



# Focus on "Friends"

## Southeast Region Friends Group News

### Note from the Regional Director

We celebrated our nation's 236<sup>th</sup> birthday this month, remembering all the things that make America great. High on the list is the spirit of the American people. Throughout our history, we have been a "can do," optimistic people. We don't easily give up when life hands us challenges. When things go wrong, we do what needs to be done to turn the situation around. That is as true now as it was in 1776. It is as true for employees of the Fish and Wildlife Service and our Friends as it was for our founding fathers and mothers. Here in the Southeast Region, time and again we have demonstrated the indomitable American spirit by turning conservation messes into conservation successes. That's what we do.

*The Service had a celebration of another kind in Mississippi, this one both deeply gratifying and bittersweet. On June 22, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge was officially renamed the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in honor of our late Director.*

More than 200 people, including Sam's family, many friends, Refuge staff members and Friends, and representatives of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other NGOs and partners joined Director Dan Ashe and me in celebrating Sam's life and legacy in this renaming ceremony. Sam's impact on others was made very clear when the announcement of the new name brought the crowd to its feet in a standing ovation. I want to extend my gratitude to the Friends of Noxubee NWR and the refuge



*Sam's grandson Davis unveils the new sign at the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR renaming event with Clay Hamilton, Sam J. Hamilton, Becky Hamilton, Cindy Dohner, Dan Ashe, and Steve Regan. Credit: USFWS*

volunteers who contributed to the success of this event.

Sam was our Regional Director for 12 years, and his ties to the Southeast and to this refuge could not have been stronger. He was a native Mississippian, and Starkville, where the refuge is located, was his hometown and where he is laid to rest. Sam's path to becoming our Director quite literally began at Noxubee. He caught his first fish at age five in refuge waters and got his first job as a teenager in the Youth Conservation Corps at Noxubee. The appropriateness of this tribute is not lost on any of us who knew him.

As the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge sign was unveiled during the ceremony, I was struck by the fact that there exists an even greater tribute to Sam's memory. It is the way in which we in the Service and the Region are carrying forward his vision for our organization as we fulfill our crucial role in conserving America's fish

and wildlife heritage. Sam knew that our success in the future was tied to working with our Friends and in partnership with others in the public and private sectors at the landscape scale. He believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that we had to fully embrace new conservation approaches and technologies and be driven by science while maintaining our pride in our history and past accomplishments. He was committed to a One Service approach, where Program boundaries provide structure but don't inhibit the free flow of communication and collaboration that are critical to our success.

As I consider what we are doing across the Southeast and the things that are happening in standing up Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in the Region and across the nation, it is clear that Sam's vision lives on. We are Sam's legacy in all that we do, and we each are creating a legacy of our own to leave for future generations.

*Cindy*

## Fisheries News

### 2012 Veterans Appreciation Fishing Rodeo

Article by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery located on Rock Creek Road just off Highway 60 in Suches, Georgia, held its first annual Veterans Appreciation Fishing Rodeo on May 8<sup>th</sup>. More than 125 U.S. military veterans of all ages and branches of service and their family members attended the free event.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Ranger Training Battalion at Camp Frank D. Merrill recognized the veterans and provided a certificate of appreciation to the Hatchery in honor of hosting and organizing the event. More than 2,000 beautiful rainbow trout were stocked into Rock Creek especially for the Rodeo.



A banner welcomes the Veterans to the Fishing Rodeo. Credit: USFWS

Department of Veterans Affairs, Georgia Department of Veterans Services, and Project Healing Waters representatives were present to provide information and answer questions about their programs. Friends of the Hatchery and Trout Unlimited served free hotdogs donated by Save-A-Lot Food Store, condiments, patriotic cupcakes, soft drinks, and water to the participants for lunch. A special banner commemorating the event was presented by the Friends of the Hatchery. The hatchery grounds were beautifully decorated by the Friends with patriotic American flags, banners, and tablecloths.



Kids line the bank waiting to reel in the big one! Credit: Al Beardsley

### The One that Didn't Get Away

Article by Wm. Russell Cain, Friends of Dale Hollow NFH

"I got one!" "I got one!" "Hold on, keep the tip in the air!" "I'll be right there to help you." These words echoed across the small stream surrounded by parents and kids at the fifth annual Kids Fishing Rodeo at Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. It was an exciting event in which 295 kids plus parents registered to participate. Parents and children came from many miles around to take part in this annual event sponsored by the Hatchery and supported by the Friends group. In addition to Hatchery staff and Friends members, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff, Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency officers, Sheriff Deputies, and EMT personnel were on hand to assist. Hundreds of trout ranging in size from normal release size up to 10 pounds were released for the Rodeo. Two different times the participants saw trout released into the stream.

Not only did the young people who were fishing have the opportunity to catch trout, but many prizes donated by area businesses were given away. Approximately 50 businesses and individuals provided prizes for this Kids Fishing Rodeo. Without their support, the Rodeo would not have been so spectacular! Prizes included rods and reel combinations, stringers, fishing tackle boxes, and other fishing gear. Free drinks and hot dogs were a part of this celebration.

It was exciting to watch the young people, some fishing for their first time,

while others were experienced anglers, as they interacted with each other and their families. This event was as part of National Fishing Week and Free Fishing Day in Tennessee. Fathers, mothers, grandparents, whole families, took part in this four-hour event. Many of the participants mentioned they would like to see more opportunities for their children to become active in fishing. Of course, this is one of the goals of the Kids Fishing Rodeo, and the work of the Friends of Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. It is why the Friends group continues to hold casting classes and demonstrations, provides "Trout in the Classroom" programs, and helps the Hatchery with their many school outings. Most people went away happy with plans to return next year.

While the Kids Fishing Rodeo was in progress, the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery also held its Open House. Approximately 70 people received drinks, cake, and cookies as they toured the Hatchery facilities and fed the fish. Friends group members helped as tour guides.

Plans are already underway to promote the next Kids Fishing Rodeo and Open House at the Hatchery. The Friends are also beginning to meet with teachers and school administrators in the area to understand how they can better link with their needs in the classroom. The Friends see this as an exciting new way to meet the goals and the objectives of both the Hatchery and the Friends group.

## Refuge News

### *“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society Wins Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau’s Chrysalis Award for Education*

Article by Chelle Koster Walton, DDWS



DDWS President John McCabe, Executive Director Birgie Vertesch, Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, and DDWS Office Manager Gary Ogden. Credit: “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge received the Chrysalis Award for Education from the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau and Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce on May 9 in a ceremony at the Harborside Event Center.

*“There were 10 organizations nominated for this prestigious education award, and the society was announced as the winner with a special video made in their honor;” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who nominated DDWS. “What a great way to celebrate 30 years of this amazing group helping the refuge.”*

As part of the National Travel and Tourism week, the third annual Celebration of Business & Tourism Awards Luncheon and Trade Show paid homage to the value of tourism as a major economic engine in the county.

The Chrysalis Awards signify the development of a partnership between the business and tourism communities. Ten winners out of 80 nominees were judged within their respective categories on how they distinguished themselves in the community, along with their efforts to promote the destination, contributions to business and tourism partnerships, and work to foster growth and sustainability.

### *Friends of Carolina Sandhills NWR Host Annual Youth Fishing Derby*

Article by Lyne Askins, Carolina Sandhills NWR, Refuge Manager

Smiles, laughter, and lots of splashes were familiar sights and sounds at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Fishing Derby on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by the Friends of Carolina Sandhills NWR, 110 participants, ages 15 and under, attended this year’s derby at Oxpen Lake on the Carolina Sandhills NWR. Located in rural northeastern South Carolina, the refuge provides opportunities for connecting kids with nature through hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation. Realizing that today’s youth do not spend as much time outdoors as previous generations, the Friends wanted to promote a wildlife-dependent activity that would engage youth from this rural constituency. The Fishing Derby has enjoyed enthusiastic participation and has become the Friends’ signature event.

With picture perfect weather for the event, fishing began promptly at 8:30 am and continued until the buzzer sounded at 10:30 am. For kids who were hesitant to fish or tired of “reeling ‘em in,” wildlife-related arts and crafts were available. Participants decorated fishing lures to take home and birdhouses that are to be displayed outside the refuge visitor center.



A youth reels in a catfish at the Friends of Carolina Sandhills NWR Youth Fishing Derby. Credit: USFWS

Following the Derby, the Friends provided a picnic meal for all attendees at the Lake Bee Recreation Area. The cookout was a great way to celebrate the success of the day with grilled hotdogs and all the fixings. Due to the generosity of the Friends and more than a dozen local businesses and community organizations, door prizes were drawn and each child received a prize. From coolers to beach towels, fishing rods to tackle boxes, Slip-n-Slides® to wacky sprinklers, all things outdoors were given away to encourage outdoor fun and recreation. Participants were also handed goodie bags as they departed, but it was obvious the biggest “takeaways” were the memories they will cherish for years to come.

## *St. Marks Refuge Association Awarded Every Day Capacity Building Grant*

*Article by Betsy Kellenberger, St. Marks Refuge Association, President*

The grant recipients for the first round of the 2012 Every Day Capacity Building Grants have been announced and the St. Marks Refuge Association is one of them! St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is located just south of Tallahassee, Florida and encompasses about 70,000 acres of coastal marsh, seasonal wetlands, upland pinelands, and large impoundments for migratory ducks and wading birds.



*Paul Hamilton, Board Member; wrote the grant application with Betsy Kellenberger, Board President on the right. Credit: Lou Kellenberger*

The Every Day Capacity Building Grants come from the National Environmental Education Foundation and provide funding to strengthen the organizational effectiveness of community-based nonprofits who serve public land sites in the United States. The grants assist the groups with strategic planning, branding, communications and marketing, volunteer management, and improved fundraising. The projects advance the organizations' ability to carry out their strategic goals and make them more sustainable.

SMRA Board Member Paul Hamilton wrote the grant application earlier this year. He did some historical research on award-winning grants in previous cycles to complete the grant application. The Association will use the \$5,000 grant for a new member/donor database, a laptop computer, printer and capacity building/fundraising workshops, which will be held through the end of the year.

St. Marks Refuge Association thanks the National Environmental Education Foundation for this opportunity to expand their efforts to support the St. Marks NWR staff as they work to conserve our public lands and protect wildlife.



*Volunteers pick-up trash from the banks of the Cahaba River. Credit: USFWS*

## *Renew Our Rivers*

*Article by Paula Fancher, Friends of CRNWR, President*

*Friends of Cahaba River NWR hosted their first Renew Our Rivers event back in April 2007.*

*During the inaugural event, 54 volunteers helped pick-up three tons of trash including 64 tires from inside the refuge and along the banks of the Cahaba River.*

*The Friends have continued the event each year and since 2007, volunteers have helped collect more than eight tons of trash and countless tires.*

To make the most of the event and allow for maximum trash collection, if the river is not too high the Friends will bring canoes so the volunteers are able to pick-up trash on the opposite banks where trash flows from Birmingham, AL.

Alabama Power continues to collaborate with the Friends and donates t-shirts, trash bags, gloves, hats, and other items to use during the event. Food and drinks is provided for the volunteers and the Friends supply sunscreen and bug spray.

The majority of the volunteers come from Jefferson, Shelby, Tuscaloosa and Chilton counties with few coming from Bibb County. The volunteers have fun and enjoy the time on the refuge as well as help the refuge tremendously by getting rid of the unwanted trash. As an added thank you to the volunteers, they have the chance to take part in a canoe lesson and then can paddle for a short period on the river.

*Renew Our Rivers* has turned into an awesome event and the Friends plan to continue it in the future!

## Calendar of Events

### August 20 Call for 2012 Fall NWR Friends Group Grant Program Proposals

This program provides competitive seed grants (\$1,500 - \$5,000) to creative and innovative proposals that seek to increase the number and effectiveness of organizations interested in assisting the Refuge System nationwide. For more information on the Friends Group Grant Program including the Request for Proposal, grant guidelines, sample balance sheet, and access to the online application please visit <http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?>

### September 8 The Hatchery Outdoor Adventure

From 10 am to 3 pm, the Friends of the Norfolk National Fish Hatchery will host a special event aimed at introducing kids (and adults) to the enjoyment of the outdoors.

### October 13 Wild Things

From 10 am to late afternoon, the Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges co-sponsors the refuge's National Wildlife Refuge Week event. Wild Things welcomes over 30 other nature and conservation-oriented organizations to share displays, presentations, and hands-on activities with visitors. Admission, parking, and all tours and programs are free.

## Check It Out

### New Online-Only Issue of Friend Forward

This brand new special online-only issue of *Friends Forward* is devoted entirely to fundraising. In this issue:

- values of email, snail mail, and online, capital campaigns and bequests,
- special events and creative projects, and
- tips, contacts, links, and resources.

Click here to download a PDF version:

[http://www.fws.gov/refuges/Friends/pdfs/FFSpecialIssueFundraisingSum\\_2012.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/Friends/pdfs/FFSpecialIssueFundraisingSum_2012.pdf)

## Tip of the Quarter

Want more information on the 'Conserving the Future' National Wildlife Refuge System Vision process? To learn more you can:

- Check out [AmericasWildlife.org](http://AmericasWildlife.org) where you can discover blogs from the nine implementation teams, read the implementation teams' work plans, or join the 'Conserving the Future' social network;
- Visit the 'Conserving the Future' ([facebook.com/americaswildlife](http://facebook.com/americaswildlife)) Facebook page; or
- Call or send an email to one of the implementation team members from our Region.



A Friend and a young Carolina Sandhills NWR Derby participant anxiously wait to reel one in. Credit: USFWS

Teams	Region 4 Member
Leadership Development	Holly Gaboriault
Urban Refuges	Sharon Fuller
Strategic Growth	James Burnett
Planning	Ken Litzenberger
Science	Keenan Adams
Community Partnerships	Anne Morkill
Communications	Bruce Butler and Andrew Gude
Hunting and Fishing	Keith Weaver
Interpretation and Environmental Education	Stacy Armitage