

News Release



J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge
1 Wildlife Drive
Sanibel, FL 33957
239-472-1100, Fax 239-472-4061

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 28, 2008

CONTACT: Patrick Martin,
239-472-1100 ext 225

Paul Tritaik selected as the next Refuge Manager for the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Paul Tritaik has been selected to become the 8th Manager of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which also includes Caloosahatchee, Matlacha Pass, Pine Island, and Island Bay National Wildlife Refuges. Paul will follow in the footsteps of past managers Tommy Wood, Ron Hight, Lou Hinds and Rob Jess, each of whom have played pivotal roles in shaping conservation efforts on Sanibel and throughout Southwest Florida.

For the past 15 years, Paul has been managing Pelican Island and Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuges located in Indian River and Brevard Counties, Florida. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, located in the Indian River Lagoon, became America's 1st National Wildlife Refuge in 1903. Paul played a critical role in helping the Service and local community organize the National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial Celebration. He was also instrumental in working with others to expand land conservation, habitat restoration and public facility enhancements at Pelican Island NWR. He successfully worked with partners to restore Pelican Island's rapidly eroding shoreline and to build the Centennial Trail visitor complex. At Archie Carr NWR, Paul helped lead a multi-agency partnership that successfully acquired over 250 parcels of valuable coastal habitat, including vital nesting beaches for sea turtles. Archie Carr NWR is located along 20 miles of Atlantic coast, between Melbourne Beach and Wabasso Beach, and is home to the largest population of loggerheads in the Western Hemisphere, the largest population of green turtles in the United States, and one of the largest populations of leatherbacks in Florida.

Despite a very small staff, Paul has been successful in developing partnerships to accomplish some large conservation projects for the benefit of wildlife. He helped form two new friends groups (Pelican Island Preservation Society and Friends of the Carr Refuge) and facilitated their growth to become effective community-based organizations supporting Refuge projects and events. Elizabeth Souheaver, Refuge Supervisor for the Southeast Region stated: "He is a tremendous leader of public use programming and development of partnerships for the benefit of refuges. Paul will bring excellent skills in these areas to Ding Darling."

Paul graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.S. in Wildlife Management. Before managing Pelican Island and Archie Carr NWRs, Paul started his career as an animal caretaker at

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. He went on to work as an outdoor recreation specialist at Okefenokee NWR in Folkston, Georgia and then as the refuge manager of Bond Swamp NWR in Macon, Georgia. His experience in working with the public and other organizations has prepared him well for his new assignment in Southwest Florida.

“I am honored to become the next manager at J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR and continue the tradition of conserving wildlife and sharing the wonder of nature that has become the hallmark of this Refuge. I look forward to working with a talented and dedicated group of employees and volunteers, a tremendously supportive friends group and committed partners who have all demonstrated the unlimited possibilities of what can be achieved when working together. My wife Rachel, son Liam and I are excited to become part of the Sanibel community and to enjoy the natural beauty of this special place” said Tritaik.

Paul’s tenure as Refuge Manager will begin May 25th, 2008.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. Visit the Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov>."

* * *