

# Inside Region 3

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## Best of Friends

### Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges Named National Friends Group of the Year

The Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges (Group) were named Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation at an award ceremony held March 17 in Washington, D.C. Presented annually, this national award is widely considered one of the most prestigious honors in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Group is an independent, non-profit organization consisting of a Board of Directors and five chapters dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural resources of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and its four Districts Offices located in Winona, Minn., LaCrosse, Wis., McGregor, Iowa and Savanna, Ill. In addition, the Group supports the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge in Trempealeau, Wis., and the Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge in McGregor, Iowa. All these refuges are located in and along the Upper Mississippi River Valley.

"It was a great honor to accept this award on behalf of the Group," said Group President George Hoffmann. "This award really goes to the 250 members who volunteer their time and effort to do the on-

Continued on page 2



--USFWS Photo

**Cost Share Event.** Cost share projects can be enjoyable for families, too. Last year's "Take a Kid Fishing" event at Michigan's Shiawasee NWR was a partnership effort involving the Service and Saginaw Field and Stream Club. The event helps introduce kids and their parents to the outdoors. More than 300 kids participate in this event annually.

## Region's Cost Share Partnership Provides More Than \$2 Million for Fish and Wildlife

At least 83 projects valued at more than \$2 million will be carried out by the Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) through the Fiscal Year 2001 Service Challenge Cost-Share Program (SCCSP). All projects are being carried out in cooperation with a variety of local, state and regional partners.

The cost-share program is coordinated in the eight-state region by the Service's Regional office at Fort Snelling, Minn., has been conducted annually since 1988. Since then, the SCCSP has successfully leveraged

federal funds with non-federal dollars and in-kind services to cost-share projects that support fish and wildlife conservation on Service, nonfederal, private and tribal lands.

For Fiscal Year 2001, \$255,000 of Service funds will cost-share projects on and off Service lands; \$50,000 will cost-share National Wildlife Refuge Centennial projects on Service lands; \$90,000 will cost-share habitat restoration and enhancement projects on private lands; and \$150,000 will cost-share projects that enhance recreational fishing opportunities on NWRs.

Continued on page 2



--USFWS Photo

*Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges Board Members pose with their award plaque. Pictured from front left: Dorothy Hoffmann, George Hoffmann. Back row from left: Bill Scott, Jim Rouchy, Bill Aldrich and Jim Eddy.*

## From page 1 Best Friends

the-ground work that supports the refuges. The real reward is the personal satisfaction all of us get from knowing we are helping this great river and the fish and wildlife it supports.”

The Coulee Chapter of the Group has collected over \$15,000 toward a habitat restoration and flood reduction project in Upper Halfway Creek Marsh. The Bob Pohl Chapter organized efforts to plant trees and shrubs with the Madison Elementary School children at Mc Nally's Landing. The Palisades Chapter was instrumental in organizing a dedication ceremony for the Ingersol Wetlands Learning Center in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. American River's and the McGregor chapters continue to organize into formal chapters to help facilitate advocacy for the refuges.

The Group has also served as strong advocates for the resources of

the refuges and the National Wildlife Refuge System as a whole, contacting Congressional Members and other influential people and organizations on behalf of refuges. The Groups activities last year led to Congressional funding for the Environmental Management Program, designed to improved the ecological health of the Upper Mississippi River.

“This award and the work that the Group has accomplished really shows that Friends Groups can make the difference for national wildlife refuges on both a local and national level,” said Hoffmann. “I hope this award can act as a spring-board to get more people involved in the activities of their local refuge.”

For additional information on the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges, visit its website at: <http://friendsofuppermiss.org>  
*Cynthia Samples, UMRNW&FR-Complex HQ*

## From page 1 Region, Partners Contribute \$2 Million to Conservation

Cost-share projects will restore wetlands and other unique upland habitats, including native prairies, oak savannas, bottomland hardwoods, coastal marshes, rare fens and important riparian areas for trust species, including endangered and threatened fish and wildlife; purchase equipment and/or supplies for habitat projects; conduct fish and wildlife research; maintain and improve Service facilities; enhance hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photographic and other recreational opportunities on Service lands for all visitors, including youth and physically challenged guests; sustain diverse self-guided interpretive programs; and improve environmental education and outreach.

Of the 2001 cooperative projects, 27 joint ventures will improve recreational fishing on national wildlife refuges in the region; 25 will restore wetland/upland habitats on private lands, therefore enhancing natural resources on Service lands; six ecosystem projects will provide for research, habitat enhancement, outreach and education; and five projects will assist conservation outreach and education in honor of the 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System in March 2003.

Since the SCCSP began, partners have cost-shared more than 930 regional projects valued at approximately \$12.6 million and the Service has provided more than \$4.4 million. This 3-to-1 spending ratio demonstrates the interest of partners to become and then continue their involvement on behalf of fish and wildlife conservation by sharing costs. Approximately 11,200 acres of wetlands and more than 10,000 of uplands have been restored since 1988 through the Service Challenge Cost-Share Program. *(Steve Kufirin, Wildlife and Habitat)*

# Michigan Homeowners' Piping Plover HCP is Model of Cooperation Between Wildlife Conservation and Commercial Landowners

Three years of close cooperation and negotiations between a Michigan homeowners association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), has resulted in an agreement that provides added protection to the federally-endangered piping plover while accommodating construction and occupancy of homes near a Lake Michigan beach used by the plovers.

The Service's East Lansing Field Office issued an Incidental Take Permit to the Magic Carpet Woods Homeowner's Association March 20. The 25-year permit, as provided for by Endangered Species Act, allows the Association to incidentally "harass" plovers while constructing 13 homes on a 90-acre site adjacent to Leelanau State Park in Leelanau County in northwest Michigan. The wooded site includes about one-half mile of beachfront that is not currently being used by nesting plovers.

The Service also approved a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) submitted by the Association with its permit application March 29, 2000. The HCP formalizes conservation measures for piping plovers, who recently began nesting on beach habitat inside Leelanau State Park. The HCP includes measures to minimize and mitigate the impact of the Association's project on the piping plover: Conservation measures in the plan include control and storage of garbage, restrictions on pet and human activity on the beach, access by state and federal biologists to monitor the property for plover use, and protection of any nests that might occur on the property in the future.

The landowners' voluntarily applied for the Incidental Take Permit and cooperatively worked for months with Service biologists to develop the HCP and assist with an Environmental Assessment (EA). A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and a final EA were issued by the Service March 2, 2001. The public was invited to review



----National Park Service Photo

*The Great Lakes population of piping plover has been federally listed as endangered since 1986. A group of Michigan landowners voluntarily sought to protect the shore-bird before planning to construct houses near the birds nesting grounds.*

and comment on two draft versions of the EA and HCP in May, November and December 2000.

The permit, HCP and an implementing agreement are the results of a cooperative process that began in March 1998, when landowners contacted biologists at the East Lansing Field Office. The landowners sought information about potential effects on listed species during construction and occupancy of houses on their property which is located adjacent to Cathead Bay. The property does not contain optimal nesting habitat, but Service biologists are reasonably certain that plovers are likely to forage there. The lake shore is a dynamic system and natural processes could improve conditions for nesting on the property in the future. Houses will be constructed in the woods and will not directly harm piping plover habitat, but Service biologists believe that unrestricted human activity on the beach could disturb, or take, piping plovers and that recovery of the Great Lakes population of plovers could be affected if they were unable to utilize the beach.

The Great Lakes population of piping plovers were federally listed as endangered in 1986. According to the last breeding census in 1996, the Great Lakes

population has only 32 breeding pairs. At least one-third of suitable Great Lakes piping plover habitat is found on private land, necessitating the involvement and assistance of private landowners for this species to recover. The Magic Carpet Association's voluntary HCP, reduces the potential for further damage to the Great Lakes plovers while contributing voluntary protection measures.

The proposed construction project generated considerable controversy among some conservation groups and local citizens who objected to the owners' plans. Defenders of Wildlife, the Michigan Land Use Institute and the National Wildlife Federation were among those that objected to issuance of the Incidental Take Permit. The Magic Carpet Woods HCP minimizes potential adverse effects of the housing project on piping plovers while serving as a model of cooperation between private landowners and the Service.

The Magic Carpet EA, HCP and several related documents may be obtained from the Service's Region 3 website at: <http://midwest.fws.gov/NEPA/index.html>

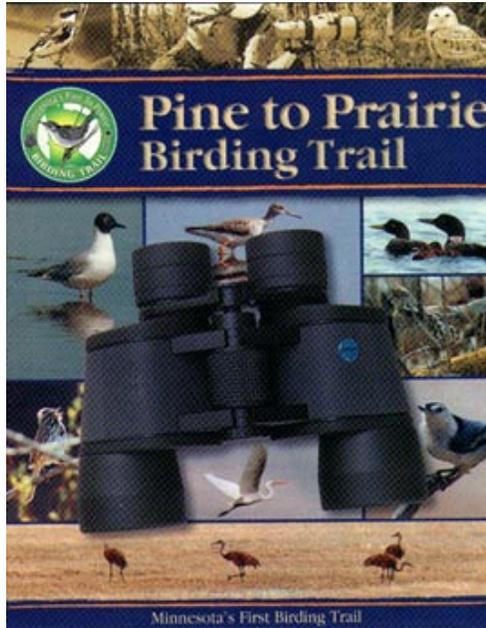
*(Mike DeCapita, East Lansing Field Office)*

# Minnesota's Pine to Prairie Birding Trail Taking Flight, Visiting Birders Encouraged to Visit State's National Wildlife Refuges

## *Service Part of Partnership Promoting Ecotourism in Northwest Minnesota*

Interest in the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail in northwestern Minnesota is on the rise as a result of promotion efforts by the unique area partnership that developed the trail. The partnership, which includes state and local government agencies, area businesses and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has mailed trail information directly to birders throughout the United States and issued numerous news releases about the birding trail. As a result, numerous articles have appeared in local and regional media outlets, and the birding trail web site ([www.mnbirdtrail.com](http://www.mnbirdtrail.com)) consistently receives more than 100 visits monthly.

The 230-mile birding trail was developed through a partnership of five northwestern Minnesota communities, four National Wildlife Refuges, two Wetland Management Districts, Lakes Area Birding Club, Minnesota Office of Tourism, and Minnesota



*The Pine to Prairie Birding Trail Guide.*

Department of Natural Resources.

Biologist Les Peterson represents the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District on the partnership's trail

steering committee. The Committee met March 29 to work on strategies for long term funding, formalizing the committee into a non-profit organization, web site review, and promotion of the trail.

Thus far, publicity efforts are paying off for the trail. Five cooperating community tourism bureaus have reported receiving numerous requests for the birding trail brochure and are encouraged by the positive response. More than 800 requests for information have been received since January.

The birding trail encourages birders to visit four National Wildlife Refuges and two Wetland Management Districts highlighted along the trail. In addition to being good birding sites, visitors to the Refuges and Districts can learn about a variety of other Service conservation programs. *(Les Peterson, Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District)*

## Applicants Sought For November Youth Deer Hunt and Training at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge

Rydell National Wildlife Refuge, located near Erskine, Minn., is offering first-time hunters the opportunity to participate in a youth deer hunt Nov. 10-11, 2001.

To be eligible, hunters must be between 12 and 15 years old, have a firearms safety certificate, a valid Minnesota Zone 4 deer license, parental/guardian permission and an adult (over 18 years old) mentor who can participate in the training and escort them during the hunt. The mentor does not have to be an accomplished hunter.

This is an exceptional opportunity for young hunters to have a safe, enjoyable and educational introduction to deer hunting. Past success rates for this hunt have exceeded 75 percent.

To apply, send a post card with the both the hunter's and mentor's names, ages, address(s) and phone number(s) to: 2001 Youth Hunt, C/O Rydell National

Wildlife Refuge, Rural Route 3, Box 105, Erskine, MN 56635. Applications must be received by July 30, 2001 to be considered.

Twenty-five hunters will be selected to participate and successful applicants will be notified by Aug. 10.

Each selected hunter will be required to attend a certified whitetail deer hunting clinic to be held at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge on Sept. 8 and 9. Clinic hours will be 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days. The clinic will provide young hunters with information on the habitats and biology of deer; as well as hunter safety information and hunting techniques. A \$5.00 fee will be collected to cover the cost of a 91-page handbook for each participant. Please contact the refuge if you are interested in volunteering for this or other refuge events.

*(Rick Julian, Rydell NWR)*

## Dan Frisk Named Manager of Ottawa NWR Complex

Dan Frisk has been named as the new Project Leader at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex in Oak Harbor, Ohio. Frisk assumed his new duties March 25, 2001. As project leader of the 5,794-acre Ottawa NWR, Frisk will supervise 10 employees and oversee the operations and biological programs of the refuge complex, which includes Ottawa, Cedar Point and West Sister Island refuges. Frisk will also administer the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program for Ohio. The refuge complex and surrounding areas provide critical habitat for migratory birds. Up to 70 percent of the Mississippi Flyway population of black ducks can be found in the Lake Erie marshes during the fall migration. *(Chuck Traxler, External Affairs)*

# Annual Report Highlights Region's Accomplishments

The Region 3 Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2000 is complete and will soon be available for viewing and downloading from the Region 3 website. The Report is a comprehensive record of the Region's efforts in managing and maintaining ecosystems, refuges, fishery resources and hatcheries, private lands and waters, partnerships and restoring and preserving species in America's heartland.

The Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Report is published in three volumes, each containing summaries of individual Program and Ecosystem teams in the Region. Additionally, more than 1,500 individual accomplishment reports filed through the Accomplishment Reporting System (organized by

program, by month) are contained in the Report.

The Annual Report volumes include:

*Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Report:* This Program-oriented volume contains summaries of accomplishments and goals for Administration and Budget, Ecological Services, External Affairs, Law Enforcement and National Wildlife Refuge System. The summaries are combined with individual accomplishments filed by field offices throughout the year. (366 pages)

*Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Report-Program Accomplishments:* Summaries and highlights of the year's Program accomplishments. (92 pages)

*Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Report-*

*Ecosystem Accomplishments:* Summaries and highlights of the year's Ecosystem team accomplishments. (64 pages)

In addition to the volumes above, individual program and ecosystem reports were created and are available to each program and ecosystem team. All reports are published in portable document format (.pdf) for electronic publishing.

A very limited number of reports were printed. Publishing electronically allows for a wider distribution and availability of Regional accomplishments, while saving thousands of dollars in printing costs. (*Scott Flaherty, External Affairs*)

## O'Hare Airport Wildlife Inspectors Sponsor Conservation Symposium For Educators Seized Wildlife Trophies Donated to Education Programs

Inspectors with the Service's Wildlife Inspection Program at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport invited environmental educators from 19 organizations to a Service-sponsored conservation education symposium at the Airport in January. As part of the symposium, educators were offered wildlife (trophies, parts, etc.) seized by Service inspectors, and now property of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Educators also made presentations and shared experiences in an effort to help other institutions communicate effective conservation messages. Inspectors distributed hundreds of seized wildlife items to help supplement excited educators' conservation programs.

Donating seized wildlife items helps the Service further educate the public about wildlife protection laws. Community educators help communicate the Service's conservation message through various conservation education programs in the area. Partners in this effort include the Brookfield Zoo,



--Photo by Keri Halpin

**Wildlife Sampler.** Seized wildlife parts await distribution to Chicago-area educators

Lincoln Park Zoo, Phillips Park Zoo, World Wildlife Program, Elgin Public Museum, Jurica Nature Museum and various school and community level educators.

(*Keri Halpin, Chicago Inspection Program*)

## Horicon Refuge Helps Host "Discover Wisconsin" Premiere

As part of the Marsh Melodies Events Committee, Horicon NWR helped host the "Discover Wisconsin" Premiere Party March 26, at the Camelot Golf Club, Lomira, Wis. More than 100 visitors and media attended the event, including Rick Rose and Stephanie Klett, hosts of the Discover Wisconsin Television program.

Stephanie Klett presented a commendation to the committee from former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, that recognized the committee for its partnership efforts. The audience also enjoyed a premiere viewing of the upcoming episode, 'A Natural Experience - Horicon Marsh,' broadcast March 31 and April 1, 2001 on network television. The episode is part of the Marsh Melodies spring promotion of the Horicon Marsh Area in conjunction with the \$40,000 Joint Effort Marketing matching grant awarded to the committee by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism last summer. (*Molly Stoddard, Horicon NWR*)



--USFWS Photo

*Frank Stone observes fingerlings being marked at Keweenaw Bay Tribal Hatchery*



Photo by Frank Stone

*An OTC bath awaits fish at Keweenaw Bay Tribal Hatchery*



Photo by Frank Stone

*Iron River National Fish Hatchery biologists Denise and John Johnston monitor Ph levels in an OTC batch.*

## Investigative Drug Helps Service Evaluate Success of Brook Trout Stocking in Lake Superior, Tribal Streams

Frank Stone of Ashland Fishery Resources Office (FRO) recently completed a brook trout marking project with fishery biologists from the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (NFH) and the Keweenaw Bay Tribal Fish Hatchery. The project uses an experimental drug called oxytetracycline (OTC) to mark the trout and help fishery managers identify hatchery stocks and evaluate restoration efforts.

Stone was issued an Investigational New Animal Drug permit to administer OTC, which is an antibiotic. The brook trout fingerlings are contained in a holding tank containing 700 parts per million (ppm) of OTC for six hours. During the treatment period, the OTC is incorporated into the bony structures of the fish. When these structures (otolith) are viewed using a microscope and ultraviolet light, the presence of an OTC mark will be noted as a yellow-gold band within the otolith. This spring, approximately 50,000 marked brook trout

will be stocked to waters off Isle Royal National Park and 60,000 will be stocked to streams on the Keweenaw Bay Indian Reservation.

Lake Superior fish management agencies have recommended marking brook trout stocked into Lake Superior or its tributaries as a means of evaluating stocked hatchery-reared fish. However, the actual contributions that stocked fish contribute to a fishery is often unknown. OTC will hopefully serve as an inexpensive fish marking tool that will allow future assessments efforts to verify the recruitment levels of various life stages of brook trout that originated from hatchery programs.

The information gained from this project will give fishery managers a better means of estimating the survival of stocked brook trout fingerlings. *(Frank Stone, Ashland FRO)*

## Accomplishment Reports Received

The following accomplishment reports were processed by the Accomplishment Reporting System from March 15- April 1, 2001. Employees can search summaries from more than 1,900 accomplishments using the ARS Online database: <http://ars.fws.gov>. Numerous summaries are also posted for viewing by the public.

**1. Seney NWR Co-Sponsors Teaching With The Outdoors Workshop May 4-5**

*Marianne Kronk, Seney NWR*

**2. Michigan Emergency Managers Get Endangered Species Act Training**

*Mark Hodgkins, East Lansing FO*

**3. Fond du Lac Sturgeon Assessment**

*Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*

**4. Service Continues Partnership Effort to Restore Walleye to Red Lakes in Minnesota**

*Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*

**5. News Releases from the Fergus Falls WMD**

*Kevin Brennan, Fergus Falls WMD/PWLC*

**6. Annual Report Highlights Region's Program and Ecosystem Accomplishments**

*Scott Flaherty, External Affairs*

**7. Fergus Falls WMD Launches New Website**

*Kevin Brennan, Fergus Falls WMD/PWLC*

**8. Interest in Minnesota's Pine to Prairie Birding Trail on the Rise**

*Les Peterson, Detroit Lakes WMD*

**9. Youth Deer Hunt and Training Offered at Rydell Refuge**

*Rick Julian, Rydell NWR*

**10. Youth Deer Hunt and Training Offered at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge This Fall**

*Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

**11. Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges Named 2001 National Friends Group of the Year**

*Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

**12. Dan Frisk Named Refuge Manager of Ottawa NWR Complex**

*Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

**13. Upper Mississippi River Refuges Friends Group named Friends Group of the Year**

*Cynthia Samples, UMRNW&FR-Complex HQ*

**14. Aquatic Toxicology Instruction at Michigan State University**

*Lisa Williams, East Lansing FO*

**15. Horicon Refuge Helps Host Discover Wisconsin Premiere Party**

*Molly Stoddard, Horicon NWR*

**16. Service Approves Habitat Conservation Plan for Piping Plover in Michigan**

*Michael DeCapita, East Lansing FO*

**17. Service, Partners Cooperate to Provide More Than \$2 million for Fish and Wildlife Conservation**

*Steve Kufirin, (ARW) Wildlife and Habitat*

**18. Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club Donates Time for Mallard Nest Structures**

*Kevin Brennan, Fergus Falls WMD/PWLC*

## Inside Region 3



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