



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

E-GRITS NEWSLETTER



Columbia fishway ribbon cutting ceremony officially opens fish passage

On July 13, 2006, staff from the Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, and the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia, gathered at Columbia Canal Riverfront Park for a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Columbia Dam fishway in South Carolina.

"This fish passage facility will be the first Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed, non-federal fish passage facility in South Carolina," said Tim Hall, Charleston Office Field Supervisor. "This fishway will provide diadromous fish access to approximately 24 miles of the Broad River and tributaries, totaling 1,856 surface acres of habitat which has been blocked for over 180 years."

This is a significant step forward toward restoration of American shad, blueback herring, shortnose sturgeon, and American eel in the Broad River sub-basin, as well as the entire Santee River Basin. Other species that will benefit from the fishway include hickory shad and robust redhorse. The fishway will start operation in time for the spring 2007 spawning migrations.

Some partners who participated in the ceremony included South Carolina Electric and Gas Company, the City of Columbia, other federal and state resource agencies, and conservation organizations. The NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service gave out souvenir hats with the motto "Restoring Santee Shad" in tribute to the historic occasion. So "Hats Off" to the Charleston Field Office for the completion of the Columbia fishway. This event represents nine years of coordination with the utility and natural resource agencies. Steve Gilbert, a former colleague and the original Service project biologist, also stopped by for the festivities. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Bill Timmerman, Chairman, President and CEO, SCANA Corporation, cuts the ribbon. Photo by Mark Cantrell, ES, Asheville, NC

Submitted by Sue Cielinski, Ecological Services, Atlanta, GA & Amanda Hill, Ecological Services, Charleston, SC



Col. Francis P. Bottorff, Cherry Point Station, NC

Leathernecks Saving Leatherbacks

"Leathernecks Saving Leatherbacks" is the theme of the seventh poster in an ongoing preservation partnership among the U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This poster included collaboration with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

"It was an honor to work on this poster project and to represent the Service and our Director, Dale Hall, during its unveiling" said Lewis Gorman, Department of Defense Liaison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "The USMC Endangered Species Poster Series highlights the valuable and continuing conservation partnership between the Service and the Marine Corps," said Gorman. "This event at Cherry Point was made even more special for me, since

my father trained here during World War II with his dive bomber squadron," Gorman added.

The poster was unveiled during a ceremony on August 10 at the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. The poster is part of a campaign to raise awareness and help protect the sea turtle habitats in the surrounding areas to include Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune.

In addition to the poster unveiling, ceremony guests were treated to a tour of the installation, as well as, a flight over the training ranges in the salt marshes off the coast. Visitors saw how the Marines help protect seas turtles and other marine and wildlife while conducting military exercises.

"To keep the turtles safe, numerous methods are used," said Robin T. Ferguson, natural resources specialist at Cherry Point. We scan potential targeted areas using video cameras for any movement in the waters where turtles may be swimming, she said. "We also have help from search and rescue helicopters who survey the area and give us feedback on possible dangers to the wildlife," said Ferguson

"People may think we have exclusive use of military training zones, but they are anything but exclusive," Colonel Francis P. Bottorff, Cherry Point commander.



L to R: Lewis Gorman, DoD Liaison U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program, Jim Lecky, Director of Protected Services, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, and Col. Francis P. Bottorff, Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Base commander.

Submitted by Patty Matteson, Ecological Services, Raleigh, NC

Behind the Scenes --



Future fish hatchery worker

Miss Sarah Parrish recently got a fishing lesson from Carl Campbell, maintenance worker at Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery in Tupelo, Mississippi. According to her mom, Jackie Parrish, Assistant Regional Director for Business Administration, Sarah's visit to the hatchery has convinced her she wants to be a "fish hatchery worker" when she grows up.

Photo by Laura Dobbins, Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery.

Submitted by Vicki McCoy, Special Assistant to the Regional Director, Atlanta, Georgia

Susan and Cinder help North Carolina children learn to read

What do you get when you bring children, dogs and books together? You get happy, confident children who love to read. Susan Miller, biologist at the North Carolina Sandhills Sub-office in Southern Pines, North Carolina, and her dog Cinder have signed up to participate in a new Moore County school program called Canine Assisted Reading Education or CARE. The mission of CARE is to expand a child's interest and confidence in reading, thus laying the groundwork for a lifetime of education that will ultimately lead to a higher quality of life. Miller and her three-year old Labrador retriever Cinder recently visited a local preschool class and read several books to the children. The kids loved having such a unique visitor in their class. For school-age children who are self-conscious about reading aloud to peers or adults, having a dog for a reading buddy creates a much more relaxed environment. Therapy dogs give



children the encouragement they need to read aloud. In order for dogs to become reading buddies to the children they must be certified as a therapy dog through Therapy Dogs International and must have passed the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen Program. The county school's CARE program also provides a three-hour training session in order to become CARE certified.

Submitted by Susan Miller, Sandhills Sub-office, Southern Pines, North Carolina

Bragging Rights --



Kurtis loads fish on to a truck. Photo by Andrew Currie

Local youths spend summer working at Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery

Clay County, Tennessee residents Kelsea Smith and Kurtis Rhoton spent this summer working at the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery as Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) enrollees. Kelsea and Kurtis helped the hatchery staff with feeding fish, collecting dead fish, cleaning raceways, moving fish around the hatchery, distributing fish to local waters, performing janitorial work, maintaining the public fishing area, and doing grounds maintenance. They also toured the new Conservation Fisheries Incorporated facility in Knoxville where they assisted CFI co-founders Pat Rakes and J.R. Shute capture and boxed up Barrens topminnows for transport to the hatchery. Upon return to the hatchery, Kelsea and Kurtis received hands-on experience in tempering the fish into closed recirculation systems for grow-out and subsequent distribution into the wild. The three objectives of the YCC program are to accomplish needed conservation work

on public lands, provide gainful summer employment to youth for approximately eight weeks, and develop an understanding and appreciation of this nation's natural environment and heritage. The program also included a tour of the Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Kentucky conducted by hatchery manager James Gray. Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office Project Leader Lee Barclay gave the enrollees a tour of his raptor rehabilitation center in Cookeville.

Submitted by Andrew Currie, Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery, Celina, Tennessee



Kelsea collects dead fish. Photo by Andrew Currie.



L to R: Kathy Ellis, South Kentucky RECC, Jim Glahn, Jerry Coleman, and Tina Begley all Friends group members. Photo by Joy Bullock, South Kentucky RECC

Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery get People Fund grant

The Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. recently received a \$500 People Fund grant from South Kentucky Rural Electric Cooperative (RECC). The funds will be used for resource materials to expand the hatchery's environmental education program. The People Fund is derived when electric customers round their bill up to the nearest dollar. South Kentucky RECC takes applications for the grant and awards them to groups, clubs, and organizations throughout their service area.

Submitted by James Gray, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky

Common Ground volunteers plant cutgrass at Bayou Sauvage

On Thursday and Friday, July 6 and 7, more than 120 volunteers from a non-profit group called Common Ground participated in the largest restoration planting in the history of Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. The group planted 3,100 pots of cutgrass in an area known as Blind Lagoon, under the direction of Assistant Manager Shelley Stiaes. The plants were purchased by the City of New Orleans through an ongoing partnership with the Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs. The non-profit group, which usually assists with gutting and rebuilding of hurricane damaged homes, wanted to assist with public land recovery, and they seized the opportunity to get knee deep in the marsh.



Knee deep passing plants. Photo by Shelley Stiaes.

Submitted by Shelley Stiaes, Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, New Orleans, Louisiana



Lake sturgeon spawning at the base of Shawano Dam in Shawano, WI in April 2006. Photo by Jaci Zelko.

Warm Springs Fish Technology Center participates in the annual spawning of Lake Sturgeon in Wisconsin

Technology Center personnel recently traveled to Shawano, Wisconsin to assist in the spawning of lake sturgeon in the Wolf River. Sperm samples were collected from lake sturgeon collected to develop a lake sturgeon sperm repository for future spawning operations. As populations of lake sturgeon continue to decline, valuable genetic resources are lost. Sperm cryopreservation allows conservation of genetic stocks, transfer of genes from wild populations to hatchery broodstock, spawning of asynchronous populations, and better control of selective breeding. These preservation and recovery efforts are part of collaborations with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Service to begin restoring this species in portions of its historic range in the Southeast.

Submitted by Jaci Zelko, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia

Warm Springs Fish Technology Center cryopreservation of Pallid Sturgeon sperm in North Dakota

Technology Center personnel recently traveled to Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery to collect sperm from pallid sturgeon males held at the facility. The pallid sturgeon is federally listed as an endangered species. A pallid sturgeon cryopreserved sperm repository has been established, and portions of the sperm are held at three facilities. Samples were collected and cryopreserved to preserve as much genetic diversity as possible. Studies to determine the effectiveness of cryopreservation techniques were also conducted during the spring spawning season. The Fish Technology Center has been collaborating with the Upper Basin Recovery Team on this project.



Milt collection from an adult pallid sturgeon held at Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery in June 2006. Photo by Jaci Zelko.

Submitted by Jaci Zelko, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Tennessee Purple Coneflower site protected

There has been a 42 percent increase in the number of Tennessee coneflowers at a Corps' of Engineers location because Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and the COE have erected barriers along the all-terrain vehicle (ATV)

trails. Last summer, ATV disturbance of a population of the coneflower, a federally listed endangered plant, was observed. A follow-up visit last month revealed no further signs of ATV use and an increase in the number of coneflowers. This site is important for meeting recovery goals for this species.

Submitted by Timothy Merritt, Cookeville, Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office

Return of the Barrens Topminnow

In 1999, topminnows only occurred at two locations throughout its historic range. Since 2001, reintroductions of this fish have occurred at 23 sites. Earlier this year, nine of the sites were sampled and reproduction and recruitment were documented in seven of them. This news is very encouraging for the many partners participating in the topminnow restoration effort. Meanwhile, stocking efforts continue in sites where suitable habitat and landowner cooperation exist. Although the long-range outlook is still guarded due to competition from the invasive western mosquitofish, the progress made in reproduction and recruitment is still very encouraging.



Photo by Conservation Fisheries Incorporated.

Submitted by Brad Bingham, Cookeville, Tennessee Field Office



This eastern red bat was aged, sexed, weighed, and banded before it was released. Photo by Jared Handley.

Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge surveys the night life

With the help of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Ecological Services personnel, and refuge staff, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge has a better understanding of what bat species can be found on the refuge. Bat surveys were conducted on July 20, and August 7-9, at several different locations on the refuge. At the conclusion of the surveys, four different species were recorded from a total of 21 bats netted. Those species include: eastern red, evening, pipistrelle, and Southeastern. An AnaBAT unit was also set up and recorded over 300 hits. That data is currently being analyzed to determine the presence of other species on the refuge. This work is the prelude to more intense surveys planned for next year.



Workers are taking a break between net checks. Photo by Jared Handley.

Submitted by Stacey Campbell, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, Benton, Kentucky



L to R: Jeffrey Fleming, Atlanta Regional Office; Nicholas Throckmorton, Washington Office; Kyle Hastie, Atlanta Regional Office; Joan Guilfoyle, formerly FWS, now NPS, past-president of ACI; Craig Rieben, Washington Office; Jennifer Kochas, Charleston, SC Field Office; Tom MacKenzie, Atlanta Regional Office; Lilibeth Serrano, Caribbean Field Office; Connie Dickard, Jackson, Mississippi

FWS Public Affairs Specialists gather at ACI in Orlando

Nine Public Affairs Specialists from Washington, the Southeast Region, and the field attended the annual four-day Association for Conservation Information (ACI) conference in Orlando in July. ACI provides a forum for communication professionals across a variety of fields to exchange new ideas, concepts and practices that promote conservation. The conference was a valuable gathering which offered hands-on training in news media relations, vocal preparation, presentation skills and public speaking. There were also panel discussions on partnerships, web sites, magazines and regulatory publications; plus talks on marketing, interpretive materials and volunteers. The field trips were outstanding and included a morning kayak, pontoon boat, or bus tour of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and an afternoon visit to Kennedy Space Center. The ACI conference offered something for everyone interested in the public relations aspects of natural resource management. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

hosted this year's ACI conference under the theme "The Legacy and the Challenge."

Submitted by Connie Light Dickard, Jackson, Mississippi Field Office

Candidate Conservation - Service Regions 2 and 4 Collaborate with Multiple Partners to Conserve One of the Rarest Reptiles in North America: the Louisiana Pine Snake

The Southeast and Southwest Regions of the Service are collaborating with several partners to conserve the Louisiana pine snake which inhabits longleaf fire forests in Louisiana and Texas. The species produces the largest egg (three to five inches) and hatchling (18-22 inches) of any North American colubrid snake. A 2004 Candidate Conservation Agreement provides a framework that is being used to develop a comprehensive, cooperative plan for recovery so that the species may not need to be listed. Specific goals, strategies, and success metrics will be established for each conservation category which includes: (1) ecosystem conservation; (2) habitat management; (3) monitoring and trapping; (4) captive breeding; (5) research, (6) outreach and education, and, (7) integration of public and private-land conservation efforts. Based on the foundation established by the Agreement, the 2006 Annual Louisiana pine snake meeting in early August fostered growing interagency and private-land owner cooperation. It provided an active forum that stimulated lively debate and discussion. The meeting was hosted by the U.S. Forest Service in Nacogdoches, Texas with strong support from Arlington, Texas and Lafayette, Louisiana Field Offices. Participants included state wildlife agencies in Louisiana and Texas, the National Forest of Louisiana and Texas, the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station, the Department of Defense at Fort Polk, Louisiana, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, the Texas Department of Transportation, Stephen F. Austin University, Texas A & M University, the Ellen Trout Zoo of Lufkin Texas, and private landowners including Temple-Inland, International Paper and TimberStar. Video footage taken at the meeting of this multi-partner, two-state CCA will be one of three agreements featured in a video on candidate conservation agreements that is in production by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



The pine snake is a large non-poisonous constrictor and one of the rarest reptiles in North America. FWS photo.

Submitted by Jack Culpepper, Louisiana Ecological Services Office, Lafayette, Louisiana

Visitor Services --

Tarpon Bay Recreation Area gets new observation deck



New observation deck under construction. Taken August 10, 2006 by Cindy Anderson.

The J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) students worked diligently this summer at removing the old, wooden observation deck at the Tarpon Bay Recreation Area (TBRA). After clearing away all remnants of the old, rotten wood the YCC students put in stringers for the new deck. Refuge staff is now working on laying down the recycled plastic decking. When completed, TBRA will have a fantastic, handicapped accessible area for the public to view the water and a great meeting place for tours and programs.



Submitted by Cindy Anderson, J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, Florida

Wage Grade Profile --



Robert Rahn and the rolagon marsh buggy he rebuilt. Photo by Russell Webb.

Robert Rahn: Savannah Coastal Refuge's native son

Robert Rahn, mobile heavy equipment mechanic, has lived in the neighborhood adjacent to Savannah Coastal Refuges in Georgia most of his life. He has hunted, fished, and enjoyed the wildlife on the refuge since childhood, and since July 7, 1998, he has worked there.

"I have always wanted to work here," he says. "I enjoy it all – working as a team, on the islands, and in the shop."

Rahn recently rebuilt the refuge swamp buggy from a bare frame for about \$13,000. It would have cost the refuge about \$70,000 to replace it. The fire crew uses the buggy for prescribed burns and fighting wildfires. The refuge biologist depends on it to work on wood duck boxes.

He also totally rebuilt the refuge's lowboy trailer for hauling heavy equipment such as bulldozers and farm equipment.

In his spare time, Rahn enjoys riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle, target shooting, and building rifles. He has six children and 15 grandchildren.

Submitted by Elsie Davis, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia

Photo Album --

Awards presented at Power of Partnerships workshop -- All photos by Leopoldo Miranda.



PRIVATE LANDOWNER STEWARDSHIP AWARD: Dr. Luis Ramos-Santiago, Hacienda Central Pellejas, Adjuntas, Puerto Rico: Dr. Santiago was recognized for his conservation efforts on his 1,390 acre Hacienda and his active community involvement in promoting a conservation ethic in Puerto Rico. Since 2002, Dr. Santiago has entered into several agreements through the Partners Program and the Private Stewardship Grant Program leading to the restoration of approximately 45 acres of native plant species, two miles of

riparian habitat protection, and 200 acres of tropical uplands. The implementation of these projects are expected to benefit 12 Federal and Commonwealth protected species.

PRIVATE LANDOWNER STEWARDSHIP AWARD: Mr. Ben Williams, Corning, Arkansas: Since 2000, Mr. Williams has voluntarily placed approximately 2,240 acres of his cropland into conservation programs through partnerships with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (Wetland Reserve Program and Emergency Watershed Protection Program), the Service's Partners Program, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Mr. Williams also donated an existing natural oxbow lake to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for public use. As a result of his conservation efforts, there will be lasting conservation benefits to the community, state and nation, including fish and wildlife habitat, reduced flooding and soil erosion, and improved water quality.



Ben Williams (private landowner award recipient, third from left), his wife (fourth from left), and members of the Williams family.



Alison Higgins (center) holds her Power of Partnerships Award, Individual. Dr. Ronnie J. Haynes (Regional Partners Coordinator on left) and Kathy O'Reilly Doyle (Partners Program biologist, Florida Panther NWR) to far right.

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS AWARD, INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY: Alison Higgins, The Nature Conservancy, Florida Keys: Alison Higgins, serving as the Land Stewardship Coordinator in the Florida Keys for The Nature Conservancy, has been a leader in developing a multi-faceted partnership approach to addressing the many problems of invasive, exotic plants in the Florida Keys. Alison has led the Keys Invasive Exotic Task Force and the supervisor of Project GreenSweep. These initiatives have been very effective in educating the public about the need to control invasive and exotic species and in working with private landowners while developing and promoting effective partnerships to address the problems. Furthermore, these efforts are serving as an effective model to other communities that are beginning to undertake similar efforts. Alison is currently working to implement a program (Green Thumb Certified) that will provide certifications to commercial nurseries that agree that they will not sell invasive species, and will provide information to customers in the categories of mulch, fertilizer, irrigation and native plants.

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS AWARD, ORGANIZATION CATEGORY: The Nature Conservancy, North Georgia Office, Dalton, Georgia: Since 1997, the North Georgia Office of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has focused much of its conservation effort on the Conasauga River and its tributaries. This imperiled aquatic system is home to 76 species of native fish, 26 species of freshwater mussels, 20 snails, 20 salamanders, and one endemic crayfish. Using a landscape level approach, TNC has promoted and developed effective partnerships with key landowners (including private industry), local government, public agencies and other stakeholders to leverage conservation funding and technical assistance to the on-the-ground protection and restoration of habitat within the Conasauga River System. The list of partnerships and accomplishments led by TNC in this area are to numerous to list here, but over the last several years, TNC has worked closely with the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and other partners to plant native vegetation and to protect over four miles of riparian habitat and over 800 acres of upland habitat along the Conasauga and Jacks rivers and tributary streams. TNC has also helped to start a local grassroots river alliance, The Conasauga River Alliance that focuses on the education and outreach needs of the area.



In center holding and accepting award for The Nature Conservancy, North Georgia Office (Power of Partnerships Award, Organization), Shawn Clouse; left, Dr. Ronnie J. Haynes; right, Anita Goetz (Partners Program biologist, Asheville, NC Field Office).

Columbia fishway ribbon cutting ceremony -- more photos



The Columbia Fishway at the Columbia Hydroelectric Project. Photo by Mark Cantrell, Ecological Services, Asheville, North Carolina.



Another spectacular view of the Columbia Fishway. Photo by Sue Cielinski, ES, Atlanta, GA



Amanda Hill, Charleston, South Carolina Field Office, stands in front of the fishway viewing window. Photo by Sue Cielinski, ES, Atlanta, GA



Gathering and socializing of participants just before the ceremony begins. Photo by Sue Cielinski, ES, Atlanta, GA



Amanda Hill, Charleston Field Office, speaks with Gerrit Jobais, of American Rivers. Photo by Sue Cielinski, ES, Atlanta, GA



Tim Hall, Supervisor, Charleston Field Office, speaks at ceremony. Photo by Mark Cantrell, ES, Asheville, NC.



Participants explore the new Columbia Fishway. Photo by Mark Cantrell, ES, Asheville, NC.



Sue Cielinski, Mark Cantrell, and Tim Hall pose at entrance to the Columbia Canal. Photo by Amanda Hill, ES, Charleston, SC.

Candidate Conservation - Service Regions 2 and 4 Collaborate with Multiple Partners to Conserve One of the Rarest Reptiles in North America: the Louisiana Pine Snake -- more photos



U.S. Forest Service hosts annual Louisiana pine snake conservation meeting at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas. FWS photo.



Attendees included representatives from multiple state and federal government agencies, academia, NGOs, and private landowners. FWS photo.



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