



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

January 2011

Neosho Takes the LEED



Editor's Note:

Connecting with nature does not look the same for everyone. Connecting with nature means different things to different people. For some, it's hunting and fishing. For others, it's walking in the woods or on the beach. What does your nature encounter look like? We want to know. To that end, we have added a regular section called Let's Go Outside!

We invite you to submit personal nature encounters as experienced by you and your children, as well as innovative ideas on how to connect with nature. We will run your accounts in this feature segment.

Please submit your youngsters' stories and photos to our regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's Corner features the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov with your Let's Go Outside! and Kids Corner articles, photos, journal entries and poems.

On the Cover:

The new Neosho NFH Visitors Center. USFWS photo.

Departments

RD's Corner /3

Features



Fresh Start / 3

The RD shares his thoughts on the Service's upcoming year.

By Tom Melius



Neosho Takes the LEED / 4

Neosho National Fish Hatchery hosted the grand opening of its state-of-the-art visitor center.

By Ashley Spratt



Fergus Falls Says Goodbye/ 6

Kevin Brennan retires.

By Tina Shaw



Land Steward of the Year/ 8

Bill McCoy wins big.

By Tina Shaw

Fresh Start

As we start anew with 2011, I wanted to first tell you once again how much I appreciate all the wonderful work you did over the past year. I recognize that your outstanding efforts have truly enhanced the effectiveness of our conservation mission and have helped the Midwest Region to have a very successful year. We've had some milestones, some challenges and many victories. In 2010, the tempo was fast, the issues complex, and the results made for a tumultuous, yet extremely productive year. We made remarkable strides over the year. Your united efforts ran the gamut from responding to major oil spills to facilitating congressional site visits to leading the battle against sea lamprey and Asian carp. You have even engaged the public by representing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on

national television.

As always, the new year ushers in an opportunity for a fresh, new start. I am truly impressed by your efforts last year. My vision for the future of the Service certainly is fueled by it. My outlook for the Midwest Region is one of enthusiastic optimism. I'm excited because as we move forward into a new year, it presents a unique opportunity for the Service to shine. One of which



is a national effort to craft a new vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In July, the Midwest Region will support a national meeting to this end. We want to develop a renewed vision that will facilitate conservation delivery, leadership and relevance. Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation is crucial for us as an agency. The location for this special event is Madison, Wis., where Aldo Leopold, a true conservation pioneer, was the first professor of game management at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I encourage you to view the video on the subject on the intranet and to visit the new Visions website at: <http://americaswildlife.org/conference/> for more information.



Above: Todd Turner, Deputy Assistant Regional Director; David Hendrix Hatchery Manager; Kurt Schilling, Hatchery Program Supervisor. USFWS photo by Karla Bartelt.



Regional Director Tom Melius (l), Dave Hendrix (c) and Mike Weimer enjoy the festivities at the Neosho Visitor Center grand opening. USFWS photo.

In addition, as we continue to further the mission of the Service it is important that we cultivate our work force and groom the next generation. We must continue to foster partnerships and achieve outreach and scientific excellence. Our growth in the future depends on it.

I am excited about the future and again, I wish you a very Happy New Year!

*--Tom Melius
Midwest Regional Director,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Neosho National Fish Hatchery Celebrates Visitor Center Grand Opening

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Neosho National Fish Hatchery, in southwest Missouri, hosted the grand opening of its state-of-the-art visitor center on Dec. 9. The event was attended by approximately 725 people, including dignitaries, supporters, and partners.

The event culminated with cutting the ribbon to officially open the facility with visiting dignitaries including Congressman Roy Blunt, Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius, President of Friends of the Neosho National Fish Hatchery Jerry Christian, and Neosho Mayor Richard Davidson.

The event was a true community celebration which included live music, lunch, and guided tours. The Neosho Chamber of Commerce presented the Hatchery



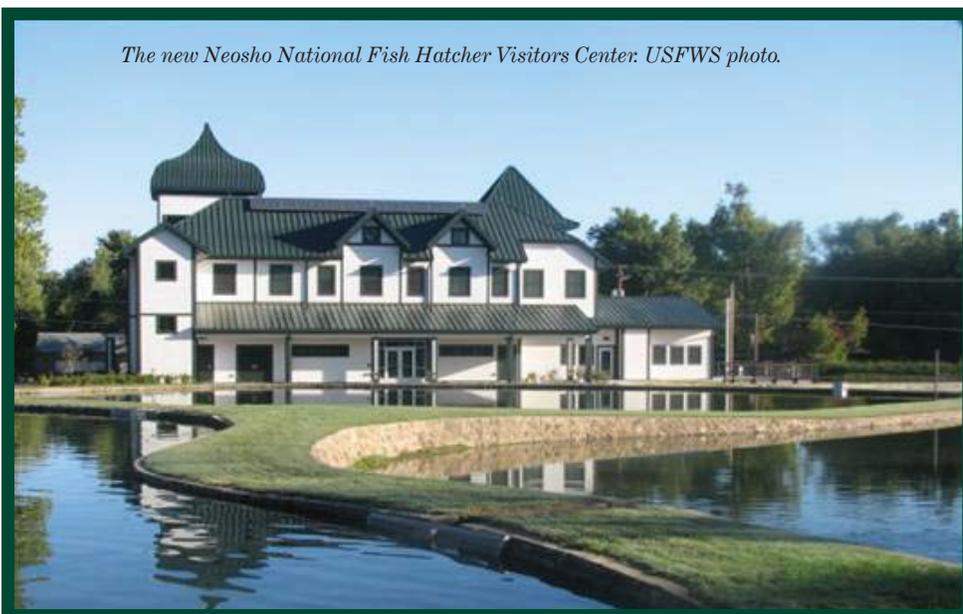
with a Recognition Award, and a State House Resolution applauding the history, goals, and accomplishments of the Hatchery was presented by the Honorable Kevin Wilson, Missouri House of Representatives.

Above: Regional Director Tom Melius joins Congressman Roy Blunt and others at Neosho for the ribbon cutting ceremony. USFWS photo.

The visitor center is expected to accommodate more than 100,000 visitors per year, while enhancing environmental education and interpretation opportunities, and generating economic benefits for Newton County and surrounding areas.

David Hendrix, Neosho National Fish Hatchery Manager, said, "It's a historic day for our public. We finally have a wonderful visitor center to use as a tool to allow us to serve them better."

"We're so proud to see this project come to fruition," said Tom Melius. "Not only does the architectural styling of the new visitor center pay tribute to the hatchery's



The new Neosho National Fish Hatcher Visitors Center: USFWS photo.

Neosho National Fish Hatchery Celebrates Visitor Center Grand Opening

rich history, but its engaging interpretive exhibits, impressive classroom spaces, and energy efficient design will play a critical role in the promoting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's efforts to conserve natural resources and reconnect our people with the natural world."

"This is a great day for Neosho National Fish Hatchery and the city of Neosho. It took a lot of effort from many dedicated people to get here. The hatchery's new visitor center will not only yield tremendous value in terms of environmental education to the public, but it will provide equally important economic benefits to the community for many years to come," Congressman



Fish Hatchery Manager Dave Hendrix delivers welcome speech. USFWS photo.



Fish Hatchery Manager Dave Hendrix (l) welcomes Congressman Roy Blunt (r) to the new center. USFWS photo.



Regional Director Tom Melius commends the work from start to finish. USFWS photo.



Fish Hatchery Manager Dave Hendrix leads ground breaking ceremony. USFWS photo.

Roy Blunt said.

Neosho NFH was established in 1888 and is the oldest operating federal fish hatchery. The hatchery raises endangered pallid sturgeon for recovery efforts in the lower Missouri River and rainbow trout for stocking

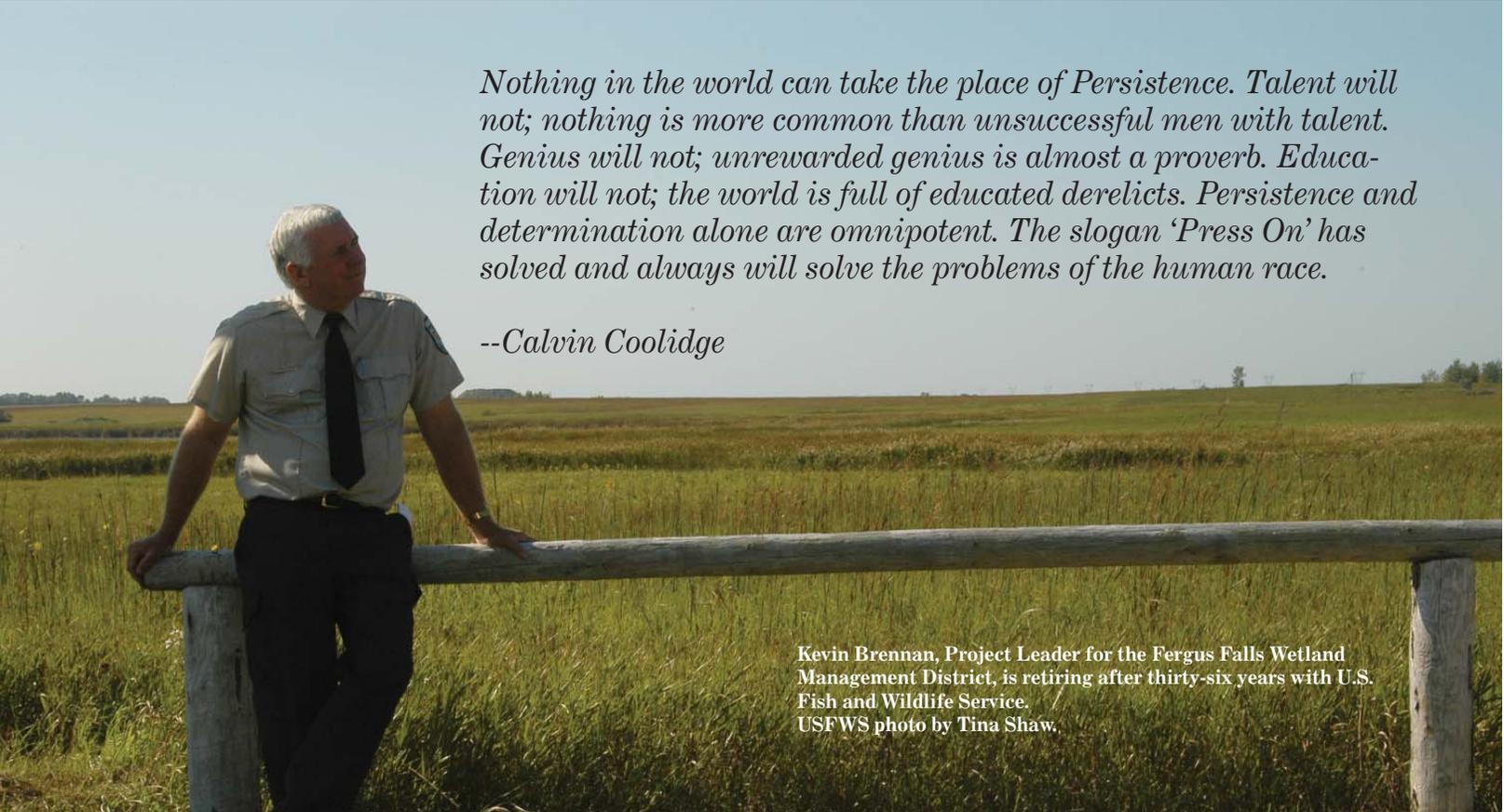
in Lake Taneycomo. The hatchery also supports conservation of the endangered Ozark cavefish and restoration of native mussels.

*--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs*

The Fergus Falls Wetland Management District Says Farewell to Kevin Brennan

Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

--Calvin Coolidge

A photograph of Kevin Brennan, a man with white hair, wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and a dark tie, leaning on a wooden fence in a vast, green prairie field under a clear blue sky.

Kevin Brennan, Project Leader for the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District, is retiring after thirty-six years with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
USFWS photo by Tina Shaw.

After thirty-six years, Kevin Brennan is retiring from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as the Project Leader for the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. Ever-present as the prairie wind, Brennan has been a motivating force for conservation in the North Country for more than two decades. The District hosted a retirement celebration for Brennan December 29, 2010.

Brennan's career path has taken him across the Prairie Pothole Region, and down into Kansas, from Devils Lake Wetland Management District and Kirwin

National Wildlife Refuge to J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge and finally Fergus Falls Wetland Management District, where he has spent the last 24 years focused on conserving the prairie. During that time, Brennan rallied a mosaic of partners around the importance of small wetlands that decorate the region.

Brennan's management style was modeled after, Ralph Fries, his first manager at the Devil's Lake District when he was a seasonal biological technician. Brennan described Fries as "a very straightforward, honest and fair person

who you knew where he stood." Brennan goes on to say that Fries' decisions were always focused on "what was best for the resource." This resource focus directed Brennan's decisions as well.

With a passion for the open prairie and the wetlands that dot the landscape, Brennan carried on the legacy first charted by Grady Mann, the Father of the Small Wetlands Program. This legacy also informed Brennan's career path. Thinking back to his first time meeting Mann, Brennan remembers a certain kinship and fervor for place. As Brennan recalls, "I met Grady

Continued on next page.

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in the spring of 1979 at J. Clark Salyer Refuge. He happened in there on a Saturday morning as he was touring places where he had worked. We talked for a good two or three hours about the prairie and wetlands and we just had a natural connection of similar philosophies.”

Keystone to Brennan’s conservation philosophy is his firm belief in education and the importance of fostering a sense of ownership in the greater community. As a testament to this, Brennan was instrumental in the establishment of the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center; a steadfast group of concerned citizens who created the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) in 1994. Passionate about bettering the community, educating local youth and their families and spreading the mission of the USFWS, Brennan supported the PWLC from a fledgling to the mature program it is today.

PWLC Instructional Systems Specialist David Ellis describes Brennan as “efficient, positive and professional” and goes on to say that, “For more than three decades Kevin Brennan has been a positive partner for the Service, community schools, children and land owners. Though he never says it, his life shows this personal attitude: ‘make a difference where you are.’ Because Kevin has followed this, West Central Minnesota has been a better place for wildlife and people.”

Kevin has always stressed the importance of partnerships with organizations, agencies and individuals. The Fergus Falls District entered into agreements with dozens of agencies and organizations over the years. Whether it was through habitat improvement and native prairie acquisition or flood control and invasive species projects—Brennan has always kept his eye on the prize, asking “What’s best for the resource?”

Since Brennan joined the Fergus Falls WMD in the 1980s, the District has grown by 50 percent, adding 26,612 acres of habitat, including 8,800 acres of title land, 5,400 acres of wetland easements, and 2,131 acres of upland easements. In addition, 10,281 acres of privately owned wetlands and uplands were restored through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

When asked about the growth and success of the District, Brennan credits his staff, saying, “I’ve been very fortunate to have an awesome staff the whole time I’ve been here. This is a team effort! The credit belongs to the many co-workers I have had the honor and privilege to work with.”

Brennan is very thankful for the communities he has been able to work in. “There’s a whole array of folks in Fergus Falls and the surrounding 5-county area that we in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are fortunate to work with as partners,” says Brennan. He goes on to say that, “We have such strong support from so many civic

and conservation organizations and Fergus Falls – Elbow Lake – Alexandria – Pelican Rapids communities have a lot of people who support the conservation efforts of the Service. I just want to thank them all for being who they are and for doing what they do for our prairie wetlands.”

One such group, the Fergus Falls Fish & Game Club, feels the same way about Brennan. Roger Rustad, an active member of the Club for more than 40 years, notes that even though the Club had “considerable interest in environmental education, it wasn’t until Kevin Brennan moved to Fergus Falls that we saw our goals start to materialize.” Rustad goes on to say that, “With Kevin’s support and leadership, we were able to solve two of our major problems, a place to have the facility and the staff to run it. We are very thankful and appreciative for the efforts put forth by Kevin and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

Thanks to Brennan’s efforts and energy, the passion of Grady Mann, and many other conservationists like him, will live on in the Fergus Falls community.

*--Tina Shaw
External Affairs*

Bill McCoy Recognized as Land Steward of the Year

The Hoosier Environmental Council (HEC) recognized Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge Manager Bill McCoy as their Land Steward of the Year during its Third Annual Green Policy Forum Nov. 6, 2010 in Indianapolis, Ind.

McCoy has served as manager of the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge and Management Area since its establishment in 1994 and is recognized by HEC for his efforts in land acquisition and outreach.

USFWS Area Refuge Supervisor Matt Sprenger commented that, "Bill provides a working example of how effective partnerships can work together

in support of conservation" and he praised McCoy for his "tireless efforts in bringing together non-profit organizations, state agencies



Bill McCoy humbly receives his award. USFWS photo.

and private corporations to improve southwest Indiana's fish and wildlife habitat."

"Bill's passionate outreach on the refuge's behalf has converted skeptics and engaged refuge neighbors in its protection," said HEC Executive Director Jesse Kharbanda. "His public service goes well beyond what is expected."

Patoka River NWRMA is located in southwestern Indiana within the historically important north-south flyway of the Wabash River Basin. This river bottoms refuge is strategically located to provide important resting, feeding, and nesting habitat for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical songbirds.

To learn more about The Hoosier Environmental Council visit: <http://www.hecweb.org/>

Conserving the Future

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently undertaking the process of creating a new strategic mission for the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will guide refuge management through the next decade. The strategic document that is generated by this process will be highlighted at the 2011 Vision Conference, to be held the week of July 10, 2011 in Madison, Wis. A companion website for this effort has been created by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. The website is titled "Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation" and it can be found at <http://www.americaswildlife.org/>.

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the website 'Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation'. The browser is Internet Explorer. The website has a blue and green color scheme. The main heading is 'Conserving the Future' in a large, stylized font, with the subtitle 'WILDLIFE REFUGES AND THE NEXT GENERATION' below it. There are navigation tabs for 'Home', 'Community', 'About Our Social Network', 'The Core Teams', and 'Conference'. On the left side, there is a 'PARTICIPATE' section with links for 'WATCH OUR WELCOME VIDEO', 'READ THE BLOG', 'SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING', 'JOIN THE DISCUSSION', and 'TAKE A SURVEY'. Below that is a 'HAPPY NEW YEAR' section. The main content area features a blog post titled '"A Little Help From My Friends"' by Joan, dated December 27, 2010. The post discusses the Beatles' hit song and its relevance to the National Wildlife Refuge System. There is a small photo of a man in a blue shirt. On the right side, there is a login form with fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Remember Me' checkbox, and a 'Log In' button. There is also a 'Login with Facebook' button. At the bottom right, there is a 'TIPS AND THOUGHTS' section.

www.americaswildlife.org/



Trumpeter Swans.
These Trumpeter Swans were photographed on a small wetland near Fayette, Mo. They were there for several days. USFWS photo by Molly Comstock.

Indiana Beagle Club Fined for Pole Trapping Birds of Prey

A beagle club based in Underwood, Ind., paid \$9,450 in fines to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to satisfy federal violations of the illegal take and attempted take of migratory birds, through the use of metal leg hold traps. This form of illegal trapping has a profound impact on migratory birds and occurs across the country in hunting club operations and game bird farms.

The same metal leg hold traps used legitimately by trappers to take small game were illegally employed by this group as a means of predator control for protected birds of prey such as hawks and owls. This method, commonly referred to as "pole trapping," involves the placing of a metal leg hold trap on an elevated structure, typically a pole, where hawks or owls would perch. The bird lands on the pole and the armed trap closes on the bird's legs.

The club president, and several members of the hunt club, monitored such traps on club property, with the intent of killing hawks, owls and other birds of

prey and protect against predation of the rabbit population on club property.

These violations and associated fines stem from an investigation by the Indiana Department of Natural

investigators, with both of the red-shouldered hawk's legs trapped in a metal leg trap. The hawk was euthanized due to the extensive injuries to its legs.

Tom Tidwell, Service Resident Agent in Charge for Michigan, Indiana and Ohio notes that the success of this case is due to an active and informed public. Tidwell thanked the public for their interest in protecting



Hawk photo courtesy of Steve Jurvetson.

Resources and the Service Office of Law Enforcement that began in February 2009, when INDNR Conservation Officer Mack Spainhour received an anonymous tip concerning a great horned owl found dead. Both of the great horned owl's legs were trapped in a metal leg hold trap.

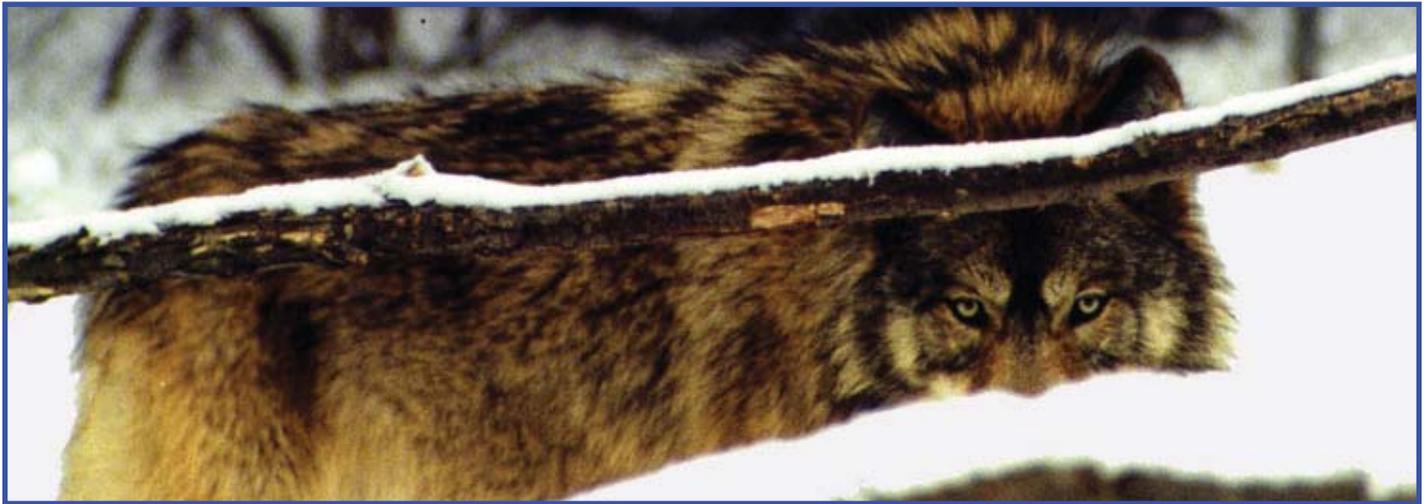
During the course of the investigation, eight metal leg hold traps were documented to have been placed on poles on the Club's property and all eight traps were armed when located by law enforcement. One red-shouldered hawk was discovered by

wildlife, saying that, "Wildlife are protected for all of us and when one person or organization takes it upon themselves to kill protected wildlife it affects everyone."

To learn more about the Indiana Turn in a Poacher or Polluter Program or report a violation, visit <http://www.in.gov/dnr/lawenfor/2745.htm> or call 1-800-TIP-IDNR.

--Tina Shaw
External Affairs

Status of Wolves in the Western Great Lakes Under the Endangered Species Act



Based on the success of the Endangered Species Act in helping the gray wolf population in the Western Great Lakes region recover to healthy levels, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to move forward toward removing the species from the list of threatened and endangered species.

In April 2009, the Service first issued a rule to remove gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes from the list of threatened and endangered species. The decision to delist, however, was litigated in District Court. The Court found procedural flaws in the delisting process and overturned the decision, directing the Service to address the Court's concerns.

Based on the court's decision - and because wolves continue to exceed recovery goals and are no longer threatened with extinction - the Service is correcting the issues that the court raised and moving forward again with the delisting process.

The Service is working to publish a new delisting proposal by April 2011. The proposed rule will provide the biological basis for delisting, addressing the current status of wolves in the region and evaluating any continued threats to the species. Following publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register, stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide information to the Service during a public comment period. After review of comments and other available scientific information, the Service plans to publish a final rule by the end of 2011.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others. The recovery of the gray wolf in the western Great Lakes area is a success story and the Service is confident that the states and tribes are able to manage the wolves once they are no longer listed.

Gray wolves are currently protected under the Endangered

Species Act as endangered in the lower 48 states, except in Minnesota where they are designated as threatened. Wolf populations in the core recovery states of the Western Great Lakes Distinct Population Segment – Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin – have exceeded recovery numbers for several years. Wolf numbers total more than 4,000 animals in the three core recovery states. Minnesota's population is estimated at 2,922 wolves; there are an estimated 557 wolves in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and another 690 in Wisconsin.

As part of implementing the Eastern Timber Wolf Recovery Plan, state management plans were put in place to ensure long-term viability of wolves. In addition, the Service and the states will implement an approved post-delisting monitoring plan to track the status of gray wolves in the western Great Lakes once ESA protections are removed. More information on wolves in the Midwest Region is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/>

--Georgia Parham
External Affairs



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/>

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Connecting Kids with Nature



<http://www.naturerocks.org/>

Thank you for entering your journal reports and photographs in the Fish and Wildlife Journal (aka. ARS)
<http://ars.fws.gov>.