

Kudos!

The National Wildlife Refuge Association has named the **Friends of Pool 9** (Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge) as this year's Friends of the Year and **Marie Springer** (Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge, NJ) as Volunteer of the Year.

Three years old and 400 members strong, the Friends of Pool 9 in Iowa are making a difference along their 31-mile stretch of the 261-mile Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The Friends' annual Pool Wide Clean-Up Day and Leave No Trace program serve to rid the refuge of trash. Each fall, their Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival brings more than 300 people to enjoy and invest in the region and in the refuge. The Friends also showcase the refuge for young people with programs such as The Mississippi River Adventure Day.

Volunteer Marie Springer logged more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time for Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey and the Refuge System. An artist and also a skilled researcher, Springer collected and documented more than 5,000 native bees and educated the public about the importance of Walkill Refuge's recently discovered endangered Indiana bat population. She has served as the president of Friends of Walkill River and has also been helpful at Supawna Meadows (NJ) and Shawangunk Grasslands (NJ) National Wildlife Refuges.