



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
National Conservation Training Center

USFWS History Committee

2024 Annual Report



Message from the Chair

As I present this annual report on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) History Committee's activities, I am awed by the scope of our work and by how motivating it is to reflect back on the lives and experiences of those who have contributed so much towards the mission of our agency.

For our annual meeting, the Committee met at the historic Murie Ranch near Jackson, Wyoming, where we were inspired by the lives and work of pioneering field biologist Olaus Murie and his wife Mardy. Their contributions to wildlife science, art, and American conservation are unmatched. We visited with past Service Director

John Turner and were humbled by his energy and continued passion for fish and wildlife, the people of the Service, and for his messages of encouragement. By learning about the leaders and innovators of our past, listening to their stories, and understanding their challenges, we can find inspiration and motivation that will help us all be more successful in achieving our shared mission for fish and wildlife conservation.

I invite you to enjoy this report and learn about the various History Committee activities. Here is a challenge for you: read one oral history transcript from

our extensive collection ([Oral History Transcripts](#)) and think about what lesson you can learn from their story. There is much to be proud of from our past, and certainly errors made that we must learn from.

Lastly, if you have an interest in Service and conservation history and want to learn more, contact your regional or office representative listed at the end of this report.

—Steven Chase, *Director,*
National Conservation Training Center

Cover: Bonefish (1971) featured in the *Bob Hines, National Wildlife Artist* exhibit in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Museum Google Arts & Culture collection.

Right: USFWS History Committee members in the Murie House living room, at the Murie Ranch near Jackson, WY, during the May 2024 annual meeting (left to right: April Gregory, Steve Floray, Elisa Dahlberg, Tayla Bahr, Amber Zimmerman, Steve Chase, Maria Parisi, Libby Herland, Vicki Finn, Peggy Hobbs, Mike Boylan, Paul Tritaik, Deborah Holle, Cindy Barry. *Tom Worthington*



2024 in Review

The 2024 annual meeting at the Murie Ranch was productive and enriching. We mourned Bennie Williams, a Committee member from Fish and Aquatic Conservation who passed away in 2024, as we began to explore developing a posthumous history hero award. While in Jackson, we expanded our partnership with the Teton Science School: we are working together to preserve and share the historic furnishings, art, specimens, photos, archival collections, and other artifacts in the Murie Collection.

As a great deal of work happens via subcommittees, we highlight their accomplishments here.

Oral History Subcommittee Accomplishments

Preserving our heritage through the voices of our people

We conduct oral history interviews, prepare and review draft transcripts, complete final transcripts, and make transcripts available to the public on the Service's [Oral History Transcripts](#) collection webpage.

- Conducted 29 oral history interviews, including with former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner.
- Transcribed 39 oral histories for interviewee review.
- Contracted with a part-time transcriptionist, thanks to support through the Association of Retired Fish and Wildlife Service Employees, to supplement NCTC's transcriptionist, resulting in 5 additional draft transcripts this year.

- Finalized 25 oral history transcriptions, to be uploaded to the oral history website, bringing the total number of completed oral histories to more than 600.
- Launched an online Oral History Collection and began migrating oral history transcripts to the new page.

For more information about the Oral History Program, please visit the [USFWS Oral History page](#).



**U.S.
Fish & Wildlife
Service**

**Oral
History
Program**



*Sharing
Our History
Through
the Voices of
Our People*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History Committee recognizes the rich history of the Service and the many contributions of employees, partners, and others to our mission. The Oral History Program seeks to record these stories for researchers and for future generations. Help us tell your stories!

Communications Subcommittee Accomplishments

Telling our stories

The purpose of the Communications Subcommittee is to share Service history in transparent, ethical, and relevant ways that promote thoughtful understanding of our agency's evolving mission to better meet contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Heading into 2024, our focus was on internal communication or inreach. Having synthesized an inreach communication problem-framing exercise, we prioritized and completed a [USFWS History Committee Member Position Description](#). This useful document informs active duty and retiree members and nominees about Committee roles and responsibilities.

At the annual History Committee meeting, we decided to incorporate education and outreach into the Communications Subcommittee, absorbing a need to continue these key functions of the now dissolved Artifacts Subcommittee.

USFWS Museum and Archives

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Museum and Archives, located at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), completed the renovation of its main exhibit gallery, just in time for the NCTC Open House in May. The new exhibits feature a number of the museum's recent acquisitions and the many different stories of the Service.

In addition to Service history, the exhibits illustrate important chapters in the ongoing story of American conservation and present, to our guests, important objects and artifacts of our history.

We work hard to build important relationships with those involved in the history and legacy of the Service. These relationships ensure that we can protect our history and tell our stories.

The museum completed two significant preservation projects this year: stabilization and treatment of Dr. Harry Walsh's punt gun, and cleaning and treatment of the Fallen Comrades statue. The work, which was carried out by museum conservators Amy Fernandez and Greg Byrne and their assistant Kalin Gregg, ensures the long-term preservation and protection of these important artifacts.

Dynamic online engagement opportunities opened up the USFWS Museum and Archives to an even broader audience. Two examples follow.

1. In August, we launched four online museum exhibits on the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Museum's Google Arts and Culture](#) site.
2. In December, we presented a highly successful "Live from the Archives" broadcast to the Coalition of Refuge.



Museum conservators Amy Fernandez and Greg Byrne, and their assistant Kalin Gregg, treating the Fallen Comrades Statue. *FWS*



USFWS Museum's new entrance. *FWS*

Wildlife Portraits for a Cause

Connect with species through the artwork behind the National Wildlife Federation's conservation stamps.



Journey Under the Sea-Wind with Wildlife Illustrations

Explore Bob Hines' illustrations for Rachel Carson's book *Under the Sea-Wind*.



The First Stewards

Three North American artists celebrate the recovery of wildlife central to their regions.



Bob Hines, National Wildlife Artist

A career sketch of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's renowned wildlife artist.



National Fish and Aquatic Conservation Archives and D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery

The Service's National Fish and Aquatic Conservation Archives (NFACA) collection collects, preserves, and shares the stories of the history, culture, management, resources, challenges, and successes of the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program. The artifacts and records—housed on the grounds of the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery in Spearfish, South Dakota—encompass the breadth and depth of its history, which goes back to 1871.

NFACA staff worked on the National Fish Hatchery Museum exhibit redesign project. Plans are to host a grand opening in June 2025. The hatchery and archives Friends group, the Booth Society, funded this \$700,000 project and contracted with an exhibit designer, has worked with closely for 4 years. Besides working on images and content, collection staff prepared 249 objects to go on display in the updated exhibits.

In 2024, NFACA staff also assisted local volunteer Roger Lessly with his project of recreating historically accurate chandeliers for the Fish Car #3. The full-size replica fish railcar is open for tours to the public from May through September and welcomes more than 35,000 people annually through its doors. The replica is based off the to-scale model of Fish Car #3, built in 1884 by the manufacturer. Lessly was instrumental in creating the full-size replica in the early 1990s. At age 84, he decided to build them, as it always bothered him that he never completed the chandeliers. Each of the 4 chandeliers has 274 component parts, many of which Lessly fabricated. A retired contractor and engineer, he created the chandeliers using NFACA photos. After 11 months of building them from scratch and 1,000 volunteer hours, they were installed in August.



National Fish & Aquatic Conservation Archives. FWS

2024 USFWS History Award Winner *Jerome S. "Jerry" Smith*

We're honoring Jerome S. "Jerry" Smith with the 2024 USFWS History Award. Jerry made a lot of history during his career with the Service—especially with law enforcement, endangered species, and international wildlife conservation—but it's Jerry's work on behalf of preserving law enforcement history that earned him this award.

After retiring in 1994, Jerry began organizing annual reunions of retired Division/Office of Law Enforcement staff. He has coordinated 26 annual reunions since 1997, interrupted only 1 year by the pandemic. Jerry has welcomed Oral History Subcommittee representatives to speak about the Service's History Committee work at reunions, and thanks to his enthusiastic support, more than 50 retired special agents and other law enforcement staff have conducted oral histories or indicated a willingness to do so. Beyond oral histories, partnering with Jerry has led to the preservation of newspaper and magazine articles and other artifacts. Additionally, Jerry shares stories from retirees and marks the passing of retired law enforcement staff in the "Scattergunning" newsletter that he writes.

The History Committee recognizes Jerry for engaging law enforcement retirees with other Service retiree efforts and associations, for writing a history of Service law enforcement that detailed changes in law enforcement based on the passage of various wildlife laws, and for his own oral history showcasing the evolution of the Service's law enforcement program. We'll thank Jerry, in person, in May at the retiree reunion in Madison, for his work preserving law enforcement history.



Jerry Smith aboard the Noordam in Alaska's Inside Passage, July 2024.
Libby Herland

On the Horizon for 2025



2024 History Committee members at National Elk Refuge (left to right, front to back): Steve Chase (Chair), Tom Worthington, Libby Herland, Vicki Finn, Mike Boylan, Peggy Hobbs, Maria Parisi, Amber Zimmerman, Deborah Holle, Elisa Dahlberg, Steve Floray, Tayla Bahr, Paul Tritaik, Cindy Barry, April Gregory. *FWS*

Oral History Subcommittee

As we continue collecting and sharing oral histories, we'll focus on three areas:

- Complete more transcripts and post all final transcripts in the new online Oral History Collection.
- Explore video interviewing. While in-person interviews are best, virtual interviews may expand our geographic reach and aid in scheduling timely interviews, especially with ill or elderly retirees.
- Finalize interviewer guidance. To reduce delays between interviews and finalizing transcript reviews, we'll disseminate updated guidance for interviewers to support them in their work.

Communications Subcommittee

We'll begin the year by developing a communications strategy that incorporates inreach to our people, outreach to the general public, and with academia as we strive to increase engagement in the complex stories of the Service that serve to connect the past and present.

History Committee Members

As stated in the Committee Charter, members represent geographic regions and key positions and include active-duty and retired representatives. The Service's Director appoints the Chair, Regional Directors appoint their regional active-duty representatives, and the Association identifies their retiree representatives.

Questions?

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



[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History](#)



[National Conservation Training Center](#)

Role/Region	2024 Committee Members	
Chair	Steve Chase, Director, National Conservation Training Center	
R1	Cheri Anderson, Columbia River Gorge National Fish Hatchery Complex	Vicki Finn*
R2	Amber Zimmerman, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge	Deborah Holle*
R3	Lynn Cartmell, Visitor Services Chief	Tom Worthington*
R4	Ernie Clarke, Gulf Restoration Office	Paul Tritaik*
R5	Peggy Hobbs, Parker River National Wildlife Refuge	Libby Herland*
R6	Josh Homer, Leadville National Fish Hatchery	Vacant
R7	Vacant	Mike Boylan*
R8	Alexandra Pitts, Leadership and Employee Engagement	Mendel Stewart*
Headquarters	Mark Madison, USFWS Historian	Mamie Parker*
At-Large Retiree	Cindy Uptegraft Barry*	
Ex-Officio	<i>National Conservation Training Center:</i> Nate Hawley, Manager, Creative Resources Division Maria Parisi, Partnerships Team Lead Steve Floray, Curator Adriana González Martínez, Partnerships Training Technician Alexandra Henry, Oral History Project Manager Jamie Stoner, Museum Archives Training Technician	
	<i>Cultural Resources:</i> Eugene Marino, Cultural Resources Jasmine Heckman, National Curator and Headquarters NAGPRA Lead	
	<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, Collections Manager	

*Retirees



National Elk Refuge. FWS

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

[*https://fws.gov/history-of-fws*](https://fws.gov/history-of-fws)

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February 2025