



Today's Agenda

- 8:30 a.m.** "A Refuge Manager's Perspective"
Robin West, Refuge Manager, Kenai NWR, AK
Robert Byrd Auditorium
- 9:00 a.m.** Wrap it up!!!!
Executive Committee
- 10:00 a.m.** "A Closer Look - A Regional View"
Regional Directors
Moderated by David P. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
- 11:00 a.m.** "Call to Action"
Steven A. Williams, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- 11:30 p.m.** Final Thoughts and Announcements
- 11:45 p.m.** Adjourn

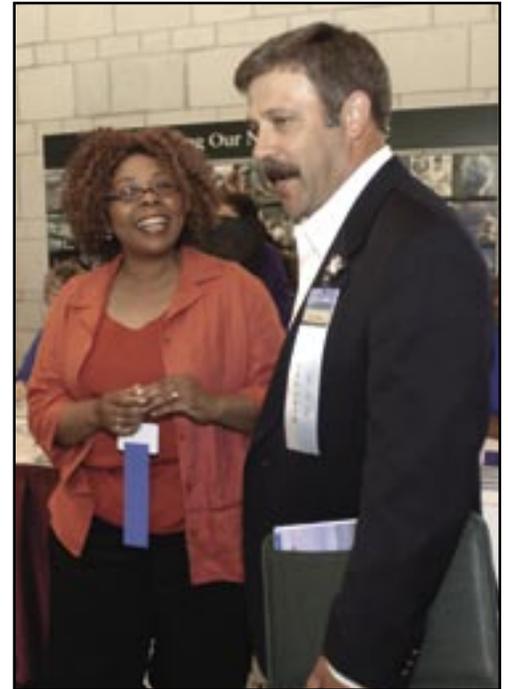
Director Williams to Close Summit Today

Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams will deliver final remarks closing the Conservation in Action Summit at 11 a.m. today.

As former secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and deputy executive director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Williams incorporates his leadership experience with his professional perspective in state government to broaden partnerships that benefit the Refuge System. A biologist and avid sportsman, he also champions scientific integrity and outdoor recreation in the management of refuges.

Williams is expected to summarize his observations on Summit proceedings and present his view of how to carry the Refuge System legacy forward. He may also touch on some of the results of last night's survey regarding specific action items for future refuge management.

--Ben Ikenson, Staff Writer



USFWS Director Steve Williams will deliver a call to action this morning to conclude the Conservation in Action Summit. Pictured with Williams is Dr. Mamie Parker, Assistant Director, Fisheries and Habitat Conservation. (Ryan Hagerty/USFWS)



White House Fellow Dr. Michael Suk (Ryan Hagerty/USFWS)

Suk: Refuges Key in Fat Fight

Michael Suk calls himself an "average guy," but anyone who's simultaneously earned degrees in medicine, public health, and law isn't your average, lethargic "Joe Six-Pack."

And the White House Fellow hopes Americans will harness at least a bit of his same energy to resolve the national problem of obesity, "the 'hot button' issue in America today." Dr. Suk thinks the National Wildlife Refuge System is part of the solution.

Dr. Suk, a University of Florida orthopaedic surgeon, currently coordinates the Interior Department's portion of President Bush's "Healthier US" initiative, among five bureaus that collectively attract 500 million visitors annually. It aims at increasing Americans' physical activity, improving diets, encouraging preventative health screening, and promoting healthier choices.

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Ann Smith President of Friends of Black Bayou, Inc., said nurturing the Refuge System is the job of Friends groups. (Ryan Hagerty/USFWS)

Friends “Love a Piece of Ground”

Infused with seemingly limitless energy and wide expertise, Friends groups can help the Refuge System capture the community support that is so vital to conservation, Friends of Black Bayou, Inc. (LA) President Ann Smith told an 8 a.m. audience yesterday.

Friends groups can “do almost anything” to assist refuges and, in the case of Congressional lobbying, for example, can do work the USFWS isn’t permitted to do, she stressed.

To keep members involved, the group has held monthly membership meetings throughout its seven-year life. That may well be one reason they succeeded in raising \$250,000 since January for a wet lab, where youngsters can “do messy science” to learn about wetlands.

Another reason for the extraordinary fundraising – matched by a \$150,000

USFWS grant – is the group’s ability to find partners. The West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau donated \$200,000 because it realized the tourism potential in a project that will feature floor-to-ceiling aquaria filled with native plants and animals.

“This refuge is my refuge,” declared Smith. “It’s not just for the plants and animals. It’s for Ann Smith and all the others who come out to the land.

“Our main job is to nurture the refuge because, at some point, we all fell in love with a piece of ground and with the Refuge System,” she concluded to a warm ovation.

--Martha Nudel, Staff Writer

Chat on the Bridge

“What would you like to see as the top priority on the action list that comes out of this Summit?”



“Once and for all, we need to come to grips with honoring our visitors and providing them with the meaningful experiences they should have on our wildlife refuges.”

Mike Boylan
Refuge Supervisor, Region 7



“The theme that needs to come out of this Summit is to work more closely with partners in the NGO community, with state and federal agencies.”

Ashlie Houston
Ducks Unlimited



“Invasive species control needs to be the top priority of the Refuge System.”

Mike Daulton
National Audubon Society



“Funding people on the ground needs to be the top priority – getting hands in the dirt. That may not happen right away, but I want to see that in the future.”

Karen Pacheco
Refuge Manager
Harris Neck NWR, GA

West Optimistic About Refuge System's Future

With great optimism about the Refuge System's future, Kenai NWR (AK) Manager Robin West today will highlight a little conservation lore – including the years when a \$2 bounty was offered for bald eagles in Alaska – as he calls for making the public a focus of refuge work in coming years.

West, a 25-year veteran of the USFWS, will deliver his presentation, “A Refuge Manager's Perspective,” at 8:30 a.m., part of the Summit's closing day. He has worked in Alaska for more than two decades, having served on Izembek NWR and as refuge manager at Yukon Flats.

West will suggest that, as the public awakens to the need to conserve oceans, coral reefs and fisheries, large areas of federal waters could join the Refuge System. He will

also touch on future land protection work, which he believes could increasingly be accomplished through conservation easements and management agreements.

He will stress that providing wildlife experiences to the American people is the Refuge System's special niche in the world of conservation.

He will also cite a few “bumps in the road” – such as organizational efficiency – and cautions, including scientific arrogance and shifting scientific baselines that complicate the ability to implement aggressive adaptive management mechanism.

-- Martha Nudel, Staff Writer



Kenai NWR (AK) Manager Robin West will speak today about the Refuge System's future on Wednesday. (Dick Cole/USFWS)

“Never Quit Digging” Is Hallmark of Leaders



Refuge System Deputy Chief Jim Kurth expressed “faith in the deep-seated and enduring quality of leadership” in the Refuge System. (Todd Harless/USFWS)

“Leadership is about giving,” declared Refuge System Deputy Chief Jim Kurth yesterday as he called upon Summit participants to concentrate

on helping a new generation become the conservation leaders who will guide the USFWS in coming decades.

Emphasizing that public service is an honor, Kurth expressed optimism that the Refuge System will accomplish its mission, not only because of its heritage of superb leadership, but because, “I know we have evolution and the ages on our side.

“Our species has a hard-wired connection to the land – ancient ties and instincts that took eons to evolve and that would take eons to erase,” he continued.

More importantly, Kurth expressed rock solid faith in the deep-seated and enduring quality of leaderships already evident within the Refuge System.

“I am not worried about the future because I have faith in you, faith that we will maintain our tradition of extreme optimism in the face of great challenge,” he stressed.

He told the story of Marcus Nelson, who retired as chief of the Refuge System in 1979 after a long career in conservation. Nelson often talked with joy about his first job at Medicine Lake NWR, MT, during the Dust Bowl days.

Nelson recalled that he learned, through trying times, that the way to move forward was to “never quit digging, never quit hacking away.” Refuge System leaders have brought that same zeal, passion and plain determination to conservation for the past 101 years, concluded Kurth.

-- Martha Nudel, Staff Writer

Suk (continued from page 1)

And refuges, he told Conservation in Action Summit attendees yesterday, are a means by which healthier lifestyles can be linked to enjoyable recreational pursuits.

“We want to introduce people to easy things they can do in the outdoors, in small steps,” said Dr. Suk. “Shift the paradigm – getting out of the chair is better than sitting in the chair.”

Refuges and the recreational equipment industry need to capitalize on the boom in weight loss and exercise fads, and demonstrate that physical activity isn't all sweat and pain, or costly, said Dr. Suk. “You can hunt and fish and expend as much energy enjoyably as does an aerobics instructor. Refuges and parks have been in the physical activity message from the start, but the connections aren't being drawn for people.”

Examining one of NCTC's soon-to-be-refabricated campus directional maps, Dr. Suk recommends abandoning mileage scales and express distances in steps, for instance. “Not everyone will walk five miles, but they will attempt 10,000 steps. And refuges are a step in that direction.”

--David Klinger, Staff Writer



MAY 24-27, 2004 | SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV

Conservation in Action SUMMIT

A new century of conservation challenges



Approximately 250 Conservation in Action Summit participants completed surveys that conveyed a sense of the important issues facing the Refuge System. (Todd Harless/USFWS)

Survey Draws Summit to Consensus

The surveying of Summit participants conducted yesterday evening has given the Refuge System a sense of which items people consider most important to guide the Refuge System toward identifying measurable priorities for the next five to 15 years.

The consensus items will be included with other action items into a summary document that will indicate where the Refuge System needs to focus more attention in the future – either by seeking more funding, redirecting money from lower priority tasks or creating or enhancing partnerships.

“They may also be helpful in strategic planning for the Refuge System or the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE),” noted Bob Byrne, a member of the three-person Summit Executive Committee. Byrne is with the Wildlife Management Institute and a key member of CARE.

The consensus process is just the start of identifying critical issues of concern. The ideas, opinions and critical issues highlighted during the Summit will become part of the document to be formulated in coming months.

“We've gathered a lot of information, ideas, opinions and recommendations in the past few days,” noted Refuge System Deputy Chief Jim Kurth, also a member of the Summit Executive Committee. “Now the heavy load of formulating priorities begins.”

-- Martha Nudel, Staff Writer