



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

DECEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

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Biologists help restore dunes, save wildlife

Under the misty, overcast sky, Alabama Field Office supervisor Rob Tawes grabbed a cart of plants from the back of a truck, and hauled them to the beach nearby. The plants came in by the thousands....sea oats, morning glory, beach elder, and sea purslane just to name a few. This vegetation was about to get a new home, and help endangered species on the beaches of Fort Morgan.

Fort Morgan is a small community west of Gulf Shores. Named after a Civil War fort, people who live there believe in keeping the natural beauty of the beach. But living in paradise has come with a price. Hurricanes such as Ivan, Katrina, and Gustav have practically wiped out parts of the beach. Homes have been destroyed, and scattered sand has made the roads of Fort Morgan nearly impassable. While residents are trying to keep their vulnerable beachfront homes in tact, many local species no longer have homes. The sand dunes, which house unique wildlife such as the Alabama beach mouse, were eradicated by the storms.



Alabama Field Office supervisor Rob Tawes joins another organizer to address a crowd of more than 60 people.. Photo by Denise Rowell

That's why biologists with the Alabama Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are helping nearly 200 landowners to restore the sand dunes, and take back their beaches. They teamed up with the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to host a "Dune Restoration Workshop" on Friday, November 7, 2008.

"Most of our wildlife habitat in Alabama is found on private land, and the Fort Morgan Peninsula is no exception," explained Tawes. "After witnessing the devastating impacts of the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, we developed a program where we could work cooperatively with private landowners to benefit migratory birds and endangered species."

With the help of the "Dune Doctors," organizers helped provide more than ten-thousand plants for the dunes. The landowners were able to get the plants through a federal program aimed at helping them restore damaged habitat. More than 60 landowners arrived at the workshop, eager to learn about the plants and how to take care of them.

With her hair pulled back, Susan Bell was ready to get to work. She's lived on Fort Morgan for more than ten years. "I'm just so happy somebody cares about the sand dunes," said Bell. "In Fort Morgan, we don't have anybody to help us. We've been taking care of our sand dunes since (Hurricane) Opal."

With an eager crowd watching, Tawes spread out each species of plant across the sandy beach. Then, organizers grabbed a shovel, and showed onlookers how to bring the dunes to life. Soon, onlookers became participants, planting the rest of the vegetation into the sand.

“Landowners play an important role in the success of this program,” explained Josh Rowell, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Dune restoration in Fort Morgan gives the dual benefit of restoring habitat for endangered species and migratory birds, as well as providing property owners some protection against storm surges.”

After the demonstration, landowners hopped into their cars, opened their trunks, and lined up to get plants of their own. Now, it was their turn to put their knowledge to the test, and restore the dunes that made Fort Morgan home. In addition to the plants, homeowners also received a parting gift from biologists....a sea-turtle friendly yellow bug light.

The workshop lasted a couple of hours. But the restoration is just beginning. The Alabama Field Office is still getting calls from Fort Morgan residents who want even more plants for their dunes. Now, it will be up to them to keep the dunes vibrant, and give endangered species a fighting chance.

“Through this program we are doing more than restoring wildlife habitat,” said Tawes. “We are also building relationships with the community and providing environmental outreach that will benefit Alabama’s coastal wildlife resources in the future.”

Submitted by Denise Rowell, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office

Behind the Scenes--



Allen Ratzlaff. Photo by Gary Peoples.

Extraordinary soccer coach: Allen Ratzlaff

Thirteen years ago, Allen Ratzlaff, a biologist with the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, had never even played soccer when he volunteered to coach his daughter’s rec team in order to prevent it from folding. Today, he is helping to coach one of the most successful high-school soccer programs in North Carolina.

As Ratzlaff’s daughter grew, he continued coaching her, even as she entered Reynolds High School, where he was asked to help coach the boy’s and girl’s teams at the varsity and junior varsity levels - including becoming the head coach for the girl’s junior varsity team.

Though his daughter graduated high school more than a year ago, he continues coaching, helping the school’s soccer teams (boys and girls, varsity and junior varsity) to a total of 10 conference championships over the past four years.

Submitted by Gary Peeples, Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office

Even the tents were pink...

It was a beautiful sea of pink. Pink shoes, pink shirts, pink hair, pink balloons, pink flags, and lots more. All that pink was to highlight breast cancer awareness and the 3-Day event sponsored by the Susan G. Komen Foundation for the Cure. More than 3,400 walkers of all ages and shapes spent three days in late October walking 60 miles around metro Atlanta to demonstrate to the world the importance of breast cancer awareness. Many of the walkers had survived personal battles with breast cancer and many were honoring those who lost their battle.



Gloria Bell, Kristi Watkins, and Sandy Tucker at closing ceremony. Photo by Bessie Nepomuceno.

With so many walkers, there has to be crew members to tend to their needs. Three employees from the Service's Southeast Region decided to be part of the 400+ crew members for the Atlanta 3-Day walk. Gloria Bell, Kristi Watkins and Sandy Tucker spent four days finding out just how cold, wet, tired and inspired a person can get. Gloria, the veteran crew leader, had the unenviable task of tracking her 15-member crew and all the tasks that needed to be done—making bag lunches at 4:30 each morning; distributing towels for showers; helping set up, take down or move around tables, chairs and barricades; guiding traffic; picking up trash and more. Kristi and Sandy were more than happy to be part of Gloria's "go-fer's."



Walkers and crew camped out in a sea of pink tents. Photo by Bessie Nepomuceno.

Tending to the chores was the tiring part. Seeing the doggedness of the walkers was the inspiring part. By the end of the weekend, many walkers were barely able to put one foot in front of the other... but they did and we cheered and we cried...for them, for their friends and families... and for ourselves. Events like these remind us just how valuable each precious life is and how much can be accomplished when we work together. In addition to the friendships and inspiration generated by the 3-Day, an astounding \$8.3 million was raised for breast cancer research and awareness in the Atlanta area. For more information on the Susan G. Komen Foundation and 3-Day event, go to www.3day.com. Remember to "Think Pink!"

Submitted by Sandy Tucker, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office, Athens, Georgia

Bragging Rights --



The event was focused at Mt. Zion church. Photo by Troy Littrell.

Back to the old 23rd: a day to celebrate wildlife, history, and heritage

On November 1, a beautiful fall day, about 300 people came to Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge to celebrate wildlife and the history and heritage of the people who once lived in the "old 23rd voting district." That district is now known as the Big Sandy Peninsula portion of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge. During the event, the Bennett's Creek observation deck and a newly refurbished Chickasaw

National Recreation Trail were dedicated. An old-fashioned “dinner on the grounds” was offered at the site of Mt. Zion church, an 1850’s-era church still standing on refuge grounds. Visitors feasted on chicken, potato salad, corn bread, and apple pie. Chris Evans, local historian and author, talked about the past history of the area. The public also enjoyed guided birding and hiking tours, history hayrides, up-close encounters with hawk and owls, and an old-fashioned musket shooting. The Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge sponsored the event. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Joan Stevens, Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Paris, Tennessee

150 Louisiana quillworts transplanted into native habitat

When, in 2001, a proposed bridge replacement was going to destroy 70 Louisiana quillwort plants the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP), the Louisiana Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD), Mercer Arboretum in Houston, Texas, and the Lafayette Ecological Services Field Office worked to minimize impacts to this endangered species. The team removed the plants, and Mercer Arboretum agreed to temporarily hold them until after construction.



Louisiana quillwort. Photo by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

When funding issues delayed project construction for several years, the Mercer Arboretum allowed the 70 quillworts to increase to more than 600. On October 23, 2008, the team transplanted 150 Louisiana quillworts back into their native habitat on Abita Creek in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. The partnership has resulted in long-term protection of the transplanted quillworts on the TNC’s Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve and adjacent private property registered with LNHP.

Submitted by Brigette Firmin and Seth Bordelon, Lafayette, Louisiana, Ecological Services Field Office



Seth Bordelon transplants quillworts. Photo by Brigette Firmin.

I gave eight: a day of discovery at Harris Shoals Park



Eric Prowell and the students survey the catch. Photo by Deborah Harris.

On October 16, biologists from the Georgia Ecological Services Field Office in Athens met 26 kids ranging from kindergarten through seventh grade at Harris Shoals Park in Watkinsville, Georgia. The kids were part of an after school program from a local church. They left school earlier that day because of parent-teacher conferences and were eager to get outside.

Everyone had fun in the stream looking for fish and aquatic insects, and checking the minnow trap. Finds were placed temporarily in jars, so everyone could see them. The students also hiked through the woods and wetlands around the park looking for birds and tadpoles. Each child had a container for leaves or insects or whatever they wanted to share with the group. They made animal track prints with colorful paint and also collected seeds, leaves, and acorns and used them to make nature bracelets and mobiles. According to the students, their favorite



Deborah Harris helps students with their track prints. Photo by Samantha Lattimer.

activity was “catching things in the water!”

Submitted by Deborah Harris, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office, Athens, Georgia

Valuable volunteers at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

How does a bustling trout hatchery raise over a million rainbow and brown trout per year and staff a Visitor/Environmental Education Center every day with limited resources? Volunteers! Whether they are local members of the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc., or helpers at the hatchery’s annual Kids Catch a Rainbow Fishing Derby, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery’s volunteers have diverse backgrounds and talents. Wolf Creek also is currently hosting eight Workampers, volunteers who give of their time at various sites across the United States. These volunteers live full-time in their personal motor home or RV on a campsite provided by the hatchery. In exchange for the site and other amenities, the volunteers give of their time and talents by helping to fulfill the hatchery mission. Whether it’s a day spent helping to clean raceways and grade fish or serving at the Visitor/Environmental Education Center front desk, Wolf Creek would not be able to function as well as it does without the help of these dedicated volunteers!



Friends Group member and volunteer, Tony Thomas, talks with a group of students during a field trip to the hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Workampers currently at the hatchery are Steve Berry of Massachusetts; Barbara Jones of Florida; Stew and Sue Nash of California; Bruce and Barbara Temple of Oregon; and Terry and Lynne Sammon of Indiana. Popularity and interest in Wolf Creek’s volunteer program is rapidly growing, and it is with much gratitude that the hatchery looks forward to working with these volunteers and others to follow. During the last fiscal year, 187 volunteers logged a total of 12,024 hours, resulting in a cost savings of \$234,588.24, and with such immense giving of time, its no wonder the hatchery can truly say thank you for the time given from these kind volunteers!



Volunteer Bruce Temple enjoys a great day of fishing fun with a young participant at the 2008 Reaching for Rainbows Kids Fishing Derby. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky

Mars Hill College students help conserve endangered plant

A group of Mars Hill College students are working with Professor Scott Pearson to bring the power of the school’s computers to bear in an effort to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protect the endangered Roan Mountain bluet.

Roan Mountain bluet is found at only a handful of high elevation sites in five western North Carolina counties. With such a limited distribution, knowing where every plant is found is critical to scientists



Students hike to Roan Mountain bluet site. Photo by Jeanette Behrens

working to save the plant. This information was collected in the 1990s; however, it sits, of limited use, as a stack of topographic maps with dots on them and a pile of data collection forms – something students from Pearson's Introduction to Geographic Information Systems class are going to change.

The students will visit a Roan Mountain bluet site and discuss some of the conservation issues surrounding the plant and that particular site. From there, they'll take the paper files – all the topographic maps and the accompanying data sheets - and turn them into a digital GIS file, enabling scientists to project on their computers a map showing the locations of all the sites, and call up information for each site, such as habitat type, elevation, amount of area occupied by the plants, and number of plants.

The partnership between the college and the Service resulted from the Asheville Field Office's web site, which posts projects that would help the Service conserve rare species while giving students a chance to meet course requirements with a real-world application of what they're learning.

Submitted by Gary Peeples, Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office



Service Law Enforcement conducts training seminar for U.S. Probation Office

On October 30, staff members from the Service's Louisiana Office of Law Enforcement and Refuge Law Enforcement conducted a training seminar for 10 members of the United States Probation Office of the Eastern District Louisiana. Special Agent Stephen Clark presented on behalf of the Office of Law Enforcement, and Zone Officer John Branum presented on behalf of Refuge Law Enforcement.

Ten members of U.S. Probation, Eastern District of Louisiana, along with Service Refuge Law Enforcement and Office of Law Enforcement staff. Photo by Joyce McCoy.

Presentations included an overview of the Service's mission, law enforcement priorities, and investigation overviews, as well as discussions about prosecution, sentencing and probation issues. In addition, participants took an airboat tour which included discussions about Migratory Bird Treaty Act cases, wildlife observation, bird watching, and identification.

Eastern District of Louisiana U.S. Probation Officer Chief Jill Benoit attended the seminar and received an appreciation plaque from the Service's Office of Law Enforcement.

Submitted by Stephen Clark, Office of Law Enforcement, Lacombe, Louisiana

National Fish Strain Registry is online

The National Fish Strain Registry (NFSR) is an internet-based program that assembles information on the life history, genetics, reproduction, and behavior of wild populations and domestic broodstock strains. This management tool assists resource managers with decisions on which populations will be most effective for each production or conservation management application. The NFSR

is managed by fishery biologists in Warm Springs, Georgia, and is physically maintained at the Service's Information Resources and Technology Management Office in Denver, Colorado. As of September 25, 2008, the NFSR database is available for use by federal and state governments, private producers, and the general public. In order to access the NFSR website, please submit a request via email to NFSR managers, Chester Figiel (chester_figiel@fws.gov) and Nicole Rankin (nicole_rankin@fws.gov). Once registered, users can access the page at <http://sds.fws.gov/nfsr>. Over the next several months, NFSR managers will be contacting federal and state hatcheries to input information about fish strains they are currently managing. This database is responsive to the needs of the Service's partners and to the Service's mission. It also is available to fisheries managers, fish producers, and researchers throughout the United States.

Submitted by Nicole Rankin, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Georgia



The North Tibwin Plantation, circa 1805. Photo by Tricia Lynch

Sewee Visitor Center volunteers tour Francis Marion National Forest

On Friday, September 19, a cadre of volunteers, nine front-liners, who traditionally give information and conduct visitor services, departed Sewee Visitor Center for a tour of the Francis Marion National Forest to enhance their knowledge of Forest management, history, and recreation opportunities. Tricia Lynch, volunteer coordinator for Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, and Becky Ashley, information assistant, Francis Marion National Forest accompanied the volunteers.

First, the volunteers walked the recently restored Sewee Shell Ring Trail. The walk began at the new parking area, by the interpretative kiosk, and ended at the new board walk, along the 4,000-year-old Native American shell ring at Awendaw Creek. Other stops for the day included Buck Hall Recreation area, North Tibwin Plantation, circa 1805, and St. James-Santee Church, established in 1768 and early church of the rice plantations. Other stops were the bluff above Santee River at McConnell's boat landing, a drive through a picturesque, wildflower filled forested area, and lunch at Huger Park Picnic Area. A wonderful lunch was provided by the SEWEE Association and the Sewee staff. Volunteer Coni Dudley brought a homemade cake.

After lunch, Harry Scott, Forest Service timber staff officer, greeted the volunteers and gave an interesting talk on what his job entails, what the Timber shop accomplishes, and, how this work helps to keep the Francis Marion in line with the Healthy Forest Initiative. Harry also spoke about the management practices of Bio Mass and First thinning, both significant treatments along the Highway 17 corridor and other major roadways. Harry concluded with a question and answer period, answering many questions and explaining timber harvesting procedures for the volunteers. Forest Service District Ranger Orlando Sutton greeted the volunteers and added his compliments and thanks for the fine assistance that the volunteers give for Sewee Visitor Center and also to the entire Francis Marion Forest.

Leaving Huger Park, the tour visited the flowing artesian well at Huger Creek, drove by the Forest Service office complex, and traveled back to the Sewee Visitor Center. The volunteers welcomed the interaction with one another, some meeting for the first time, and had an informative day that was enjoyed by all. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Becky Ashley, Francis Marion National Forest, Awendaw, South Carolina

Connecting children with nature through photography

While many children would rather spend a Saturday in November playing sports or hanging out in their neighborhood with friends, ten students from Columbia Middle School decided to tag along on a trip to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge with their science teacher, Pat Armstrong. Their mission had been decided a month earlier when Mrs. Armstrong had met with refuge visitor services staff. Since there are no trail-specific handouts for Creef Cut Trail, the students would take on the task of creating one.



Columbia Middle School science teacher and students. FWS photo

Using digital cameras the refuge had purchased with regional grant funds, the children split up into three groups. Each group selected a specific category to capture on their cameras; animals, plants and other. Along the way, refuge staff provided an overview of the refuge and its mission. The groups were able to discover many things to photograph for their categories. Most items were easy to put in a category. When the students came upon a strange looking item on the trail, they learned it was bear scat and had a discussion as to which category it belonged. Since there is water beside the trail, an occasional wet footprint was found and identified. The three girls in the “other” group were delighted when they realized “other” included folks fishing at the accessible overlook. After asking if they could take a picture, the students were busy snapping shots of the anglers. It was very enjoyable to see the students interacting with older visitors. Actually, it was hard to tell who enjoyed the exchange more—the students or the anglers.

The highlight of the morning was the appearance of a mother bear and her cub walking across the trail. When reaching the spot where they had crossed, the students were thrilled to see the large footprint on top of an active anthill. The students will be presenting a program to the Board of Education and creating handouts about the trail. However, it will not be all work and no play for the group. In addition to the field trips, refuge staff will be visiting the school with programs for the Science Club. In addition, a canoe trip on one of the refuge paddling trails will be a special treat in the spring.

Submitted by Cindy Heffley, Alligator River/Pea Island National National Wildlife Refuges, North Carolina



Refuge biologists and managers discuss forest management at the Habitat Goals and Objectives Workshop. Photo by Sue Wilder.

Pine management, hibernating bats, Refuge Habitat Goals and Objectives Workshop

The last week of September ushered in the first frosty mornings of the fall season at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, and we were there in October at the Habitat Goals and Objectives workshop to scrape the frost from our windshields, gather for a quick cup of welcome coffee and a donut, and head out to the field to look at the habitats of Noxubee and talk habitat objectives and management.

Who were the lucky souls that got to call this ‘work’? Biological staff from refuges of the East Gulf Coastal Plain, ranging from Hatchie and Mountain Longleaf in the north, Big Branch and Bon Secour to the south, and Eufala and St Catherine Creek to the east and west. Conducted by the Refuges’ Natural Resource Branch staff, this last in the series of Habitat Goals and Objectives workshops brought updates to the field on the latest in national and regional migratory bird population planning, an introduction to adaptive management tools, and area specific

information on priority species, partnering programs, and management tools. Better still, it incorporated field trips to see refuge habitats and wildlife and to discuss how Refuges do, and can do yet more, to deliver this on the ground.

As with all the workshops, one of the greatest values was being all in one place at one time, discussing our biological objectives on the refuges and sharing knowledge and experiences. The cross-discipline expertise was invaluable, as managers, biologists, foresters and fire folks shared their perspectives. In the field, we visited bottomland hardwood habitats (complete with up-close-and-personal viewings of roosting bats), pine stands managed under red-cockaded woodpecker objectives, and moist-soil units managed for wintering waterfowl. Each site was fodder for discussion of biological objectives, priorities, and management strategies.

Habitat comes in all shapes and sizes. I'm not sure, but have you seen it all 'til you've stuck your head inside a hollow tree to look into the tightly-shut eyes of a hibernating bat?

Submitted by Janet Ertel, White River National Wildlife Refuge, St. Charles, Arkansas



These Rafinesque's big-eared and southeastern myotis bats share a roost spot in this hollow cypress tree on a cold morning. Photo by David Richardson.



About 20 private school students embark on their first water-quality-testing field trip on the Mississippi River. Photo by Deborah Logan.

Students take a field trip on the Mississippi River

In early November, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality hosted a water quality field trip on the Mississippi River for some private high school students from Jackson, Mississippi. The juniors and seniors from Jackson Academy spent two hours on the Sweet Olive, a passenger boat which normally caters to the tourist trade. The 20 students conducted standard water quality testing in the Yazoo Industrial Canal and then compared the results with water quality in the open Mississippi River. Paul Hartfield, fish and wildlife biologist with the Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office in Jackson, helped teach the group. He explained changes to the river for navigation and flood control and described current management actions to improve habitat quality. The field trip was the first experience on the Mississippi River for the students and their teachers.

Submitted by Paul Hartfield, Mississippi Field Office, Jackson, Mississippi



Paul Hartfield (on the right) helps prepare equipment for water-quality testing. Photo by Deborah Logan.

Friends Group --



Rosla Plant accepts check from Karen Redick of Wal-Mart. Photo by Friends' member Mike Plant.

Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery receives check from Wal-Mart

On October 7, 2008, Karen Redick of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center 6054 in LaGrange, Georgia, presented a \$1,500 check to Rosla Plant, staff liaison to the Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery.

The funds will be used to support the non-profit Friends Group's efforts and programs. Recently, the Friends supported the Chattahoochee Council of Boy Scouts' God, and Country Encampment when more than 300 Scouts and leaders toured the aquarium and public use area on September 13. During the encampment, Friends' members manned various stations to showcase the variety of activities and career opportunities the Service offers. On September 20, Friends' members provided hot dogs, drinks, and hatchery information for

Open House participants. On September 27, the Friends traveled to West Point Lake Highland Marina to support the Children's Miracle Network's Camp Sunshine bass tournament fundraiser. The Friends Group supported the event by providing family activities and by donating raffle prizes for the fundraiser.

Other 2008 efforts the Friends have supported include the annual Kids Fish for Fun Day and a Big Brother and Big Sister Atlanta Chapter's fish event. In addition, Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery provided three purple martin rack house systems, wood duck boxes, bluebird houses, and bird feeders to support migratory birds and the Audubon February Great Backyard Bird Count. The Friends Group also provided materials, interpretative signs, and equipment for the one-mile nature trail on the hatchery and the carnivorous plant display. A tree grant was secured by the Friends Group providing 30 trees to replace native tree species lost during the past several years on the hatchery.

The Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery has provided many services since the group was founded in 2003. Four of the Founding Board Members Ray Schmeck, Tim Coates, Frida Powers, and Mike Plant were honored with the Regional Director's Award in 2007 for their support and dedication to the Service.

For more information about the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center and the Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery, or if you would like to join the Friends Group, please see these web sites: www.fws.gov/warmsprings or www.warmspringsfishfriends.org.

Submitted by Rosla Plant, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia

Friends

By Noreen Clough, former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director and one of the founding members of the Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery.

Such a small word with such large implied meaning. We all have them -- friends. And we all are one. But now, there's a new set of "friends" on the block. During August, while many of us were fishing (I was doing mine down in Costa Rica), a group of dedicated

volunteers and fisheries professionals were meeting in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, putting together the “National Fisheries Friends Partnership.”

In 2006, the National Fish Hatchery System Volunteer Act was passed to enhance the existing volunteer program of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), most of which has been focused on the National Wildlife Refuge System. Now, through the Fisheries Friends Partnership additional focus can be provided to promote community partnerships that benefit National Fish Hatcheries and FWS fisheries program offices throughout the US. The goal of the program is to enlist volunteers to work with FWS staff in promoting conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources, providing environmental education opportunities for the public, and advocating the mission of the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS), its associated Fish Technology Centers, and FWS Fisheries Offices that work with states and others in managing interjurisdictional fishery resources.

I hope most of you have had the opportunity to visit a National Fish Hatchery. There are 70 of them in all, in 35 states, plus 7 Fish Technology Centers and 9 Fish Health Centers. Many of them are historic properties with lovely old buildings and serene grounds in beautiful settings – the Hatchery System began in 1871. One of the oldest is D.C. Booth in Spearfish, ND. It was established in 1896 and today is a living museum as well as a hatchery continuing its original mission of raising trout for the Black Hills area recreational fishery.

When the NFHS was established, its purpose was to provide domestic food fish to replace declining native fish due to natural or human influences, as well as to expand recreational fishing opportunities. The system has evolved over time, changed, endured and grown to meet modern needs. While many National Fish Hatcheries in the southeast culture trout to mitigate for lost recreational fisheries due to Corps of Engineers dams, today the system has a unique responsibility in helping to recover a variety of endangered and threatened aquatic species, including freshwater mussels, as well as working with national fisheries and aquatic resource restoration and research programs. This includes work involving Great Lakes lake trout, Atlantic Coast striped bass, Atlantic and Pacific salmon, technologies for the culture of endangered sturgeon, advances in fish health, and many other things too numerous to mention.

During my time with the FWS, I had the privilege of overseeing the operations of the Hatchery System. I gained a real appreciation for its diverse mission as well as the outstanding unique expertise and dedication of the folks who staff them for the benefit of the American public. I was so impressed that, when I retired, I became – well, you know – a “friend.”

Yep, I was one of the original handful of volunteers that got together 5 years ago at the behest of FWS hatchery employee Rosla Plant, to form “Friends in Support of the Hatchery” (F.I.S.H.), at Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center, in the town where FDR took his therapeutic baths – Warm Springs, Georgia. Since that time we’ve grown in numbers and accomplishments – everything from renovating the visitor center to planting native trees. But the real achievements have been in being able to provide environmental education and fishing opportunities to schools and youth groups. It’s these types of activities that foster future anglers and fisheries biologists, and youth who appreciate and support natural resource conservation.

Rosla and her “friends” do such a good job that last year, Friends of Warm Springs received the FWS Regional Director’s Award for outstanding community outreach and facility improvement. But the icing on the cake came just this past week. Rosla was notified by the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in LaGrange, GA, that Friends of Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery is the recipient of a \$1,500 Wal-Mart Community Grant to help further our efforts. Doesn’t get much better than that for a Friends Group!

Treat yourself. Got to the website (<http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/nfhs>) to learn more about the National Fish Hatchery System and

see if there's a Hatchery near you. If so, take your kids and make a visit, learn what they do – I think you'll be pleasantly surprised. And ask if they have a "Friends" group. You might even want to think about expanding your own circle of "friends."

This article was reprinted from the September issue of Bass Conservation Journal. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author Noreen Clough and Bassmaster.com.

Hats Off -



Exterior view of the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Photo by Kay Hively, Friends of Necedo NFH.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery honored as "Hatchery of the Year"

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery received the Department of Interior's Hatchery of the Year Award 2008 on November 18, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia. The hatchery, located in Jamestown, Kentucky, was honored for its Visitor and Environmental Education Center's sustainable building design and environmental education programs.

Last year, when the hatchery's staff dedicated their new Center on April 4, it became the first major visitor and Environmental education center at a Southeastern National Fish Hatchery.

"We are extremely proud of the Wolf Creek staff's leadership in both energy efficiency and public education," said Sam D. Hamilton, the Service's Southeast Regional Director. "With the help of our Regional Fisheries and Engineering Programs, a multi-functional building was constructed on only one acre of land."

The 8,700 square foot Visitor and Environmental Education Center includes six offices, an auditorium, a 1,500 square foot exhibit hall, an 800 square foot classroom and wetlab, and a gift shop.

Prior to the Center's construction, the hatchery's six-person staff shared one office and a breakroom. Visitors were confined to the grounds and outdoor raceways.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery received a plaque, an award certificate, and a "traveling" trophy which will be displayed at the Visitor Center for a year.

Some energy efficient features of Wolf Creek's \$1.7 million Visitor and Environmental Education Center include vegetated buffers around the building to control storm water runoff, the use of waterless urinals inside, and the storage of rain and gray water for irrigation. In addition, only bus parking and drop-off areas were added to the existing parking facilities outside the center. Sustainable materials used in the center's construction included composite and engineered wood and siding materials.

The visitor center is open 364 days a year, 8 to 11 hours a day, with the help of volunteers. Special classes are conducted for school groups, and environmental and conservation programs are offered to the local community. Some of these include Terrific Trout Trek, a guided tour of the hatchery, followed by trout fishing; environmental curriculum development workshops for teachers;

an annual youth fishing derby; and a Venomous Snakes of Kentucky educational program.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery is the sole producer of trout for the state of Kentucky, stocking more than 100 different public waters. About 1,000,000 rainbow and brown trout are produced at the hatchery annually.

Submitted by Elsie Davis, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia

Photo Album --

Back to the old 23rd: a day to celebrate wildlife, history, and heritage -- more photos



Guided "history hayrides" were a big hit with many refuge guests. Photo by Joan Stevens.



Visitors enjoyed an old fashioned "dinner on the grounds." Photo by Troy Littrell.



The blue goose, played by Tara Dowdy of Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge was a big hit. Photo by Troy Littrell.



Bennett's Creek observation deck. Photo by Troy Littrell.



A guided birding tour by expert birder Hap Chambers. Photo by Bil Williams.

Sewee Visitor Center volunteers tour Francis Marion National Forest -- more photos



A participant fills a water bottle at the artesian well. Photo by Tricia Lynch



Participants read the interpretive signs at Buck Hall fishing pier. Photo by Tricia Lynch.



Break Time. Photo by Tricia Lynch.



1768 St. James-Santee Parish Church. Photo by Tricia Lynch.

Visitor Services --

An unlikely event: Modern art at a wildlife refuge, conservation innovation in art, invasive species put to good use



Andrea Dinep holds her sculpture.
Photo by Marion Sansing.

If this spiked your curiosity and interest, then a recent sculptural installation at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge has achieved its intent. This project was conceived by Marion Sansing, a refuge volunteer, in an effort to shed new light on the harmful effects of non-native plants on wildlife refuges and other ecosystems.

A recent study has shown that about 75 percent of audiences will not listen, if presented with doom and gloom stories and statistics. A joint effort between the refuge and a local artist was a successful undertaking to reach a greater audience and to rekindle the interest of already educated supporters, in an unconventional manner.

Marion approached Andrea Dinep, a local artist, who had created some installations before, with the idea to use invasive species from the refuge to create art and awareness. Two months later, Andrea brought a small model to the Refuge for everyone to see and for the manager's approval.

Andrea was given the choice to use any of the invasive plants on the refuge, and she decided to use Golden Bamboo, Chinese Privet, and non-native Wisteria to create her modern sculpture. Friends of the Refuge helped harvest the materials and install the sculpture pieces in front of the visitor center. Two signs were erected: One with detailed information on the invasives used and the other with the artist's statement.

An artist's reception was held, where invited guests mingled and had a chance to talk to the artist. Two days later the exhibit was officially presented to the public, during the Refuge's annual Refuge Week Celebration. Fish and Wildlife Service handouts were provided and the Mississippi State University's Department of Weed Science offered information at a booth next to the exhibit.

After a month at the refuge, the installation moved to the Mississippi State University's Landscape Architecture building courtyard to raise awareness there.

If you like more information about the project or to read the artist's statement, contact Marion Sansing at noxubee_refuge@bellsouth.net.



Invasive plants sculpture in front of the refuge. Photo by Andrea Dinep

Submitted by Marion Sansing, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, Brooksville, Mississippi

Wage Grade Profile --

Jerry Dunn of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge



Jerry Dunn. Photo by Jerome Philips.

“It was hot, sweaty, muggy, and buggy... but, we always had fun.” Jerry Dunn, a maintenance worker at Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, smiled as he described the construction of the refuge’s newest nature walk, the Centennial Trail.

Jerry has worked at Bon Secour refuge since 1997. His outgoing personality helps him teach new interns. Each May, a new crop of interns arrive at the refuge, and each year, with the same patience, Jerry, eagerly and without criticism, instructs them how to perform tasks ranging from operating a weed-eater to backing up a boat trailer. One of his proudest achievements is the 40 x 80 foot pole shed he constructed with interns in 2005. Dunn, a certified ATV and boater safety instructor, conducts training courses in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. In addition, each year he aids the Mississippi Sandhill Crane Refuge by mowing and preparing food plots.

At work and in his spare time, Jerry spends a lot of time outdoors, something he considers a job perk. He loves fishing and boating in the Gulf of Mexico. During the hunting season, much of his spare time will be spent scouting or in a deer stand. The rest of his free time is devoted to his family, which includes his wife Cynthia, his two children, Joshua and Shanda, and his two grandchildren, Jaden and Dawson.

Jerry describes the refuge as a great place to work and in his words, “This is the best job I’ve ever had.”

The employees and volunteers of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge are lucky to have such a dedicated and friendly co-worker as Jerry.

Submitted by Rebecca Horton, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Gulf Shores, Alabama

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