Aloisi's leadership, the Higginseye recovery program has put more than 5.5 million animals into six rivers in the upper Mississippi River watershed. More than 300,000 juvenile endangered winged mapleleaf mussels have been released into the St. Croix River, and propagation programs have begun for four other mussel species of concern.

Culture techniques developed by Genoa are being used across the country for mussel restoration and recovery efforts. Partnerships for mussel recovery and restoration include three federal agencies, four states, several universities and other conservation organizations.

Lake sturgeon propagation at Genoa NFH — which could preclude listing this rare species as endangered — has quadrupled to more than 34,000 fish annually since Aloisi became hatchery manager. This program has gone from restoration sites on the Menominee and White Earth Indian reservations in Wisconsin and Minnesota to five, including the Red River drainage in Minnesota, the Mississippi River in Missouri, and the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. *Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs*



- USFWS photo by LaVonda Walton  
Service Director Dale Hall poses with the three "Project Leader of the Year" award winners. Left to right: Craig Czarnecki, East Lansing ESFO; Gail Carmody, Panama City, Fla., ESFO; Director Hall; and Doug Aloisi, Genoa NFH.

### Upper Mississippi River Refuge Staff Receive Planning Award

The staff of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge have received a national award that recognizes exceptional contributions made in support of refuge planning, according to Thomas Larson, chief of planning for the Midwest region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service annually honors a person or group for work of an exemplary nature within the realm of refuge planning.

In his congratulatory letter to the staff, FWS Director Dale Hall wrote, "Every day, all across the country, extraordinary civil servants are doing their best to improve the National Wildlife Refuge System for the American people. They carry on this work, overcoming obstacles big and small, with little recognition or reward, other than their own pride in a job well done." Director Hall wrote that this award gives well-deserved recognition for the outstanding contributions by the staff.

"We have a better plan because of the staff effort and the significant involvement of the public and other agencies. I am very pleased that the work of the staff has been recognized with this award," said Refuge Manager Don Hultman. *John Schomaker and Jane Hodgins, Refuge Planning*



Upper Mississippi River Refuge Staff

- USFWS photos

### Hultman Named 2007 Refuge Manager of the Year

Don Hultman, refuge manager of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge was honored as the 2007 Refuge Manager of the Year at a ceremony held March 23 in Portland, Ore.

Hultman was honored for his achievements in managing the development of the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, his dedication to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and his ability to work effectively and professionally with the numerous states, partners, agencies and visitors who have an interest in the future of the Refuge and the Mississippi River.

Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge President James Eddy was not surprised to hear that Don was honored with the Refuge Manager of the Year Award. "This award is a result of Don's positive leadership, outstanding communication skills, patience, understand and resolve to get the job done. Don was a special gift to this premier wildlife refuge and his efforts will allow it to meet any challenges the future may hold for the Upper Mississippi River."

Don Hultman was born and raised in Minnesota. After serving in the Marine Corps, Hultman attended the University of Minnesota



Upper Mississippi River Refuge Manager Don Hultman.

and received a Bachelor of Science in Communications and Wildlife, and a Master of Arts degree in Education. He has held positions as a park naturalist with the Minnesota DNR and as a public information officer with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Hultman's 25 year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has included staff and manager positions at Tamarac NWR in Minnesota; Seney NWR in Michigan; Devils Lake WMD, Valley City WMD and the Chase Lake Prairie Project in North Dakota; and Benton Lake NWR and WMD in Montana. He moved to the Twin Cities Regional Office in 1991 and served as a refuge manager in Realty-Ascertainment, an assistant refuge supervisor, acting refuge supervisor, chief of refuge operations and refuge supervisor for Minnesota, northern Iowa, and western Wisconsin. In 1998 he went to Washington, D.C., as the Division of Refuges deputy chief.

Hultman moved to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in 2002 to serve as the refuge manager, and is also the supervisor of 11 other refuges along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. *Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

## La Crosse Area Offices Honor Volunteers

**L**a Crosse FRO and La Crosse District of UMR Fish and Wildlife Refuge “Go Green” at Annual Volunteer Banquet

On March 9, the La Crosse Fishery Resource Office and La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, thanked their hard-working volunteers at the Annual Volunteer Banquet.

During fiscal year 2006, fishery volunteers contributed over 617 hours to the La Crosse FRO. Fifteen individuals contributed to this volunteer effort. Don Schroeder was recognized as the volunteer who contributed the most hours in 2006 with a total of 250 hours. Don is also a two-time Volunteer of the Year and reached the 3,000 hour club last year for volunteer service.

La Crosse FRO recognized Ken Visger as the 2006 Volunteer of the Year. Ken has been instrumental in the development of the Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services. Ken also helped with the La Crosse Boat Show and sturgeon tagging. Pete Schaettle, was added to the La Crosse FRO Volunteer Hall of Fame and Jeff Dahl received recognition for donating over 364 accumulative hours over the past five years.

The La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge had 60 volunteers during fiscal year 2006 that contributed a



- USFWS photo

LaCrosse area volunteers.

total of 987 hours. Volunteers helped with many projects. Two school teachers from Logan Middle School were recognized as 2006 Volunteers of the Year. Don Schroeder contributed the most hours (121) in 2006,

followed by Irv Halvorsen (88). Irv, who has volunteered with the Refuge since 1992, was awarded the Director’s Volunteer Recognition Award. *Heidi Keuler, LaCrosse FRO*

## Roger Gordon Named a Recovery Champion

**F**rom diving into the murky depths of the Mississippi River to designing a mussel-friendly hatchery building, Roger Gordon, assistant manager of Genoa National Fish Hatchery, has proved to be a freshwater mussel’s best friend. His efforts to save endangered mussels of the Upper Mississippi River from extinction earned Gordon the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s 2006 Recovery Champion award.

Gordon was honored for his work with two endangered freshwater mussels, the Higgins eye pearlymussel and the winged mapleleaf mussel. Gordon was cited as the driving force behind mussel conservation at Genoa National Fish Hatchery, where under his guidance, Higgins eye pearlymussels and winged mapleleaf mussels are produced for relocation in rivers and streams in the Upper Mississippi River System. These efforts are helping restore rare mussels to an ecosystem where they once flourished.

“Roger’s work with endangered mussels has impact beyond the waters of the Upper Mississippi River,” said Robyn Thorson, the Service’s Midwest Regional Director. “Mussel culture techniques developed by Roger at Genoa are being used by others across the country for mussel restoration and recovery efforts. He is considered a leader in native



- USFWS photo

Roger Gordon (center) receives the 2006 Recovery Champion Award from Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley.

mussel restoration and recovery issues.”

A native of the Saginaw Bay area of Michigan, Gordon studied fisheries biology at Lake Superior State University in Michigan after a 4-year stint in the Navy. His first fisheries job was as a fisheries technician at an Army Corps of Engineers facility in Washington state, monitoring downstream passage of young Pacific salmon. His career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began in 1991 as a fishery biologist at the Sullivan Creek National Fish Hatchery in the upper Peninsula of Michigan. He then worked at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin as a fishery biologist in the lake trout program. He received the assistant manager position at Genoa in the summer of 1999. *Georgia Parham, External Affairs*

## Water Level Management Projects on Upper Mississippi River Win Seven Wonders Award

Water level management on the Upper Mississippi River recently won a Seven Wonders of Engineering award from the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers. The project involves environmental drawdowns in Pools 5 and 8 on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. These drawdowns were accomplished by the Water Level Management Task Force, an interagency partnership. The award was presented Feb. 23 to project sponsor the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages water levels on the Upper Mississippi River for the federal 9-Foot Channel Project.

A pool-scale drawdown involves a seasonal decrease in water levels at the navigation dam to mimic the low-flow cycle in the upstream reservoir that no longer occurs naturally. Drawdowns expose sediments which dry and improve reproduction of aquatic vegetation. They are a low cost way to improve large areas of shallow aquatic habitat that support fish and wildlife on the Upper Mississippi River. In addition to improv-

ing aquatic vegetation, the project was also designed to maintain the federal 9-foot channel project for commercial navigation, minimize adverse effects on river recreation, and educate the public on the environmental benefits of drawdowns. *Gary Wege, Twin Cities ESFO*



- FWS photos by Gary Wege  
Increased abundance of aquatic vegetation after a drawdown in Pool 5, Upper Mississippi River.

**Tracy Hill** received the Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Service Award for his contributions towards improving the plight of Missouri River fishes as project leader at the Columbia FRO during the 2006 March Madness Event on Capital Hill sponsored by the FHC program.

**Frank Stone** received a Special Recognition Award from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society for his outstanding contribution to the Minnesota

Chapter, working through the Red Lake Fisheries Technical Committee on rehabilitating the walleye fishery on Red Lakes, Minnesota.

**Joe Genovese** of the Marquette Biological Station (Sea Lamprey Control) was awarded the "Vernon Applegate Award for Outstanding Contributions to Sea Lamprey Control" by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission at its annual meeting for his efforts above and beyond his duties to keep the public, the media, and politicians informed

about the Sea Lamprey Control Program.

**Bill Thrune** (Refuge Operations Specialist) and **Calvin Gehri** (Biological Science Technician) of the La Crosse District Office of the Upper Mississippi NWFR in Wisconsin each received an Exemplary Act Award from the Secretary of the Interior in recognition for their quick action and bravery that resulted in the rescue of a potential drowning victim who had fallen through the ice on Lake Onalaska, a major backwater of the Upper Mississippi River, on Dec. 6, 2005.

**Steve Fike**, a tractor operator at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, received the Department of the Interior's Exemplary Act Award for his efforts to save a visitor whose car fell into a river on the Refuge.

**Darryn Witt**, refuge officer at the Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge was named the Region 3 Refuge Officer of the Year.

**Gary Huschle**, wildlife biologist at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge was awarded the Minnesota Award by the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. This is the highest award presented by the Chapter.

**Ellie Koon Smith**, fisheries biologist at the Ludington Biological Station was honored with the Justin W. Leonard Award of Excellence at a recent combined meeting of the Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana chapters of the American Fisheries Society. The award, sponsored by the Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, recognizes outstanding professional competence and achievement of a professional employed in the field of fisheries or aquatic biology in Michigan.

## If An Accomplishment Happens and No One Hears About It...

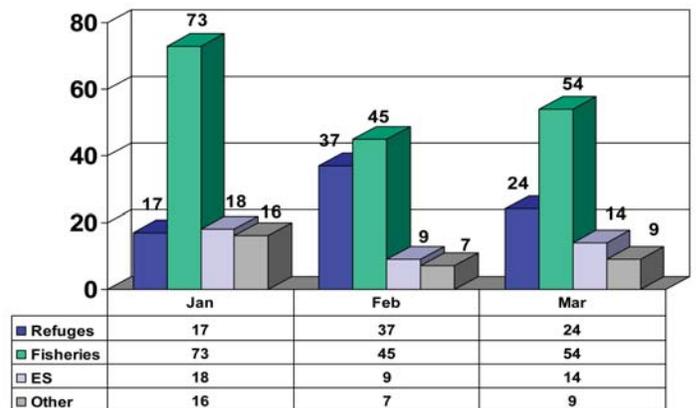
Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley is on travel as I write this column, en route to a meeting with a Congressman in Green Bay. He is attending this meeting armed with a handful of information about Service successes and impacts right in the Wisconsin representative's backyard.

In March, Green Bay FRO biologist Dale Hanson updated the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's stocking database with all available 2006 fish stocking data. Dale might have thought this task was business as usual, but someone in the Green Bay FRO entered that victory into the Accomplishment Reporting System (ARS). This entry, and several others from the FRO, Green Bay ES Field Station, and Green Bay Law Enforcement Office, are part of the packet that Charlie is able to hand the congressman.

I encouraged the use of ARS at the recent project leaders meeting. Several people asked me what level of accomplishment warrants ARS

entry. Because each ARS is a single data point, it often takes several—like the packet Charlie carried—to fully portray the success stories we have. Saving an acre may seem small, but 1,000 ARS reports on single acres tell a significant story.

ARS is *the* way we chronicle our historical successes. It is actively used to compile a myriad of products used to “tell our story.” An ARS report may not manifest into a media story or an Inside Region 3 article, but it may find its way onto the Secretary of Interior's desk (Children and Nature summary), or be given to a dignitary prior to a visit (as happened with the Secretary at Crane Meadows). This recent ARS packet helps Charlie



Region 3 Accomplishment Reports Received by Program since Jan. 1, 2007.

Wooley define our value to a key politician

Telling our story is an essential component in keeping appropriations, funding priorities, and maintaining support for our mission. Like the tree falling silently in the woods, an accomplishment that no one hears about doesn't fully serve the resource. Keep those ARS reports coming—they matter.

*Jason Holm, ARD-External Affairs*

## Sherburne Refuge Honors 800 Volunteers

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge recognized 800 volunteers for their service during 2006, at an awards dinner attended by 135 individuals on March 6. Among the Refuge volunteers there are 195 individuals from local communities who are regular volunteers, and more than 540 members of local scout troops, families, school classes, 4-H clubs, and conservation groups. The time donated to the Refuge by volunteers during the past year is equivalent to that of four full-time employees.

James Pasch, Princeton, MN, received the 2006 Volunteer of the Year for his contribution of more

than 750 hours of volunteer service to the refuge during the past 10 years.

Other volunteers receiving distinguished awards include Robert and Edward Trunk from Princeton who were honored for 1,500 hours of volunteer service, Denise Eidem, Becker, and Pam Spar, Big Lake, honored for 500 hours of service.

*Nancy Haugen, Sherburne NWR*



- USFWS photo by Nancy Haugen  
Anne Sittauer, Sherburne NWR refuge manager, presents the 2006 Volunteer of the Year Award to James Pasch.

### New Region 3 Friends and Volunteer Coordinator

The Midwest Region Refuge Office is pleased to let you know **Al Murray**, Stewardship and Volunteer Coordinator at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, is the Midwest Region's new Friends and Volunteer Coordinator.

Al will be the liaison between the Region and friends and volunteer coordinators at the Washington office. His role will be to keep staff in the field apprised of what's going on with issues on the volunteer and Friends front. Al will also be coordinating the quarterly awards program for both regional and national awards and collecting information for the annual report.

Allan "Al" Murray has been working for the Department of Interior since 1996. He began his career as a seasonal park ranger for the US Park Service, National Capital Parks, at Prince William Forrest Park in his home state of Virginia. Over the next several

years, as he pursued a career as a park ranger, he worked at a total of seven Department of Interior units, including Harpers Ferry NHP and the J.N "Ding" Darling NWR.

Following his first position as a permanent employee at the Big Cypress National Preserve in Everglades City, Fl., in 2002 he moved to central Iowa to accept a position as the stewardship coordinator on the public use staff at Neal Smith NWR. This position was a perfect match for Al as he was able to be involved in recruiting for and organizing volunteer and school groups for stewardship activities throughout the refuge.

Al is looking forward to his new duties and encourages you to contact him at Neal Smith NWR (515-994-3400) if you need assistance or information. *Donna Stanek, Refuges - Visitor Services*

### Hail & Farewell

Quality employees make Region 3 an outstanding place to work and we welcome the following new permanent employees: **Mark Brouder**, Ashland FRO; **Lisa Coomes**, Big Stone NWR; **Abby Kucera**, RO-MBSP/FA; and **Valerie Redmond**, RO-ABA.

We also bid farewell and say thank you to the following retirees: **Joan Bratley**, Ashland FRO; **Larry Childs**, Fergus Falls WMD; **Dean Franke**, Minnesota Valley NWR; **Richard Greenwood**, Chicago ES; **Catherine Hanson**, Sherburne NWR; **Gloria Hoog** and **Dale Ollila**, Marquette Biological Station; **Peggy Nelson**, RO-DCR; and **Patricia Westfall**, RO-ABA.

Names provided by the Region Human Resources Office.



<http://midwest.fws.gov>

April 2007

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Midwest Region, Office of External Affairs  
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Available in alternative formats upon request

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