

THE MODEL PARTNERSHIP



# Key Element

*A Solid  
Collaboration*



FLOCKR / USLATER318

Quivira NWR, Kansas



There are many reasons for Refuge Friends organizations and the Refuge to enter into a collaboration or partnership. Often, a primary reason is to build a strong, positive bond between the Refuge and community. Collaboration is required because relationship building cannot be accomplished alone. Other reasons for partnering include raising the visibility of and advocating for Refuges, establishing and expanding broad education and outreach and programs, fundraising and resource development.

**R**egardless of the reasons for entering into a partnership, building a solid collaboration takes time and requires a mutual effort by the Friends members, Refuge Manager(s) and Refuge staff. According to mentors, success may elude partners because they fail to identify and take the important steps required to build a solid collaboration. On this subject Friends Mentor Molly Krival, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, writes:

*Once the initial enthusiasm of formation dissipates, board members and refuge staff have only a vague idea of how to work together. Frequently, Friends do not know how to collaborate for each project. Or staff do not realize they have to collaborate on Friends projects in order to ensure they fall within refuge and Service parameters. Managers may not understand the kind of collaboration they and their staff need to provide...*

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*The reasons for collaboration are to achieve some result your organization cannot achieve alone, and to achieve that result in a complex environment.*

Karen Ray (2002), from: *The Nimble Collaboration: Fine-Tuning Your Collaboration for Lasting Success*

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In this section we’ll examine four key elements Friends/Refuge must work on to ensure a solid collaboration:

- A positive, well-defined *relationship*
- *Trust* between the partners
- A mutually defined *vision*
- *Shared power*



## Creating a Positive, Well-Defined Relationship

According to collaboration expert Karen Ray, much of the frustration people endure at the start of a collaboration involves defining relationships among members. The more each entity knows about this relationship at the outset, the easier it is to nurture a collaboration that rewards all the members.

Over the past decade, the Fish and Wildlife Service and Refuge System, National Wildlife Refuge Association, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have sponsored a wide array of programs and materials to assist Friends organizations and Refuge Managers and staff in establishing collaborations. They have produced books, created networking tools, offered workshops, conferences and training, provided grants and managed the Mentor Program in what has become a national model for Friends organization development. Each of these tools has proven critical to the growth and success of Friends/Refuge collaboration on refuges across the country.

Among these tools is the *Guiding Principles for the Friends/FWS Relationship* created by a group of Friends experts at a pivotal 1997 meeting held in Virginia Beach, Virginia (see Appendix A). The Guiding Principles form the basis for establishing the relationship — providing a foundation upon which Friends and Refuge partners can build their collaboration.

In *Collaboration: What Makes it Work, 2nd Ed*, authors Paul W. Mattessich, Marta Murray-Close, and Barbara R. Monsey (2004) describe 20 factors that influence the success of a collaboration. The Guiding Principles document closely matches many of the twenty factors identified by Mattessich, Close and Monsey (see table, p. 17).

Build a positive, trusting, respectful relationship at the outset to put your collaboration on solid footing. Relationship building takes time. A good relationship provides the solid foundation necessary for working well together, especially when difficult issues arise. To reach the goals of the Guiding Principles, Friends/Refuge partners should allow time to get to know each other well before venturing too far into collaborative efforts. Spend meeting time learning about each other, plan social time outside of regular meetings, schedule fun activities — all of these efforts will lay a foundation upon which trust and respect can develop, making it possible to create a shared vision and to share power in reaching toward the vision.

The value of personal relationships cannot be stressed enough. In a world of e-mail, portable communication devices and increasing technological advances, we must remain diligent and committed to face-to-face meetings. Without it, even the most worthy and successful collaborations are prone to challenges and even failure.

## Working Together to Increase the Visibility of the Refuge

### The Manager's Story

In 1997 the Friends of Quivira NWR was established. The group got its start during a mentoring session when manager David (“Dave”) Hilley asked the community to join him in creating a collaborative partnership. He saw a need to increase the visibility and community awareness of the Refuge and believed a Friends partnership was the best way to accomplish this.

Nine years later, Dave reports three key accomplishments that place this Refuge/Friends collaboration in the big leagues:

- The Friends have increased awareness of the Refuge. Indeed, the Friends have not only improved the image of the Refuge within the community, they have succeeded in building awareness statewide.
- Visitation has increased from about 50–60,000 a year a few years ago to nearly 100,000 today.
- The Friends have made a strong connection with the community. They sponsor an annual calendar of events that draws people from all over the area. They have been the proud winners of the community’s annual Octoberfest chili cook-off three years in a row. These and many other activities have built community relations, making the Friends and the Refuge valued neighbors.

Why has this partnership been so successful? Dave Hilley lists a number of factors.

#### The Manager's Role is Pivotal

When he visits other refuges under the mentoring program, Dave advises that the Friends partnership is the Manager’s job. Managers may delegate day-to-day coordination of partnership activities to a staff member, but it remains their responsibility to maintain the relationship by providing support, guidance and leadership. One way Hilley does this is by attending all meetings and events. He acknowledges that it’s not always possible for Managers to participate in every Friends function. However, by being present, a Manager sends a powerful message to the Friends that s/he is committed to the collaboration.

#### QUIVIRA AT A GLANCE

##### The Refuge

- Established in 1955 to provide wintering and migration stopover habitat for migratory birds along the Central Flyway of North America.
- 7,000 acres of wetlands with slight to moderate saline water.
- Thousands of Canada geese, ducks, and other migratory birds, such as sandhill cranes and shorebirds, use these wetlands as they pass through the Refuge on their annual migrations.
- Visit <[www.fws.gov/quivira](http://www.fws.gov/quivira)>

##### Community

Stafford County is located in south central Kansas and has a population of about 5,000 that reside in a 788 square mile area.

##### The Friends

Established: 1997  
 Membership: 132  
 Annual budget/expenses: \$5,000–10,000  
 Visit <[www.friendsofquivira.org](http://www.friendsofquivira.org)>

##### Mission

To promote the refuge, support its mission, education and wide use by visitors.

##### Recent Accomplishments

- Annual events, especially monarch mania, and the October celebration
- Hosting two statewide eco-meets
- Supporting the Ramsar designation
- Fishing clinic and derby

## A Clear, Shared Vision

A clear vision for the partnership is necessary, one that is realistic and responsive to the interests and needs of all the partners. Dave Hilley understood what he wanted from the Friends collaboration before he asked for help. He reports that he wasn't interested in having the group talk with public officials, raise money or be involved in a lot of Refuge projects. His personal vision was to increase awareness of the Refuge.

He understood that he could share his vision with the group, but that they had to agree, on their own that this was also their vision. He notes, "We discussed things for a long time." As a result, the partners agreed to take on the task of building Refuge awareness and decided to reach their vision by focusing on events.

## Good Communication a Must

Good communication is critical in order to build trust, set expectations and establish boundaries. When asked how the partners have built trust and established boundaries, Hilley says, "The big thing is communication; it reduces the problems. There are no secrets with the Friends. The Friends President knows she can call us and we'll be perfectly straightforward with her." Communication goes both ways, with partners checking in with each other on rumors they hear in the community and discussing how everyone should respond. There have been times when Hilley needed to talk with the Friends President two or three times a day. Right now they chat at least weekly. He says that he's seen situations where managers never talk to the Friends group and it has proven to be a big mistake.

Because the partners regularly communicate, they can assure that everyone is on track—they learn about each other, reaffirm values, set expectations and build relationships. New board members know what's expected of them, and they are not accepted onto the board if they have a different agenda. Hilley reports that there was one instance where a board member had some trouble, but the group was strong enough to say, "your agenda isn't our agenda," and the board member withdrew. This would not have been so easy to do if communication was poor or expectations were unclear.

## Fostering Relationships

Building personal relationships has big payoffs. The partners have invested great energy in building personal relationships—with each other and the community at large. They see relationship building as an important tool for achieving their vision. Hilley notes that while staff was initially worried at first about what the Friends were going to do, they supported the collaborative vision and spend lots of time working with the Friends on events. He says the staff sees the value of wildlife education and making the public aware of the Refuge's habitat and wildlife. "Without this awareness, we don't have support. If the Refuge were threatened, more people would support us now that we have the Friends than would have prior to their existence. And that's a secure statement from a manager."

Hilley almost jokingly shares that one of the most important tools they use to build relationships at Quivira NWR is food. "We always have food. People might not like to come to meetings, but if we have food, we have a great turn-out." Indeed, while the Refuge was being considered for designation as a Ramsar site (a wetland of international importance), the Friends financed and served 1,100 meals for meeting attendees.

## Motivating the Team

Personal rewards and appreciation are important to sustaining the relationship. While tokens of appreciation are used, Dave Hilley thinks these are less important than a personal approach. He says, "We make a big effort to say thank you. I never send an e-mail to the Friends without saying 'Thank you for your effort.'" Every year, the staff takes the Friends on a spotlight tour, visiting places at night that most people don't get to see.

Appreciation goes both ways. The Friends make a big thing about recognizing staff when they put together their staff appreciation dinner. This mutual gratitude means there is an atmosphere of harmony in working together. Staff members go out of their way to work with the Friends because they appreciate them. >>

## The Friends Story

If you heard about the successes and visibility of the Friends of Quivira NWR, you might think that this was a sizeable group with a long history in a large community. Up close, the story is quite different.

Stafford County is a small farming community in Kansas, with a population approaching 5,000 people spread across a 788 square mile area. In the 2006 Friends Organization Survey conducted by the FWS, the Friends reported a membership of 80 people and an annual budget of \$5,000 to \$10,000. They do not operate a sales outlet, although they are considering this option.

This is a small Friends organization located in a small farming community, yet the Friends of Quivira NWR reports big results since the organization was established in 1997:

- Increased awareness of the Refuge *statewide*.
- Purchased a tram to carry visitors around the Refuge.
- Increased annual Refuge visitation by 50,000.
- Developed a strong connection with the community.
- Held many highly successful events each year that draw people from around the state.

One reason the Friends of Quivira can report such success is that their primary objectives are simple and clear:

- Get people—primarily families—to the Refuge.
- Increase awareness of the Refuge in the state.

Friends of Quivira report successes that are appropriate to the Refuge and community, successes that fulfill a vision developed as a collaborative effort between the Friends and the Refuge. This partnership has found a formula that works well. The Friends report these keys to their success:

- Focusing on children and their families as a target audience.

- Deciding what they want to accomplish and finding a way to do it.
- Focusing on fun.
- Having a hard working board that puts the needs of Quivira NWR first.

The emphasis of this organization has not been fundraising, but education. Members have focused their attention on activities that draw people to the Refuge. Since its inception, the organization has sought to create enjoyable events that interest the community while educating them about the Refuge. Here's a recent sampling from their website:

### Peeps & Pastry Morning Tour

Sign up for a Peeps & Pastry Morning Tour. See the Refuge in spring all abloom as only a Friends of Quivira member can!

### Father's Day Out

Give Fathers some quality time with children in preparing for Mother's Day (and give Mom a morning off!).

### Fishing Clinic

Work with Quivira staff to teach kids a love of fishing and how to do it safely.

### Monarch Mania

Learn about flora and fauna of the plains while helping the Quivira staff tag monarch butterflies.

The Friends report that staying with “the tried and true” has been important to the group's success. However, as the organization matures, members are beginning to think more strategically about the future. They are concerned about programs and activities getting stale and worry about inevitable transitions in leadership, both within the group and on the Refuge. They recognize the need to nurture new leaders and are considering ways to engage more of their membership in the workings of the organization. A rural location and small population base have not been handicaps for this hard-working, ambitious group. □



**Factors Influencing the Success of a Collaboration**

*A Selection From Mattessich, Murray-Close and Monsey (2004)*

- Communication is open and frequent
- Unique purpose
- Mutual understanding, respect, trust
- Members share a stake in outcomes and process
- Collaboration is in the self-interest of members
- Established informal relationships
- Shared vision
- Members are flexible, adaptable, able to compromise
- Clear roles and policy guidelines
- Skilled leadership, adequate funds, materials, time

**Guiding Principles for the Friends/FWS Relationship**

*Abbreviated version—see Appendix A for full text*

Friends Role	FWS Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use consistent, regular, honest communication.</li> <li>■ To be independent advocates, work to protect the natural resource, assist in accomplishing refuge projects.</li> <li>■ Respect and trust USFWS employees and have reasonable expectations.</li> <li>■ Agree to always discuss differences of opinion.</li> <li>■ Become educated and know the refuge mission</li> <li>■ Fully commit to keeping up the partnership. To not undercut agency and refuge management.</li> <li>■ To buy into a shared vision that both sides work to create.</li> <li>■ To help the Service personnel to be and feel productive.</li> <li>■ To understand and respect the operational pressures and boundaries that affect the Service.</li> <li>■ To provide a positive community influence. Be the doorway to the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use consistent, regular, honest communication.</li> <li>■ Have a true sense of partnership with a “no surprises” philosophy and a full sharing of information.</li> <li>■ Work to protect the natural resource and fulfill FWS mission as mandated by Congress.</li> <li>■ To trust and respect the Friends.</li> <li>■ Agree always to discuss differences of opinion.</li> <li>■ To understand what it takes to have a Friends group.</li> <li>■ View the Friends groups as a long-term, personal friendship.</li> <li>■ Work to infuse support for Friends throughout the agency.</li> <li>■ Help the Friends to be and feel productive.</li> <li>■ Teach Friends about the government systems to make the job easier.</li> <li>■ Provide consistent follow-through and active support (training, mentoring and providing the resources) of Friends groups from the Washington office, the regional offices, and the field.</li> </ul>



## Building Trust Between Partners

The Guiding Principles provide a conceptual template to apply to the realities of the Friends and Refuge cultures. By nature these cultures are very different: the FWS is a federal agency in the Executive Branch, subject to numerous laws and regulations, as well as Congressional oversight. Friends organizations, conversely, represent the grassroots approach and are governed by mission statements and bylaws developed by their members. Friends are not held to the same regulatory framework as Refuge staff. It takes time to build trust between these very different entities, but this a critical step in establishing a successful collaboration.

In a 2000 FWS survey, Friends members and Refuge Managers identified their fears about entering into a partnership:

About Friends, Managers wonder:

- Will they expect special privileges?
- Will they help us or add to our burden?

- Will they be patient with the system and what may appear to be bureaucratic hurdles?
- Will they work with us?
- Will they speak out against us?
- Will they represent the Refuge well in public?

About FWS, Friends members wondered:

- Do they understand our limitations?
- Will they work *with* us?
- Will they respect us?
- Will they keep us informed?
- Do they understand our rights as independent organizations?
- Do they understand our need to be productive and useful?

These fears are all related to issues of trust. One way to build trust is for members of the collaboration to reveal their self interests, which Karen Ray defines as “a code word for *passion*. Once a person’s passion is hooked, that person’s commitment is hooked.” Ray also notes that when self-interests are not revealed, people get secretive and look for hidden agendas:

*When you talk about your organization’s self-interest, you are exposing what used to be its hidden agenda. You legitimize concerns and create an atmosphere that invites discussion about important issues. One of the first dramatic changes that people observe in healthy collaborations is, “We have no secrets.”*

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*“Trust the Friends and Turn Them Loose’ This is hard to do. We try to hold things close to our chests, particularly those of us with law enforcement backgrounds. But, it is important to do. Once you educate them, trust them and turn them loose.”*

Kelby Ouchley, Manager, Black Bayou Lake, NWR

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It is frequently helpful to place a discussion about self-interests on the meeting agenda, and then to revisit the topic every six months or so as ideas and interests change. Interests also need to be discussed anytime new members join the board or subcommittees, and as Refuge managers and staff change.

## Creating a Mutually Defined Vision

Most experts on collaboration and partnerships agree that vision plays an important role not only in the start-up phase of an organization but throughout the organization's entire life cycle. Vision is what points the way for all who need to understand what the organization is and where it intends to go. Inevitably, a time will come when an organization needs to refocus that vision to address changing needs and realities.

The Friends/Refuge collaboration needs a mutually defined vision. It is through an understanding of this shared vision that reasonable goals and plans can be developed.

Defining the vision takes time. It is an outgrowth of a mutual understanding of the needs of the refuge, the Friends and the interests and abilities of the collaboration's leaders. The vision helps define boundaries for the relationship, and may help motivate the collaborating partners to resolve conflicts and strive toward common goals.

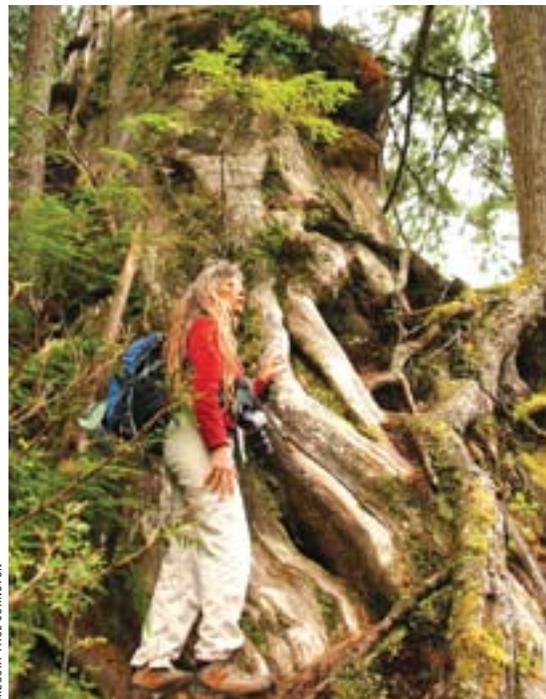
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*“The refuge manager who interacts with the Friends has to be a leader. There is a big difference between being a manager and being a leader and it has to do with vision. Charlie has a vision; the Friends have that vision; and the vision is in alignment with the purposes of the refuge.”*

Beverly Arnoldy, President, Friends of Willapa NWR

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Successful collaborations have a clearly stated vision, one that is written into the partners' governance agreements or bylaws. This ensures that everyone understands and agrees to the *same* vision. Or, stated another way, without a vision statement, separate self-interests can defeat collaborative interests.



GREGORY PAUL JOHNSTON

Teal Slough at Willapa Bay NWR in Washington



## Sharing Power

Power in a successful Friends/Refuge collaboration is *shared*, but this does not imply that it is *equal*. In their book *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, Michael Winer and Karen Ray (1994) write: “Power is always present and is never equal. However, in a collaboration we do not seek *equality*. Instead, we search for *equity*; we acknowledge and value the different types of power each person and organization bring to our joint effort.”

Shared power for the collaboration does *not* mean that Friends manage Refuges or that the Refuge manages the Friends. Indeed, when it comes to refuge management, the buck stops with the Refuge Manager, who holds the legal authority for ensuring refuge mandates set by the U.S. Congress are met. Likewise, the Friends board holds a legal responsibility for managing the organization according to nonprofit laws and regulations. The imbalance of power needs to be discussed openly—and not allowed to stop the group from developing a truly shared vision.

Shared power means that *everyone*—Friends members and Refuge management and staff alike—holds the responsibility for creating the vision and ensuring the success of the collaboration. There must be a commitment to shared goals, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility.

The ability to share power stems from a trusting relationship, an understanding that each of the collaboration’s members is committed to the Guiding Principles for the Friends/Refuge Relationship (Appendix A). As many have noted from past experience: “Empowerment means not simply that you have freedom to act; it also means you are accountable for results.” The stories at Black Bayou Lake and Willapa NWRs illustrate how building trust, having a vision, and sharing power can lead to amazing achievements. See these stories within this handbook and the advice offered by Mentors for more details on building a solid collaboration.

## Nurturing a Solid Collaboration: Mentor Advice

NWRS Friends Mentors have identified the following key ingredients to nurture a successful and sustainable Friends/Refuge collaboration:

### Refuge Manager Is Directly Involved in the Partnership

The manager serves as a leader and visionary—and sets the stage for the collaboration. The manager helps create a cooperative environment, engages the staff and shows Friends that they are valued partners. While a manager may sometimes necessarily delegate day-to-day projects to a staff member who acts as Friends liaison, the manager cannot delegate his or her leadership role. When the manager is not directly involved, it sends a message to the Friends and staff that the collaboration is not important. Charlie Blair, FWS Mentor and Manager of Maine Coastal Islands



FUCKER / JSLATER18

Trial signs at Quivira NWR



NWR Complex, advises: “Managers need to be involved—intensely. A bad start is worse than no start. It takes much more energy to recover from a bad start than to put the time in to make everything work well from the beginning.”

Mark Musaus, Manager of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR and FWS Mentor, agrees that a manager cannot delegate vision and leadership, but notes that once the relationship is well established, delegating certain responsibilities to staff (e.g., monthly meetings) can be a healthy step. He writes:

“I agree this is critical (for managers to attend every meeting and function) when a manager first comes on board and when starting up a Friends group. I believe this was a critical step in helping the Friends of A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR move from a Cooperating Association to a Friends group and to be successful. When they saw my belief in them and my support they responded accordingly. However, over the last couple of years I have handed over the monthly meeting participation to my deputy, for two reasons. One, I travel a good bit due to the complexity of the job and off site meetings. Secondly, it gives my deputy a chance to interact with the Board and for him to appreciate and know what the Board is doing. He fully speaks for me and makes decisions, so the board is not waiting to get back with me.

That said, I attend several board meetings a year, have contact throughout the month with the Friends President and make myself available for any discussions the board wants, or for critical decision making. I guess what I am saying is that I am still committed to the Friends and they know it. I just don’t attend every meeting.”

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*A key role of refuge managers is to provide vision and leadership to the Friends/Refuge collaboration.*

From an interview with Charlie Stenvall, Manager, Willapa NWR

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### **Refuge Staff Is Engaged in Collaboration**

In order for the Friends/Refuge collaboration to succeed, the relationship must be nurtured at all levels of each organization. Refuge staff spend a lot of time working with the Friends—on events, work projects, educational programs—everything that they do. Staff play key roles in making volunteers feel welcome and valued. By interacting with staff, Friends members learn about the refuge and begin to see resource management through their eyes. As staff members experience the direct benefits Friends bring to the refuge, they learn to value these contributions. This two-sided process builds mutual respect.

Dave Hilley, FWS Mentor and Manager at Quivira NWR, notes that when their Friends/Refuge collaboration began, the staff was worried: “what are they (the Friends) going to do?” Dave says he “never required staff to attend Friends activities, but asked if they would. They did, and everyone was professional. Staff saw how great it was and bought into it. Today staff spends a lot of time working with the Friends and see the value of it.”



### Be Educated About Each Other

Many partnership experts advise that, right from the start, the group needs to devote energy and time to developing mutual respect, understanding and trust. It all begins, they tell us, with simple, common courtesy: take time to learn about the others around the table—both the individuals and the organizations they represent.

From the outset, members of the Friends of Tennessee NWR recognized they needed to be better educated if they were to be effective “ambassadors” for the refuge. As a result one goal for their first year was as follows:

*Friends will have a clear understanding of the National Wildlife Refuge System and Tennessee NWR and how the Friends fit with the refuge. As a result, well-trained Friends Board members will be able to develop and deliver a clear and consistent message.*

To accomplish this goal, meeting agendas included staff member presentations. Board members have also attended national and regional Friends conferences. These efforts have helped build trust and strengthen the bonds between these partners. They are also preparing the Friends to become effective advocates and educators.

This type of education is critical to the Friends/Refuge collaboration, as NWRS Friends Mentor Molly Krival notes: “Lack of knowledge severely hampers the effectiveness of Friends and often leads to loss of goodwill.” She offers the following list of areas where Friends need to become educated.

Friends need to learn about or upgrade their understanding of:

- The entire Refuge System.
- The FWS, including Regional Offices and general offices of the Department of the Interior.
- Regulations governing how FWS staff work
- The ecosystems and wildlife locally and regionally
- How to intervene on behalf of refuge funding and regulations with decisionmakers
- How to become acquainted with their congressional representatives and be effective advocates.
- How local and state governments (Planning and Zoning in particular) can affect refuges.

It is equally important for Refuge managers and staff to learn about what it takes to develop and sustain a Friends organization. Gaining an understanding of such topics as volunteerism, membership development, nonprofit regulations, advocacy and Board development, will help the Refuge partner better support the growth of the Friends group.

### Clarify Goals, Roles and Expectations

In successful collaborations the partners clearly understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the group. These things have to be addressed and discussed directly, and not simply assumed. A letter of agreement can be valuable tool, spelling out the roles, rights and responsibility of each partner. This letter could also state the basic values and philosophy of the group.



It's important for Friends and Refuge partners to consider what they expect of each other in the relationship, what they want to achieve together, and what each partner's roles are. These discussions take time and need to be revisited regularly (i.e., as part of the annual planning process) and revised as appropriate.

It is also important to recognize, however, that sometimes members of the collaboration can become swept up in the excitement of doing—and to forget to take the time to have these discussions. The danger, in the long run, is increasing confusion about roles and expectations. This confusion could lead to mistrust and lost of respect, and it could ultimately damage the relationship.

Mentors highlight the importance of creating a written agreement to guide the collaboration. Many Friends organizations have agreements with the FWS that allow them to manage sales outlets on the refuge. This agreement should clearly define roles as they relate to the store, but might not define the relationship overall. To create a sustainable relationship, it is important to define the mission, vision and goals of the *overall* collaboration.

Curt Buchholtz, FWS Mentor and Executive Director of Rocky Mountain Nature Association, recommends creating a “best practices” document that sets the operation standards and establishes a basis for expectations. For an example, see the Rocky Mountain Nature Association's best practices document in Appendix B. These practices were designed for an institution that is larger than most Friends organizations; however, the document provides useful tips for assessing how the partnership is going.

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*“I don't have any secrets from my Friends. We have frank discussions and I don't hold anything back.”*

Charlie Stenvall, Manager, at Willapa NWR

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### Clarify Communication System

Good communication is the basis for building trust and understanding between Friends and Refuge partners. A “no secrets” policy is a critical element in creating trust and is part of the formula for good communication. Everyone needs to take responsibility for establishing a good system for communication and ensuring that the process is working well. Without a good system in place, the rumor mill will prevail and the relationship will deteriorate.

To facilitate good communications, NWRs Friends Mentors recommend locating Friends' offices in the Refuge Headquarters office. They also recommend having Friends members and Refuge managers and staff attend each other's meetings, whenever appropriate. The Friends/Refuge partners at Tennessee NWR have followed this advice and report very positive outcomes. In places where travel distances can create barriers to communications, tools such as e-mail and conference calls can effectively bridge the gap. In an extreme example, since Friends members live all around the country and the Refuge is so remote, the collaboration between Friends and FWS for Midway NWR and Friends of Alaska NWRs are managed almost exclusively through the telephone and e-mail.



### **Additional Resources**

The Fieldstone Alliance at [www.fieldstonealliance.org](http://www.fieldstonealliance.org) offers a wide array of tools and publications (for purchase and online viewing), including these excellent books:

Mattessich, Paul W., Murray-Close, Marta, Monsey, Barbara R. (2004). *Collaboration: What Makes it Work, 2nd Ed.* St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Ray, Karen (2002). *The Nimble Collaboration: Fine-Tuning Your Collaboration for Lasting Success.* St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Winner, Michael, Ray, Karen. (1994). *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey.* St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

### **Collaboration assessment tool**

*Assessing Your Collaboration: A Self Evaluation Tool* by Lynne M. Borden at [www.joe.org/joe/1999april/tt1.html](http://www.joe.org/joe/1999april/tt1.html)