U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fall 2011

Fish & Wildlife News

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Editors' Note: Publication of this edition of *Fish & Wildlife News* was delayed in order to include coverage of the National Wildlife Refuge System's **Vision Conference**.

On the cover: *Fall cypress trees in Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi.*

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Relevant, Resilient and Relentlessly Focused:

The Future of the Service

Throughout its history, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been successful because it has been relevant, resilient and relentlessly focused on the resource. Through two world wars, the Great Depression and the transformation of American society in the postwar years, we have continually remade our agency to respond to changing conservation challenges.

Now, the global challenges we face, as well as the current economic climate in which we operate, demand that we again reinvent our organization to realize the vision I strongly believe we all share for the Fish and Wildlife Service — to become an increasingly effective, relevant, science-driven organization that will accomplish the Service's mission as never before.

When I speak about making our organization relevant, I mean several things. First, we need to recognize that America is changing — becoming more urban, more diverse, and less physically connected to the outdoors. As a result, it is increasingly difficult for many Americans to understand why conservation is relevant to their lives. They need to feel that what we do affects them personally — whether it's by providing recreational opportunities, or by demonstrating the connection between healthy wildlife habitat and a healthy economy.

Relevancy is also tied to our efforts to make the Service, and its culture, more inclusive and diverse. We must change with America by bringing new voices and ideas into the agency and finding new ways to reach out to nontraditional audiences.

We must increase our focus on resources by setting clear biological priorities and pursuing them relentlessly, by putting our resources where the science tells us they will do the most good. We must have the greatest impact possible — which requires us to leverage our resources and work with state agencies and other key partners.

We must continue to develop and employ the Service's science capacity, making resource management decisions driven by the best available scientific information. In order to accomplish that, we will invest in the expertise of our employees and build shared science capacities with our partners in a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

This vision will be reflected in our budget, in the work we do and in our training programs. You will hear more in the coming months about how we are beginning to take a strategic approach to the Service budget, linking funding decisions to explicit biological outcomes, and identifying representative species that we believe will be the best indicators of these outcomes.

The Conserving the Future document, which Secretary Salazar and I signed at Pelican Island a few weeks ago, envisions a refuge system transformed by these principles. The vision it sets forth, which you can read about in this issue, will help us create an increasingly relevant, resilient and focused refuge system.

Secretary Salazar shares our vision and is challenging us to breathe new life and vision into landscape conservation. He knows, as do we, that our best work often occurs where the Service is the catalyst for conservation work on a broader scale than we could accomplish working individually. Projects like the Dakota Grasslands and Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Areas, and the proposed new Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area are the centerpieces of the Secretary's vision for America's Great Outdoors, and its emphasis on partnership-driven conservation.

The largest barrier to this transformation is our own past success. Many will point to this success and ask, "Why do we need to change?" We must change because America itself is changing. As Rachel Carson once wrote, "Like the resource it seeks to protect, wildlife conservation must be dynamic, changing as conditions change, seeking always to become more effective."

And I'll end with one more quote, this one from Mother Teresa: "Life is a challenge. Meet it." I intend to, and if history is any window to the future, so will the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Catalyzing Bird Conservation: The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

Earlier this year, the Service awarded more than $4.3 million in grants for projects supporting neotropical migratory bird conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere, funded under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

Matched by more than $15.1 million in additional funds from partners, the projects will support habitat restoration, environmental education, population monitoring and other activities within the ranges of neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Mexico and 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Neotropical migratory birds breed in Canada and the United States during summer and spend the winter in Mexico, Central America, South America or the Caribbean islands. The more than 340 species of neotropical migratory birds include plovers, terns, hawks, cranes, warblers and sparrows. The populations of many of these birds are presently in decline, and several species are currently protected as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 — or Neotrop Act — established a matching grants program to fund projects promoting neotropical migratory bird conservation in the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean. Funds may be used to protect, research, monitor and manage bird populations and habitat, as well as to conduct law enforcement and community outreach and education. By law, at least 75 percent of the money goes to projects in Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada, while the remaining 25 percent goes to projects in the United States.

Among the projects that received fiscal year 2011 grants is the U.S.-Mexico Grasslands Conservation Project, the longest-running Act-funded initiative. This partnership has leveraged more than $2.1 million in grants with nearly $7 million in partner matches to support habitat protection and bird population recovery efforts on tens of thousands of acres from the Rocky Mountain Front to the Chihuahua desert.

Results of the U.S.-Mexico Grasslands partnership include:

- Long-term wintering bird research and monitoring to develop the first population baseline for birds in regional Chihuahuan grasslands.
- Community outreach, including demonstration grazing projects and workshops, to train biologists and give livestock producers, range managers and conservationists the tools they need to enhance habitat for grassland birds.
- New public-private alliances that focus on grasslands conservation research and monitoring and growing the conservation capacity of partners.

With the most recent grant, partners will conduct grassland bird research and monitoring in Mexico to inform conservation and management of high-priority wintering grassland bird species. They also will conduct training in Mexico to build local capacity for grassland bird conservation and in Colorado to educate students and teachers about grassland birds and habitat.

USFWS

ANIBAL PARERA / BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

(Below) The Neotropical Act grant helps to conserve the Southern Cone region's grasslands. (Right) Brewers sparrows are among the more than 300 bird species that benefit from grants made through the Act.

Another long-running and successful Neotrop Act-funded project is the Southern Cone Grasslands Alliance, which has united farmers, researchers, conservationists, rural and urban residents, and government agencies to conserve critical and increasingly threatened grassland habitat in South America.

More than $633,000 in Neotrop Act funding and $2.6 million in partner contributions have supported this large-scale, multi-national initiative. Partnership accomplishments include:

- Best management practices that show private landowners how to help conserve the region's grasslands.

- Landowner incentives funded with a $750,000 donation from the Inter-American Development.

- Bank for farmers and cattle ranchers who conserve grasslands habitats.

- Demonstration sites, toolkits, forums for landowners and community outreach that increase the number of ranchers and other agricultural producers who support and promote "biodiversity friendly" land management practices.

For more information on the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, go to <www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/index.shtm>. □

RACHEL F. LEVIN, Migratory Bird Program, Washington Office

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds Successfully Obligated by the Service



(Left): Willapa NWR YCC crew members dig a hole for a new art installation on the Salmon Trail at Refuge Headquarters. (Middle): New energy efficient administrative and visitor center for the Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex at the Assabet River refuge in Sudbury, Mass. (Right): The Service is using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funds to construct and install tornado shelters at refuges in the Mountain-Prairie Region.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service met its goals for obligating funds received as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The U.S. Department of the Interior received $3 billion in ARRA funding when President Barack Obama signed the legislation into law in February of 2009. Of that amount $280 million went to the Service. All of this funding has been distributed to contractors, which resulted in employment for numerous construction workers, additional laborers, as well as wildlife and habitat conservation internships for college students.

"Putting people back to work and supporting nature conservation are our primary goals for the Recovery Act," said the Service's Director Dan Ashe. "We are thankful to see local communities and businesses thriving as the result of stimulus dollars," he said.

All 719 of the Service's ARRA projects have been awarded to private contractors and other entities. The projects include critical infrastructure improvements and repairs, habitat restoration, energy efficiency and renewable energy. The work has proven to be a win-win situation for the Service and communities across America.

"The stimulus contract means survival for our business and our lives," said Craig Joiner of Joiner Construction whose California small business received ARRA funds to restore the Big Bear Flat in the Sacramento River. "We worked with other contractors, too. So our small community benefited a great deal from the work," Joiner said.

ARRA funds have increased youth employment across the country, giving college students a chance to use their education in a professional environment. "Thanks to the Recovery Act I was allowed the opportunity of joining the External Affairs Office of the Service," said Mike Gardner who worked as an intern in the Northeast regional office. "It has been a rare and invaluable experience," he said.

"We look forward to continued job creation and infrastructure development through ARRA. From local contractors to Service workers across this nation, the dedicated team effort to help stimulate our nation's economy is benefiting people and wildlife," said Ashe.

For a full list of funded projects nationwide, go to the Department's Recovery Website at <recovery.doi.gov> and click on the Service's logo for a list of projects. Secretary Salazar has pledged unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Department of the Interior's economic recovery projects.

The public will be able to follow the progress of each project on the recovery Website, which will include an interactive map for tracking where and how the recovery dollars are being spent. □

KIM BETTON, Office of Public Affairs, Washington Office

HALEY RAUCH, Intern, also contributed to this article.

The Service's Strategic Plan for International Conservation

Global issues are integral to our effectiveness in wildlife conservation and management. Many foreign species are valuable to the American public for the contributions they make to clean air, clean water and other features we all depend on — and for their intrinsic value. Migratory species in particular must be conserved outside domestic borders if we are to continue to enjoy their presence here at home. Far-ranging issues such as wildlife diseases, habitat destruction, invasive species and climate change have both global drivers and global impacts. And our own actions and demands on resources can have significant impacts on habitats across the globe.

Last year, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service launched an initiative to develop a Strategic Plan for the Service's international conservation activities over the next 10 years (2012–2022). The Director asked the International Affairs program to lead this initiative. This will be the Service's first strategic plan covering all these activities. It will lay out goals and strategies to achieve success and coordination throughout the agency.

During the first year of the international conservation strategic planning process (Phase I), we sought to gather input from a wide variety of stakeholders. Through in-person focus groups, stakeholder meetings and online feedback forms, more than 70 organizations and individuals provided responses to structured questions designed to identify international conservation threats, priorities and potential actions. The meetings and online forms engaged all Service Regions and the Washington Office, other federal and state agencies, tribes, and members of the conservation community.

We have analyzed the input from Phase I, categorized around 22 central themes — each with a key message to incorporate in the strategic plan. This comprehensive feedback analysis is available for all Service employees via the international conservation strategic planning SharePoint Website at: <sharepoint.fws.net/Programs/IA/Planning/default.aspx>.

Building from the stakeholder input and internal planning exercises, International Affairs has developed a vision, a mission, goals and a structure for the international conservation strategic plan. We are now in the most difficult part of the planning process: drafting the language and design of the plan (Phase II).

All Regions and Programs were asked to incorporate their international strategies, objectives and activities into draft language for the strategic plan.

International Affairs is now working to put this language together into a cohesive format for the plan. Focus groups in every Service Region and the Washington Office emphasized the need to coordinate and share activities and ideas on international conservation within the Service. With your help, we hope to increase our collaboration across the Service on international issues.

Whether you were a participant in one of our focus groups last year, or are just learning of this effort, we continue to welcome your input. Seek out the point of contact in your Region or Program for more information. Check in with us on SharePoint to read the Phase I input analysis, and provide direct feedback through our SharePoint discussion threads.

Phase III of the strategic planning process will involve a Service-wide review of the draft and finalizing the plan. After compiling plan components from Phase II, the draft will be made available for review online. All Service employees will have a special 60-day review period via SharePoint before the plan is distributed to the public for review. We want you to make this your plan, and we encourage you to read and comment on the draft. If you would like to be added to the international conservation strategic planning e-mail list and receive important updates about the plan's progress, please contact Rachel Penrod at <rachel_penrod@fws.gov>.

We are excited to develop the first Service-wide strategic plan to guide our international projects and programs, and we appreciate all of the input received so far. Together, we can have a global impact for wildlife conservation. □

RACHEL PENROD, Division of International Conservation, Washington Office

Focus groups met across the country in 2010 to brainstorm key conservation threats and actions for the International Conservation Strategic Plan.

Service Launches National Survey On Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program has launched the 12th National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. The survey supports information for the only comprehensive statistical database available on participation and expenditures for hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching in all 50 states. As part of the survey, the U.S. Census Bureau will contact 53,000 households across America, primarily through telephone interviews.

"The last survey published in 2006 revealed 87.5 million Americans enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation and spent more than $122.3 billion pursuing their activities," said Hannibal Bolton, assistant director for the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program. "The survey is a critical information resource for federal and state wildlife agencies, outdoor and tourist industries, local governments, planners, conservation groups, journalists and others interested in wildlife and outdoor recreation."

The interviews began in April and ran through June. A second round took place from September to October in 2011, followed by the final wave in January to March in 2012. Those contacted will be asked about their participation and expenditures in several categories of wildlife-associated recreation. The survey is strictly voluntary, confidential and selections are based on a scientifically derived method to assure an unbiased representative sample of all U.S. households. Data collected is used for statistical purposes only and no participant can be identified from information contained in the database and follow-up reports.

"Based on the household information, the Census Bureau will select a representative sample of 19,000 sportspersons (anglers and hunters) and a sample of 10,000 wildlife watchers (observers, photographers, and feeders) for detailed interviews about their participation and expenditures during 2011," said Sylvia Cabrera, the Service's Chief of National Survey. "Therefore, these samples cannot be comprised of individuals asking to participate in the survey. For those individuals who are selected, we greatly appreciate their participation."

Preliminary findings of this year's survey will be available in the spring of 2012. The survey's results will be available in a national report and in 50 individual state reports. Final reports will be issued beginning in the fall of 2012. The reports, when completed, will be posted at <www.wsfrprograms.fws.gov>.

The survey is funded by the Multistate Conservation Grant Program authorized by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000. □

KIM BETTON, Office of Public Affairs, Washington Office

The Service's last survey in 2006 revealed **$87.5** million Americans enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation and spent more than **$122.3** billion in the process.

Representative samples will be derived from initial contacts with **19,000** anglers and hunters, and **10,000** wildlife watchers.

GIRL WITH SIGN: JENNIFER JEWETT / USFWS TOAD: ROGER SMITH / FLICKR

COLLABORATE

CONNECT

Puddles, the refuge mascot, helps edit video footage from the conference.

GUIDE

NICK NUKAUSKAS / USFWS

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, left; then-Refuge Chief Greg Siekeniec; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, right, were among those who spoke at the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

HONOR THE PAST

Conserving the Future *Conference Engages Thousands in Madison and Far Beyond*

by MARTHA NUDEL

That theme — honoring the past, planning for the future — permeated the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin, as 1,100 participants came together — and many more tuned in virtually — for the July 11–14 *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference, where an invigorated vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System was ratified.

The conference was the culmination of more than a year of deliberations, planning, online and face-to-face discussions, the submission of 239 bold ideas online, and thousands of comments and votes about the future of the 150-million-acre Refuge System.

The *Conserving the Future* vision underscores the importance of building and expanding partnerships — working together with other federal agencies, states, tribes, conservation organizations and citizens.

And not since the *Fulfilling the Promise* conference in Keystone, Colorado, in 1998 had such a broad cross-section of stakeholders — from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees and representatives of state departments of natural resources to Refuge Friends, sportsmen, wildlife enthusiasts and partners — determined the future direction of the nation's premier network of public lands devoted to wildlife conservation. For the first time in Refuge System history, much of the discussion took place online and on such social media sites as Facebook and Twitter.

The conference was one of the "greenest" in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's history. It was held in a facility that has won accolades for its environmental design. In addition, the Service worked with The Conservation Fund's "Go Zero" program to offset the carbon created in traveling to the conference — and around Madison — by reforesting areas in the Lower Mississippi Valley. The conference also provided attendees with tools and information to help them change their own communities, including information on renewal energy projects nationwide.

In addition to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, four nationally acclaimed **>>**

Inside **Spotlight...**

(Above right) Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin, helped make the conference one of the "greenest" in the history of the Service.

Plan for the Future, continued from page 7

figures from divergent backgrounds were among the major speakers. Retired Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen, national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, spoke on the issue of leadership. Rice University history professor and author Douglas Brinkley, who recently wrote *The Quiet World: Saving Alaska's Wilderness Kingdom*, called the Refuge System a national treasure. The challenge, he said, is to make others understand. "If I tell my regular buddies in Ohio that I want to save the whooping crane, they laugh at me. If I show them whooping cranes and how majestic they are, they say, 'We've got to save them.' "

Dr. Sylvia Earle, a former chief scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, now a National Geographic explorer-in-residence, charged listeners to do more to conserve the earth's great oceans, whose wildlife resources, she said, are being extracted at "alarming" and unsustainable rates. "We have to understand there are limits to what we can extract from wildlife that keeps us alive," she said.

National Geographic photographer Dewitt Jones wowed attendees with a slideshow of winning shots from his photographic career, in which he learned there's "more than one right answer." The key to photography — and much of life, Jones told listeners, is improving your technique, putting yourself in the right place and being open to new possibility.

Jane Goodall, the world's foremost expert on chimpanzees, sent a video message. Attendees also saw a video of Nina Leopold daughter of conservationist and author Aldo Leopold, made before her death in May at age 93. Aldo Leopold was the first professor of game management at the University of Wisconsin/Madison. He helped develop the field of environmental ethics and recorded sharp, almost poetic observations of the natural world.

The lecture series offered opportunities to hear nine presenters, including Brinkley and Majora Carter, host of "The Promised Land," a public radio show that has won a Peabody Award. She founded the non-profit environmental justice solutions corporation, Sustainable South Bronx, in 2001.

Workshops brought into sharp focus such leading issues as the role of national wildlife refuges within Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, which are applied science partnerships; the use of volunteers; youth sportsmen; green tools for wildlife refuges; citizen science; and building successful partnerships with private landowners, among others.

Cutting-edge technology engaged participants thousands of miles away from Madison. During the conference, live streaming video was aired on the *Conserving the Future* Website, <www.AmericasWildlife.org>, where Service personnel, Refuge Friends and individuals across the nation submitted questions remotely as speakers also took questions from the floor. Online daily news feeds were produced by teams of Service employees who acted as roaming journalists — writing stories, interviewing participants and creating on-the-spot videos. Social media writers brought news from the conference to Facebook and Twitter sites. Photos were posted regularly on Flickr.

Youth engagement was a hallmark of the conference. About 20 students — brought to the conference through a nationwide nomination process — reported on what they saw and heard.

"Ratification of the vision, which was open to public comment for about 60 days, was a major goal of the conference," said Service Deputy Director Greg Siekaniec. "But it was not the only objective.

"We feel certain that people who attended the conference — and joined us from every corner of the nation — stand ready to make the vision a reality. They will take the conversations we started online into their own neighborhoods to energize people who never before thought of themselves as conservationists." □

MARTHA NUDEL, Division of Visitor Services and Communications, National Wildlife Refuge System, Washington Office

A Few Choice Words

The full *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* vision is available online at <www.americaswildlife.org>. To get a flavor for both the writing and the concepts that drove the conservation conversation nationwide, consider these excerpts:

> **The scale of issues and challenges we face is unprecedented and impacts us all**; no single entity has the resources necessary to address these challenges on its own...

> **In the past, we focused largely on what happened within refuge boundaries**, in isolation from the landscapes around them. Today, we realize we must view and manage refuge lands as pieces of fabric woven into a landscape-level tapestry of conservation...

> **Though nature may seem farther away, and we struggle to explain the mystery of its benefits**, Americans agree that time in nature is vital to our health and mental well-being...

> **Though our fundamental mission is wildlife conservation**, we recognize that to be successful we must inspire the American people...

> **We must actively encourage and provide new opportunities for people** of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature...

Next Step: Implementation

Passion speeds the process

Implementation of the Refuge System's *Conserving the Future* vision is on the fast track. Charters have been written for each of the three teams established by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe when he closed the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference July 14.

Those teams will focus on strategically growing the Refuge System, fleshing out details of an urban wildlife refuge initiative and developing the next generation of Refuge System leaders. The third team—the Leadership Development Council—was charged by Ashe to build on the successful approach used to implement the leadership goals of *Fulfilling the Promise,* the previous guiding vision of the Refuge System.

JANE PELLICCIOTTO

The ratified vision calls for an urban wildlife refuge initiative to bring Refuge System programs into at least 10 cities in the near future. Some national wildlife refuges—like Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge near Portland, Oregon —already serve urban populations.

Fast-track implementation is happening because of a passion for progress evident throughout the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference, July 11–14 in Madison, Wisconsin. Perhaps no one summarized the passion for conservation more succinctly than historian and writer Douglas Brinkley, who declared, "If I wasn't a professor, I would want to be like you because of the integrity of the Fish and Wildlife Service. You undertake this as a spiritual mission."

Now the Work Begins

Overall implementation of the *Conserving the Future* vision will be the work of the Executive Implementation Council, chaired by the chief of the Refuge System and supported by the Refuge System Leadership Team, and a council coordinator, a full-time position within the Refuge System. Other deadlines are:

- A refined and final vision document was released during Secretary Salazar's visit October 20 to Pelican Island, the first national wildlife refuge.

- The *Conserving the Future* charter, signed by Ashe, calls for developing an overall implementation strategy within 90 days of the vision document's publication. The strategy will identify teams or individuals tasked with implementing the document's 24 recommendations—and deadlines to get them done.

- The *Conserving the Future* vision will be largely implemented within the next five years, according to the charter.

In chartering the strategic growth team, Ashe noted during his closing conference remarks, "We need a rapid, top-to-bottom review of current land acquisition projects. We need clear priorities and biological objectives in order to decide how many new projects we can take on and how to select them."

Calling the urban wildlife refuge initiative "exciting and innovative," Ashe said: "There are many important wildlife and habitat management challenges in our vision for conserving the future. We will not succeed in these endeavors unless we have strong support from a connected conservation constituency. *People* must be a key component in our conservation strategy."

The initiative seeks to identify successful strategies of national wildlife refuges near cities like Denver, Minneapolis, San Francisco, New Orleans and Portland as the Refuge System works to expand programs in at least 10 cities in the next few years.

Those who didn't tune into the virtual conference have a chance to relive the excitement by reading stories on the Newswire or watching videos available on <www.Americaswildlife.org>. □

MARTHA NUDEL, Division of Visitor Services and Communications, National Wildlife Refuge System, Washington Office

Thinking Big

Bold ideas lead to visionary document

Nearly 240 bold ideas were put forth, and they gathered more than 10,000 comments. Over a 60-day public comment period last spring, the *Conserving the Future* draft vision document garnered 9,500 comments online at <www.AmericasWildlife.org> or via e-mail. Little wonder, then, that the vision document for the National Wildlife Refuge System has changed dramatically from its iteration months ago.

The document contains 24 recommendations — compared with almost 100 earlier — and makes clear ties to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. It is organized around several broad concepts, including strategic growth; science; conservation planning and management; increasing a conservation constituency; and enhancing leadership opportunities for employees and potential employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Building on *Fulfilling the Promise*, the guiding document adopted in 1998, the new vision stresses that the Refuge System will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife cons-ervation, providing an enduring legacy of healthy lands and waters managed in accordance with a 21st-century adaption of Aldo Leopold's land ethic.

It notes that the Refuge System, in carrying out its "wildlife first" mission, must use a scientific, landscape-level approach that focuses on environmental stressors to protect, restore and manage conservation lands and waters.

At the same time, the document recommends that landscape-scale habitat management be strengthened by an approach that leverages resources through partnerships with other government agencies, conservation groups and private landowners.

The vision document emphasizes that the Refuge System will continue to grow strategically by protecting ecosystems in concert with the efforts of conservation partners. The overriding vision establishes that national wildlife refuges are valued elements of local communities, cherished places for people to connect with nature, and to learn about and assist in conservation stewardship.

NICK ZUSKAUSKAS

Sharing the vision with the next generation. The *Conserving the Future* conference brought a contingent of 20 young people — selected from across the country — to participate in all aspects of vision setting. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, along with many top managers of the Service and the Refuge System, held a 90-minute workshop designed specifically to get their views and to introduce a new generation to the idea of a career in wildlife conservation.

"The vision that was ratified in Madison is vastly different than earlier versions — and that's in direct response to the comments we heard," said Cynthia Martinez, chief of the Refuge System Division of Visitor Services and Communications. "We heard that the draft document was too long, that its 98 recommendations were far too many, and that many of the recommendations were not visionary, but rather implementation steps. So we brought the vision document to the visionary level — to that 30,000-foot level of broad concepts that will truly guide the Refuge System for the next decade or so."

The document:

- **Envisions that every wildlife refuge fully implement the principles** of adaptive management. The Refuge System recently established a national program to inventory and monitor wildlife and habitats with the goal of providing baseline information and informing planning and management decisions.

- **Seeks improved communications to inform Americans about** the benefits of the Refuge System's conservation mission.

- **Envisions a day when every wildlife refuge** or refuge complex has a community partner. Today, 230 Refuge Friends organizations exist nationwide to work on behalf of individual refuges or, in the case of Alaska, for refuges statewide.

- **Recommends development of an urban wildlife refuge initiative** to spread the types of excellent work done at urban refuges like Minnesota Valley or Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuges to 10 new cities.

The final vision document is scheduled to be available in mid-October at <www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision>. □

MARTHA NUDEL, Division of Visitor Services and Communications, National Wildlife Refuge System, Washington Office

Awe and Inspiration

A team of 400 colleagues crafts the initial vision... and inspires one another along the way

by KAREN LEGGETT

Angler and author James Prosek said that preserving the diversity of fish and other wildlife is to "preserve the sources of our awe and inspiration." That is precisely what national wildlife refuges are meant to do and what an invigorated vision should enable them to do better in the years ahead.

The notion of preserving wildlife and wild lands as a source of awe and inspiration motivated me and perhaps many U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees — 400 of us — to nominate ourselves to be on a core team, charged with drafting the first ideas and versions of a new vision to guide the Refuge System for the next decade or so. *Fulfilling the Promise: the National Wildlife Refuge System* guided much of the Refuge System's work since 1999, but today, as former Refuge Chief Greg Siekaniec noted, "new perspectives are needed to meet emerging challenges."

Each of five core teams had 12 to 15 members: Conservation Planning and Design; Conservation Delivery; Inventory, Monitoring and Science; Relevance to a Changing America; and Leadership and Organizational Excellence. I was struck by the diversity of our relevance team — younger people relatively new to the Refuge System alongside those who had helped draft *Fulfilling the Promise*, Service employees with expertise in endangered species, coastal programs, construction, visitor services, environmental education and refuge management.

We all learned how to "raise our hands" and engage in spirited but collegial discussions during our weekly web-based conference calls. Every issue that would later generate comment on the *Conserving the Future* Website — such as diversity among staff and visitors, an urban presence, a marketing campaign for the Refuge System, more flexible interpretation of the Appropriate Use policy — received much debate among core team members. Yet there was overarching agreement on the principle stated by essayist Curt Meine that "the land ethic will need to embrace, and be embraced by, new constituencies." We were constantly searching for ever bolder ways to engage those new constituencies while upholding the primacy of the Refuge System mission to protect wildlife and habitat.

Although we had been told not to worry too much about "wordsmithing" our recommendations, we did precisely that, and then expressed both angst and appreciation with each new version of the document. We combed through online comments and bold ideas, suggested modifications and generated a significant list of useful ways to implement recommendations.

NEAL MCLAIN

Five core teams, each with 12–15 members, conceptualized the vision that was ratified at the conference in Madison, Wisconsin. Here, conference participants walk to the Monona Terrace Community and Conference Center, with the Wisconsin capitol dome in the background.

The relevancy team — like most others — held only two meetings in person to reduce our carbon footprint. Intense conversation and shared food — Wellington chocolates, Alaskan moose jerky and a homemade vegetarian feast — cemented relations that are sure to prove valuable long after a new vision is printed.

The 14 months from core team announcement to *Conserving the Future* conference proceeded with integrity, vitality, and, yes, serendipity. The vision launched at the conference will be the Refuge System's contribution, at this moment in time, to the social evolution of a land ethic and a continuing ability to preserve the sources of awe and inspiration. □

KAREN LEGGETT, Refuge System Branch of Communications, was a member of the Relevancy Core Team.

Many Hands Make Light[er] Work

The voices of partners explain why, more than ever, no one can do it alone.

by EVAN HIRSCHE

A new vision for the Refuge System could not have been accomplished without the involvement and input of partners. National and local partners played a vital role in *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*. In submitting ideas through the Website, <AmericasWildlife.org>, and other venues, many of these partners — including sportsmen, environmentalists and local Friends organizations — emphasized in their comments the evolving nature of conservation and the need to collaborate for better conservation success.

America has changed significantly in the past 100 years, and issues like global climate change will continue to threaten biodiversity and challenge conservation professionals for decades. This is happening at a time when federal, state and private budgets for wildlife conservation are tightening, requiring a renewed look at how wildlife conservation success is achieved collaboratively across broader landscapes. Weaving state, private and federal conservation resources together will be paramount for *Conserving the Future.*

The final *Conserving the Future* vision document was informed by the input of many individuals and organizations; its implementation will depend, as never before, on the investment of partners. Read what these partners said in the AmericasWildlife.org blog:

> *"An increasingly urbanized nation of over 300 million citizens puts new pressures on the NWRS. Our vision for the System includes commitments to effective and active management. A 'hands off' approach no longer works for these islands of conserved habitat. It is also vital that FWS partner with refuge neighbors so the 'islands' aren't isolated. The Service must be a good neighbor with states, adjacent landowners, sportsmen and other NWRS users to ensure broader conservation of fish and wildlife."*
>
> — BILL HORN, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance

> *"My vision is that the Service and NWRS serve as focal points for expanding the individual and collective commitment of our nation's citizens to wildlife conservation. A key question is, 'How can we inspire more Americans to commit to passing the legacy of conservation forward?'"*
>
> — DALE HALL, Ducks Unlimited; former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

> *"A 'hands off' approach no longer works for these islands of conserved habitat..."*

It takes a village. Social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook allowed hundreds to submit their bold ideas for conserving the future of refuges. The conversation contined through and beyond the conference.

EVAN HIRSCHE, President, National Wildlife Refuge Association

Making it real. The role of partner organizations and state fish and wildlife agencies was critical in the formulation of a reinvigorated vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Conceptual artists with Alchemy captured the broad array of partners and the concepts discussed in their daily renditions of the conference. (Created by Jessica Townsend Teague/Alchemy)

"Expanding into new landscapes also improves the NWRs' ability to enhance youth education and conservation outreach programs. With President Obama's America's Great Outdoors *Initiative and First Lady Michelle Obama's* Let's Move Outside *program, America has already taken critical steps toward improving outdoor education and the inherent values that experiencing nature, fish and wildlife present. Our children are the future of coldwater conservation and we urge the NWR System to be ever more available to TU's youth programs and other appropriate educational opportunities."*

— ANDERSON SMITH, Trout Unlimited

"Just as the National Wildlife Refuge System is the backbone of conservation lands in the United States, Friends groups are the backbone of public support for national wildlife refuges. We bring expertise of all kinds to this effort. We are former military, biologists, engineers and technology experts, business people, educators, non-profit sector staff and volunteers. We range from seasoned organizers and outreach strategists to new faces and hands.... Our different perspective is a source of richness and strength that will create more effective partnership [with the Refuge System]."

— BARBARA VOLKLE, Friends of Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge

"The National Environmental Education Foundation is working with health care 'Nature Champions' who can bring the message of the critical importance of time outdoors to hundreds of their colleagues—and hundreds of thousands of patients. Imagine the impact of every refuge having an outdoor education center where health care professionals, parents and naturalists work to get kids outside."

— KATE WINTERBOTTOM, National Environmental Education Foundation

"As we go forward in the future of conservation, we know that we're going to be facing a lot of challenges, perhaps even more than we have in the past. We think about habitat loss, contaminate issues, climate change issues and water quality and quantity [issues]…the Refuge System will play an important role as we address these challenges."

— STEVE WILLIAMS, Wildlife Management Institute; former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

"Each refuge has the potential to contribute far more value than the sum of its acres, and we must view each unit in terms of its larger contribution. In this time of rapid ecological change, there is no better moment to forge a new role for our refuge lands and waters—one in which the Refuge System reaches across institutional, cultural and generational boundaries to advance conservation across the landscape."

— JAMIE CLARK, Defenders of Wildlife; former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997–2001

"Each refuge has the potential to contribute far more value than the sum of its acres..."

Why Now?

A changing world calls for enhancing our foundation

by GREG SIEKANIEC

Then-Refuge System Chief Greg Siekaniec asks four students from the Prairie Wetland Learning Center in Minnesota, what the nation can do to grow a new generation of conservationists.

"Do the right thing. It will gratify some people," quipped Mark Twain, "and astonish the rest."The energy and vitality generated by the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* process and conference has been absolutely astonishing. And I feel sure that we gratified a lot of people.

As to doing the "right thing" now, we have a straightforward answer to the "why now" question: When we started the process more than a year ago, we recognized that much had changed since *Fulfilling the Promise* became the guiding vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1999. Today, we confront new challenges.

Consider the U.S. population. As of April 2010, the number of people living in the U.S. was 308.7 million, compared to 281.4 million a decade earlier. The Hispanic population went up by 42 percent in the 2010 census as compared to 2000. Today, one in every six Americans is Latino. In 2010, more than 40 million people were 65 or older, up from 35 million in 2000. The trend is expected to continue, with a projected population of 88.5 million older Americans by 2050.

And then there's climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Fourth Assessment Report*, issued in 2007, estimated that approximately 20 to 30 percent of the world's plant and animal species are likely to be at increasingly high risk of extinction as global mean temperatures exceed a warming of two to three degree Celsius above preindustrial levels. In the wake of that report, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service adopted its climate change strategic plan in 2010. Yet, as you read *Fulfilling the Promise*, you might tease out environmental change from the strategic growth discussion. We should be straight up as we talk about wildlife adaptation needs.

Those aren't the only changes we have seen in the 13 years since the *Promises* meeting in Keystone, Colorado.

Facebook, launched in a Harvard dorm room in February 2004, now has more than 500 million active users. The first tweet was sent on March 21, 2006; almost 200 million people around the world now use Twitter. Nearly 100 million iPhones have been sold since their launch in 2007. When *Fulfilling the Promise* was written, we thought "social media" meant an invitation to a really great party.

As we considered how to reflect such societal and environmental changes, we knew that the Refuge System needed a new strategic approach, a new way of doing business.

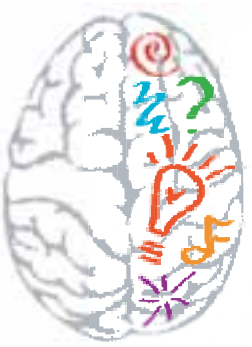
We have accomplished a great deal since the 42 recommendations were crafted for *Fulfilling the Promise.* The first three recommendations in the Wildlife and Habitat section have been integrated into the Strategic Habitat Conservation we now use as our day-to-day business model. The recommendation to forge new alliances through citizen and community partnerships has become reality with 230 refuge Friends organizations, many more than existed in 1999. WH10 in *Fulfilling the Promise*—the recommendation that we develop systematic habitat and monitoring programs—has become reality in the Refuge System's inventory and monitoring (I&M) program that works to ensure that we understand the extent of environmental and wildlife changes so we can make informed management decisions.

Today's challenges require the Service to collaborate on conservation strategy in which the National Wildlife Refuge System plays a key, leadership role. The concept of "working beyond the boundaries" has entered the conservation lexicon, going far beyond the concepts articulated in *Fulfilling the Promise.*

The world has changed since *Fulfilling the Promise* emerged as the guiding, strategic force for the Refuge System. The Refuge System has to change, too.

While the Refuge System's basic tenets won't change, how we can become relevant to a new generation of conservationists must. So was born the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* process. The national conversation it engendered has been unprecedented. □

GREG SIEKANIEC, Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, former Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System



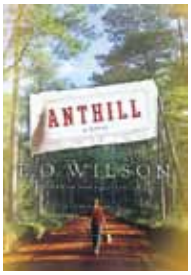
Right Brain Thinking

Creativity and Conserving the Future

by HEATHER JERUE

The innovative use of community and social networks for the conference on <AmericasWildlife.org> represented a milestone for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But it wasn't the only way that the *Conserving the Future* vision process engaged conservationists of all ages to create excitement. Creativity was given full rein.

There was *America's Wild Read*, a virtual book club coordinated by the National Conservation Training Center. Available at <www.AmericasWildlife.org/WildRead>, the book club brought readers together from around the country to inspire each other to connect with nature while ultimately helping to inform a new vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System.



The virtual book club read *Anthill*, the only novel written by renowned conservationist and biologist and E.O. Wilson. As Dr. Wilson's foray into the world of fiction, *Anthill* is the tale of a boy whose Huck Finn-inspired summer in rural Alabama teaches him deeper insights into nature and its most ruthless predators, humans.

Readers even weighed in with their opinions about which book to select. One refuge biologist said that a story or novel would be a welcome "change of pace after all the non-fiction books I read for work." A student intern thought that *Anthill* would be "something I would be more willing to read in the evening."

The *Wild Read* also featured two related essays: *Thinking Like a Mountain* by Aldo Leopold, a founder of the land conservation movement; and *Once and Future Land Ethic* by Curt Meine, senior fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

The *Wild Read* was moderated by conservation writers, including Meine and Will Stolzenburg, author of *Where the Wild Things Were,* scholars, poets and even an ant expert. The Wild Read was such a success that it is continuing at <www.wildread.blogspot.com>.

Another great opportunity was the "Giving the Land a Voice" Youth Art Contest. The Service asked young people—ages 15–24—to use artistry and creativity to answer the question, "What kind of future do you want for America's wildlife and wildlands?" Answers were submitted in several multimedia formats, including poster, collage, essay, audio or video podcast, among others. Prizes included a trip to Madison, Wisconsin, for the *Conserving the Future* conference and gift cards to outdoor recreation stores and more. To see the winning entries, visit <www.AmericasWildlife.org/youth-contest>.

Finally, there was Flat Blue, based on Flat Stanley—that fanciful, storybook character who has traveled the nation and the world as a cut-out. Flat Blue—the Blue Goose symbol of the Refuge System—was easy to download and print from <AmericasWildlife.org/FlatBlue> and then take on adventures to any wildlife refuge. Flat Blue will be introduced to thousands of science teachers through a 2011 calendar distributed by the American Geological Institute as part of its "Saving the Geosciences" program. Schools can include Flat Blue in their curricula and take their classes to wildlife refuges to see nature up close. □

The refuge version of Flat Stanley, Flat Blue—the Blue Goose symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System—was easy to download and print and then take on adventures to any wildlife refuge.

HEATHER JERUE, attended the University of Wisconsin/Madison, and is a *Conserving the Future* fellow.

JIM MARAGOS / USFWS

preserving BEAUTY in the *deep*

The search for Hawaiian coral reef management options in a changing climate

by DEANNA SPOONER

(Above) A tropical Pacific coral reef at Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the Pacific abounds with fish. Ocean warming and acidification, tied to climate change, are taking a toll on coral reefs.

Tropical coral reefs are among the world's most diverse ecosystems, harboring thousands of species in a complex community built by living corals. But in the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands, as elsewhere, these ecosystems are declining because of human impacts, including climate change.

"Coral reefs are on the front line of climate change," explains Jeff Burgett, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and science manager for the Pacific Islands Climate Change Cooperative (PICCC), a conservation research coalition based in Honolulu and part of national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. "Scientists around the world are documenting severe impacts to reefs from warming seas, and the lowering pH of the oceans will hurt their ability to recover."

In the Pacific, where the Service manages more than a million acres of coral reef habitat in 11 refuges, including the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Service scientists are seeking ways to reduce coral vulnerability.

High water temperatures stress corals, causing them to expel the algae they normally shelter and nourish. These algae do more than give coral their vivid colors; they also release glucose needed for healthy coral function. Without the

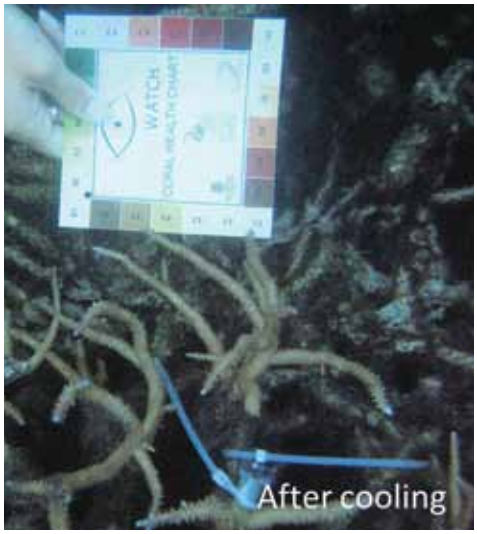
symbiotic algae, the white skeleton of the translucent coral animal is exposed. Intense coral bleaching often leads to coral death, as the coral starves without the algae. Even corals that regain their algae are weakened and often succumb to opportunistic diseases.

Coral bleaching is a growing global phenomenon. Last year high water temperatures caused a mass bleaching in the Indian Ocean, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. The severe El Niño of 1998 raised ocean surface temperatures to historic levels, killing nearly 16 percent of the world's coral. Such events are becoming more frequent as the ocean warms.

Ocean acidification is also compounding the problem. As the ocean absorbs rising levels of carbon dioxide from the air, it acidifies, impeding the ability of corals to build new limestone skeletons.

At present, scientists can predict some coral bleaching events but can't stop them. Managers focus instead on trying to reduce other stressors such as overfishing and runoff from deforestation and poor farming practices. Sediment runoff smothers coral, blocking vital sunlight. But enforcing laws to control these practices is often difficult.

LINDSEY KRAMER / USFWS



B. VON HERZEN/CLIMATE FOUNDATION

Acropora corals subjected to seasonally high water temperatures off Tutuila in American Samoa appear bleached of color (left). After 24 hours of treatment (right) with cooled seawater, some of their color has returned.

We can't afford the death of these vital ecosystems.

— SUSAN WHITE, Pacific Reefs National Wildlife Refuge Complex

PICCC is funding a study that might expand the range of management options.

The Climate Foundation, a private non-profit, has developed a field-based cooling system for reef water. Initial tests on the island of Tutuila in American Samoa, where coral undergoes seasonal bleaching, have shown that cooling peak water temperatures about 1 to 2 degrees Celsius helps two sensitive species of coral retain their healthy color.

With the support of PICCC and other partners, The Climate Foundation is refining the system, testing solid-state cooling modules, solar-powered pumps that cool reef water and othertechnologies. Their conservation potential will depend on their effectiveness, scalability, cost and adaptability to remote sites.

(Left) This small colony of cauliflower coral (Pocillopora meandrina), located in the French Frigate Shoals, part of the part of the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument, hosts more than a hundred endemic Hawaiian Domino Damselfish (Dascyllus albisella, 'alo'ilo'i). Hawaiian domino damsels prefer corals situated in open sand and along the edges of coral reefs to ensure priority access to their planktonic meals.

One possibility: exploiting the increasing use of industrial seawater air conditioning systems. Using such systems on tropical islands may provide a low-cost means to buffer near-shore reefs from climate change.

"We are looking for management actions that can give coral reefs a fighting chance in our changing climate," explains Susan White, who manages coral reefs within the PICCC area as project leader for the Pacific Reefs National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "We can't afford the death of these vital ecosystems." □

DEANNA SPOONER, Fish and Wildlife Service Administrator Coordinator, Pacific Region

Editor's Note: This article was part of a blog series, *The Climate of Conservation in America: 50 Stories From 50 States*. Beginning on Earth Day, April 22, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched a series of 50 stories for 50 consecutive weekdays that explored the many ways accelerating climate change is impacting or may impact fish and wildlife across America. To read all 50 stories, visit the archive for the series at <www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/stories505050.html>.

a girl and a wolf pack

What I learned from spending a day with the wolves

story and photos by ROYA MOGADAM

Driving a sporty compact car over snow and ice covered dirt roads, winding through majestic mountains vistas, merely inches away from towering cliffs at elevations of over 9,000 feet, sound like all the makings of a great car commercial. In real life, it truly was a bit terrifying—but at the end of the ride was a day I would never forget. My journey was taking me to Mission: Wolf, a sanctuary for captive-born wolves and wolf-dogs in Gardner, Colorado, on the outskirts of the San Isabel National Forest.

Mission: Wolf is a sanctuary for captive-born wolves and wolf-dogs in Gardner, Colorado.

The sanctuary is perched atop a steep hill at the end of a mile long dirt driveway. Tepees are set up to serve as overnight shelters for volunteers and visitors who wish to wake up to the haunting sound of wolf howls. I was greeted by Mike, one of the volunteers at the sanctuary who took me on a walking tour of the facilities where I met the 37 wolves and wolf-dogs that have been rescued by Mission: Wolf. Peering out from behind striking aspen trees, the wolves were curious but cautious—until feeding time.

I was lucky enough to visit on a Saturday, one of two "big feed" days. Mike explained the sanctuary attempts to create, as best they can, a natural "wild" environment for these captive animals. Wolves in the wild will gorge themselves after a successful hunt, not knowing when another opportunity for a meal may come along, and may not eat for days after. To mimic this natural behavior, Mission: Wolf feeds the animals sparingly during the week—but on Saturdays they are presented with a feast. As feeding time neared, the wolves joined in an enchanting chorus, all howling in unison. Closing my eyes I listened to their wild song and it was truly captivating.

I was later greeted by Kent Weber, the president and founder of Mission: Wolf. While I watched the wolves in complete awe, he told the stories of how some of the wolves found their way to his sanctuary.

One strikingly handsome male wolf, Apollo, was sold on Craigslist to a dog-trainer as a Husky-German Shepherd-mix puppy. After bottle-feeding the puppy and caring for him for months, his owner

Left: Wolf Raven meets the author. Above: Apollo was originally sold on Craigslist to a dog-trainer as a Husky-German Shepherd-mix puppy.

began to notice his puppy was special. After a visit to the vet, Apollo was confirmed to be a wolf. The owner, knowing the difficulties involved in raising a wolf, found his 3-month-old puppy a home at Mission: Wolf. Apollo resides with four other wolves and wolf-dogs, Magpie, Farah, Zeab and Abraham, in the Ambassador Pack. They occupy a huge enclosure with plenty of room to roam and play. Even in the winter, with the aspen trees bare, the sanctuary creates a beautiful natural environment for its inhabitants.

I learned the entire facility is "green" and runs on solar energy generated from a large solar panel on the property. The buildings, all constructed by volunteers and made from recycled or reused materials, also are designed to utilize passive solar heating techniques. The buildings have large south facing windows allowing sunlight in during the day while the back of the buildings are placed into the sides of hills in order to better insulate them by holding onto the natural heat accumulated by the sunlight.

Kent described his sanctuary as ultimately, a jail for wild creatures and his mission is to educate people in order to prevent additional inmates. Kent and his wife, Tracey, drive across the country with the Ambassador Pack to educate people about wolves and provide audiences with a powerful real-life experience with wildlife. He and the pack travel to various places: schools, government agencies, museums and conservation groups, to name a few. He even took the pack to Capitol Hill and told me a hilarious story about walking through Capitol Hill security with a pack of wolves.

Kent has many riveting stories about the pack, including the tremendous impact he and the wolves have on students in urban schools who have never even seen a deer, much less a pack of wolves. For them, and truly all who meet the Ambassador Pack, it is a memorable experience with wildlife that they will remember forever.

After being at the sanctuary for more than five hours (it felt like minutes) I left Mission: Wolf with the gift of a priceless memory and a renewed sense of my mission as a Service employee and wildlife conservationist. As I drove back, I reflected on my visit and thought about just how powerful a personal encounter with wildlife can be in fostering a passion for wildlife conservation.

Living in Northern Virginia, I have the luxury of having access to many wonderful wild places even in and near the bustling Washington D.C., metropolitan area. I am minutes away from the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge where ospreys and eagles routinely fly over beautiful Potomac River vistas; and Great Falls National Park where the Potomac cascades over massive rocks and cliffs; as well as the peaceful winding nature trails at Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, the first refuge specifically established for the protection of the bald eagle. With the existence of such urban refuges, witnessing wildlife in America's Great Outdoors is becoming more accessible to more people. Exposing a wide diversity of people to the values and beauty of America's wildlife can instill in them a sense of responsibility to support wildlife conservation and can encourage generations of youngsters to become the future of wildlife conservation. □

ROYA MOGADAM, Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Washington Office

pacific

Refuge Takes Unique Approach to Restoring Oak Woodland

In a corner of the nation where some people view Douglas fir trees as sacred, the staff at Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon has labeled the conifer an invasive species — at least on 2,558-acre refuge.

And with good reason: Over the years, fire suppression in the Willamette Valley has allowed the fast-growing Douglas firs to overtake the oak trees that historically dotted the prairie, squeezing out much of the native habitat and the species that depend on it. Once spread throughout low-lying areas and foothills of the valley, oak savannah now ranks as one of Oregon's most endangered ecosystems — mostly due to farming and development but firs have also played a role in their demise.

"We're trying to take out everything that isn't oak and remove the threat of fir," said Refuge Biologist Jock Beall. He is overseeing a 40-acre restoration project that will benefit the endangered Fender's blue butterfly and three bird species of concern.

Labeling Oregon's state tree an invasive species helped the refuge get a $77,000 grant from the Refuge Program's invasive species program. The money is paying for the removal of about 900 trees from refuge land and another 100 from adjacent land owned by The Nature Conservancy. Most of the trees are Douglas firs — some 120 feet tall. A small number are maple and cherry.

Re-establishing the oak habitat in this area will benefit several species of birds — the white-crested nuthatch, acorn woodpecker and western bluebird — and create a corridor for populations of the endangered blue butterfly between the two parcels of land, Beall said.

"It will open up a flight path between the TNC land and the refuge and facilitate movement between the two groups (of butterflies), which have been interrupted by this stand of trees," he explained.

The trees were selectively felled last winter by loggers who had to walk into the hilly area. They were removed in May by helicopter, necessary because of the steep terrain, lack of access roads and the need to protect habitat. Over two days, a Boeing Vertol helicopter owned by Columbia Helicopters of Aurora, Oregon, carefully lifted the felled timber — some whole trees, some cut into logs — and laid it down in neat piles in a nearby field. It will be hauled off by the Portland Water Bureau, which will use it for stream restoration projects to satisfy requirements of a Habitat Conservation Plan. The Water Bureau contributed $40,000 to the project.

"It's great that we're using trees from a project to restore oak habitat in the Willamette Valley and at the same time helping threatened salmon in the Sandy Basin" near Portland, said the Water Bureau's Angie Kimpo, who helps implement the HCP.

About 20 to 30 large-diameter fir trees were left at the Baskett Slough restoration site and will be topped to create snags for cavity-nesting birds. Then refuge staff will grind stumps from the logged firs, mow the area and reseed it with native grasses and plants. The area will need to be initially treated mechanically because burning isn't an option.

"There's no way we could do a controlled burn at this stage of the restoration," Beall said. "There's no access, it's too close to private property and there's too much fuel."

Rachel York, refuge law enforcement officer for the Willamette Valley NWR Complex, on patrol to ensure that people stayed out of the area where the helicopter was moving the trees.

Oak savannah restoration at Basket Slough has been "piecemealed" over the years as funding has come available. Oak thinning has occurred on approximately 100 acres; about 200 acres of oaks remain in need of treatment.

"It's a work in progress that happens in small steps," Beall said. "But it will be very satisfying over time, when the birds and other wildlife respond to it." □

JOAN JEWETT, Office of Public Affairs, Pacific Region

midwest

Region Welcomes New Dive Officer

After 10 years of leadership Nick Rowse from the Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office is stepping down as the Regional Dive Officer and handing the duties over to Scott Yess from the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

"Scott and I have been diving together over the last decade. He has been my dive buddy on many occasions. I know his skills under the water and I know he is a leader. I feel very comfortable with him becoming the leader of the dive team," said Rowse on his successor.

Yess is looking forward to the new challenge. "It has been an interest of mine to follow up after Nick," said Yess.

As Regional Dive Officerm Yess hopes to shine a spotlight on the dive team to let the region know

USFWS

(Top) Nick Rowse during a pool training session with the Midwest Region's dive team in La Crosse, Wisconsin. (Bottom): After ten years as the Midwest's Regional Dive Officer, Nick Rowse, left, hands the regulator over to Scott Yess.

the team exists as a resource. "[The dive team] brings another capability to the Service," said Yess, "in that we have the opportunity to get into the habitat, the natural environment, and see the conditions first hand."

The Midwest Region's dive team was re-established in 2000 after over a decade of inactivity. Both Rowse and Yess played an integral role in the reemergence of the team. The two were working together in 1999 and had just agreed to pay contract divers $25,000 for three weeks of work to examine zebra mussels.

"Scott and I were on the river talking about it and we were both certified divers," Rowse recalls. "We said, we could do this, and for a lot less. That's what kicked off the dive team."

In its first year back, the Midwest Region's dive team, consisting of only Rowse and Yess, operated under the auspices of the National Park Service's diving safety regulations. Today the region has eight authorized divers and operates under U.S. Fish and Wildlife diving safety regulations, Chapter 241 FW 10, which was approved in 2006. Three additional Service employees in the region are seeking authorization status, bringing with them new opportunities.

"In the last three or four years we have gained quite a few new members," said Yess. "That opens up for larger joint projects with all or part of the team."

Though Rowse admits he will miss the camaraderie when he retires, he has high hopes for the team's future. Rowse and Yess agree that the number one goal for the dive team is safety, but beyond that both believe that the dive team can make a serious contribution to the conservation of aquatic resources and help the Service in its mission. □

KATIE STEIGER-MEISTER, External Affairs, Midwest Region

Missouri: Climate Concerns Add to Challenges Facing Sturgeon Recovery Efforts

Above-average fluctuations in rainfall, snowmelt and runoff in the lower Missouri River are complicating Fish and Wildlife Service efforts to recover endangered pallid sturgeon, one of the continent's largest freshwater fish. Unusually low water levels in 2004 and 2006 have been followed by record high levels since 2007, say scientists. The Service is working with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) through the National Climate Change Wildlife Science Center and Science Support Partnership Program to anticipate how a range of such changes may impact pallid sturgeon recovery efforts throughout the region, encompassing Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota.

"Essentially we are trying to build a more comprehensive picture of how the fish may react" to changes in water level and temperature that might be associated with a changing climate, said Mark Wildhaber, USGS research ecologist.

For centuries, rivers in the West and Midwest teemed with these great fish, which can weigh as much as 60 pounds, and have distinctive long, flat snouts. Then engineers dammed and straightened the Missouri, eliminating tree snags where sturgeon feed, hide and spawn. Overharvesting by commercial roe fishermen further stressed the species, listed as endangered in 1990. Scientists are now factoring climate change into the recovery equation.

Wildhaber is working with researchers from the University of Missouri and Iowa State University to build complex computer models that examine the potential impacts of varying precipitation, water flow and water temperature on the watershed, river hydraulics and fish populations.

For sturgeon, some potential changes can be double-edged swords. Higher water temperatures, for example, would raise fish metabolism, spurring growth and reproduction —as long as adequate food is available. If food is scarce, however, fish growth and reproduction would likely slow in warmer water. >>

Mark Luehring and Josh Schloesser, childhood friends, and now both fishery biologists, pose with a 74-pound adult lake sturgeon captured in the Bad River. During spawning eggs can make up 25 percent of a females body weight.

Missouri, continued from page 21

High water flow can likewise help or hinder sturgeon recovery. In spring, high flow benefits the fish, triggering migration and conditioning spawning sites. But in summer, high flow washes fry downstream, reducing survival and recruitment into the adult population.

Service biologists are trying to rebuild the pallid sturgeon population through captive breeding. Since 2002, the Neosho National Fish Hatchery has produced more than 27,000 pallid sturgeon and stocked them in the lower Missouri.

The Service and USGS tag all hatchery-raised fish and monitor their survival. But so far, pallid sturgeon populations aren't bouncing back.

"The million-dollar question is why do we come across hundreds of shovelnose sturgeon [a sister species] and only a single pallid when we are out on the river sampling?" said Tracy Hill, project leader of the Service's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Columbia, Missouri.

The pallid's feeding habits could be partly accountable. While shovelnose sturgeon feed primarily on silt plankton and small invertebrates, pallid sturgeon depend on larger organisms, such as other fish, for food. Changes to river habitat and water flow have reduced the availability of those organisms, a situation that could be exacerbated by a changing climate.

And commercial roe fishing remains a threat. Shovelnose caviar is more sought after, but pallid sturgeon have also been harvested for their eggs. The Service's recent listing of shovelnose sturgeon as threatened may help protect both species. The listing permits law enforcement actions in portions of the Missouri and Mississippi River basins where pallid and shovelnose sturgeon co-exist.

Recovery scientists meanwhile are trying to plan for an uncertain future. "There isn't one answer," Wildhaber said. But he and his colleagues think computer modeling offers them their best shot at adapting wildlife management practices to changing climate conditions. □

ASHLEY SPRATT, Office of Public Affairs, Midwest Region

mountain-prairie

Using Ravens to Count Cranes

Sandhill Cranes are awe-inspiring birds valued by bird watchers and ornithologists for their spectacular migrations and by hunters for food. Most individuals who follow these birds are familiar with their migrations through the Platte River Valley in central Nebraska each spring. The Rocky Mountain population of cranes takes another spectacular migration, from nesting grounds in Montana, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming to wintering areas in New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico.

These birds congregate in the San Luis Valley of Colorado a few weeks each year to rest and feed. During the evenings, they concentrate on roost areas by the thousands, mostly within the boundaries of the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge.

Jeff Sloan holding the Raven RQ-11A.

COURTESY OF MARK BAUER

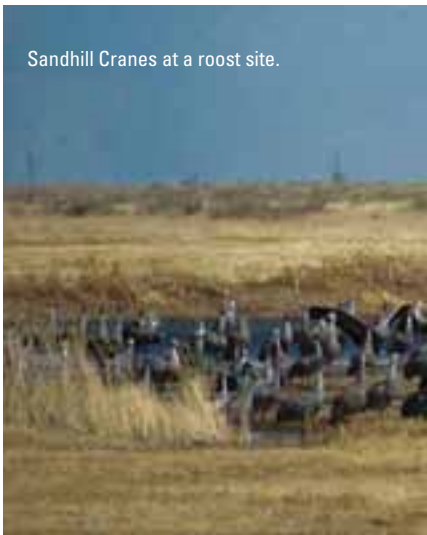
Since the 1980s, personnel from the Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management (DMBM) have done population estimates by counting cranes from aircraft and from vehicles on the ground. While these surveys have resulted in excellent estimates of abundance, they are relatively expensive, time consuming and involve risk to the pilots and biologists conducting surveys.

Recently, under a memorandum of agreement with the U.S. Army, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) acquired several unmanned Raven RQ-11A aerial systems from the Army that are used in surveillance missions. USGS and Service personnel had an idea: the Raven could fly over roosts and count cranes using videography.

Over the course of the winter, they would develop a study proposal and seek supporting funds, as well as apply for the necessary authorizations to fly unmanned aerial systems over a specific area. In the spring, when the birds congregated at the Refuge, biologists would count cranes from the ground. The Raven would then fly over the cranes to capture videography of the birds. Using this information, the team could determine whether video from the unmanned aerial systems was of sufficient quality to detect individual birds and whether software used to count birds on the imagery could produce estimates similar to what the biologists counted from the ground. The team met for a week at the Refuge, beginning March 19, 2011, to test their idea.

Immediately, they encountered obstacles. Because this was the first mission of its kind, the Certificate of Authorization (COA) granted by the Federal Aviation Administration restricted the area and time of day of the operation. Operators could fly the unmanned aerial systems only between civil twilight, thirty minutes before sunrise, and thirty minutes after sunset. Cranes are most concentrated on the roost at night and leave the roost early to feed. This left the team only a small window of time before birds began flying and could not be counted.

Before flying the test mission, the team performed several flights over cranes during the day at various altitudes for proficiency checks and to assess the cranes' reactions to the unmanned


Sandhill Cranes at a roost site.

aircraft. The first results were not encouraging. During mid-morning, while cranes were feeding in the fields, Raven flights at several altitudes caused the birds to flush. However, when the Raven flew over birds in the afternoon, while they were loafing in fields, the cranes did not become as agitated.

With this experience in hand, the team conducted the first test flight over a roost early on March 23. The flight began at 6:36 a.m. and conducted several passes over the cranes, at altitudes varying from 75 to 300 feet, before returning. This first flight was a great success. The birds did not appear to react negatively to the Raven flying over them, and the cranes were clearly visible on the thermal imagery.

The team launched the Raven again, on the morning of March 24, using a new, modified down-looking thermal camera, to better capture the signatures of individual birds. The operator made multiple passes over the cranes, at varying altitudes, to determine where the videography produced the best images. The flight lasted 24 minutes and made 13 passes over the roost. Once again, the cranes did not appear to react negatively, and the camera provided excellent imagery.

Video from the flights was pieced together using mosaicking software. USGS personnel then used manual and automated methods to identify and count the cranes using the thermal signature of the cranes on the imagery. Because the down-looking camera likely provided the most accurate count, the team used the count from the second operational flight to compare estimates. The ground observers had counted 2,692 cranes on the area. The Raven videography showed 2,567, a difference of only 4.6 percent.

This initial effort to count cranes using the Raven reached milestones for the participating agencies. Most notably, this was the first approved unmanned aerial systems flight in the National Airspace System for the Department of the Interior, to which both the USGS and the USFWS belong. It also demonstrated the potential this technology has for biological investigations.

The team considers this effort an unqualified success, but realizes more work is required before the technique can be used in operational surveys. The team is planning next steps of this project, using lessons learned from the initial effort to help develop additional surveys at the Refuge in the fall, when the cranes return. The team will also seek authorization to fly the Raven over roosts at night, which would reduce the likelihood of airstrikes between cranes and the Raven, expand the amount of time available for videography, and minimize potential conflicts between Raven flight crews and Refuge visitors. Ultimately, the team hopes to complete a full survey of cranes on all roost sites within the Refuge boundaries in the spring of 2012.

COURTESY OF MARK BAUER

This effort would not have succeeded without the substantial efforts of many agencies and individuals. Floyd Truetken, team member and Manager of the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, and Refuge Biologist Scott Miller both enthusiastically supported the effort and allowed it to take place on the Refuge. The project was supported by USGS Quick Response Program funds, through a proposal led by Leanne Hanson of the USGS in Fort Collins, and in-kind contributions by the USFWS. Mark Bauer (USGS/Parallel Incorporated) and Jeff Sloan (USGS) operated the Raven during the morning flights. Mike Hutt (Project Leader, USGS unmanned aerial systems Project Office), Harry Keiling (Aviation Management Directorate), and Phil Owen (USGS/Aerodyne) oversaw the operations and provided program support. Current and retired staff of the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System and Division of Migratory Bird Management and biologists from USGS conducted ground-based surveys and assisted with Raven field operations, and personnel from a private company (enerGies) provided hardware and software support. □

ALICIA KING, Migratory Bird Program, Washington Office

Secretary Salazar Launches America's Great Outdoors Pilot Projects at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar attended the dedication of the new, green-built visitor center at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in late May and used the occasion to announce three America's Great Outdoors conservation projects in Colorado. Secretary Salazar was joined by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, National Wildlife Refuge System Chief Greg Siekaniec, Regional Director Steve Guertin, National Park Service Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell and other elected officials, partners and stakeholders from metropolitan Denver and other parts of the state. Secretary Salazar highlighted the role of the refuge in delivering conservation to a fast-growing urban population as well as the state's leadership in promoting outdoor recreation and protecting natural resources and open space for future generations as models for the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

"Colorado is setting an example for the rest of the nation as to the value of recreation and conservation to our economy and quality of life," said Secretary Salazar. "Today begins a new chapter in the strong partnership between the State of Colorado and the Department of the Interior, and I look forward to working with the Governor to help turn these projects into reality."

The three AGO "pilot" projects in Colorado include efforts to enhance existing greenways in metropolitan Denver and create linkages between Arsenal, >>

TAMI HEILEMANN / DOI

From left to right: Steve Guertin, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region; Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior; Steve Berendzen, Project Leader, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge Complex; Greg Siekaniec, Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System; and, Dean Rundle, Zone Supervisor, National Wildlife Refuge System (and former PL at RMA NWR), celebrate the dedication of the new visitor center at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

Secretary, continued from page 23

Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge, Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge and other open spaces in the region and, eventually, Rocky Mountain National Park; a push to conserve — using perpetual conservation easements and other innovative tools— working landscapes in the San Luis Valley, home to the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex and a vital geography for migratory birds and other trust resources; and a partnership in the Yampa River Basin to further protection of lands and waters in one of the state's most intact watersheds. The Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, long a leader in community-based, large landscape conservation, will play a central role in planning and delivery of these projects and will leverage existing programs and partnerships to help advance America's Great Outdoors in Colorado and throughout the Region, which the Secretary has visited several times in the recent past to learn about other model America's Great Outdoors projects, including the Service's Dakota Grassland Conservation Area and Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony at the refuge marked a major milestone in the rich history of Arsenal, capping the successful transformation of a Superfund site to a premier urban national wildlife refuge, where wild American bison graze in the shadow of Denver's skyline and bald eagles nest hard by what was once dubbed the "most polluted square mile on Earth." Constructed in part using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the new visitor center features a solar power system, state-of-the-art exhibits showcasing short grass prairie ecology and the history of the site and environmental education facilities. The center will be the primary public contact station for the more than 200,000 annual visitors the Service anticipates hosting. □

MATT KALES, External Affairs, Mountain-Prairie Region

alaska

Breaking Trail with the Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative

A recent Alaska science workshop may provide a roadmap to help other groups deal with complex landscape-scale issues.

In late April of this year, a group of more than 150 stakeholders and subject-matter experts gathered in Anchorage, Alaska, to discuss research priorities for the Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) for the next five years. Participants came from across Alaska, representing state and federal agencies, Alaska Native organizations, academia and the non-governmental conservation community.

LCCs are applied conservation science partnerships between groups of stakeholders within a geographically defined area. They are intended to be true cooperatives, formed and directed by their partner agencies and organizations. Nationwide 21 LCCs have been identified to date.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARCUS

The Western Alaska LCC workshop's goal, an admittedly ambitious one, was to "identify the priority science information needs for meeting shared management objectives in light of projected climate change impacts," and to do this for an LCC that covers a wide diversity of ecological conditions spanning more than 750 miles from north to south. Landscapes in the LCC include the permafrost dominated tundra of the Seward Peninsula, the complex river delta systems of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, the abundant volcanoes of the Alaska Peninsula, and the transitional forests of permafrost-free Kodiak Island. While the objective might have appeared daunting, participants were given plentiful tools—workshop structure, preparation, access to expertise and reference materials—to aid the process.

Much of the most immediate preparation for the April event took place at local meetings and a framing workshop organized by the LCC Steering Committee and held in late 2010 and early 2011. These gatherings laid the groundwork for the tasks ahead by 1) identifying decision makers, stakeholders and scopes of decision the LCC would intend to support, 2) determining resource management objectives and outcomes of interest, and 3) specifying "attributes" that would indicate how well high-level management goals were being met.

Breakout groups considered both subregional and species-specific research needs and priorities.

The workshop opened with a plenary session, which "set the stage" for the work to come. Speakers provided overviews of the projected impacts of various aspects of climate change on western Alaska. The topics included anticipated changes in permafrost, vegetation, freshwater and coastal ecosystem productivity and more.

Armed with that information, participants were then split into break-out groups to begin the process of developing and refining lists of scientific priorities for the LCC. The first of these sessions divided attendees into three sub-regional groups, focusing on the southern, central and northern portions of the LCC. Each was charged with identifying the most important projected changes in landscape processes its particular sub-region was likely to face, and the main sources of uncertainty behind the relevant data.

On the final day of the workshop, participants were again broken into subgroups, but this time organized by species and assemblages, with one gathering each focusing on birds, fish, mammals; a coastal species group (marine mammals and shore and seabirds) and a landscape ecology group. Following the pattern set by the earlier session, the subgroups attempted to identify and, to the extent possible, prioritize the most important scientific questions and information needs relevant to each taxa group, all in the context of the regional and sub-regional climate-driven changes anticipated in the LCC.

In identifying key species for the LCC, participants were instructed to consider several factors; including the immediacy of the threats faced, the potential for a species to serve as a sentinel (providing early information concerning changes that could have a broader impact over time), and the numbers of LCC partners sharing a management interest in the species. Finally, the group was charged with identifying the largest uncertainties regarding the reactions of these species or assemblages to projected climate changes.

The structured organization made for a challenging and successful workshop. In the months to come, a participant-reviewed report will be prepared to summarize the results of the meeting's discussions and lay out priority science information needs. That document will provide information to people who weren't able to attend the workshop and inform the next step in the process, the development of a science strategy for the Western Alaska LCC. In fact, the workshop discussions influenced the LCC's FY2011 project funding decisions the very next week. □

BRUCE WOODS, Office of Public Affairs, Alaska Region

headquarters

Service Partners with Go Ape USA to Raise Awareness for Great Ape Conservation

On Endangered Species Day, May 20, 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders program launched a partnership with Go Ape USA, a company that operates a highly interactive treetop adventure encouraging participants to "find their inner ape!" The partnership kicked off with the unveiling of educational boards designed by the Service at Go Ape's Rockville, Maryland, location. The boards provide information on ape biology and populations, and tips on how people can help save these species.

This fall, Go Ape held a partnership event to raise awareness and support for the Wildlife Without Borders-Great Ape Conservation Fund. For the weekend of October 7–9, Go Ape offered a 10-percent discount to supporters of great ape conservation and pledged a $10 donation to the Great Ape Conservation Fund for each person using the coupon code "GR8APE." During the sunny and cool holiday weekend 145 supporters raised $1,450 for great ape conservation. The company added $1,050 for a generous total of $2,500 for the Great Ape Conservation Fund.

The funds from Go Ape and all donations to the Great Ape Conservation Fund support the conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons in the wild. The Service's Wildlife Without Borders program awards grants from the fund for projects in Africa and Asia related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, safeguarding habitat and much more. With the help of this fund and many committed conservationists, there is hope that these animals will beat the odds of extinction. □

RACHEL PENROD, Division of International Conservation, Washington Office

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOAPE

[THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE YOU *DON'T* KNOW]

From Capitol Hill Fin Monger to Keeper of J. Edgar Hoover's Goldfish

Watergate-era Informant Blew Whistle on Fishy Perks

by DAVID KLINGER

Fish in an aquarium have long been considered a soothing, even blood pressure-reducing, part of the office décor in stressful environments, from corporate boardrooms to dentists' waiting rooms.

So perhaps the notion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service placing tanks of guppies, angel fish, tetras and cichlids on Capitol Hill was appropriate, from a psychological standpoint, as well as from an enlightened agency public relations perspective.

What better way of emphasizing the importance of fish at budget time than with an aquarium full of sprightly stripers or colorful koi in the office of the right subcommittee chairman, you know?

But the story of how the Fish and Wildlife Service lost its quaint job of tending the tanks of the Beltway's power brokers is a tale of aquatic intrigue torn straight from the Watergate era, involving such diverse players as muckraking columnist Jack Anderson to legendary G-man J. Edgar Hoover.

And the shadowy insider who blew the whistle on this little-known perk of the powerful — call him "Deep Gullet" — recently emerged after nearly four decades of silence to spin his fish tale from that bygone Washington era of lost prerogatives and privileges.

"The aquarium was under budget pressure, on the chopping block," said Deep Gullet in a recent clandestine interview. "A lovely little facility, a respite for Commerce employees, tourists, area children, who learned about ecosystems and habitats. It just didn't seem right that a tenth of our budget was spent on office decorations — a real waste of taxpayers' money."

COURTESY DC BOOTH FISH HATCHERY ARCHIVES

U.S. Fish Commission employees net carp from ponds on the grounds of the Washington Monument circa 1880.

The back story begins exactly 100 years earlier, when the U.S. Fish Commission established its National Aquarium in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, in 1873, at what would become America's premier center of fishery and oceanographic research. Moved to Washington in 1878, old sepia-tinted photographs depict a complex of aquaria, holding tanks and small ponds known as "Babcock Lakes" below the Washington Monument.

With various bureaucratic changes that shuffled the Fish Commission to the Department of Commerce in 1903 and later renamed it the Bureau of Fisheries, the National Aquarium took up residence in the basement of the Commerce building when it was completed in 1932.

Since those dark days of the Great Depression, the National Aquarium — little more than a constrained warren of tanks and exhibits in a non-descript Federal office building — became a "must see" on the Washington summer tourist itinerary. Ask any 7-year-old what they remembered of their family vacation to the Nation's Capital in the 1950s and they'd have told you: Ike, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, the Capitol rotunda…and those bug-eyed, oversized goldfish outside the Commerce Department cafeteria.

At some point in the National Aquarium's Washington tenure — no one knows exactly when — the practice of stocking the offices of Representatives, Senators and Federal bureaucrats with fish got started. In much

the same way that the Mall's U.S. Botanic Garden hauled parlor palms and philodendrons, when asked, to the nearby offices of Capitol Hill lawmakers, the Bureau of Fisheries (by 1940, the Fish and Wildlife Service, when an agency consolidation shifted it to the Interior Department) stocked and cleaned fish tanks in the halls of Congress.

By 1973, the quaint practice became fodder for investigative reporter Jack Anderson, fresh off the ITT corruption scandal and the burgeoning Watergate revelations, who set his sights on the loan-out of Federal fish, deriding the program as "some 40 fish tanks that the National Aquarium has loaned to senators, representatives and other pampered poobahs (sic) of government."

What's unknown—until revealed today—is that Anderson was tipped off to the practice by the Fish and Wildlife Service employee concerned that the age-old perk was stripping the National Aquarium of valuable staff and budget that could better be directed toward keeping the aging facility in business—by then 40 years old, and being eclipsed by other larger, more modern aquaria around the country.

It was, in a profession where the word "leak" generally spells catastrophe, a leak of an entirely different sort…the variety that's practiced inside the Washington Beltway every day.

"For guppy lovers at the highest reaches of government, the taxpayers provide pet fish and an aquarist to attend them," Anderson wrote, going on to profile the daily routine of an aquarium employee who serviced the offices Vice President Spiro Agnew, White House press secretary Ron Ziegler and assorted senators and congressmen.

"But of all Washington's famous fish fanciers, none was more devoted than the late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, whose bulldog visage and staccato speech were the terror of crooks and Communists. But he was a softie when it came to his pet goldfish," Anderson reported in his June 20, 1973, expose. "At the first chill of winter, he would deliver his special goldfish to the National Aquarium to be looked after during the cold. But as soon as the weather warmed, Hoover's personal bodyguard would appear to pick up the golden dandies. If one of his goldfish appeared ill, Hoover would order an aide to call the aquarium for a diagnosis."

Anderson went on to catalogue a litany of real or supposed sins in this fishy fish business—the congressional office that called six times in a single day about its ill Siamese fighting fish, the squeamish secretary who summoned help dipping out a dead angel fish, the bureaucrat who bred a tank of the aquarium's African Rift Lake cichlids…then offered to sell them back to the government.

"There were nearly two full-time positions and a huge truck allocated to tending the fish tanks on the Hill," says Gullet. "This was at a time when the National Aquarium was squeezed financially. It was an insult, especially when a secretary whined about a dead guppy in her tank. Talk about your unnecessary government expense."

BEN SCHLEY / USFWS

Washington's National Aquarium in the basement of the Commerce Department building was a regular stop for school kids and tourists at least as far back as the 1950s.

The upshot of the Anderson revelations was that the fish tank program was quietly phased out, and Fish and Wildlife Service employees gave up their daily rounds of fish feedings, water changes and aquaria shuffling in posh offices throughout downtown Washington. In 1981, the National Aquarium tussled with a nearby new aquarium on Baltimore's Inner Harbor over the title "National Aquarium"; both now share the same name, though neither is managed by the Federal Government.

An attic full of dusty and damaged office-sized fish tanks were last spotted in the gloomy garret of the government's Auditor's Building—a landmark lump of red bricks left over from the Victorian era that now houses the U.S. Forest Service, and where, presumably, they were once counted and carefully stored away, vestige of a long-ago era when the Fish and Wildlife Service's most visible presence in the tense halls of Congress were tanks full of bleeding heart tetras and kissing gouramis. □

This is the ninth in a series of short features about little-known aspects of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by DAVID KLINGER of the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

transitions

Pacific

Longtime natural resources manager **Michael Carrier** has been appointed Assistant Regional Director for Fishery Resources in the Pacific Region of the Service.

"This is a critical time for fisheries conservation," Regional Director Robyn Thorson said, "and the Service and all our partners will benefit from Mike's proven leadership skills and cooperative approaches."

As former Coordinator of the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC), a partnership of state and federal agencies, tribes, universities and others stretching from southeast Alaska to northern California, Carrier focused on forging a major new regional natural resource partnership to address the impacts of climate change across a large landscape.

Carrier now leads the daily operation of the fisheries program and the implementation of its strategic plan. The fishery program is a network of 25 field stations with about 260 employees in the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Hawaii. It has 15 national fish hatcheries producing approximately 60 million salmon and steelhead each year, three fish health centers, two fish and wildlife offices, three fisheries resources offices, the Service's largest fish technology center and a Lower Snake River Compensation Program office.

Before serving as LCC Coordinator, Carrier was Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski's principal advisor on natural resource and environmental issues from 2004 to 2010. Before that he was Director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for four years. He also held a variety of management positions for natural resource agencies in Iowa and Indiana.

Carrier has a Master's degree in natural resources from Ball State University and a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from Western Michigan University. □

JOAN JEWETT, Office of Public Affairs, Pacific Region

Pacific Region Selects New Budget and Administration Leader

Hugh Morrison, a sixth-generation Oregonian, has been selected to be the Assistant Regional Director for Budget and Administration in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region.

In his new position, Morrison will lead the daily operation of a program that encompasses support functions for the Service's Pacific Region, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, and the Pacific Southwest Region, headquartered in Sacramento, California. The support functions include Human Resources, Budget and Finance, Information Technology, Safety, Engineering and Water Resources, Diversity and Civil Rights, Contracting and General Services. These offices employ about 150 employees. He started his new job June 13.

In making the announcement Regional Director Robyn Thorson said, "Hugh brings outstanding business acumen to our work in wildlife conservation and the Region is fortunate to have the benefit of his skills along with his dedication to natural resource management."

For the past two years, Morrison was the Assistant Regional Director for Budget and Administration in the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, headquartered in Denver. Before that he worked in the Pacific Region as Chief of the Budget and Finance Division for eight years. He began working in the Pacific Region in 1998 as a Budget Formulation Analyst supporting the Fisheries Program and the Columbia Basin Ecoregion.

Growing up in Oregon, Morrison developed his passion for wildlife and wild places poking around in the tide pools of the Oregon coast and tromping through the forests of the Coast Range and the Cascades. He obtained undergraduate degrees in Environmental Studies and Political Science at the University of Washington and a Masters of Public Administration with a focus on Environmental and Natural Resource Management, also at the U of W. □

JOAN JEWETT, Office of Public Affairs, Pacific Region

Mountain-Prairie

Editor's note: The following story first appeared in the Helena (MT) Independent Record and the publisher graciously granted the Service permission to reprint it in Fish & Wildlife News.

Montana's "Wolf Man"

by EVE BYRON

Ed Bangs, who for 23 years led the effort to reintroduce and recover healthy wolf populations in the northern Rocky Mountains, is retiring from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in June.

As the federal agency's wolf recovery coordinator, Bangs was the face of the polarizing wolf reintroduction, conducting thousands of international, national, state and local interviews and holding hundreds of highly charged meetings, all to explain the effort as part of a massive public outreach effort. At various times, depending on the stage of the reintroduction, he was heralded as a hero while simultaneously being denounced as a wolf lover or hater, depending on people's perspective.

Yet somehow he managed to charm many on both sides of the wolf wars, with a mix of humor tinged with a reputation for fairness.

"He would get in front of a group trying to ridicule and criticize him, and Ed would beat them to the punch," recalled Carter Niemeyer, a former Wildlife Services supervisor who

worked closely with Bangs for decades. "One time, we were in Grangeville, Idaho, in front of a hostile crowd, with one guy leading the charge. He said 'Tell me what the hell good the blankedly-blank wolves ever did.' Ed chimed up and said 'They gave me this cushy job' and the whole audience cracked up. The man got up and left because he was so angry.

"He would win the crowd over, because they thought he was kind of funny, and that would get things going."

Suzanne Stone with the environmental group Defenders of Wildlife also worked with Bangs on the wolf reintroduction, and said he had a huge impact on the effort, writing the environmental impact statement—which drew more than 180,000 comments from throughout the world—and fighting for federal funding.

"He set the course," Stone said. "He was willing to work with us, but not much would deter him from the course he had in mind."

Jay Bodner with the Montana Stockgrowers Association noted that Bangs always brought a lot of professionalism to the wolf reintroduction debate and never shied away from controversial issues.

"He didn't take things personally, and when he provided his point of view he was all right when folks disagreed with him," Bodner said. "You might not agree with everything he said, but he knew how to move discussions forward.

"He was able to reach a standpoint where people respected him. He would make the call and make it fairly quickly to either remove problem packs or to do nothing."

"He always pushed us to really make data and science the basis of the state plan, and that set us up to succeed."

— CAROLYN SIME, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Bangs laughs at people's impression of him, noting that "wilderness groups loved me" when he was reintroducing the wolves, and the ranchers hated him. That flipped once he decided the science showed that wolf populations had recovered enough to take them off the list of animals protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"Now (environmentalists) say I'm in the ranchers' pocket and the ranchers say I'm not such a bad guy," he joked.

He came to head the gray wolf reintroduction in a roundabout way. Bangs grew up in Ventura, Calif., and worked through high school and college as a chemical plant laborer, a cattle ranch/feedlot hand and an oil field roughneck. He also loved to hunt and fish.

"I was going to be a welder, but my dad said that by god, I was going to be a college-educated welder," Bangs said. "So I went to a junior college to be a welder, took some biology classes and said, 'You mean you'll pay me to walk in the woods and hunt and fish?'"

After earning a degree in game management from Utah State University, he got a job at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge as a seasonal biological technician in 1975.

"The reason they hired me was they had a new garbage truck with hydraulics, and I was the only guy who applied for the job who knew how to work those," Bangs said. "So they said I was going to do biological studies, but my first job was picking up garbage in the campground. The refuge was a Quonset hut where we'd get snowed in some days and have to take a snowmobile to work. It was a great life."

He helped reintroduce caribou in Alaska, studied the effects of oil and gas development on wintering moose and worked on lynx conservation and management, and recalls jumping from helicopters in the morning to tag brown bears, and return to town in time for breakfast. It was a dream job, but when he heard about a new position being created to help states, the federal government, tribes, ranchers and others figure out how to deal with what seemed to be a growing population of gray wolves in northwestern Montana, he was intrigued.

At that time, gray wolves were listed as an endangered species, and only about 10 wolves were known to live in the Glacier National Park area in the Northern Rockies. Then wolves started killing livestock in 1987, and no one knew how to handle it. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was looking for someone to figure out how to deal with depredations and to do research, outreach and education, which was right up Bangs' alley. He applied, two days before the application deadline, and changed the course of his life.

Around that time, Carolyn Sime was in Kalispell, doing a study on radio-collared deer for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Bangs, the USFWS service project leader for wolf recovery, approached the department and proposed a swap: he would help find federal funding if they would help monitor radio-collared wolves.

"So I started flying to check out the Murphy Pack and any other collared wolves in the mid- to late-1990s," Sime said. "What struck me then, and it's been that way throughout Ed's tenure, is his amazing ability to engage other people, both professionally and personally."

She eventually became Montana's wolf management coordinator until the position recently was discontinued.

"He always pushed us to really make data and science the basis of the state plan, and that set us up to succeed," Sime said. "It was a real privilege and honor to work with him. I've learned so much and it's been a priceless experience."

Mike Jimenez, who is now in charge of Wyoming's wolf recovery program, also >>

Bangs, continued from page 29

worked with Bangs in the early years, and said he created the blueprint for bringing together people with a wide range of interests to work out the issues.

"He set the template for what came later on, creating a tightly knit organization, with a general policy for interaction on the ground with everybody," Jimenez said.

Bangs led the team that captured wolves in Canada and released them, in the mid-1990s, in Yellowstone National Park. Niemeyer recalls how Bangs would fend off the bureaucrats and deal with all the "unpleasantries" in the pre-introduction arena.

"I consider him to be the guy who made it happen," said Niemeyer, who recently released a book called "Wolfer" about his experiences. "I admired Ed for his tenacity in dealing with bureaucrats and politics. I don't think anybody wanted that part of the job."

Bangs said he felt a personal responsibility to reduce conflict and damage caused by wolves, but believes that their reintroduction to the landscape was the correct route to take. He jokes that wolves are actually kind of boring—calling them "just big dogs" that have been studied to death—but that people are fascinating, which is one reason he didn't hesitate when walking into rooms filled with angry people.

"I'm a big believer in interaction with the public, so I made a special effort to reach out to hunting groups, livestock groups, environmental groups; I've probably given 500 presentations myself," Bangs said. "I've met some really interesting people. You have to face people and hear their concerns firsthand to help resolve the conflicts."

He notes that one of the biggest issues he initially faced was the sense from the public that the wolf reintroduction in the Rockies was forced on people here by bureaucrats back East. So he empowered his people to make decisions on the spot regarding how to handle problem wolves, and had few reservations about shooting those that preyed on livestock repeatedly. Those same practices continue today.

"The first thing we did was try to make it a local person with faces that they could call, and the field person had full authority to deal with the problem right here and right now," Bangs said. "I think that helped recover wolves while it minimized the damage."

Bangs said another important part of his job was to keep science at the forefront of the emotionally charged political debate and keep the reintroduction and recovery effort moving forward. With the removal of wolves from the list of endangered species in Montana and Wyoming this week by an act of Congress, Bangs said he feels he's successfully completed his job.

"The bottom line is science is being followed," Bangs said recently, sitting behind his desk still covered with scientific journals, studies and reports, many of which he's authored, and walls dotted with awards and art. "The heavy lifting is over, and that's cool. My upbringing was to complete your job; when we started there were 10 wolves near Glacier. Now there's 1,700 in six states and they're being delisted. That's pretty rewarding."

As he prepares to walk away from his life's work, Bangs knows that he'll always carry it with him, in a sense. In an e-mail, he explained a statement posted on his office wall from someone saying how wolf scars are sexy—which, in his classic self-deprecating manner, the bachelor noted that apparently they aren't.

Bangs said the statement was given to him as a joke after he was bitten on the wrist by a wolf in Wyoming. One canine tooth went through his wrist and he had a few crush marks, but luckily it didn't break his arm. He finished the day's work before getting it checked out in the emergency room.

"I did learn a valuable lesson (that) next time someone asks you to hold a wolf down for them ask if it is immobilized," Bangs wrote. "But I am an especially fun date during full moons!" □

EVE BYRON, reporter with the Independent Record in Helena, Montana

Headquarters

Sieckaniec Appointed New Deputy Director

Service Director Dan Ashe recently announced the appointment of **Gregory Siekaniec** as the agency's new Deputy Director for Policy. Siekaniec, a career Service employee, has served as the Assistant Director for the National Wildlife Refuge System since 2009.

He began his career with the Service at the J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota as a refuge clerk and moved up into management positions in Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming and Alaska. He served as deputy chief of the Refuge System before taking over leadership at Alaska Maritime Refuge in 2001.

In his capacity as Deputy Director for Policy, Siekaniec will provide strategic program direction and develop policy and guidance to support and promote program development and fulfill the Service mission.

Siekaniec spent eight years as the refuge manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, one of the Refuge System's most remote and far flung units. The unit encompasses more than 2,500 islands encompassing nearly 5 million acres and provides nesting habitat for approximately 40 million

seabirds, approximately 80 percent of Alaska's nesting seabird population.

During his tenure there he is credited with developing a host of restoration partnerships with national conservation organizations to restore island biodiversity and ridding islands of destructive invasive species—foxes and rats—that had nearly eradicated native seabirds and other wildlife. Siekaniec earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Montana. He completed the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in 2008, the same year that he completed the Senior Executive Fellows Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. □

honors

Six Refuge System Law Enforcement Officers Win Top Honors

Between them, they've saved human lives, enforced everything from local hunting regulations to international wildlife treaties, and staked out scofflaws, drug dealers and criminal traders in endangered species. They've defused tense situations, turned crime leads into convictions, and trained officers under them.

Now, six law enforcement officers in the National Wildlife Refuge System have won honors for outstanding police work in their respective geographic regions.

Winners of the Refuge Officer of the Year awards are:

Isaac Bedingfield, Alaska

Shelby Finney, Southwest Region

Deb Goeb, Mountain-Prairie Region

Carl Lantz, Midwest Region

Bryant Marcial, Southeast Region, and

Gareth Williams, Northeast Region.

The six are among the 270 full-time and 130 dual-function uniformed officers sworn to protect public safety and enforce federal law on the 553 national wildlife refuges, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The job is a big one, and, on some large and remote lands, officers can be spread thin. That's why the Service recognizes the sharp instincts and professionalism demonstrated by the Refuge System corps, this year exemplified by these six officers.

"We're proud of the job our officers do under often-demanding conditions," says Jim Hall, chief of the Service's Division of Refuge Law Enforcement. "These officers deserve praise for the skill, training and commitment they bring to their work, and for being role models to others." In making the awards, he adds, "the Service commends all of those who wear the Refuge Officer badge and serve tirelessly with great dedication."

Among the honorees' accomplishments:

Officer Bedingfield, based at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, patrols the refuge and nearby islands and marine waters by boat and air. His piloting skills give him all-season access to remote areas where people don't expect a law enforcement presence. There, he monitors commercial fishing operations, hunting and fishing guides, recreational users and special use permit holders. He welcomes opportunities to broaden his skills and frequently helps other Alaska refuges. Officer Bedingfield is also in demand as a Service firearms instructor, performing related tasks with the confidence of a more seasoned instructor.

Officer Finney, based at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, helped the Bureau of Indian Affairs fight crime on the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico. As a member of the Service Honor Guard, he helped dedicate a Pennsylvania memorial to passengers of Flight 93, killed by terrorists on September 11: one of the passengers was Richard J. Guadagno, manager of the Humboldt Bay NWR in California. A field training officer, Officer Finney also instructs all-terrain vehicle safety trainings for Service employees and volunteers and other federal and state law officers. While piloting an airboat for the Alfalfa and Grant County Sheriff departments, he rescued four women and an infant from flash floods.

Officer Goeb, based at Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Montana, is the lead firearm instructor in an eight-state area and evaluates officers' performance in the Service's field training program. She established night patrols to curb illegal drug and alcohol use on the refuge. Her resolve in tracing an elk poaching case in a closed portion of the refuge led to a federal court conviction. She collected kill-site evidence, showing the elk was a cow. Then she had the local game warden check with local meat processors for cow elk that had been received in the last 48 hours. He obtained samples from three specimens. Goeb sent the samples to the National Wildlife Forensics Lab in Ashland, Oregon, along with samples from the kill site. Five months later, the lab determined a match. After two interview sessions, one involving the assistance of a state wildlife investigator, the suspect confessed.

Officer Lantz, based at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, completed several details with southern Indiana refuges to help them enforce their hunting laws. At Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Management Area, he used his interviewing and investigative skills to determine that a group of hunters had exceeded the duck-hunting limit. Two hunters confessed and paid fines totaling $1,800.

Officer Marcial, based at the Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, helped convict animal traffickers for selling endangered sea turtle eggs and meat, a violation of the Endangered Species Act. He conducted stakeouts to confirm violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He led multi-agency search-and-recovery missions off the island of Culebra and managed a multi-officer security detail on remote Desecheo National Wildlife Refuge to protect biologists from traffickers in illegal immigrants and narcotics.

Officer Williams, based at the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Virginia, saved a life by investigating a matter that other agencies initially had set aside because no missing persons report had been filed. When Williams saw a car parked oddly in a trailhead parking lot, he checked its tag to see if an alert had been issued for the driver. None had. But that didn't stop Williams, who contacted the driver's landlord and employer. Neither had seen the person in days. For more than two days, Williams continued the investigation until the driver's daughter filed a missing persons report, noting that her mother suffered from depression. Based on the information gathered by Williams and contained in the missing persons report, county officers launched a search. Fairfax County, Virginia, Police Officer Peter Masood and search dog Shnoz, working with Fairfax County Police Officer Scott Cole, found the woman lying shoeless and disoriented a half mile away in sub-freezing temperatures. She had swallowed a mix of alcohol and prescription drugs. She was rushed to the hospital and recovered. Had it not been for Officer Williams' persistence, the woman would likely have died. □

SUSAN MORSE, Division of Refuges, Washington Office

Southeast

Pamela Steinhaus, visitor services manager at Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Savanna, Illinois, District; and Lori Iverson, supervisory recreation planner at National Elk Refuge, Wyoming, have been chosen as Beacon Award winners by the American Recreation Coalition.

The Beacon Award is given annually to federal land management agency employees who stand out in the field of information and technology.

Steinhaus was recognized for her work integrating technology into her environmental strategy, which includes the use of wi-fi service free to refuge visitors and the installation of wildlife viewing cams throughout the southern portion of Upper Mississippi River Refuge.

Iverson was recognized for her integration of technology into a program titled "Journals and JPGs —Seasons on the Refuge" and using digital photography to stimulate interest natural resources of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem by using the refuge as a living field lab. □

Northeast

Cherry Hill Township is proud to nominate **Lew Gorman III** for the Trail Worker Category of the 2010 National Trail Awards.

His leadership is the reason that Cherry Hill, New Jersey, now has a trail system. His contributions in the planning, development and maintenance helped create more than 10 miles of trails that capitalize on Open Space lands.

While serving as the Chair of the Cherry Hill Environmental Advisory Committee (CHEAC), Gorman got the idea to put in a system of trails utilizing the town's Open Space lands. Creating marked and maintained trails would help Lew complete his desire to connect Cherry Hill residents to nature.

Lew developed the Cherry Hill Trails Plan and, after it was finalized by CHEAC, submitted it to the Mayor and Council; who decided on phased development. Lew initiated development on the trails and worked closely with the Mayor's Office and the Departments of Recreation and Public Works while writing a grant application, which was successful to the tune of $25,000.

After the first successful grant, Lew drafted another grant application to the N.J. Department of Transportation, which was submitted in December 2009. □

Mountain-Prairie

Jewett Receives Legend Award

Jennifer Jewett, education and outreach coordinator at Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota, has been named the 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Legends Award recipient.

Jewett was recognized for her innovative programs to inspire and educate youth about wildlife and habitat, and her work in the development of community partners. Of note, she oversaw two AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps crews that completed major improvement projects, including renovating an accessible nature trail, removing hazardous trees at a dangerous intersection, prepping and assisting with prescribed fires on native prairie units, and organizing events such as Christmas bird counts, the North Dakota Junior Duck Stamp display and an endangered species day at a North Dakota zoo.

The Legend Award is presented to employees of federal land management agencies who excel in the field of recreation. It is presented annually by the American Recreation Coalition, in partnership with the Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration. □

in memoriam

Inez Elizabeth Connor, 78, whose career as national spokeswoman for the Fish and Wildlife Service bridged an era in which the agency's public face blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s—when conservation concepts like "endangered species" evolved from vague ideas into household words—died May 30 in Florida of heart disease.

One of the first female representatives for the Interior Department agency in front of the Washington news media, Connor had a 20-year tenure with the Fish and Wildlife Service and became a role model for a subsequent generation of professional women. Where once a female face before television cameras or in the boardrooms of agency managers was a rarity, today women predominate in the Service's external affairs presence.

"Inez Connor was the real-deal, personally and professionally," says Vicki McCoy, the Service's former external affairs director in Atlanta. "No fanfare, no hoopla, she just got the job done. She would tell you exactly what she thought, but there was never any negative judgment attached to it. It was up to you what you did with what she told you."

Joining the Service in 1976, first in Washington, D.C., in the agency's old wildlife permit office and moving to public affairs, Connor handled a series of progressively more complex and politically charged issues. They ranged from the phase-out of lethal predator control, an agency mainstay for nearly 100 years, to the phase-in of cutting-edge scientific programs like captive breeding of endangered species and restoration of long-depleted salmon runs.

Whooping cranes, bald eagles and California condors crowded her media agenda through the early 1980s…so much so that the occasional news story would misquote "Inez Condor" in its latest account of the controversy-plagued recovery program.

"Her work advanced the recovery of the California condor," remembers Megan Durham, Connor's fellow press officer. "Many people have forgotten how controversial it was when the Service decided to take all remaining wild condors into captivity for breeding. Prominent conservation groups strongly opposed that. Inez was the person who communicated the Service's reasons for that decision."

"That was a time of great creativity and talent in the Fish and Wildlife Service's communications program," says Alan Levitt, former chief of the agency's current information office, where Connor wrote feature stories, planned news conferences and answered a constantly ringing telephone in that pre-e-mail era. "Inez was sharp enough not to accept jargon or simplistic answers to her questions when she wrote about issues. She was a spokesperson for a Federal agency. Her comments—whether about a wild condor or a wetland issue—could be communicated to millions of citizens. She had to get it right…for our agency and for her own integrity."

Connor's prior job experience on Capitol Hill, where she worked for several members of Congress and the Democratic National Committee during the height of the Watergate scandal, gave her innate political savvy and an intuitive feel for the shrewd roll-out of major agency initiatives. Those skills came in handy during especially trying national issues like the phase-out of lead shot, elimination of conflicting public activities on wildlife refuges and the always newsworthy endangered species program.

Connor was named as one of the Fish and Wildlife Service 10 most outstanding employees in 1986.

A native of Columbia, Missouri, Connor retained much of the "show me" demeanor of that midwestern state, cutting to the chase in her representation of her agency with reporters and posing the tough questions to occasionally evasive agency managers that she knew they would face with the press. Ever the stickler for accuracy and the right word, Connor wrote her own obituary for her hometown Florida newspaper.

After Washington, Connor served nine years beginning in 1983 as assistant regional director for public affairs in Region 5. She briefly returned to the Washington Office in 1992, where she conducted communications and outreach activities for the refuge system and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Connor earned a B.S. in journalism from the University of Maryland in 1974.

Connor retired to Redington Shores, Florida, in 1996; her husband of 54 years, Joseph, died in 2004. Her communications work continued in that Tampa-area suburb, where she served her condominium association as an officer, produced its newsletter and video history, and wrote promotional materials for town government. She is survived by two sons and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Burial was in Belle Center, Ohio, her late husband's hometown. □

DAVID KLINGER, National Conservation Training Center

Terry Bell, who retired approximately six years ago from the Duck Stamp Office, passed away on May 23, 2011. She had recently been diagnosed with ALS or Lou Gerhig's disease. Terry had a long and distinguished career with the Federal Government. Among other agencies, she worked at the White House's National Security Council and Office of Management and Budget before coming to the Interior Department in 1984. She worked for the Assistant Secretary (Policy, Budget and Administration) prior to joining the Duck Stamp Office in 1987. She thrived under these new responsibilities and played a large role in promoting both the Federal and Junior Duck Stamp program until her retirement. Terry enjoyed her retirement since then spending time with her grandchildren and great grandson. □

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Make a Global Conservation Impact: Save Vanishing Species Semipostal Stamp Was Issued
On September 20, 2011, a special stamp will give every American the chance to support international wildlife conservation just by mailing a letter. The stamp will directly support the conservation of tigers, rhinos, African and Asian elephants, great apes and marine turtles.

The stamp features an illustration of a tiger cub by artist **Nancy Stahl**. Stamp purchases will directly benefit the Wildlife Without Borders Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF) administered by the Service.

The five funds presently enacted by Congress are: African Elephant Conservation Act, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act, the Great Apes Conservation Act and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act.

A semipostal is a stamp issued at a cost of 55 cents, which is above the present first-class postage rate. The additional 11 cents on each stamp sold will directly benefit the multinational species conservation funds. The stamp will remain on sale for at least two years.

Learn more and stay in touch
• Wildlife Without Borders Multinational Species Conservation Funds and the Save Vanishing Species stamp <www.fws.gov/international/semipostal>

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