



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region**SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS**

NOVEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

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This message from Sam D. Hamilton, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Regional Director, was directed to Service employees throughout the Southeast.

A wise person once said that the one thing that remains constant is change. Whether we resist it or embrace it, change will have its way with us and the world around us. There is, for example, the change that has come to us in the Southeast Region recently with severe weather events that have impacted our field operations. There is also change in the world's climate that is demanding of us a more strategic approach to our conservation mission. And of course, there is the change that we face in a few months as Service employees and as citizens with the advent of a new Administration and a new Director. I am of the mind that change offers us both challenges and opportunities, with the ultimate outcome depending largely upon how we respond.

The road of change can sometimes be bumpy, even uncomfortable, but it may lead us to new possibilities we hadn't envisioned before. As a case in point, over the last year we have experienced significant changes in our Human Resources operations, many of them difficult for everyone involved. Now, these changes are now beginning to pay off as we forge ahead in creating a Human Capital Management "Most Efficient Organization" that will better serve the needs of our programs and field stations.

Change often moves us to look more deeply at what we most value and to find new ways to achieve those things that are important to us. For example, we who have dedicated our professional lives to the conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife resources have seen human-induced changes to the natural world that we find very distressing. Yet out of that distress has arisen in us a more urgent commitment to the critters, new and innovative approaches to our conservation mission, and an even deeper realization of the fact that we as a Service can't do it alone.

No better example exists of the potential payoff from a creative response to change than the recent events at Brosnan Forest, a timber and wildlife preserve located 35 miles northwest of Charleston, South Carolina. Owned by Norfolk Southern, one of the nation's premier transportation companies, Brosnan Forest is of great ecological significance. The Forest is one of the few remaining locations of mature longleaf pine habitat in the Southeast and encompasses the headwaters of the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto (ACE) Basin, one of the largest intact coastal ecosystems on the East Coast.

In 1999, in response to the dire need of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker for habitat, Norfolk Southern enrolled Brosnan Forest in one of the most innovative wildlife conservation programs ever devised—Safe Harbors. The Safe Harbor concept was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Defense Fund in recognition of the fact that private landowners were the key to turning around the changes that were occurring in the American landscape as a result of development. Safe Harbors encourages private landowners to restore and maintain habitat for endangered species without fear of incurring additional regulatory restrictions. The Safe Harbor program worked on Brosnan Forest. Today, nine years later, the Forest is home to the largest known population of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers (79 clusters) on private lands in the Southeast.

But Norfolk Southern didn't stop there. A few weeks ago, the company took the unparalleled step of permanently protecting 12,488 acres of the Brosnan Forest from development through a conservation easement to the Lowcountry Open Land Trust--the largest easement ever made by a corporation in South Carolina.

I recently had the honor of joining with 100 folks representing conservation organizations and agencies from throughout South Carolina and the Southeast for a dedication ceremony for this donation. It was a thrill for me to take part in recognizing Norfolk Southern for its vision in striking the balance between economic profit and protecting rural lands and wildlife values that the people of South Carolina and the nation cherish. Talk about a courageous response to change: In the face of disturbing changes in landscapes across America and in spite of unsettling changes in the nation's economic outlook, Norfolk Southern stepped up and voluntarily did a great thing for wildlife and for people. There's a lesson in that for all of us.

//s// Sam D. Hamilton

Wildlife conservation and our changing climate

Sea turtles are losing nests and habitats. Sooty terns are nesting several months earlier than previously known. Songbirds are arriving on the gulf shores earlier each spring. Fish and mussel populations are strained by warming of waters as well as an increasing demand for water because of drought. Waterfowl are changing their winter distribution and abundance. Armadillo and fire ant ranges are expanding rapidly marching north and east. Invasive plant species are thriving in longer growing seasons.

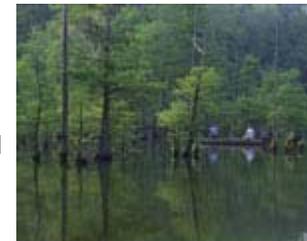


Photo by J and K Hollingsworth.

Many ecological variables contribute to these changes. As biologists, managers, and conservationists, we have an obligation to ask questions and experiment with our assumptions to serve our wildlife mission. And now, those questions have to include climate change: How is a changing climate contributing to ecological changes that impact wildlife populations and distribution? Is climate change accelerating these changes? Would we recognize climate change impacts if we see it?

Those who study climate patterns agree the expected patterns of climate have changed over the last several decades; in fact, ask any gardener or back-yard birder if they've noticed changes blooming patterns or nesting and migration patterns. The difference now, according to experts, is the accelerated rate of those changes. For the most effective conservation measures now and into the future, it is critical to remember that fish and wildlife, in turn, began either adapting or losing ground to changes in climate long before many of us understood or acknowledged our climate is, indeed, changing.

How do we, as conservationists, begin to tackle hard questions about our fish and wildlife conservation mission? Questions that seem so much larger than the place where we work? Our ability to develop and implement conservation strategies to help wildlife adapt to climate change requires the kind of conservation framework embraced by Strategic Habitat conservation. For the Service to meet its mission over the next 50 years, this landscape-level conservation model provides a working framework within which we can engage our partners to help us determine desired population objectives for fish and wildlife, design landscapes to sustain those populations, deliver conservation in the most important places, and then, monitor and adapt our management practices as we learn from both success and failure.

Here in the Southeast under Regional Director Sam Hamilton's leadership, a team of roughly a dozen people came together representing all of our programs to think through some of these issues. This team is framing climate-related issues in terms of four broad categories: wildlife adaptation to climate change, carbon sequestration, mitigation – our carbon footprint, and communications, awareness, and education.

In the realm of wildlife adaptation, for example, we are developing a GIS database to help guide us regionally as habitats and wildlife distribution changes. With that, we working closely with USGS on a hypothesis-based research project that will predict climate change impacts to fish and wildlife across the region. Soon, we'll be linking nationally to an effort that identifies those species most vulnerable to a changing climate. The team also has an ongoing project to develop and maintain "current issues" database that will include the kinds of work taking place related to climate around the region. The team is exploring avenues to incorporate climate change impacts and management actions from capacity building to adaptive management at landscape scales into Service documents including comprehensive conservation plans, biological opinions, recovery plans, and joint venture management plans, among others.

The Southeast is a leader in using the emerging market in carbon sequestration as a tool for habitat restoration for wildlife using the tool to add 40,000 acres of land to the refuge system and restore a total of 80,000 acres to native habitats for fish and wildlife. The team is continuing that work and developing methods to expand it to new areas regionally and nationally.

These are a few examples of our first attempts to address wildlife response to climate change so far aimed at keeping the Service in the forefront of fish and wildlife conservation. As we proceed, specific management recommendations will emerge both from the team and from land managers learning how to adapt to climate change on the ground. We recognize that not all area or resources will be affected by climate change in the same way, or in the same time period; but we do know that we will all have to stand together to address current climate change issues now, and that we will all have to adapt in order for wildlife to adapt.

Over the next six weeks, you will see the first big steps our agency is taking to position itself as the leader in a collaborative effort within the fish and wildlife conservation community to adapt to accelerated climate change, building capacity through partnership, and bolstering a century-long legacy of innovative conservation. An ambitious draft strategic plan to guide our effort over the next five years is being completed by a team Service employees - your peers. Soon you will be asked to review it and provide comments on it and a range of activities that will serve as next steps for our generation's work to conserve America's fish and wildlife in a changing climate.

To learn more about the impacts of accelerated climate change on fish and wildlife and their habitats, please visit www.fws.gov/southeast/climate/.

Submitted by Bob Ford, Climate Team Leader, Southeast Region

Behind the Scenes--



Sarah Freske with crappies. Photo
by Tanya Freske.

My home: the wilderness

Sparkling water in the lake
Squirrels stealing our pecans
Tomatoes growing up a stake
Pink blossoms on mimosa fronds

In the canal are alligators
Chickens running, catching frogs
Turtles digging making craters
Opossums seeking hollow logs

Fawns frolic in the forest
Bears come out to eat the wheat
Crickets chirp in humming chorus
A snake sunning in the heat
My home is this place of nature
With every single wild feature

Written by Sarah Freske

Sarah is the 11-year-old daughter of Bruce Freske, refuge manager of the Mattamuskeet-Swanquarter-Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuges in Swan Quarter, North Carolina. She is home-schooled.

"I think the poem is particularly special because it comes from the rare perspective of a child raised on a National Wildlife Refuge," said Bruce." It also showed me how much of an influence simply living on a refuge and in a rural area has had on her perspective of the world."

Bragging Rights --



Dancing with a crocodile. FWS Photo.

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge holds Wildfest

On October 25, Alligator National Wildlife Refuge hosted Wildfest, including a new wildlife olympic segment. Participants enjoyed mimicking wildlife behavior during the wildlife olympics. Children of all ages learned that mullets can jump twice their body length out of the water, some lizards do push-ups to make themselves look bigger than they really are, and monarch butterflies pump their wings to warm up on cold mornings so they can fly. Other activities included testing skills on the Rock-climbing Wall, casting animal tracks, learning to track red wolves, seeing artifacts from Native Americans, and making fish prints and bird feeders. Smokey-the-Bear even visited the refuge.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina

Captain Marty's Outer Banks Fishing Guidefeatures FWS Ads

On the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Captain Marty Brill just about has celebrity status. Captain Marty has been doing a radio talk show, The Other Side of Fishing, every morning for more than 10 years. More recently, the radio stations have begun publishing Captain Marty's Outer Banks Fishing Guidewhich is distributed as a free publication all along the Outer Banks.

Even more recently, Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges became official Captain Marty partners when he decided to broaden the scope of his fishing guide to include lots of other outdoor activities. The upcoming edition of Captain Marty's Outer Banks Fishing Guidewill have three full-page infomercials for national wildlife refuges in eastern North Carolina, Wings Over Water, and Connecting Children with Nature, all at no cost to the Service. Marty hopes to be able to provide more space for similar information in future editions. You can download a pdf file of the current edition of "Captain Marty's Outer Banks Fishing Guide" at

http://www.fws.gov/northcarolina/images/CaptMarty_OuterBanks_FishingGuide.pdf

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina



FWS' Connecting Children with Nature ad.



A Catch a Smile participant is truly all smiles as she proudly displays her catch of the day. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery initiates new Catch a Smile Senior Fishing Rodeo

Smiling faces and blue skies combined to make Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery's first Catch a Smile Senior Fishing Rodeo a great success. Held on September 24, 2008, the event was a great day of fishing fun for people aged 62 and older. Staff and volunteers from Wolf Creek, along with support from the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. and several community businesses and organizations planned the event. More than 40 seniors attended, along with 18 staff members and volunteers. With a well-stocked creek full of jumping trout, everyone tried their hand at catching their limit. Attendees also were treated to lunch and a chance to win one of many door prizes. More than 35 sponsors donated an estimated \$3,000.00 (either cash or items) to help ensure the derby was a success. Countless other organizations gave of their time and resources, making this event a true example of the positive benefits of partnering. Through such teamwork, the event occurred with little or no cost to any one agency.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Jamestown, Kentucky



Fishing was truly wonderful at the Catch a Smile Senior Fishing Rodeo at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Daniel Lancaster with his mentor Bruce Butler, Jr. Photo by Cheryl Hartzog.

I gave eight! Mentee receives Eagle Scout award

Bruce Butler, Jr., federal Game Warden at Vieques National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico, attended Daniel Lancaster's Eagle Scout award ceremony on August 24, 2008. He also was a guest speaker during the ceremony held in Green Cove Springs, Florida.

"I encouraged Dan to join my former Boy Scout troop where I earned my own Eagle Scout award," said Bruce.

Submitted by Bruce Butler, Jr., Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico

Reaching for Rainbows at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

On September 25, the staff of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. held the first Reaching for Rainbows Special Children's Fishing Derby. The event, designed for severely disabled students from Russell and Clinton counties, featured plenty of wonderful fishing along with a special opportunity for each child to get outdoors. Reaching for Rainbows was made possible through the support and help of several local businesses and organizations along with numerous caring teachers and volunteers, and each young person was treated to lunch, special prize medallions, t-shirts, and lots of encouragement! More than 30 students participated along with the help of 60 staff and volunteers.



A young participant enjoys a beautiful day of blue skies and jumping trout at the hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Support for this derby also came from more than 35 sponsors, who donated an estimated \$3,000 in cash or items to help ensure the derby was a success. In addition, countless other organizations gave of their time and resources, making this event a true example of the positive benefits of partnering. Through such teamwork, the event occurred with little or no cost to any one agency.

Perhaps the most amazing and joyous results of the day, however, were found in the smiles of those children who were able to participate in a great day of fishing and outdoor fun designed just for them. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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



Chad Shirey, electrician, talks with folks about what he does at the hatchery. Photo by Norm Heil, FWS.

Community enjoys Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery Open House

On September 20, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery held its first Open House. About 130 residents from the community enjoyed learning about freshwater fish, mussels, and more on guided thatchery tours. A kid's coloring contest, a tour of fisheries equipment, and pond and fish demonstrations also were available to participants. In addition, The Fish Health Center and Fish Technology Center provided demonstrations and displays. The Friends of Warm Springs Fish Hatchery, Inc. prepared a hot dog lunch.

"We're happy so many people came out to see and support the hatchery," said Carlos Echevarría, hatchery manager. "We plan to make the Open House an annual event." More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Jaci Zelko, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia

Tennessee Technological University students assist with lake sturgeon marking and tagging at Warm Springs Hatchery

Six students from Tennessee Technological University traveled from Cookeville, Tennessee, to Warm Springs, Georgia, to help hatchery staff tag and mark over 3,900 lake sturgeon. Two scutes were removed from each lake sturgeon. Then, each fish was tagged with coded-wire tag. The lake sturgeon will be stocked in the Upper Tennessee River, as part of the Lake Sturgeon Reintroduction Plan. The hatchery has been a partner in the lake sturgeon reintroduction efforts in Tennessee and Georgia since 2000. Extra hands greatly reduced the hatchery staff's workload, and the students got hands-on fish culture experience.



Jaci Zelko reaches for the next anaesthetized lake sturgeon that will be injected with a tiny coded-wire tag. Photo by Carlos Echevarria, FWS



Chad Shirey demonstrates the proper techniques to remove scutes from a lake sturgeon fingerling. Photo by Carlos Echevarria, FWS.

Submitted by Jaci Zelko, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia

Migrant workers' children learn how to fish

Staff from Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge kicked off National Wildlife Refuge Week October 4, by helping to host a fishing clinic for migrant workers' children.

Forty seven children from Immokalee attended the event at the Port of the Islands Marina in Naples, Florida. The children learned how to fish, how to tie knots, the proper way to handle fish, and about fishing regulations. Each child received a rod and reel and a tackle box to take home. The event was a joint effort involving several other organizations including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Sea Grant, Port of the Islands Marina, Double R's, Collier Audubon, Marco Island Sport Fishing Club, Migrant Families Children Liaisons, Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge, and other refuge volunteers. More photos in [Photo album](#).



FWS volunteer Jeanne Emerick teaches casting. Photo by Takako Sato.

Submitted by Takako Sato, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Naples, Florida



Service's Regional Directorate visits Roan Mountain. Photo by Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.

Regional Directorate tours Appalachian highlands

Members of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Regional Directorate recently toured Roan Mountain, on the Tennessee and North Carolina state line, learning about the conservation efforts of the Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office and its partners.

Roan Mountain, considered by many to be one of the most biologically diverse areas in the Southeast, is home to six federally threatened and endangered species, the recently recovered peregrine falcon, and some of the world's rarest natural communities, including grassy balds and spruce-fir forests.

The Directorate, which included the Regional Director and heads of the National Wildlife Refuge, Migratory Bird, and Law Enforcement programs, met with conservation partners, including the USDA Forest Service, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The group discussed goals and objectives of existing partnerships across the Roan Mountain area and how they meshed with the Service's emphasis on strategic habitat conservation, an effort to increase the efficiency of how Service resources are used.

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

Eighth Graders learn about stream ecology and water quality

Eighth graders from every public school in North Carolina's Haywood County were out on the Pigeon River in early September, where biologists joined them in collecting fish, sampling benthic macroinvertebrates, testing water chemistry, and learning how land use affects stream quality. The next week, 300 students from Henderson County's Rugby Middle School were on the North Mills River learning the same things.

The students participated in the Kids in the Creek program, sponsored by Haywood Waterways in Haywood County and the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service in Henderson County, and supported by the Service. The Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office's support of Kids in the Creek is an on-going effort to foster stream education in communities with listed fish or mussels, and both of these events involved students who live in watersheds that are home to the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel.



Students study macroinvertebrates in the Mills River. Photo by Gary Peeples.

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



Logo for the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature podcast. Credit: Gary Peeples.

Asheville Ecological Services Field Office begins podcasting conservation commentary

The Southern Appalachian Creature Feature, for years a radio commentary the Asheville Ecological Services Field Office has created in partnership with radio station WNCW, 88.7, is now also available as a podcast, available both directly from their website (<http://www.fws.gov/asheville/htmls/generalinfo/podcasts.html>), and through iTunes.

The commentary provides a glimpse into the fascinating world of plants and animals in the Southern Appalachians, one of the most biologically diverse temperate regions in the world. Beyond that it examines the pressing conservation issues of the region that affect those plants and animals - from invasive species, to growth management, to engaging people in the outdoors.

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

Biologists return to pollution-plagued Cane River, making discovery

Aquatic biologists returning to Yancey County's pollution-plagued Cane River made a surprising discovery recently – two live Appalachian elktoe mussels upstream of the town of Burnsville's wastewater treatment plant which has been beset with problems.

This marks the first time the endangered mussel has been documented upstream of where the plant discharges into the river.

With data from the North Carolina Division of Water Quality showing improved fecal coliform levels in the Cane River, biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission decided to enter the river to better gauge the extent of a mussel die-off that coincided with problems at the wastewater treatment plant.

Since August 7, biologists have examined eight stretches of the Cane River for signs of mussel life. In addition to finding live mussels upstream from the wastewater treatment plant, they also found live mussels at the two sites furthest downstream from the plant. However, at the five downstream sites nearest the plant, where mussels were known to exist prior to the discharge problems, biologists failed to find any live mussels.



State biologists catalogue mussel shells from the Cane River. Photo by Gary Peeples.

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



Appalachian elktoe. FWS Photo

An answered call for assistance

Mark Cantrell, of the Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Office, called for assistance with a hydroelectric project requiring the surveying and relocating of endangered Appalachian elktoes in Dillsboro, North Carolina. Fisheries biologists from the Warm Springs, Georgia, Fish Technology Center and the Orangeburg, South Carolina, National Fish Hatchery joined personnel from Duke Energy, their contractors, volunteers, and several state agencies. Despite the crisp mornings and cool water temperatures all the surveyors

enjoyed the work in the Tuckasegee River and the opportunity to share experiences while the group found, moved, and tagged more than 450 mussels. This combined effort was a great success in partnership building and inter-agency cooperation. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Bill Bouthillier, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Georgia

Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center helps the Hooch

The city of Columbus, Georgia, held its twelfth annual Help the Hooch day on October 18, 2008. Over 10,000 volunteers helped clean up trash along the banks of the Chattahoochee River and some of its tributaries. Volunteers removed over 100,000 pounds of litter. Afterward, the city hosted a watershed festival to celebrate the clean-up. Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center staff members set up a booth with several tanks containing aquatic species from the watershed. The most popular attraction was the touch tank containing turtles, frogs, crayfish, and tadpoles. Approximately 5,500 children filtered through the booth to touch or pick up crayfish and turtles.



Children touch a small musk turtle. FWS Photo.



Albino Loggerhead sea turtle hatchling. Photo by Rebecca Gallagher.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge successes and setbacks for Loggerhead sea turtles

During the fall, Cape Romain's staff reflects on the successes and setbacks of the 2008 nesting season for threatened loggerhead sea turtles. As one of the most significant nesting areas for the northern sub-population of loggerhead sea turtles north of Amelia Island, Florida, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge numbers about 1,000 nests each summer.

Loggerheads made good use of approximately 15 miles of beach on three refuge islands, Cape, Lighthouse, and Bulls Island. They laid 1,458 nests along the beaches, and the hatch success rate was average until tropical storms Fay and Hannah blew through the area in mid-September. The storms caused severe erosion on Cape Island where more than 20 feet of beach was lost. As a result, 90 nests were lost, and many others were washed over so severely that hatch rates were reduced by nearly 90 percent. Despite the storms, however, loggerheads had a remarkable summer thanks to the unwavering

dedication and diligence of staff and volunteers for Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge.

Refuge and Charleston Ecological Services Field Office employees, along with scores of volunteers, soldiered throughout the summer to protect the nests of the much-loved turtles. This summer, 81 volunteers contributed 4,578 hours to protect the loggerhead sea turtles nesting on refuge beaches. Volunteers include hard-working folks of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the South Carolina Aquarium, the SEWEE Association, and the Deweese Island Homeowner's Association.

The Loggerhead sea turtle was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1978. Factors attributed to their decline include loss of nesting habitat, artificial lighting, pollution, incidental capture in fisheries and dredging, and boat strikes. It is estimated that only one of every 1,000 hatchlings reach sexual maturity. The nest protection program was first implemented in 1979 and has been growing for the past 30 years. Recovery activities includes constructing protective hatcheries, locating nests and false crawls, relocating nests threatened by washover and erosion into hatcheries, caging nests for predator control, monitoring nests, and conducting inventories at season's end. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Patricia Lynch, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Awendaw, South Carolina

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 -



Honkers, Supervisory Ranger Teresa Adams, and Project Leader Dwight Cooley prepare to cut the birthday cake. Photo by George Ponder.

Wheeler NWR celebrates 70 years of conservation

On September 20, 2008, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama celebrated 70 years of waterfowl conservation. The Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association and refuge staff invited the local community to the birthday celebration!

On July 7, 1938, an executive order by President Franklin D. Roosevelt set aside the middle third of the then new TVA Wheeler Reservoir as an experimental National Wildlife Refuge to determine whether power reservoirs could be made attractive to waterfowl. The experiment was deemed a success as concentrations of ducks began wintering on the refuge soon after its establishment. It was the first national wildlife refuge to be placed on a reservoir of this type.

Activities at the September birthday celebration included two presentations by Byron Ferguson, "Master of the Longbow" and extreme archery marksman. He has appeared on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and on ESPN, among other television networks and programs. In addition, The Kelly Bartlett Conservancy presented a live demonstration of their birds of prey, featuring owls, hawks, and eagles. Larry and Cheryl Battson, founders of Wildlife Educational Services, presented their live wildlife program. Their animals have appeared on television programs such as The Tonight Show, Oprah, and the Today Show. They also have worked with Animal Planet, the Discovery Channel, and Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.

Other activities include a Castingkids Contest presented by Bassmasters of North Alabama; a Lasershot Game presented by Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; a flint napping exhibition; a bird banding demonstration by refuge staff; a wildlife discovery trail activity; hay wagon rides; and face painting. Exhibitors included Alabama Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Tennessee Valley Authority, Natural Resources and Conservation Service, and the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association. Of course, Honkers the Blue Goose was on hand throughout the day.

The day began with rain showers which prevented the scheduled hot air balloon rides from taking place. However, the day was a success with an estimated attendance of more than 2,500 people attending. The refuge received very positive comments and compliments for a wonderful, free, family event. The successful celebration was made possible with the help of a \$9,000 Education Funds grant from the Alabama's Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys Resource Conservation and Development Council. More than 20 volunteers donated more than 800 hours toward the event. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Teresa Adams, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, Alabama

Norfolk Southern sets bar high for corporate America

Pick up any national magazine today and you are likely to read about the pervasiveness of corporate "greed" in America -- stories about top-heavy companies with wealthy CEOs surrounded by drained and exploited communities.

Pick up the newspapers in South Carolina and escape the dread of Wall Street. Here you'll find a story that the rest of corporate America would pay any top public relations firm to be a part of.

Step back in time to the 1830's. South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company purchased some 100,000 acres of what was thought to be virgin forest near Dorchester, South Carolina. Massive quantities of timber were consumed from the forest for firing boilers of their steam-powered locomotives and constructing track structures like cross-ties, trestles and bridges. Then in 1899, Southern Railway took over the forest. By this time, most of the mature timber was gone, and the acreage shrank to around 14,000 acres as parcels were carved up and sold off. Species like the red-cockaded woodpecker whose existence depends on the mature longleaf pine forests of the southeast were slipping closer towards extinction. By the mid-1920's, Southern Railway began to reverse course and took its first steps towards revitalizing this once pristine natural area. The company began to replant longleaf and loblolly pines for pulpwood production, but more important was Southern Railway's desire to develop a demonstration area for other landowners wishing to restore and re-forest their land. Besides serving as a demonstration area, the forest also became a living laboratory for forestry students from universities throughout the South.



Brogan Forest. FWS photo.

Fast forward to 2008 and you'll find a forest that looks much like it did when our forefathers arrived in the New World. The elegance of stately longleaf pines towering overhead welcomes each and every visitor to this forest, much as it welcomes the species that are beginning to rebound in this meticulously well-managed Norfolk Southern property. The forest, now known as Brosnan Forest, was officially dedicated in 1968 and bears the name of a former president of Southern Railway, Bill Brosnan. Enrolled in the Service's Safe Harbor Program since 1999, Brosnan Forest now hosts almost 80 groups, or clusters, of red-cockaded woodpeckers, the largest known population of red-cockaded woodpeckers on private land in the Southeast.

And if "growing" endangered species wasn't enough to show Norfolk Southern's commitment to conservation, their next move was one that stunned even the most seasoned conservation professionals in South Carolina. In August 2008, Norfolk Southern announced that over 12,000 acres of Brosnan Forest would be placed under conservation easement with the Lowcountry Open Land Trust. Marking this monumental occasion, a Dedication Ceremony was held at Brosnan Forest on October 9, 2008, with over 100 people representing conservation organizations and agencies from throughout South Carolina and the Southeast.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton joined a host of distinguished guests in recognizing Norfolk Southern's commitment to conservation. Acknowledging the gift that Norfolk Southern has made, not only to the people of South Carolina but indeed, the people of this nation, Director Hamilton praised the vision and fortitude of Norfolk Southern.

"We aren't making any more open land, and we are seeing it being gobbled up across the United States every day," said Hamilton. "The conservation work you all do in the Lowcountry is unparalleled."

"You have a vision – a great love of the outdoors and wildlife, and a connection to the past, and a desire to have that for the future," he continued. "Your conservation gift for the future is a gift for wildlife, a gift for my grandson, and for all Americans. Thank you very much."

The conservation easement donated by Norfolk Southern on Brosnan Forest is the largest conservation easement ever donated by a corporation in South Carolina. With the perpetual protection of over 12,000 acres, Norfolk Southern has become a true model of corporate giving. As Southern Railway has grown and evolved into the corporation that we now know of today as Norfolk Southern, one very important thing has grown and evolved with this corporation: a desire to protect and preserve a place that they've all come to know as "The Forest."

Striking a balance between profits and protection, Norfolk Southern has secured something more than some positive press. What they have accomplished with this protection effort will bring about the return of the longleaf pine forest to the Southeast and bring one more endangered species closer towards recovery.

Submitted by Jennifer Koches, Charleston Ecological Services Field Office, South Carolina

Photo Album --

Reaching for Rainbows at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery -- more photos



Wolf Creek Hatchery Deputy Project Leader Sheila Kirk helps distribute medallions to all of the derby participants. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. member Tina Begley enjoys a great morning of fishing fun with her son Bo. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Smokey Bear stopped by Wolf Creek NFH to greet participants as a proud partner and supporter of the derby. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Community enjoys Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery Open House -- more photos



Staff and volunteers wait for the public to arrive. Photo by Norm Heil, FWS.



Fish distribution truck sits on display at the hatchery. Photo by Norm Heil, FWS.



Several displays were used to show the public what the hatchery does, including working with native fish and freshwater mussel species. Photo by Norm Heil, FWS.

Migrant workers' children learn how to fish -- more photos



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission dog loves kids. Photo by Jeanne Emerick.



Casting to the sky. Photo by Takako Sato.



Marco Fishing Club representatives teach children about the contents of a tackle box. Photo by Jeanne Emerick.



Everyone who participated in the fishing clinic. Photo by Chris Shucart, marina owner.

Wheeler NWR celebrates 70 years of conservation -- more photos



Cheryl Battson and Alaskan timber wolf. Photo by Garry Tucker.



Project Leader Dwight Cooley demonstrates the art of bird banding. Photo by George Ponder.



Birds of Prey presentation, always a crowd favorite. Photo by George Ponder.



Master of the Longbow, Byron Ferguson wows the crowd. Photo by George Ponder.

An answered call for assistance -- more photos



Surveyors looking for mussels. FWS Photo.



Tagged mussels. FWS Photo.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge successes and setbacks for Loggerhead sea turtles -- more photos



Allan Dawson holds Leatherback sea turtle egg. Photo by Leslie Beil.



Digging up a Leatherback nest. Photo by Leslie Beil.



Putting eggs in hatchery. FWS Photo.



Probing to locate turtle nest. Photo by Rebecca Gallagher.



Night work. FWS Photo.



Loggerhead sea turtle hatchlings. Photo by Rebecca Gallagher

Visitor Services --

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge holds successful Open House



Visitors enjoy a boat tour. FWS Photo.

On Saturday, September 27, 2008, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge hosted an Open House to make its resources known to the residents of Gulf Shores and surrounding towns. Situated on the Fort Morgan peninsula in Alabama, the refuge offers five miles of pristine beaches, six miles of trails through maritime forest, and the last fully intact dune ecosystem in the state.

During the Open House, the refuge's staff hosted 30-minute boat rides and guided trail tours. Boat passengers enjoyed seeing the Sand Bayou unit, a relatively remote area of the refuge. On the ride along the Intracoastal Waterway, passengers spotted great blue herons, cormorants, brown pelicans, laughing gulls, and a bald eagle. Participants on the Pine Beach Trail tour enjoyed listening to one of the experienced tour guides explain the maritime forest, dune, and lagoon ecosystems' importance to local flora and fauna. In addition to seeing the vibrant wildflowers and fruiting shrubs, a few lucky visitors saw a dusky pygmy rattlesnake, monarch butterflies, hummingbirds, stringrays, and triple tail fish.

In the refuge office, kids and adults alike learned about important species, such as the endangered Alabama beach mouse and the threatened loggerhead sea turtle. The guests also enjoyed kids' activities and watched a video showcasing the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Thanks to help from dedicated volunteers and the gorgeous autumn weather, the Open House was a success.

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

Wage Grade Profile --

Don Roby of Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge



Don and the 2008 YCC crew after a hard day of work. L - R: Billy Lusk, Don Roby, Will Downs, and Sidney Townes/ Not pictured: Caleb Williams. Photo by Kimberly Hayes.

Don Roby has worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service for more than 10 years. In 1998, Don started as a temporary Engineering Equipment Operator at the North Mississippi Refuges Complex in Grenada, Mississippi. After a couple of years he became a full-time Engineering Equipment Operator at the Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge in Brownsville, Tennessee. He worked there for two years before returning to the North Mississippi Refuges Complex as a full-time Engineering Equipment Operator at the Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge.

For the last four years, Don helped with several noteworthy projects and supervised the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). Under his direction, the YCC program completed a number of essential maintenance projects, including a fishing pier on Happy Hollow Lake at the Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge.

Don enjoys the diversity of projects that he works on where he can utilize his skills in carpentry, welding, and operating equipment. He also enjoys working with the Friends of Dahomey and assisting with outreach events.

Don's hobbies include a variety of home improvement projects and working as an Assistant Deacon at his church. He retired from the Mississippi National Guard after 25 years of service. He lives in Holcomb with his wife Arlean and has two daughters Charlean and Tasha, and one grand-daughter.

Submitted by Alejandro Galvan, Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge, Boyle, Mississippi

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