U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# We Are Region 8

July 2009

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**Kim Field, desert tortoise recovery biologist at the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, attaches a radio transmitter to track a tortoise's movements when released into the wild. See article, page 8.**

# From the PSW Regional Director

It should come as no surprise to anyone that climate change is already here. It is affecting fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats around the globe. In fact the rate of change outstrips the predictions made just a few years ago.

Here in Region 8 we are working aggressively to make sure we incorporate climate change into our decision-making and management actions. I want to thank Deb Schlafmann for her work over the past several months leading our climate change efforts. She volunteered to act as the coordinator and has done an outstanding job in getting the Region's Climate Change Program up and running.

We have just selected Rick Kearney to be the permanent regional Climate Change Coordinator and he will begin on August 16. You may remember Rick from his detail in the Regional Office during his SES training. Rick's background includes leading the national USGS/FWS Avian Influenza team and, while at USGS, cooperating with the Service on climate change strategies. The latter position provided him with insight on the Service's vision for leadership in the climate change area. Rick also provided leadership in USGS's wildlife science program. Rick has a bachelors degree in wildlife science and masters degrees in conservation biology and engineering. Rick's time spent in Washington DC, with USGS and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, will provide us with contacts and experience that will greatly benefit the region.

In the meantime, we have asked Deb, who has been on 120-day detail in this position, to continue for another 120-days to provide continuity during the transition. We relied on Deb to ensure that the Region coordinated with the Washington Office and among regions. Marge, Alex and I are grateful to Deb for her excellent work.

A couple of weeks ago the Navy gave us a tour of San Clemente Island, where they are doing great recovery work for foxes, shrikes, and other species. A number of prehistoric beach shelves are obvious, dating back a million years or so, when the ocean was hundreds of feet higher than today. More recently, about 12,000 years ago, the ocean level was so low only a narrow channel separated the islands from the mainland. Climate change and change in ocean levels are natural events.

What is not natural is that today's warming trend is happening fast, probably much faster than the historic events. Unlike past events, today's climate change can be slowed, and hopefully stopped, if we take actions now. Stopping and reversing the warming will take time. In the meantime, many species are going to be stressed and unable to adapt. Species will go extinct.

In addition to doing all we can, as individuals and as an agency, to halt and reverse the warming trend, we need to be strategic about where we spend our scant resources. We will not be able to stop all extinctions. We need to form partnerships like we never have before, to strategize at the ecosystem level. The Klamath Basin and the California Central Valley, including the valley's drainage to the Pacific, are excellent examples of ecosystems where we have existing partnerships and the potential to conserve corridors and watercourses that will allow species to migrate south to north, west to east, and from low to high elevations. There has never been a time when our collaboration and conservation skills are so needed.

I urge you to get involved at your stations and in your communities to become carbon neutral. Here in the regional office our travel is being offset. It's something I would urge all of us to do. A regional carbon neutral team headed by Andy Yuen has just been formed. A new regional carbon sequestration team is being formed and will be led by Kim Forrest. We need to set an example in this area. It's not enough to talk about climate change, we must change our actions. If you have ideas for moving forward in these two important areas, I encourage you to contact Andy and Kim to share your thoughts.

As the nation's principle federal conservation agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is dedicated to helping reduce the impacts of climate change. Our employees specialize in wildlife management and ecosystem dynamics, and have an extensive network of partners who work alongside us to protect our nation's fish and wildlife resources.

Here in Region 8 we are working with partners to identify, and begin to address, climate change effects on wildlife and habitats. And we are working with our counterparts across the nation to examine how accelerating climate change will amplify many conservation challenges. It's become abundantly clear that we cannot meet these challenges alone.

We are also working to more fully develop the Service's climate change strategic plan. We cannot face this challenge by simply repeating the conservation successes of the past.

If you haven't yet had the opportunity to visit the Service's climate change website, I encourage you to do so: http://www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/. There are links to sites that discuss climate change and adaptive wildlife management, up-to-date news articles, scientific studies, and more. It's a great place to find the very latest information in this important field. One of the areas highlighted is an innovative partnership between the EPA, the Service, and six other federal agencies. Together we have developed a new Climate Change, Wildlife and Wildlands Toolkit for educators. The kit contains materials to help teachers and educators in refuges, forest lands, parks, nature centers, etc. , teach middle school students about how climate change is affecting our nation's wildlife and public lands and how everyone — including kids — can become "climate stewards." http://www.globalchange.gov/resources/educators/toolkit.

# Contract Awarded for Planning, Design, Engineering for San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center

**by Scott Flaherty, External Affairs**

*Proposed site for new refuge headquarters and visitor center on San Luis NWR.* (photo: USFWS)

On June 19, Secretary Ken Salazar announced the award of a contract to design and engineer a new administrative headquarters and visitor center for the Service's San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC) in Merced County, California. Catalyst Architecture LLC of Prescott, Arizona, was awarded the contract to provide planning, design, construction management and inspection services for the $9.775 million construction project funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The proposed design for the new facility totals 15,300 square feet, and will be located on the southwest corner of San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), about 8 miles north of Los Banos. Refuge management and administrative functions will occupy approximately 10,500 square feet and include workspace for up to 39 people. The visitors' center is proposed to be 4,800 square feet, and may contain such features as a classroom, an auditorium, permanent and temporary interpretive exhibit spaces, and information desk.

"The economic recovery investments that the Department of the Interior is making will create jobs by building trails, restoring habitat, upgrading visitors' centers, and protecting national treasures in communities across America, while leaving a lasting legacy for our children and grandchildren," said Secretary Salazar.

The new facility will replace the present refuge offices, which have been operating out of a strip mall in Los Banos for more than 14 years. Eliminating costs for leased space will save the Service an estimated $300,000 per year. The strip mall location provided no facilities for refuge visitors, which have numbered about 70,000 people annually. The Service's Unified Design and Cost Model predicts visitation in the new facility to exceed 140,000 people annually.

"We are very excited to begin this much-needed project that will benefit the refuge and the local community for years to come," said Kim Forrest, Project Leader at the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "It improves management efficiencies by locating our staff on the refuge as well as provides a long overdue state-of-the art public facility that will help make San Luis NWRC a destination for families seeking to re-connect with wildlife and nature."

The administrative headquarters and visitor center will also be built to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification standards.

"Catalyst Architecture is an award-winning firm and experts in energy-efficient and sustainable design," Forrest said. "The design will combine functionality with sustainability and beauty, blending the structure with the ecology of the site. When complete, the facility will be an exceptional work place for refuge staff and an asset to the local community."

The Service expects the design to be completed by March 2010, with construction commencing by June or July. The Service anticipates local subcontractors will be used during various phases of this project, and future contract awards will be announced when known.

Contract opportunities for all ARRA projects are announced on the Internet at FedBizOpps.gov (www.fbo.gov).

More information about this and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service projects is available at http://recovery.doi.gov/press/bureaus/us-fish-and-wildlife-service.

# Sacramento NWRC Planner Jackie Ferrier Recognized as Service's Top Planner

Jackie Ferrier, a conservation planner at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, was recently awarded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Outstanding Planning Staff Award during the National Refuge Conservation Planning Conference June 9, at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepardstown, West Virginia.

The award is presented to the person who has made outstanding contributions to planning efforts in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

During her five years as a planner, Ferrier has worked on some of the most complex refuge plans in the region. Her responsibilities have spread beyond the refuges in the Sacramento Valley to include Modoc NWR in northeastern California and the Desert NWRC in Nevada.

In addition to mammoth refuge comprehensive conservation plans, she's also contributed to several visitor services plans, refuge hunt plans and integrated pest management plans, several of which are used as models for other planners.

*Jackie Ferrier (center) receives the Outstanding Planning Staff Award from National Wildlife Refuge Chief Greg Siekaniec (left) and Refuge Planning Division Chief Andy Loranger.* (photo: USFWS)

"Jackie is one of those folks that the public rarely sees but is integral to keeping our refuge conservation planning program functioning properly," said Refuge Manager Kevin Foerster. "Her dedication to innovative management and public participation is exemplary. We are extremely proud of Jackie and her accomplishments."

## Prescribed Burn Provides Training to Firefighters

**by Miriam Morrill, Sacramento NWRC**

On June 2, the Service conducted a prescribed burn on three upland habitat units, totaling 350 acres, on the Llano Seco Unit of the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge near Chico.

Fire staff contacted the Cal Fire Butte County Unit to assist and provide training for new firefighters. The interagency training burn went off without a hitch. Both collateral refuge staff and new state firefighters had the opportunity to work with experienced firefighters in a "live" fire training exercise. Firefighters from both agencies were able to sign-off new items on their task books and the effort helped build camaraderie between fire crews.

Benefits to prescribed burning include burning out invasive weeds which provide poor habitat for wildlife and increase the fire hazard.

The objective for one of the units was to burn-off the non-native seed beds and allow native grasses to return. The objective for the other unit was to burn-off noxious weeds which were competing for water and space in restored vernal pool habitat areas.

*A new refuge firefighter uses a drip torch to ignite fire along the edge of the burn unit.* (Photo: Kipp Morrill)

# Service Signs Largest Safe Harbor Agreement in California

**by Steve Martarano, Sacramento FWO**

The largest Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) ever established in California is now final.

The historic 28,000-acre SHA to protect and enhance three listed species in the Mokelumne watershed was signed by the Service and the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) during a June 2 Pardee Reservoir ceremony. The agreement is among the largest single-landowner SHAs ever created in the country. The agreement, which took about a year to craft, covers parts of scenic San Joaquin, Amador and Calaveras counties.

"This SHA may have been the biggest one we've ever done, but it was about the easiest that I've been involved with," said SHA coordinator Rick Kuyper, a Service biologist with the Conservation Partnerships Division of the Sacramento FWO. "The coordination and cooperation with East Bay MUD and the Environmental Defense Fund was extraordinary."

The 30-year SHA permit will cover three federally protected species: Valley elderberry longhorn beetle, California red-legged frog, and California tiger salamander. The final agreement can be found at www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/documents/Final_EBMUD_SHA.pdf

"We are very pleased to be signing this landmark agreement with East Bay MUD," Susan Moore, Field Supervisor, Sacramento FWO, said during the signing ceremony. "It's a win-win. In order to successfully conserve federally listed species, we need cooperative conservation agreements with private landowners in California, and this is a great example of how that can be accomplished."

Under a Safe Harbor Agreement, landowners voluntarily undertake management activities on their property to enhance, restore, or maintain habitat benefiting species listed under the Endangered Species Act. SHAs encourage private and other non-federal property owners to implement conservation efforts for protected species by assuring that the owners will not be subjected to increased property use restrictions as a result of their efforts to attract and help listed species on their property.

SHAs are not new to EBMUD, as the district has been participating since 2007 in another SHA on the lower Mokelumne River for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle.

"In April 2008, East Bay Municipal Utility's Board of Directors adopted the Mokelumne Watershed Master Plan to provide long-term guidance for future use and management of its 28,000 acres of watershed lands and reservoirs in the Mokelumne watershed," said Richard G. Sykes, Manager of Natural Resources for EBMUD. "The Mokelumne Safe Harbor Agreement meets the Plan's objectives of implementing prescriptive management activities that result in a net conservation benefit to California tiger salamanders, California red-legged frogs, and Valley elderberry longhorn beetles; providing a regulatory mechanism to facilitate watershed management; and establishing protocols for management, and routine maintenance and construction."

Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), whose attorney Michael Bean worked on the SHA concept more than 10 years ago, once again played a major role in bringing USFWS and EBMUD together to work out potential conflicts, and helping USFWS respond to comments that were submitted. Bean has just joined federal service as counsel on the ESA to the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

"Safe Harbor, for certain landowners, is a fairly cost-effective way to remove the barrier that can exist to (helping species)," Eric Holst, Managing Director of the Center for Conservation Incentives of EDF

***Continued on page 6***

*Beautiful Pardee Reservoir in Amador County is part of the 28,000-acre Safe Harbor Agreement recently signed by USFWS and EBMUD.* (photo: USFWS)

*Continued from page 5*

told the Sonora Union Democrat newspaper. "It eliminates the problem for a landowner that 'if I do something good for the species, it may result in a greater regulatory burden. ' "

The EBMUD agreement centers on habitat surrounding two large dams and their reservoirs, Camanche and Pardee, plus lands adjacent to the Mokelumne River for a half-mile below Camanche Dam. Current and recent land use practices on the property include management for water supply, flood control, grazing, aquaculture, hydroelectric power, wastewater treatment, facility maintenance, residential use, and recreation.

The 30-year agreement and the associated permit authorize EBMUD to incidentally take the three federally-listed species during specific maintenance and operation activities; and in exchange, EBMUD will enhance, create, and manage habitat for listed species on their property.

The property has known occurrences of the valley elderberry longhorn beetle and the California tiger salamander. Although California red-legged frogs have not been found on the property, it has extensive suitable breeding habitat, and the frogs are known on adjacent privately owned property. EBMUD and USFWS are optimistic that California red-legged frogs will eventually inhabit EBMUD lands. The agreement is intended to result in an increase in species populations throughout the property, resulting in a net conservation benefit for the three federally listed species.

EBMUD serves 1.3 million water customers and 640,000 wastewater customers east of the San Francisco Bay. Most of its water delivered to customers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties comes from the Mokelumne River.

# Preventing and Controlling Aquatic Invasive Species in Lake Tahoe

**by Jeannie Stafford, Nevada FWO**

Following the first discovery of the highly invasive quagga mussel in the western U.S. in January 2007, the Service established an Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Coordinator for the Lake Tahoe Basin and Nevada.

Steve Chilton, the new ANS coordinator, chairs an Aquatic Invasive Species Coordination Committee composed of representatives from local, state and federal agencies. One of the charges of the committee is to oversee the development of an Aquatic Invasive Species Integrated Management Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The Service has been instrumental in developing a boat inspection program targeting eleven public launch locations around the Lake. The goal of the inspection program is to intercept boats from infested waters and decontaminate them prior to launching into Lake Tahoe. This program has received significant assistance from local marina owners and public launch ramp operators who have had their staff certified as inspectors.

The Service is working closely with researchers from University of California-Davis and University of Nevada-Reno in developing a pilot project to control the invasive Asian clam in Lake Tahoe. The clam has been linked to algal blooms which may contribute to a more suitable habitat for survival of quagga mussels.

The committee will focus on the removal, containment and reduction of existing aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Tahoe Keys Marina; implementing control and removal actives lake-wide for AIS source populations to improve near shore habitat; AIS environmental education; and watercraft inspections.

*Quagga on rope* (Photo: USFWS)

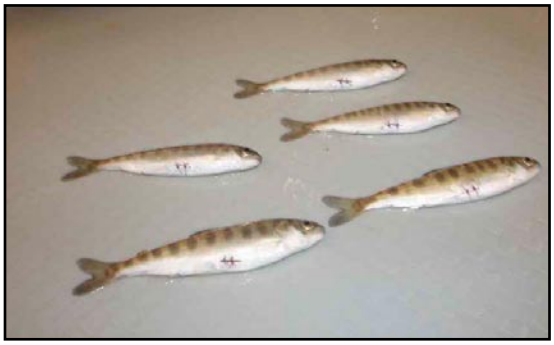
*Aquatic nuisance species include zebra mussels (left) and quagga mussels (right).* (Photo: USGS)

# South Delta Juvenile Salmon Survival Study

**Article & photos by**
**Patricia Brandes, Stockton FWO**

The Service recently participated in a large-scale, collaborative project to estimate juvenile salmon survival through parts of the southern Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as part of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP). Several agencies and contractors were involved in the study: the Stockton Fish and Wildlife Office (STFWO) and California/Nevada Fish Health Center (CNFHC), the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), California Department's of Water Resources (DWR) and Fish and Game, San Joaquin River Group Authority, University of Washington, Natural Resource Scientists Inc, FISHBIO, and Hanson Environmental.

Participants in the project tagged and released 950 juvenile Chinook salmon with internal acoustic tags and deployed 15 acoustic receivers in the south Delta to estimate survival and migration distribution among channels. The acoustic tags emit sound pulses that can be detected by acoustic receivers as tagged individuals pass the receivers deployed at strategic locations through-out the south Delta. Seven separate releases, of approximately 135 acoustic tagged salmon, were made over a 3 ½ week period starting in late April. Acoustic receives remained in place through the end of May. In addition, a small number of striped bass and largemouth bass were tagged with external acoustic tags to better understand the movement of these predators in order to help distinguish between tags in live salmon versus those that have been eaten by predators. Mobile receivers mounted on boats were also used to identify areas where tags were found to be motionless indicating that the fish had died or the tag had been defecated by a predator and settled on the riverbed.



*Juvenile salmon with sutures from surgically implanting acoustic tags into their body cavities.*

The acoustic-tagged fish released for the VAMP were also used to support a study conducted by USBR to determine if a non-physical barrier or "bubble curtain," placed at the junction of the San Joaquin River and Old River would keep juvenile salmon from entering Old River. Previous studies have suggested that mortality for juvenile salmon migrating through Old River is higher than for juvenile salmon migrating down the San Joaquin River and a bubble curtain could help direct fish into channels with a greater likelihood of survival. The VAMP study also collaborated with DWR on an additional study to evaluate the impact of agricultural barriers on juvenile salmon and steelhead in the south Delta. As part of DWR's agricultural barrier study they deployed and maintained an additional 11 fixed-station, acoustic receivers in the south Delta. These receiver stations will detect the fish tagged from the VAMP study and help DWR evaluate the impacts of the agricultural barriers on juvenile Chinook salmon migration.

STFWO led the coordination and planning phases of the VAMP study, assisted in the tagging, transported and released the study fish, maintained and downloaded data from six receivers, and helped tag predatory fish species. Employees from the CNFHC took samples from test fish held for 48 hours to detect pathological or physiological problems that could negatively affect fish survival. In addition, personnel from the CNFHC conducted bioassays to assess relative water quality effects near the Stockton Wastewater Treatment Plant.

*Service employee Jerrica Lewis participates in tagging juvenile salmon as part of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Program.*

Preliminary results suggest that survival for the first 24 hours after tagging and transport to the release site was high, but survival from the release site to the bubble curtain (approximately 15 miles), appeared lower than anticipated, with estimates of survival ranging from 48 to 73 percent. When the bubble curtain was on, it appeared to reduce the number of tagged salmon that entered Old River, although there was evidence that tagged salmon were eaten by predators in the vicinity of the barrier. Receivers placed in the San Joaquin and Old rivers downstream of the bubble curtain will provide data for modeling and comparing survival in the two rivers. Final results should be available January 2010.

## Connecting Refuge Wetlands is a Blast!

**by Carl Lunderstand, Stillwater NWR**

When faced with a difficult management challenge, staff at Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge turned to local mining and military resources for an unconventional solution.

The refuge needed to re-create a channel between two wetland units that had silted in. The site was too wet for heavy equipment to operate without getting stuck, and drying the area enough to allow access for an excavator would mean de-watering hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat for many months. This option was not acceptable to refuge biologist Bill Henry, who contacted the Navy Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Team at Naval Air Station Fallon for help. With explosives purchased from a mining supplier, the Navy EOD personnel were eager to practice their skills and at the same time help maintain wetland habitat for wildlife.

On May 21, the Navy EOD Team and members of the Douglas and Washoe County Bomb Squads placed 585 pounds of Dynomax Pro explosives along the 300-foot stretch of silted-in channel. After clearing the area, the explosives were detonated, completing the job in milliseconds without losing any habitat during the critical summer months.

*Explosives create a channel between two wetlands on Stillwater NWR.* (photo: Carl Lunderstadt/USFWS)

# New Partnerships Formed for Desert Tortoise Recovery

**by Jeannie Stafford, Nevada FWO**

Kim Field, desert tortoise recovery biologist at the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office has long recognized the potential of the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) to make a strong contribution to desert tortoise recovery. Her initiative and foresight has been instrumental in creating a new partnership that is the first large-scale collaborative effort between the Service and the Conservation Centers for Species Survival (C2S2), in the contiguous 48 states. This new partnership will serve as a national model to encourage new approaches to complex conservation issues.

The DTCC was built in Las Vegas in 1990. Since its construction, the center has been used primarily as a holding facility for formerly wild tortoises removed from development sites and for tortoises from Clark County's tortoise pick-up service. Although the center has occasionally hosted various research projects, it has had limited value to conservation and recovery of the desert tortoise.

*Desert tortoise.* (Photo: USFWS)

In 2005 and 2006, Field coordinated the development of a master plan. The plan envisions the transformation of the DTCC into a facility that would enhance desert tortoise recovery, provide for improved desert restoration techniques, foster cooperative scientific research that supports our knowledge of Mojave Desert ecosystems, and enhances public education and awareness of conservation needs of the Mojave Desert.

Since 2007, Field has worked with the DTCC manager to improve husbandry conditions and coordinate various aspects of the DTCC operations. She secured clinical training for staff enabling them to better evaluate health of the tortoises. She has worked diligently to secure operational funds, to account for both expenditures and tortoises at the DTCC, and has coordinated with the BLM on a successful grant proposal to continue the development of the Master Plan.

Last year, Field spearheaded the development of a new partnership with the C2S2, consisting of five American Zoological Association accredited institutions with a keen interest in assisting with the conservation of rare species worldwide. And in March a Memorandum of Understanding between the Service, C2S2, BLM, and Nevada Department of Wildlife for the operation of the DTCC was signed. A Cooperative Agreement between the Service and the Zoological Society of San Diego (a member institution of C2S2) for the operation of the Center was signed as well.

In addition to animal husbandry expertise, the San Diego Zoo and other C2S2 members will bring innovative outreach, training, and education techniques, along with applied conservation science background to the partnership. This will be a great step forward in conservation and recovery efforts for the desert tortoise.

# Nest Guarding Initiative Breeds Success

*A 7-day-old California condor chick stays close to dad in a nest cave near Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex.* (photo: Blake Massey /USFWS)

**by Michael Woodbridge, Hopper Mountain NWR**

Before dawn on a brisk April morning, two Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC) employees working on the California Condor Recovery Program begin an arduous hike across a steep canyon near Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. When they reach their destination, a steep slope just above a sandstone cliff, they build an anchor for the biologist, who rappels down ropes to a dusty cavity on the cliff face. To his delight, he spots a ball of white downy feathers, about the size of a grapefruit, behind two protective California condor parents. The egg, laid by condors #107 and #161, had hatched and now there was a five-to-seven-day-old condor nuzzling up to its parents in the nest. After relaying the discovery to staff back at the Refuge Complex office, the biologist ascends the ropes and the team prepares for the grueling hike out.

The "nest entry" described above is one of many that will be written over the next couple months by Service employees working on the condor recovery program. April and May are commonly the time of year when California condor eggs hatch in the wild nests of Southern and Central California.

Throughout the nesting period, Service staff, interns and volunteers monitor condor nests during daylight hours to record bird behavior and watch for potential dangers and threats to the condors, as well as their eggs and chicks. This Nest Monitoring Program is facilitated by the Santa Barbara Zoo, in collaboration with the Service and other recovery program partners. Observations begin in late fall when condors begin their courtship. The paired birds lay one egg, generally between late January and April. The egg incubates for 56 to 58 days and hatches in spring. Then it's another five-to-six months before the young chick fledges, followed by another eight months of parental care.

Service biologists and zoo veterinarians regularly check eggs and chicks for health and perform interventions to aid ailing chicks when their lives are threatened. The nest guarding efforts have increased the number of successful wild fledglings. This season, there are five active nests in Southern California, with more in Central California, Arizona and Baja, Mexico.

*To view a short video of #107 and #161's week-old condor chick: http://www.fws.gov/cno/press*

## Second Refuge Junior Firefighter Academy Graduates Class of 20

The Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge staff administered the oath to the second Junior Refuge Firefighter Academy on May 20.

Twenty Girl Scouts from Willows and Orland discovered how the refuge fire staff helps wildlife, habitat and people. They learned about the tools used during a fire and explored the fire engine, including some "hands on" use of the fire hose.

The final part of the program was a quiz that tested their new-found knowledge on fire and being fire smart.

"As fire season approaches, it's important to teach kids how to be fire smart, plus we help them discover that fire can actually be positive in nature – when managed," said program leader and Fire Engine Captain Mark Rakestraw.

After pinning on their shiny new badges and taking the Junior Refuge Firefighter oath, Smokey Bear came to take part in the celebration.

*Brownies and Daisies from Willows and Orland learn about being fire smart with Sacramento NWR fire staff, Mark Rakestraw (far left) and Tony Arendt (far right).* (photo: USFWS)

# Biologist "Walks a Mile" in Boots of Cattle Rancher

**by Steve Martarano, Sacramento FWO**

Rick Kuyper, normally a Service biologist with the Conservation Partnerships Division of the Sacramento Fish & Wildlife Office, hopes he didn't just head to his last roundup.

During the course of three June days at the Hafenfeld Ranch in the hills of Kern County, Kuyper bonded with rancher Bruce Hafenfeld, his wife Sylvia and his son Eric, while mending fences, running a cattle round up and hauling cattle to higher elevation areas. It followed a couple of days Hafenfeld spent in the Sacramento FWO's cubicles earlier in the year.

The quick trip out of Kuyper's cubicle was part of the popular Service program "Walk a Mile in My Boots," a work-exchange developmental program between cattle ranchers and the USFWS aimed at giving all involved an "inside" look at each other's lifestyle. The program is sponsored by the National Conservation Training Center, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the National Cattleman's Beef Association.

Calling the exchange "very valuable," Kuyper said that he and Hafenfeld "spent a lot of time talking about the nuts and bolts of the cattle industry, including the day-to-day operations, the financial aspects, what equipment is used and how it is used."

"Bruce was very patient with my many 'dumb' questions," Kuyper said, adding that they also discussed habitat management through grazing, and many other issues and problems facing ranchers and other ag producers. "It was not only a job exchange, but a cultural exchange."

Hafenfeld, past president of the California Cattlemen's Association, said that it was a very worthy program.

"Anytime you can learn about each other's issues, and develop a relationship that leads to a working relationship, that then leads to trust, it is a positive," Hafenfeld said.

*Biologist Rick Kuyper (left) and rancher Bruce Hafenfeld at the Hafenfeld Ranch.* (photo: USFWS)

Hafenfeld, a life-long rancher, and Sylvia, have operated the Hafenfeld Ranch in the mountainous Kern River Valley for 35 years. He didn't think he would like working in one of the cubicles at the Sacramento Fish & Wildlife Office when he visited for a couple of days in February. Hafenfeld met office personnel and attended several meetings. Despite being less than impressed by the cubicles, he did come away with newfound respect for the outreach efforts of USFWS and for the work of employees like Kuyper.

"I do realize we both work in very different environments," Hafenfeld said. "But I think we both came away with a better perspective of how we each work."

Hafenfeld's ranch is adjacent to a preserve owned by Audubon, which gives him a perspective on listed species most ranchers don't have. Kuyper spent one day touring the preserve with Hafenfeld and his son. The preserve is grazed by the Hafenfeld's cattle to manage for riparian bird species, including the willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo.

"We were able to observe a couple of willow flycatchers at the Audubon Preserve, which was a treat," Kuyper said.

The Hafenfeld Ranch has a Wetlands Reserve Program in place that includes habitat enhancement for old growth riparian which provides opportunities for listed species to better utilize this habitat on the property.

"It will be a great day that we're not afraid of the Endangered Species Act but rather working with it," Hafenfeld said. "The FWS shouldn't be a big stick, but a partner in the program."

Hafenfeld said that he wants to see the USFWS develop more Safe Harbor Agreements for listed species and that there are other ranches in his area who might be interested in developing habitat with that protection agreement.

"By spending three days with Bruce's family, I was able to better see how they view the world and the issues that are important to them," Kuyper said. "In return, I was also able to communicate some of the difficult issues that we deal with. Both Bruce and I left with a better understanding of what the other is dealing with."

One thing Kuyper would change should he do the program again, was to begin at the ranch and then go to the office environment.

"Bruce and I got along fine when he was in Sacramento, but we really got to know each other better when we were out at the ranch," he said. "You have a better opportunity to bond and build a relationship when you are out in a beautiful area riding horses."

## Banner Year for Connecting People with Nature Activities

**by Erica Szlosek, External Affairs**

In 2007, Region 8 put together a team of interested employees to focus the region's efforts to strengthen opportunities to connect people with nature. The team worked throughout the year to craft a strategic plan and identify ongoing efforts.

In 2008 the team set out energizing the region's 800 employees to integrate the Service's Connecting People with Nature initiative into their every day work. In fact, according to a survey administered by the team, employees devoted 70,000 hours to connecting people with nature activities. And many of the programs were significantly expanded in 2008 to connect even more people with nature and to familiarize the public with the important work that the FWS performs.

As a team the group put together a well-received poster showing Service employees from around the region enjoying the outdoors as children, as well as a presentation to "light the spark" – encouraging more employees to devote time and energy to finding new ways to get people outdoors.

A tally of the region's activities at the end of 2008 identified an impressive array of activities:

- festivals & events;
- environmental education programs;
- interpretive trails & guided nature walks;
- restoration & clean up activities;
- hunting programs; and
- fishing programs.

In all, the region's employees participated in more than 80 different festivals and special events; 75 environmental education programs; 50+ different programs tied to interpretive trails; and 30+ efforts to restore or clean up various habitats.

# Ventura Office Receives Coastal America Award for Contributions to Carpinteria Marsh Restoration

**by Lois Grunwald, Ventura FWO**

With the growing Jesusita Fire in Santa Barbara as a backdrop, federal partners – including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – and local and state officials, were presented with a Coastal America Award on May 6, for contributing to the success of the restoration of Carpinteria Marsh in Santa Barbara County. Diane Noda, field supervisor for the Service's Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, (VFWO) and Mary Root, the office's conservation partnerships coordinator accepted the award.

*From left: Mary Root, conservation partnerships coordinator for the Ventura FWO; Diane Noda, field supervisor for the Ventura FWO, and Terry Holman, Oceans and Coastal Programs coordinator for the Department of Interior display the Coastal America Award presented to the Ventura FWO.* (photo: Steve Henry/USFWS)

"The restored marsh not only provides a home to wildlife but also gives people of all ages a place to explore and learn about this rare coastal habitat," said Noda. "We are proud to have helped contribute to its restoration."

The Service was one of four agencies that provided more than $1.9 million in grants to the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County for ecological restoration of portions of the marsh in 2003-2006. The other agencies were: State Coastal Conservancy, County of Santa Barbara, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Carpinteria Salt Marsh is one of the largest and most ecologically important coastal estuaries in the California, and in 2008 the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Restoration Partners completed an extensive restoration project begun in 2004 to provide better wildlife habitat, opportunities for scientific research, and ways for the people to visit and learn about the coastal environment.

Growing community awareness and voter support for state conservation bonds helped to save the marsh – a special, threatened ecosystem home to rare birds and plants, and important breeding grounds to a variety of fish and marine invertebrates. In the late 1970s, the University of California acquired about half of the marsh and created the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve. Since that time, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, UCSB, the city of Carpinteria, County Flood Control, and other agencies, along with the support of adjacent homeowners and their associations, have made progress in managing and restoring portions of the marsh.

The marsh is home to 100+ species of migratory birds that use the Pacific Flyway. The restoration project has also provided habitat for two rare wetland plants: the salt marsh bird's beak and salt marsh goldfields.

*Note: Coastal America is a partnership among federal, state and local governments and private alliances to address environmental problems along our nation's coasts.*

# Study Sheds Light on Contaminant Exposure

**by Jane Hendron, Carlsbad FWO**

A two-year study conducted by the Service's Environmental Contaminants Division in Carlsbad investigated contaminant exposure of several species of seabirds, including black skimmers, elegant terns, Caspian terns, and federally endangered California least terns.

The study was conducted on the South Bay Salt Works (Salt Works) portion of the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge (SSBNWR) where eggs that failed to hatch were collected. A total of 35 eggs collected from the four target bird species, and composite samples of forage fish, including killifish, topsmelt, and longjaw mudsucker were submitted for analysis.

All of the samples were screened for a variety of contaminants including: DDT, PCBs, PBDEs (a byproduct of flame retardant) as well as mercury and selenium.

This investigation was prompted by evidence of high rates of egg cracking, crushing and denting; and high mortality rates reported for day-old black skimmer chicks on the Salt Works.

Overall, eggshell thickness for all four bird species appear to be thinner than eggs produced by those species before the widespread use of DDT and other organochlorine compounds. Eggs showing the highest levels of contaminants were those of the black skimmer which had concentration of DDTs, PCBs and PBDEs approaching levels associated with adverse impacts.

*Aerial view of the South San Diego Bay.*
(photo: Ryan Hagerty/USFWS)

The investigation also found higher levels of contaminants in longjaw mudsuckers from the Otay River compared with longjaw mudsuckers and other forage fish species sampled from the Salt Works. This study is an important starting point in determining the overall health of the Salt Works portion of the SSBNWR. Further scientific investigations, including more in-depth analysis of the Otay River and adjoining upland habitat, additional analyses of randomly collected eggs, and other types of studies will be needed to more specifically understand and characterize potential sources of organochlorine pesticides and PCBs in the Otay River and the Salt Works, and their potential effects on wildlife.

The SSBNWR was dedicated in June 1999. This 3,940 acre unit of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex was established to conserve and restore wetlands, intertidal mudflats and eelgrass beds that are utilized by thousands of migrating and resident shorebirds and waterfowl.

# Clapper Rail Recovery Effort Recognized

**by Jane Hendron, Carlsbad FWO**

A cooperative effort to recover the federally endangered light-footed clapper rail received one of the first-ever Plume Awards at the March mid-year meeting of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Since 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the City of Chula Vista's Nature Center, the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, and SeaWorld have partnered to captive breed and release light-footed clapper rails in southern California.

The work of these partners goes beyond captive breeding, with additional efforts made to monitor breeding success of reintroduced clapper rails, and construction of artificial nest structures at release areas.

More than 200 captive bred clapper rails have been released to the wild and now inhabit coastal wetlands from Santa Barbara County south to Mission Bay in San Diego County. However, there is still much to be done to achieve recovery of the light-footed clapper rail, which includes identifying factors that may be limiting the ability of the species to maintain greater numbers than are observed in the wild.

Researchers are currently conducting studies to obtain valuable data on contaminant exposure by the clapper rails, and if present, to determine if contaminants are adversely affecting the species.

The Plume Awards were established by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' Avian Scientific Study Group to recognize efforts to support captive avian population sustainability. There are two categories eligible for Plume Awards: Achievement in Long-Term Propagation Program; and Noteworthy Achievement in Avian Husbandry.

The light-footed clapper rail partners received the Plume Award for Noteworthy Achievement in Animal Husbandry.

# $1.2 Million ARRA Contract Awarded to Renovate SFBay National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters

**by Scott Flaherty, External Affairs**

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has announced the award of a contract to renovate the aging administrative headquarters building for the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC). Northern Management Services, Inc., of Sandpoint, Idaho, was awarded the contract for Phase 2 of a two-phase project to renovate the refuge headquarters. The $1.2 million renovation project is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

*The project will renovate the 9,022 square foot 1970s vintage headquarters office at San Francisco Bay NWR. Modifications include a new shingle roof, thermal-pane low-e windows and doors, expansive foam wall and ceiling insulation, high efficiency lights, solar-thermal hot water, and other modifications.* (photo: USFWS)

The project will involve interior demolition and construction of the 9,022 square foot building that serves as headquarters for refuge staff. Upon completion, the project will provide the Refuge with an expanded and improved auditorium, a new shingle roof, energy efficient windows, doors and insulation, high efficiency lighting, solar-thermal hot water, a new heating and air conditioning system and upgraded telephone and data communications systems.

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex is a collection of seven National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Southwest Region. The refuges include Antioch Dunes NWR, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR, Ellicott Slough NWR, Farallon NWR, Marin Islands NWR, Salinas River NWR, and San Pablo Bay NWR.

"The economic recovery investments that the Department of the Interior is making will create jobs by building trails, restoring habitat, upgrading visitors' centers, and protecting national treasures in communities across America, while leaving a lasting legacy for our children and grandchildren," said Salazar.

"This remodel is a wonderful use of Recovery Act funds," said Mendel Stewart, Refuge Manager at San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "Our staff benefits from much needed improvements to our work space, and the new auditorium will provide a quality indoor venue for our outreach programs and other public events."

Phase 1 of the renovation began in March 2009 and was funded with approximately $750,000 of non-Recovery Act monies. The Service expects construction under Phase 2 to begin this month, and the entire project to be completed within six months.

## Career Fair Success in Los Angeles

**by Michael Woodbridge, Hopper Mountain NWRC**

On a hot Friday in Los Angeles, staff from the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC) and Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, along with several other natural resource employers, came to a local high school to send one message: that there are green jobs and career opportunities to be had. It was a successful day of many questions, connections, and smiling faces. The event was sponsored by the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC).

Project Leader Marc Weitzel, Lisa Cox (SCEP), Ivett Plascencia (STEP), and Jen Lechuga (HCP Coordinator) joined others such as the U.S. Forest Service, Chevron, L.A. County Fire Department, Looking Green Magazine, and The Nature Conservancy to communicate their message. The morning consisted of private presentations by the chosen "role models" in various classrooms, while lunchtime brought all of the students out to visit the booths where literature and personal one-on-one time was available.

In the afternoon, the role models were able to split up in three areas of the school to give a longer lecture with a question and answer session. In the "Green Jobs" room, FWS was able to speak for a full hour and handed out a career/degree options packet to each student in the room. After the talk, five students came up and expressed a strong interest in volunteering with the FWS and a real love for animals!

# Bring Your Child To Work Day Connects Kids & Nature

**Article & photos by Erica Szlosek, External Affairs**

For the past three years children of regional office and Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office employees have been given a glimpse into the life of a Service employee, thanks to a nationwide shadowing program. This year, Bring Your Child to Work Day, was held April 23.

Organized by Region 8's Budget and Finance Analyst Dara Rodriguez, the day was put together to give children an opportunity to spend a portion of the day outside enjoying the Sun River Unit of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (near Elk Grove, Calif.) as well as a chance to experience the range of work activities of their parents'.

"It was a fantastic day, really our best event yet," said Rodriguez. "This year 36 children participated and with the support of our partners, for the first time activities included archery, a Junior Duck Stamp lesson, hiking and photography."

Every child received a specially-designed T-shirt to commemorate the day then boarded the bus south. Once at Stone Lakes the group was split into three and for the next 45 minutes children and adults alike had the chance to spend the time learning the intricacies of archery through the California Fish and Game "Archery in the Schools Program," instructed by Robert Moore. The National Archery in the Schools Program was adopted by California in 2005 and became the 35th state to do this. According to Moore it is changing lives one arrow at a time!

*Archery was the big hit of the day.*

Other activities included hiking with Assistant Refuge Manager Beatrix Treiterer and Recreation Planner Amy Hopperstad, or learning about waterfowl through the Junior Duck Stamp Program from Kelly Rathburn from California Waterfowl. For every Junior Duck Stamp art entry that is received, California earns $1 for conservation education.

*Dan Walsworth and granddaughter*

"It was hard to tell who enjoyed the activities more, the children or the parents," Rodriguez added.

After a quick picnic lunch everyone re-boarded the bus back to the office and received a goody bag filled to keep alive the outdoor experience. Then it was time for the kids to get to work shadowing their parents in the office before heading home for the day.

A number of the kids sent in thank you letters detailing their favorite parts of the day:

*"I learned how to shoot a bow and arrow and it was really fun. When they put balloons on the targets I actually popped one - man it was so fun. I also learned about water fowl and parts of their body that make them adapted to where they live. Finally we went on a hike and saw lots of interesting insects and animals like butterflies, flies that disguised themselves as bees, and all kinds of birds. We also saw cows. The cows were so cute I just wanted to squeeze them!"* Senora.

*"I liked the butterfly! I liked the bow and arrow! I like the bird nest. I like taking pictures!"* Kara, age 7.

*"I learned about wildlife. I spent time with my mom and had fun. I learned more about waterfowls – the ones with skinny feet are great for standing in the mud without sinking. I saw a weird one with lobe feet that are great for running on water. I saw animal skulls, claws, and where they could be found. I saw a lot of swans. They are very beautiful birds. I really like archery, it is very cool."* Tavanta, age 12.

*"I enjoyed the archery, and the nature walk. I learned about waterfowl. I learned that we need to improve our environment, that it is being polluted by some vehicles,"* Liy-Niesha, age 9.

*"The thing I liked the most was shooting the bow and arrows. On our nature walk we saw wetlands, birds, and cows. It was fun to take pictures of all the wildlife. I can't wait to [do] it again next year!"* Zac, age 8.

*"Today I learned about wood ducks directed by a professional girl who studies the wood duck and her name is Kelly. She explained three very important parts of the wood duck to survive the cold water and the winter... Kelly also told us that their feathers are to fly and keep warm, also their feathers are to migrate. There also was archery. Who was directed by Robert Moore. Many people did excellent. I learned how to make my target and hold the bow and arrow. ..I guess I did good enough.... I definitely had fun,"* Desiree, age 10.

Weird, Wild & Wacky

# State Fair Shifts Available!

The California State Fair is just around the corner and coordinator Viola Taylor reports that she is short of the people needed to operate the popular Service programs at the fair. She says she has a larger-than-normal number of shifts to fill.

"I am asking all of you to consider volunteering for one or more shifts at the fair. Working at the fair can be a very enjoyable change-of-pace and certainly is a fun time. You'll meet lots of fellow Service people and enjoy the chance to tell people about our work. If you haven't worked at the fair before, you'll be surprised how little most people know about our work and how genuinely interested they are in hearing about us," said Taylor.

According to Taylor, any Service employee (and your family or good friends) can volunteer to work at the fair. You don't need specialized knowledge. So whether your usual work is behind a desk or out in the field, in program work or in support, YOU can be a Service ambassador to the public at the fair! This year's theme is: weird, wild & wacky. Find out more about the fair: http://www.bigfun.org/

**At press time, available dates and shifts:**

Friday, August 21; 2-8 p.m.
Saturday, August 22; 9-3 p.m., 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m., 2-8 p.m.
Sunday, August 23; 9-3 p.m., 11-5 p.m., 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m., & 2-8 p.m.
Monday, August 24; 2-8 p.m.
Thursday, August 27; 12-6 p.m.
Friday, August 28; 2-8 p.m.
Saturday, August 29; 11-5 p.m., 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m., 2-8 p.m.
Sunday, August 30; 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m., 2-8 p.m.
Monday, August 31; 11-5 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 1; 2-8 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 2; 2-8 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 3rd; 1-7 p.m., 2-8 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 4; 9-3 p.m., 1-7 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 5; 9-3 p.m., 11-5 p.m., 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 6; 9-3 p.m., 11-5 p.m., 12-6 p.m., 1-7 p.m.
Monday, Sept. 7; 1-7 p.m., 2-8 p.m.

For more information, or to sign up for a shift, call Viola Taylor, at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, (916) 414-6567.

# Transitions

## California/Nevada Fish Health Center

Scott Benson, fish biologist, STEP appointment, started June 7, and will leave July 31, to return to school. Scott has his BS degree in fisheries biology and is working on his master of science degree at Humboldt University. Scott has been a great asset to the Center by assisting with the Klamath Fish Health Monitoring; sample collection, DNA extraction, QPCR assays and data management. He plans to incorporate these acquired laboratory techniques into his master's thesis which involves quantifying the rate of myxospore release from adult Chinook carcasses.

Anne Bolick, microbiologist, started with the Service July 13. Anne received her masters degree in aquatic biology in 2007. She has worked as a fisheries tech for the US Forest Service, a fish health lab assistant for Environmental Careers Organization in Wisconsin, a genetics lab assistant for Texas Parks and Wildlife and in the summer of 2008 she worked for the Service as a fish biologist. Anne will be helping with the Quality Assurance program and laboratory management, as well as assisting with Delta Smelt fish health support for Livingston Stone NFH, and conducting molecular surveys for Chytrid fungus in amphibians.

## Carlsbad FWO

Dr. Eric Kershner joined the Service in July as a migratory bird biologist for Region 8's Migratory Bird Program. His duties will include providing technical assistance to migratory bird related activities within California, from Madera County south to the California/Mexico border and developing and implementing migratory bird conservation initiatives. Eric came to the Service via the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton located in North San Diego County, California, where he supervised the Wildlife Management Branch. Eric holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, a master's degree in biological sciences from Eastern Illinois University, and a doctorate's degree in natural resources and environmental sciences from the University of Illinois. His master and doctorate studies focused on grassland birds, including the effects of habitat restoration on grassland bird species. Eric has a life long passion for birds. He is a master bander with extensive survey and telemetry experience and has a strong history of coordinating, developing and implementing bird conservation plans.

Jaime Marie Johnson joined the Carlsbad FWO in April as an Office Assistant for the Global Division. Jaime handles administrative work for Listing/Recovery, Environmental Contaminants, Public Affairs, and Section 10(a)(1)(A) Permits. Originally from Carlsbad, Jaime served on active duty in the United States Navy. Jaime comes to the Carlsbad Office after working for the Pentagon as a civilian contractor. Jaime has a B.A. degree in political science, and is considering law school in the future.

## Coleman NFH

Robert Carrell, maintenance mechanic, transferred from Coleman National Fish Hatchery on April 24 to a Bureau of Reclamation facility in Montrose, Colorado.

Morris (Mo) Freedman retired from Coleman National Fish Hatchery on May 8. Morris had 19 years of public service combined with the Military and the Service. Morris started at Coleman in 1991 as a temporary animal care taker and became a permanent employee in 1993. At his retirement lunch all of the hatchery staff, many retired hatchery employees, and personnel from the Red Bluff FWO and CA/NV Fish Health office attended as well.

Bill Reisland was selected to fill a vacant maintenance mechanic position at Coleman National Fish Hatchery on June 23. Bill has worked for the Interior Department before with the National Park Service at Grand Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Park and Kings Canyon National Park.

## Desert NWRC

Dan Balduini is the first-ever Public Affairs Officer for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex (DNWRC) and the Southern Nevada Fish and Wildlife Field Office in Las Vegas. He has 33 years of communications/public affairs experience including radio and television news, public health and environmental protection, and the past 17 years with prime contractors to the U.S. Department of Energy as a Public Affairs Manager at two nuclear waste repository projects. Dan will provide public affairs support to both the DNWRC and the Ecological Services group in Las Vegas, as well as the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Reno. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications from the University of New Mexico.

Chivia Horton is the new Manager of the Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge. Most recently, Chivia was the project manager/senior biologist at the Service's Great Basin Bird Observatory in Alamo, Nevada. She first joined the Service in 2002 as a fish and wildlife Biologist. She worked in Hadley, Massachusetts and Chicago, from 2002 until 2006 and from 2006 to 2008, Chivia worked for Parsons Engineering in St. Louis, Missouri as an environmental scientist/biologist before rejoining the Service at the Bird Observatory. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Zoology from Southern Illinois University and a master of

Arts in geography and environmental studies from Northeaster Illinois University.

Gennifer White is the new budget technician for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex. In addition to providing budget support she is responsible for purchasing, travel, and payroll. Gennifer has a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, which she completed after serving eight years in the United States Air Force. Gennifer worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons for five years as a Budget and Accounting Officer for the now-closed Federal Prison Camp at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas.

David Dorough joined the Desert National Wildlife Refuge as an engineering equipment operator. He is responsible for maintenance and repairs on the Desert NWR and the Moapa Valley NWR, including work that requires the use of heavy equipment. David is originally from Georgia, where he owned his own heavy-haul trucking company and a home repair service. David specialized in hauling overweight, oversized loads such as heavy equipment and large industrial machinery. David also served four years in the United States Marine Corps.

**20-Year Service Awards:**
Kevin DesRoberts reached his 20th anniversary with the Service on April 9. Kevin is the Deputy Project Leader for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex in southern Nevada; a position he has held since 2007. The DNWRC is the seventh post in his 20-year career. In 1989, armed with a degree in biology, DesRoberts drove across the country to take a temp job as a biological technician at the Modoc NWR. His first permanent position was also at Modoc — he took a job as an office automation clerk to get his foot in the door. He followed that with a stint as an administrative assistant in Modoc before moving to the Salton Sea as a refuge manager trainee. Since then, Kevin has worked at the Ruby Lake NWR, the Canaan NWR in West Virginia, and the Barnegat Division of the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in southern New Jersey. DesRoberts returned to Nevada in 2004 as the Deputy Project leader at the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex before moving to the DNWRC.

Amy Sprunger completed 20 years with the Service on July 2. Amy is the Manager of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, the largest Refuge in the 48 contiguous states at nearly 1.6 million acres. She has held this position since coming to Nevada in 2000. Amy also manages the 106-acre Moapa Valley NWR. Amy's Service career began in 1989 when she was a coop student at the Seney NWR in Michigan's upper peninsula. In 1990, while still a coop student, she joined the Ecological Services Office in Green Bay, Wisconsin. In that same year, Amy became a permanent employee as a refuge operations specialist at the Squaw Creek NWR in northwestern Missouri. From 1991 to 2000, she was stationed at the former Mark Twain NWR in Iowa as the Assistant Refuge Manager. From 1997 to 2000, Amy compiled the CCP for Mark Twain.

## Humboldt Bay NWRC

Humboldt Bay NWRC has hired a new PFT park ranger (a shared position between HBNWRC and AFWO), Sean Brophy, who will focus on outreach and environmental education for both offices, including Connecting People with Nature activities, Schoolyard Habitats, climate change awareness, community events, and more.

## Sacramento FWO

On May 1, administrative officer Chuck Friedrich retired.

New hires to the office include: Stephanie Broad, student trainee (Mgmt Asst), (SCEP summer hire); Barbara McFadden, office assistant, Sacramento Valley Branch; Nicole Nakagawa, student trainee, Coast Bay Delta Branch.

Karleen Vollherbst, has been hired as the Schoolyard Coordinator in the Conversation Partnership Program. She will be working to both implement native habitat projects at school sites and provide teacher education on how to meet state curriculum standards by using the habitats as an outdoor classroom. Karleen moved to Sacramento from St. Michaels, Maryland where she was the education director at a nonprofit wetland organization. The experience she brings from her former position includes creating schoolyard wetlands, providing teacher trainings nationwide, and revising curriculum.

## San Francisco Bay-Delta FWO

Steve Culberson has been hired to work in the Water Operations Division. He comes from the CALFED Science Program and will assist the Water Ops Division and the Bay-Delta Office in staffing of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and related Delta-centric activities. Steve holds a degree in biology from Oberlin College in Ohio where he concentrated in comparative vertebrate anatomy and embryology. During a five-year assignment with the U.S. Peace Corps in Central Africa Steve served as a cooperative extension agent and technical consultant for several national aquaculture programs under the Africa Region Basic Human Needs charter. Following his return to the U.S. and a short stint working on contract to the National Marine Fisheries Service in Seattle, and Dutch Harbor, AK, Steven earned a Master of Science degree in international agricultural development

and a PhD in ecology from U.C. Davis. From 2001 to 2005 he served as an environmental scientist in the Environmental Planning and Information Branch of the Division of Environmental Services at the California Department of Water Resources.

## San Luis NWRC

Police K9 Scott Bono Campo, is the new four-legged officer for the San Luis NWR Complex. He was certified in Patrol and Narcotics on June 30 in accordance with the California Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST). K9 Scott, a Belgian Malinois, is certified in master protection, urban/rural tracking, criminal apprehension, evidence detection, and the general five odors of narcotics.

## Yreka FWO

Jan Johnson rejoined our Forest Resources Branch. Kristy Carter is here for the summer as a STEP employee.

## Regional Office

Darrin Thome is the new Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Region 8's Ecological Services Program. He has experienced working in private industry, FWS Field Offices in two different regions, and most recently Region 8 as the Chief of the Consultation, Habitat Conservation, and Contaminants Division.

Rick Kearney has been selected as the new regional Climate Change Coordinator and will begin August 16. Many of you may remember Rick from his detail in the Regional Office during his SES training. Rick's background includes leading the national USGS/FWS Avian Influenza team and, while at USGS, cooperating with the Service on climate change strategies. The latter position provided him with insight on the Service's vision for leadership in the climate change area. Rick also provided leadership in USGS's wildlife science program. Rick holds a bachelors degree in wildlife science and masters degrees in conservation biology and engineering.

Carol Damberg recently transferred from the position of Refuge Manager at Klamath Marsh NWR, Chiloquin Oregon to Recovery Biologist for the Regional Office, Division of Recovery, Section 10, and Listing. Carol has worked for the Service for 19 years, starting out as a temporary Contaminants Bio-tech for Ecological Services in Grand Junction, CO. Since leaving Colorado in 1991 she has worked for the Division of Refuge's at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, MN (biologist); Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, AZ (Assistant Refuge Manager); and Seedskadee NWR, WY (Refuge Manager).

Jovan D. Brown is working this summer as a STEP employee. He just graduated from Foothill High School and is enrolled in American River College. Once he receives an associate degree he plans to transfer to Sacramento State University where he hopes to receive an engineering degree. J.D. says the STEP program has been valuable because it has given him the chance to work with an engineer and other Service employees responsible for helping to manage the buildings and facilities in the region's refuge system.

**We Are Region 8** *is an online employee publication produced by the California and Nevada Region's External Affairs Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, Calif., 95825. Articles and photos were primarily incorporated from FWS Journal submissions from May through September, 2008. Questions regarding the newsletter can be sent to Erica Szlosek at erica_szlosek@fws.gov or by phone at (916) 978-6464.*

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