

# Take Pride in America

**Four of the 2005** Take Pride in America award winners have connections to the National Wildlife Refuge System as the national campaign works to turn stewardship of public lands back to its owners – the public. The annual awards honor groups and individuals who demonstrate exceptional stewardship.

**Mark Musaus** has been named one of five Federal Land Managers of the Year. As refuge manager of Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, he collaborated on a variety of initiatives with the University of Florida, the U.S. Geological Survey and the South Florida Water Management District. He facilitated cooperation among biologists and other scientists and, working with partners, was able to more than triple the amount of funding available to remove invasive exotics from Loxahatchee Refuge. Musaus also serves on the Refuge System's National Mentor team to strengthen Friends organizations and their community partnerships with volunteers. (See sidebar on page 22)

**Friends of Anahuac Refuge** (FOAR) in Anahuac, Tex., received an award for a particularly successful public-private partnership. FOAR supports the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge that lies along the upper Texas Gulf Coast. Over the last year, Friends members designed and constructed a 1.5-acre butterfly and hummingbird landscape that provides nectar and host plants for 15 butterfly species as well as nectar for ruby-throated hummingbirds. Friends president Chuck Redell noted, "Volunteers did everything from helping to pour and stamp the accessible concrete



*Volunteers at Ash Meadows NWR helped restore habitat for 25 endemic species, 12 of which are threatened or endangered. The Desert NWR Complex in Nevada participates in the award-winning Southern Nevada Interagency Volunteer Program. (USFWS)*

trail to planting, weeding, mulching and watering."

FOAR received a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Centennial Refuge Legacy grant for \$13,500 to fund the new landscape. Cash and in-kind donations from individuals, businesses and foundations more than doubled that amount. More than 110 volunteers donated about 2,000 hours. Individuals or organizations have adopted nine of the 16 butterfly or hummingbird "beds."

**The Texas Master Naturalist Program** was honored as a statewide initiative. Since its beginning in 1998, the program has grown to 27 self-sufficient volunteer-led chapters of highly trained naturalists. In 2004 alone, the program trained 531 Master Naturalists and reached out to 333,387 youth, adults and private

*Friends of Anahuac Refuge designed and constructed a Butterfly and hummingbird landscape that provides nectar and host plants for 15 butterfly species as well as nectar for ruby-throated hummingbirds. (Michele Whitbeck/USFWS)*

landowners. Seven of the 11 national wildlife refuges in Texas work with Master Naturalist chapters. At Aransas NWR, the Friends and Master Naturalist chapters worked together to obtain a \$50,000 grant for the refuge.

The Refuge System's National Master Naturalist Initiative, launched less than a year ago and based on the Texas model, is working to support establishment of the program in each of the 50 states and serve as the primary nexus of information about program, according Anna Toness, National Master Naturalist Initiative coordinator. For more information, contact Toness at 703-358-1889 or Anna\_Toness@fws.gov.

**The Southern Nevada Interagency Volunteer Program** was honored for its "Get Outdoors Nevada" program that established a community connection for all volunteers interested in working on public lands. A single Web site (<http://www.getoutdoorsnevada.org/>) offers a calendar of events, training schedules and volunteer applications. The program recruited 585 volunteers who contributed almost 3,000 hours to clean-up, trail repair, habitat restoration and planting, visitor services and education.

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