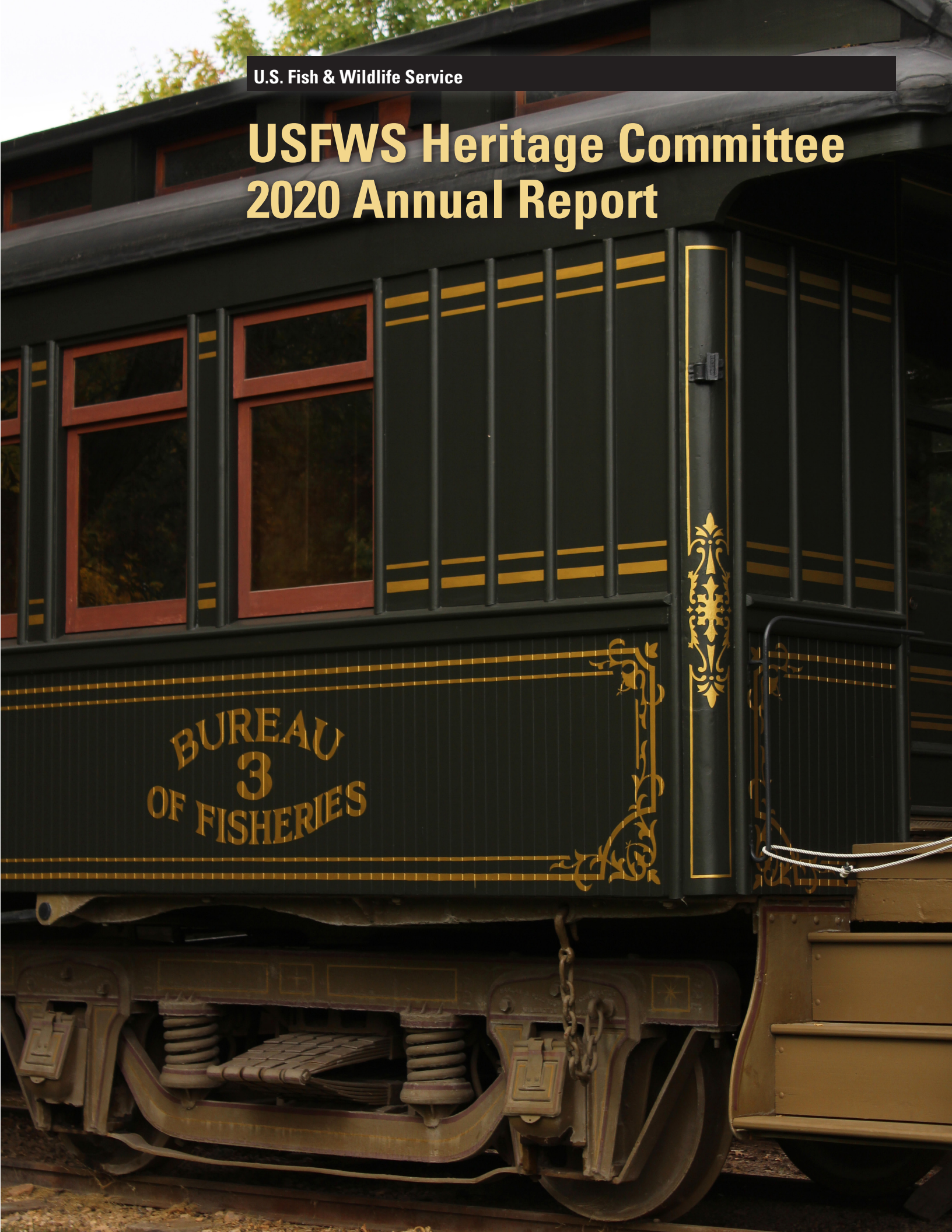


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# USFWS Heritage Committee 2020 Annual Report

BUREAU  
3  
OF FISHERIES





## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a long and proud tradition of overcoming challenges and adapting to unprecedented situations. There is no better example of this resilience than how we as an agency and as individuals faced and surmounted the challenges of this past year.

As you will read in this annual report from our Heritage Committee, this team of staff and retirees found a way to continue to make progress in three key areas.

The Oral History Subcommittee continued to collect recordings of Service retirees and partners, but this year they decided to focus some interviews on topical areas of Service history. This focus will aid future historians in understanding how certain programs evolved.

The Artifacts Subcommittee is developing traveling heritage education kits and helping National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) staff develop permanent artifact display cases for each regional office.

Lastly, the 150th Anniversary Subcommittee is driving the celebration of our Agency's sesquicentennial—tracing our roots from the first U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries founded in 1871.

I know you will enjoy reading this report and take a moment to reflect on our collective history. Be proud of your work and mindful of the legacy of fish and wildlife conservation you contribute to every day.

— Charlie Wooley,  
Regional Director,  
Great Lakes Region



# 2020 in Review

Your Heritage Committee had a productive year, despite challenges stemming from the pandemic. While unable to meet in person this year, we've been addressing agenda items during monthly video calls. The three subcommittees also met monthly. Here are their accomplishments.

## Oral History Program Accomplishments

### *Preserving Our Heritage through the Voices of Our People*

Anyone can nominate oral history candidates. These may be employees, retirees, friends, partners—anyone, in any job classification, at any level, who will share their story, who has a role in creating our history and conserving natural resources. Active duty or retired staff conduct and record interviews. NCTC transcribes interviews and uploads them to the [FWS Conservation Library](#). Since the Oral History Program began in 1999, we completed more than 1,500 interviews and more than 600 written transcripts. Conservation scholars from around the world use this resource to tell our environmental history. For more information about oral histories, visit the Oral History Project [page](#).

The Subcommittee coordinates the Program via monthly video calls, and we report regularly to the Heritage Committee and Board of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Association of Retired Employees (Association). The Association supports the Program with grant funds for oral history interviewer travel (for retirees), recording equipment purchase, and interview transcription.

The pandemic significantly reduced our ability to complete oral history

interviews in 2020. While we suspended in-person interviews, we completed some before the outbreak and some via telephone. In spite of the pandemic, we made progress in a number of areas. In 2020 we:

- Conducted a total of 11 individual and special project oral histories.
- Interviewed three former Secretaries of the Department of the Interior, after launching this effort in 2019 with an interview with Ken Salazar. In February 2020, we completed video interviews with Sally Jewell, Bruce Babbitt, and Dirk Kempthorne. We also interviewed former Service Director Jamie Clark. We will continue these efforts as opportunities arise.
- Initiated five special projects to capture the history of programs or topics through oral history interviews with personnel actively involved and to increase inclusion in our efforts to record our history. We plan to finalize candidate lists and interview questions and conduct interviews remotely, and when safe, via in-person panel interviews. These projects are:
  - Law Enforcement, including special agents and refuge officers;
  - River Basin program and projects;
  - Small Wetlands Acquisition Program;
  - Partners for Fish and Wildlife; and
  - Alaska Native tribal elders.

- Maintained two interview teams, in the North Atlantic-Appalachian

and Great Lakes regions. We plan to support additional regional teams to recruit and train more interviewers and increase interviewee recruitment.

■ Transcribed 13 oral histories.

■ Expedited the transcription process, to reduce the backlog, by (a) using Simon Says software that creates a first draft transcript from a recording for editing and (b) reimbursing volunteer transcribers for completing rough draft transcriptions—both for editing and cataloging by NCTC’s contracted transcriptionist. The Association funded these efforts through a grant.

## Artifacts Subcommittee Accomplishments

### *Every Field Station Has Its Story, Its Heritage*

The mission of the Artifacts Subcommittee is to engage active employees, retirees, and partners in preserving conservation history, consistent with Service policies. We:

1. **Identify** artifacts and collections found or based on Service lands, or Service artifacts found elsewhere, to aid in the preservation and continuation of the Service’s history and culture;
2. **Educate** on identifying what items may be considered historic so it’s known what to keep and care for on station or transfer to a Service collection;
3. **Advise** on proper cataloging, preservation, and curation of historic items retained at field stations;
4. **Serve** as a resource for field stations on proper in-house curatorial methods required for the preservation of items found on Service lands—using the

expertise of the Service’s main collections:

- USFWS Museum and Archives at the National Conservation Training Center,
- National Fish and Aquatic Conservation Archives at D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery,
- The National Wildlife Property Repository at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge,
- DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge’s Bertrand Collection.

5. **Inspire** use of objects (properly) in the field for education, outreach, or exhibit purposes to reach a wide range of visitors.

In 2020, the Artifacts Subcommittee focused on outreach. We’re developing these resources:

- Traveling heritage kits or trunks (5) with accompanying activity guides. The kits will include non-accessioned artifacts and inspire learning—about our conservation history.
- Temporary exhibit cases (9) for the use of field stations and offices to exhibit artifacts from Service collections, accompanied by Treasures of the Service pop-up displays (5).
- A Heritage Challenge. To engage Service employees, we are crafting a plan to solicit at least one iconic artifact and story from each region and program, which we may feature in upcoming Conservation History journals or otherwise promote.

The pandemic affected our progress, such as restricted access to artifacts to identify for the kits. However, other resources are available, including these online handouts and posters (scroll down on the Heritage Committee [page](#) or contact NCTC for printed posters at 304.876.7676 or [history@fws.gov](mailto:history@fws.gov)):

## FWS FUN FACT!

Maintenance worker Harry Sears could very well be the oldest Service employee. Stationed at [Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge](#), in Sudbury, Massachusetts, Harry worked right up until his passing, which was the day before his 91st birthday. Now that’s a lifelong career!



*Harry Sears, age 86, burying the Centennial Time Capsule at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.*

- Natural and Cultural Heritage—Curating Artifacts at Field Stations (handout)
- Think before you toss! Help Save U.S. Fish and Wildlife Historical Objects, Photos and Documents (poster)
- To Save or Not to Save (poster)



## 150th Anniversary Subcommittee Accomplishments

### *Celebrating our Sesquicentennial, 150 Years as the Oldest Federal Conservation Agency*

The ad hoc 150th Anniversary Subcommittee focused on developing support for field stations that wish to celebrate our sesquicentennial. Our agency dates back to February 9, 1871 with the creation of the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. The Commission became the origin point of the North American Model of Wildlife Management, which promotes public access to and use of sustainable wildlife resources—a success story achieved with partners including state agencies, sportsmen and women’s groups, and other conservation organizations. Through the decades, wildlife conservation has been an economic success story supporting tourism and recreation industries at the national, state, and local levels. In 2020 we:

- Designed a Challenge Coin for every Fish and Aquatic Conservation employee and for Heritage Committee outreach purposes.

- Released the 2020 FWS *Conservation History* journal, with its Women in Conservation theme.

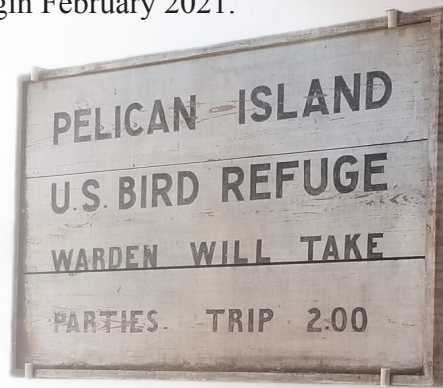
- Compiled elements of the 2021 FWS *Conservation History* journal, with its 150 Years of Conservation theme.

- Began developing a short film, working title: *Conserving our Wildlife Heritage: 150 Years of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*.

- Designed a 150th pop-up display to

produce (5) to ship/share for time-fixed events (additional displays available at requestor’s expense).

- Collected fun facts to support a 150 fun facts social media campaign, to begin February 2021.



- Designed and installed a new, permanent display in the Director’s hall in the Main Interior Building.

- Planned components of a 150th anniversary online toolkit (to include a film, a milestone map, a journal, a [www.conservationhistory.com](http://www.conservationhistory.com) portal link with timeline, and more).

- Began planning traveling heritage kits/trunks (5) for region/field use, which include toolkit contents.

In February 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Museum and Archives at the National Conservation Training Center began a complete renovation of its main museum gallery. The project, which provides for an enriched visitor experience, includes: replacing all of the original exhibits from 1997; adding several exhibit cases to house temporary, rotating exhibits; enhancing graphics, interpretive text, labels, and audiovisual elements; and presenting a more inclusive narrative of the Service’s 150 years. The work, which was interrupted by the closure of NCTC due to the pandemic, is scheduled for completion in early 2021.



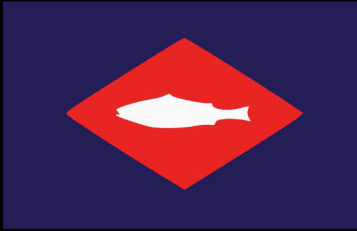
*Paul Kroegel’s Pelican Island Sign (above), which was donated to the Service by his granddaughter, is part of the new Pelican Island exhibit at the USFWS Museum at NCTC.*

USFWS

*New display in the Director’s Hall at the Main Interior Building (following page).*

USFWS

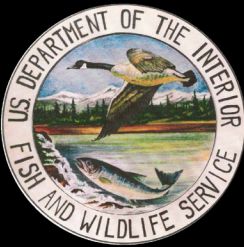
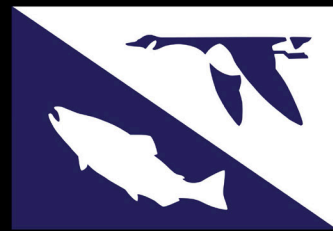




U.S. Fish Commission later Bureau of Fisheries 1871-1939



U.S. Biological Survey (1896-1939)



# U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

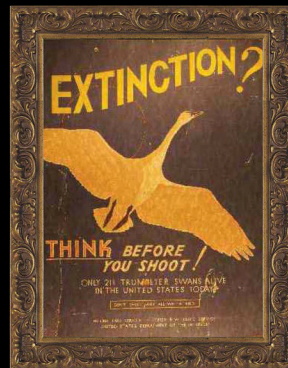


EST. 1871

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



Wildlife inspector with seized evidence



Trumpeter Swan Poster



Birding at a National Wildlife Refuge



Charlie Atkins at  
Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, Maine (est. 1889)



Herd of bison with Denver Skyline in background at  
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.



Hunting at Bear River  
Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah





*2020 Conservation History journal cover image  
artwork inspired by Shirley Briggs's photo of  
Rachel Carson at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.*



# On the Horizon for 2021

The Heritage Committee hopes to meet in person in 2021. Regardless, we will continue supporting our mission by:

- Supporting 150th anniversary celebrations by implementing the plans outlined above.
- Providing 150th anniversary talking points to leadership.
- Offering a series of public broadcasts with authors, filmmakers, and others on topics relevant to our history.
- Launching the Service's first conservation history course, *An Introduction to Preserving and Interpreting Heritage of the USFWS*, with oral history and artifact preservation practicums.
- Enhancing artifact preservation and oral history outreach, including social media (including #FWS Heritage and #Museum Monday).

■ Implementing additional strategies to significantly reduce the backlog of oral history interviews that need to be transcribed and uploaded online.

■ Prioritizing artifacts for acquisition.

■ Updating the Committee's strategic plan.

We will honor the 2020 USFWS Heritage Award winner at the next U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association reunion. The award is our agency's highest for recognizing historic preservation efforts. Past award winners have included Dale Hall, Jim Kurth, Douglas Brinkley, and other luminaries. Our 2020 awardee is Jerry Grover. An original member of the Heritage Committee, he has dedicated decades of service in support of the its mission. Jerry was also a founding member of a key partner, the Retirees Association, where he continues serving as Board Member Emeritus. Through his Association work, Jerry expanded the reach of the Heritage Committee, thanks to his unending commitment to the mission.



*Fish Car #3 Replica at D.C. Booth  
National Historical Hatchery.*



# Heritage Committee Members

As chartered, members represent our geographic regions and key positions including active and retired staff. The Service's Director appoints the Chair, and Regional Directors appoint their regional active and retired members.



## QUESTIONS?

*Heritage Committee members (left to right, front to back): Sandy Tucker, Maria Parisi, Cindy Uptegraft Barry, Eugene Marino, Linda Friar (former member), Peggy Hobbs, Deborah Holle, Nate Hawley, Libby Herland, Paul Tritaik, Dick Coon, John Cornely, Jerry Grover, Matt Perry, and Tom Worthington, photographed at the November 2019 Heritage Committee meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, in conjunction with the Association's retiree reunion.*

Please contact your regional Heritage Committee member, or contact the USFWS Historian at [history@fws.gov](mailto:history@fws.gov) or 304.876.7276, for questions or to request copies of Heritage Committee products. For additional information, see the Heritage Committee [page](#) and follow the “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History” and “National Conservation Training Center” Facebook pages and @USFWSHistory on Twitter.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History



National Conservation Training Center



@USFWS History



Role/Interior Region	Legacy Region	Committee Member	
Chair		Charles Wooley, Regional Director, Great Lakes Region	
R1	R5	Peggy Hobbs, Parker River NWR	Libby Herland*
R2, R4	R4	Vacant	Sandy Tucker*
R3	R3	Vacant	Tom Worthington*
R6, R7, R8	R2	Amber Zimmerman, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge	Deborah Holle*
R5, R7	R6	Nick Starzl, Gavins Point NFH	John Cornely*
R8, R10	R8	Vacant	Mendel Stewart*
R9, R12	R1	Vicki Finn, Science Applications	Cindy Uptegraft Barry*
R11	R7	Debbie Steen, Regional Office, Visitor Services	Debbie Corbett*
Headquarters	R9	Mark Madison, USFWS Historian	Mamie Parker*
At Large Retiree		Jerry Grover*, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association	
Ex-Officio	<i>National Conservation Training Center:</i> Steve Chase, Director Nate Hawley, Manager, Creative Resources Division Maria Parisi, Heritage and Partnerships Team Lead Steve Floray, Curator Alexandra Henry, Transcriptionist Jamie Stoner, Museum Archives Training Technician Randy Robinson, Instructional Systems Specialist		
	<i>Cultural Resources:</i> Eugene Marino, USFWS Federal Preservation Officer and National Curator		
	<i>D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives:</i> Carlos Martinez, Director April Gregory, Curator		
	<i>National Wildlife Property Repository:</i> Elisa Dahlberg, Wildlife Repository Specialist		
	<i>Research Emeriti:</i> Dr. Matthew C. Perry* Dr. Richard Coon*		
	<i>Fish and Aquatic Conservation:</i> Dave Miko, Division Chief, Programs Holly Richards, Outreach Specialist Bennie Williams, Fish Biologist, Communications and Partnerships		
	<i>National Wildlife Refuge System:</i> John Schmerfeld, Acting Division Chief, Visitor Services & Communications Paul Tritaik*, Project Leader, J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR Complex		
	Jim Kurth*		
	Dale Hall*		
	John Blankenship*		
Emeritus	Rick Bennett*		
	Patrick Leonard*		
*Retirees			

\*Retirees



**U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History**

<https://nctc.fws.gov/history/>

**304/876 7276**

**January 2021**



**Cover Image:**

*Fish Car #3 Replica at D.C. Booth  
National Historical Hatchery (2020).  
The Booth Society secured grants from  
the Outside of Deadwood Historic  
Preservation Fund and the U.S. Fish  
and Wildlife Retirees Association to  
repaint this fish car replica in 2020.*

APRIL GREGORY / USFWS