

Regional Director's Honor Awards Ceremony

Marriott Century Center
Century Ballroom
Wednesday, October 30, 2013



Left to right, top to bottom: scrub jay, Dr. Thomas Barnes; Honey Prairie Fire at Okefenokee NWR, USFWS; confiscated black coral jewelry, USFWS; snail kite, Rob Bennetts/NPS; Miami blue butterfly, Holly Salvato; artifacts from Camp Lawton, Amanda L. Morrow, Georgia Southern University.

Southeast Regional Director's Honor Award Ceremony for 2011-2012

*Marriott Century Center, Century Ballroom
Wednesday, October 30, 2013*

Welcome, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Posting of Colors, 4th Marine Logistics Group Headquarters and Service Battalion, Dobbins Air Reserve Base

National Anthem, Asia Graves, Senior at Alcovy High School, Covington, GA

Opening Remarks, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Conservation Partners

Major Curtis Brown, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Dr. Llewellyn M. Ehrhart, University of Central Florida

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

Bob Kukleski and Bob Taylor, South Florida Water Management District

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Office of Wildlife

Jane Schnee, Conservationist

Santee Cooper

Ronald Seiss, The Nature Conservancy

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Volunteer Service

Dorothy Bambach, Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges

Okefenokee Trail Team at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Ray Stainfield, Friends of the Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Employees

Trish Adams, Consultation and Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, Arlington, Virginia

Katina "Tina" DeLong, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Robert P. Ford, Science Applications, Regional Office

Bryan Hagood, Division of Contracting and Grants Services, Regional Office

Paula Halupa and Mark Salvato, Ecological Services Field Office, Vero Beach, Florida

Scott Hereford, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Gautier, Mississippi

Laura Rogers, Ecological Services Field Office, Asheville, North Carolina

Kevin Roy, Ecological Services Field Office, Lafayette, Louisiana

Richard Shelton, Mammoth Spring National Fish Hatchery, Mammoth Spring, Arkansas

Ariel Vazquez, Office of Law Enforcement, Albuquerque, New Mexico

John Watkins, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, Regional Office

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Teams

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Pains Bay Fire Team
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Honey Prairie Fire Team

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Distinguished Achievement

Outreacher of the Year

James "Kevin" Chapman, NRDAR Case Management Team, Regional Office

People Exhibiting Excellence in Regional Service Award

Laurel Barnhill, Division of Inventory & Monitoring, Athens, Georgia

Federal Wage System Employee of the Year

Dwayne P. Sanders, Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge, Hollywood, South Carolina

Biologist of the Year

Vivian Negron-Ortiz, Ecological Services Field Office, Panama City, Florida

Friends Groups of the Year

Friends of Norfolk National Fish Hatchery, Mountain Home, Arkansas
Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge, Shreveport, Louisiana

Strategic Habitat Conservation Champion Awards

Advancing Conservation Core Team

Bill Pearson, Ecological Services Field Office, Daphne, Alabama

Closing Remarks, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Retiring of Colors, 4th Marine Logistics Group Headquarters and Service Battalion, Dobbins Air Reserve Base

In Memoriam 2011-2013

Dale Bailey, Budget and Administration/Engineering, Regional Office
Lewis Brown, Budget and Administration/Human Resources, Regional Office
Bernard Jenkins, Budget and Administration/IRTM, Regional Office
Lake Lewis, Jr., Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge
Veronica McClurkin, Refuges, Regional Office
John McKenzie, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge
Lynn Robinson, Refuges/Realty, Regional Office
Jorge Saliva, Caribbean Islands Ecological Services Field Office

Refreshments immediately following the ceremony.

**Special Acknowledgement of
Previously Presented Awards
and Recognition**

*2011 Arthur R. Marshall Foundation,
The Champion of the Everglades*

*2012 National Wildlife Refuge
Association, Refuge Manager of the Year*

*2012 Florida Wildlife Federation, Land
Conservationist of the Year*

Charlie Pelizza
Everglades Headwaters
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

*2011 Southeastern Association of Fish
and Wildlife Agencies Officer of the Year
Award for FWS*

David Pharo
Miami, Florida

*2011 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Fire Management Leadership*

Rob Wood
Savannah Coastal
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

*2011 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for All Hazard Management*

Mike Bryant
Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

*2011 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Fire Management Outreach*

Josh O'Connor
National Wildlife Refuge System
Regional Office

*2012 Southeastern Association of Fish
and Wildlife Agencies Officer of the Year
Award for FWS*

Phillip "Flip" Siragusa
Lafayette, Louisiana

*2012 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Fire Management Leadership*

Brad Bailey
Mississippi Sandhill Crane
National Wildlife Refuge

*2012 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Prescribed Fire Management*

Mike Good
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

*2012 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for All Hazard Management*

Brian Hardison
Budget and Administration/Safety
Regional Office

*2012 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for All Hazard Management*

Theresa Nallet
Budget and Administration/Safety
Regional Office

*2012 Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Fire Management Outreach*

Toni Westland
J. N. "Ding" Darling
National Wildlife Refuge

*Fort Bragg Commander's Award
for Civilian Service*

*Fort Bragg Iron Mike Award
(only six given to civilians in history of
the award)*

*Fort Bragg Directorate of Plans,
Training, Mobilization and Security:
Friend of the Regiment Award*

*Fort Bragg/Pope AFB Regional
Land Use Advisory Commission:
Distinguished Service Award*

Pete Campbell
Mattamuskeet
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

*K-9 Officer Commendation,
Ocala Florida Police Department*

Eddie Brannon
Refuge Zone Officer

National Recovery Champions Award

Mark Cantrell
Ecological Services Field Office
Asheville, North Carolina

*North Carolina Coastal Federation
2013 Pelican Award*

Kendall Smith
Migratory Bird Program, Columbia, NC

*Officer of the Year
at the Academy for 2010*

Bryant Marcial
Caribbean Islands
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Partners In Flight Award

The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture

*South Carolina Department of Natural
Resources, 2011 District 2 Hunter
Education Instructor of the Year*

Don Cockman
Carolina Sandhills
National Wildlife Refuge

*Southeast Region Fire Management
Award for Prescribed Fire Management*

Reggie Forcine
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

*Southeast Region Fire Management
Outreach Award*

*U.S. Forest Service Robert Browning Jr.
Regional Award for Wildfire Prevention*

Terri Jenkins
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

*TWS Fellow Award at the 19th Annual
Conference of The Wildlife Society*

Emily Jo Williams
Migratory Bird Program, Regional Office

**Department of Interior
Meritorious Service Award**

Dr. Ronnie Haynes
Ecological Services, Regional Office

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Conservation Partners

Major Curtis Brown Investigator Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Tallahassee, Florida

Major Curtis Brown was the driving force behind a Memorandum of Understanding between the Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that allows the two agencies to grant and receive authority and share equipment, intelligence, personnel, along with the full range of resources available. This includes radio dispatch on the State Radio Law Enforcement Network, which provides special agents and refuge officers full-time radio dispatch and invaluable access to the National Crime Information Center and the Florida Crime Information Center. Major Brown has also assisted the Service in stopping the transport of uncertified, captive-raised deer in interstate commerce, the trapping and sale of wild migratory birds, and the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Major Brown is a dedicated, life-long conservationist.

Dr. Llewellyn M. Ehrhart Emeritus Professor University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Dr. Llewellyn Ehrhart, a vertebrate zoologist, has made numerous scientific contributions to sea turtle conservation over several decades. His long-term studies of nesting beach productivity have helped Service staff and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission determine the population status and trends of loggerhead, green and leatherback sea turtles. Dr. Ehrhart's work was the basis for selecting the location of the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1991 along 20.5 miles of Florida's east coast. Today, the refuge protects the most densely nested beach habitat for loggerhead sea turtles in the Western Hemisphere and is the most significant area for green turtle nesting in North America. Dr. Ehrhart's more recent research involves characterizing juvenile and sub-adult populations in coastal lagoons and over near-shore reefs.

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Coral Gables, Florida

The Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden has expanded its conservation program for the recovery and conservation of South Florida's endangered and threatened flora. In 2012, the Botanic Garden spearheaded the re-introduction of the endangered Key tree cactus to a higher elevation in the Florida Keys, in an effort to buy more time against rising seas. The cactus, which has declined by as much as 90 percent in the past decade, is arguably Florida's most critically endangered plant. The Botanic Garden has also been a leader in providing outreach activities to increase interest and awareness in the imperiled South Florida native flora. Dr. Joyce Maschinski, Conservation Ecologist and Team Leader at the Botanic Garden, is accepting this award.

Bob Kukleski and Bob Taylor South Florida Water Management District West Palm Beach, Florida

Bob Kukleski and Bob Taylor of the South Florida Water Management District have a long history of effectively partnering with the Service on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. With their skillful management of environmental contamination issues, they are helping to restore and convert thousands of acres of former agricultural lands to wetlands. They have always displayed a willingness to listen to the Service's concerns, even when those concerns might result in changes in the design of projects or delays in completion. They are working closely with the Service to protect the endangered Everglades snail kite from potential copper exposure on restored citrus groves. They were instrumental in establishing the Copper Interagency Working Group of more than eight federal and state agencies and academic institutions to make recommendations regarding the management of copper and selenium residues at Everglades restoration projects. Thanks to their efforts, the Service and the District have forged a team that operates smoothly and efficiently to ensure the projects do not have unintended effects on wildlife.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Office of Wildlife Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Under the leadership of Larry Reynolds, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Office of Wildlife successfully captured and banded 2,176 wood ducks during the 2011 pre-season banding period. This number was more than five times the agency's annual banding quota of 500 wood ducks, and represents the highest number of woodies banded by any southeastern state during the same period. During the past decade or more, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has consistently strived to meet its banding goals, and have banded well over 10,000 wood ducks since 2004. Because wood ducks are primarily found in forested wetlands, traditional waterfowl survey methods do not work. Therefore, Mississippi Flyway-wide partnership banding programs, such as those carried out in Louisiana, are critical to providing the information required to support wood duck population management.

Jane Schnee Conservationist Sebastian, Florida

Jane Schnee is a rare conservationist who manifests her commitment with generous investments of time, effort and money. She has helped restore, conserve and protect natural resources in the Southeast. In the past decade, Ms. Schnee has voluntarily assisted Indian River County staff with the monitoring and banding of Florida scrub-jays, a federally threatened bird species. In 2011, she purchased 10.67 acres of scrub habitat occupied by a family of scrub-jays and several gopher tortoises. At one time, the foreclosed property had been slated for 80 single-family homes. Ms. Schnee used her personal life savings to purchase the property, and then recruited 100 volunteers to remove from it mounds of trash and debris. She also teamed up with the Pelican Island Audubon Society, Indian River County and the Service to begin initial restoration activities on the site. Jane's exceptional innovation and persistence has made her an excellent partner in conservation.

Santee Cooper Monks Corner, South Carolina

Santee Cooper and the Santee National Wildlife Refuge have worked together in partnership since the refuge's establishment in 1941. This partnership continues to evolve as a national model for stewardship of natural resource conservation and management. Through donations and professional support, Santee Cooper has helped to expand the refuge's lease agreement to protect waterfowl sanctuaries in Cantey Bay, and also has expanded the refuge acreage by adding 128 acres on the Bluff Unit and 23 acres to the Pine Island Unit. In the past three years, Santee Cooper provided herbicide and helicopter applications valued at \$436,000 to control invasive, aquatic plants on 1,386 acres, helping the refuge reach its goals and maintaining popular public fishing spots. Additionally, Santee Cooper completed an elevated, 350-foot boardwalk and trail system at a value of \$33,500, and replaced 40 boundary posts in Lake Marion at a value of about \$40,000. Santee Cooper also participates annually in the Santee Birding and Nature Festival, enhancing environmental tourism and education, and helps the refuge reestablish native eel grass and shoreline vegetation. Santee Cooper's continued commitment to the refuge is providing healthier wetland habitats that will benefit migratory birds and other wildlife. The level of support that they have provided, on an ongoing basis, is an outstanding symbol of partnership commitment. Larry McCord is accepting this award on behalf of Santee Cooper.

Ronald Seiss The Nature Conservancy Jackson, Mississippi

Ronald Seiss is an active and insightful conservation leader, particularly in the arena of conservation partnerships. Mr. Seiss chaired the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture for several years and provided critical leadership during its development. He supports the efforts of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture's Forest Resources Conservation Working Group, leading a consensus-based approach to define and promote desired forest conditions for bottomland forests across the Alluvial Valley. He was the inaugural vice chairman of the Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative, where he

invested his time and talents to help shape the direction of the science-based partnership. Mr. Seiss' leadership and accomplishments demonstrate that conservation partners can achieve greater success working together towards mutual conservation objectives. Since Mr. Seiss' retirement as Director of Conservation Programs at Mississippi's Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, he joined The Nature Conservancy's Lower Mississippi River Conservation Program as its director.

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Volunteer Service

Dorothy Bambach Friends of Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges Savannah, Georgia

Dorothy "Dot" Bambach has been a refuge volunteer for 11 years, serving as secretary for the Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges for the past three years. She truly cares about the refuge and believes in giving back to the community in meaningful ways. Ms. Bambach has accrued more than 3,300 volunteer hours working on each refuge within the complex and has driven more than 30,000 miles conducting numerous activities. She has done various activities from pruning shrubs, removing invasive plants, organizing and conducting bird surveys, monitoring nesting bird colonies, to leading field trips for children and adults.

Okefenokee Trail Team Folkston, Georgia

The Okefenokee Trail Team of volunteers donated up to three months of their time to conduct canoe-trail maintenance in the difficult conditions presented by the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and its designation as U.S. Wilderness Area. They battled icy dawns and lingering drought conditions to cut out fallen trees and overgrown shrubs blocking many of the refuge's 120 miles of paddling trails. Some of the logs, newly exposed by the drought, had been hidden beneath the tannic-acid water for more than a century. The team, observing Wilderness Area protocols, lifted these logs out of the canoe trails with cables and hand-powered winches. One cypress log weighed between 15,000 to 18,000 pounds and took five people a half-day to

remove. They installed new signs, fresh trail markers and did minor repairs to the 640-square foot camping platforms. This team devoted many hours to ensure visitors to Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge can continue to enjoy unspoiled canoe trips through North America's largest blackwater swamp.

Mindy Gautreaux, Deputy Project Leader at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, is accepting on behalf of the team. Team members are Jackie Carter, Donna Egbert, William Hay, Walter Jetter and Sally Jetter, Greg Johnson, Terry Johnson, William Maher, Mary Morgan, and Ed Norman.

Ray Stainfield Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge Benton, Kentucky

Ray Stainfield has been a volunteer at Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge since 2007. He has served as president of the Friends Group and provided significant value to the refuge in numerous ways. An award-winning photographer, Mr. Stainfield's refuge photos have been used in displays, brochures and educational presentations. He has also gotten his hands dirty, assisting with a stream mitigation project on land adjacent to the refuge that involved planting more than 4,000 trees by hand. He has been instrumental in assisting with environmental education programs and grant writing. To date, he has helped the Friends Group receive more than \$10,000. Mr. Stainfield is an exceptional volunteer who cares deeply about wildlife conservation and environmental education.

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Employees

Trish Adams **National Habitat Conservation** **Planning Coordinator** **Arlington, Virginia**

Trish Adams proposed an innovative and novel approach to address an anticipated workload increase as a result of requests under the Freedom of Information Act related to the Eastern Collier Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan. After conferring with the Solicitor's Office and conservation organizations, she proposed that the Service upload releasable documents generated during the development of the HCP to a public website and update the information on a quarterly basis. Documents not releasable under FOIA would be withheld until a formal information request was received, at which time the documents would be sent to the Solicitor's Office for consideration. The Service is now implementing this streamlined approach. Trish accomplished all of this when she served as a biologist in the Ecological Services Field Office in Vero Beach, Florida.

Katina "Tina" DeLong **Program Operations Assistant** **National Wildlife Refuge System** **Area 1, Regional Office**

Katina "Tina" DeLong provides support to 200 employees across 39 national wildlife refuges in Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky and Tennessee. During an average year, Tina processes and tracks close to 50 recruitment actions and 100 personnel actions, as well as numerous correspondence actions, priority data calls and congressional responses. She makes travel arrangements, reviews numerous GovTrip vouchers, processes more than 100 award packages, troubleshoots Quicktime issues, establishes and updates 15 organizational charts monthly, tracks 15 credit card statements, and tracks Employee Performance Plans coming from the field. During critical staff shortages, Tina has stepped up to handle a major increase in her workload while training numerous detailers in addition to three new hires. She works extra hours when critical work needs to be completed. Tina consistently produces high quality work on time or ahead of schedule and always maintains a positive, can-do attitude.

Robert P. Ford **Deputy Assistant Regional Director** **Science Applications** **Regional Office**

Robert P. Ford's scientific expertise is respected by many. His collaborative spirit brings people together to successfully address conservation issues at various scales. He serves as chair of both the national and regional climate teams where he is instrumental in working with a diverse group to advance the Service's climate change action priorities. Bob is the regional editor of the Service's *Journal of Fish and Wildlife* and chair of the regional research team. He continues to play a critical role in moving Strategic Habitat Conservation and the surrogate species process forward. Bob led a small team that successfully put together several training workshops within a short timeframe. In addition, he serves as the deputy assistant regional director for science applications providing a key role in leading the region's science efforts.

Bryan Hagood **Contract Specialist** **Division of Contracting and Grants Services** **Regional Office**

Bryan Hagood's dedication and selfless service contributed immensely to the success of a Management Assistance Team project that was recently completed at Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge. This project was faced with more than a few contracting challenges that could have delayed it. Thanks to Bryan's responsiveness, each contracting challenge was addressed in a timely manner. In addition, he has the sole responsibility for establishing multiple, five-year, \$10 million invasive plant treatment contracts that are vital to the Service in controlling and treating invasive and non-native plants on national wildlife refuges in Florida.

Paula Halupa and Mark Salvato **Biologists** **Ecological Services Field Office** **Vero Beach, Florida**

Paula Halupa and Mark Salvato produced the proposed and final rules for the emergency listing of the Miami blue butterfly. Paula researched, drafted and submitted the proposed and final emergency listing rules while Mark provided assistance and expertise in

researching and drafting portions of these rules. Paula conducted all the groundwork necessary and authored the emergency listing rules for the butterfly. Early on, she coordinated with key staff, the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex and the Regional Office to raise awareness regarding the need for an emergency listing of the butterfly. She reached out to our partners to garner support and address concerns regarding a potential emergency listing action. Mark dedicated countless hours and considerable expertise in assisting the Endangered Species Program staff with this emergency listing action. He has shared his extensive knowledge on the Miami blue butterfly and its status, including information compiled from his personal time in assessing habitat and conducting counts at Bahia Honda State Park.

Scott Hereford **Supervisory Wildlife Biologist** **Mississippi Sandhill Crane** **National Wildlife Refuge** **Gautier, Mississippi**

During his 19-year service as supervisory biologist at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Scott Hereford has developed new protocols, tested new research and pushed boundaries to improve the recovery of the critically endangered Mississippi sandhill crane. The captive release program for the Mississippi sandhill crane, operated in conjunction with the Audubon Nature Institute and White Oak Conservation Center, is the largest and oldest crane release program in the world. It received international attention. Since the early 1980s, the program has released 464 birds using the acclimated release protocol to encourage colonization strategically throughout the refuge. Scott coordinated a floristic survey of annual vegetation plots to evaluate response to management practices and protocols to be used for annual surveys of savanna health. He recognizes the importance of these habitats for species, such as the cranes. His innovative scientific research is helping to ensure the health of ecosystems and species on a landscape level.

Laura Rogers
Administrative Officer
Ecological Services Field Office
Asheville, North Carolina

Laura Rogers demonstrates outstanding performance in budget formulation and execution, procurement, property, timekeeping, and personnel management. Her dedication, leadership, competence, organization, vision, concern for her colleagues, and focus on customer service keep the Asheville Field Office operating at peak efficiency. In 2011, Laura played a key role as Asheville worked with North Carolina Department of Transportation to renew an agreement for funding three positions in North Carolina, including two in Asheville and one in Raleigh. She formulated budgets as well as assisted in drafting and negotiating the language on deliverables, reporting, and accounting. The renewal was accomplished ahead of accelerated deadlines associated with the transition to the FBMS system. In addition, she did exemplary work assisting in the planning and execution of the Asheville office's budget, achieving an obligation rate of more than 99 percent.

Kevin Roy
Senior Field Biologist
Ecological Services Field Office
Lafayette, Louisiana

Kevin Roy has made exceptional contributions to Louisiana coastal restoration through the Coastal Wetlands, Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. He chairs the CWPPRA Environmental Work Group and facilitates the annual environmental benefits review of candidate restoration projects. Kevin also manages two active coastal restoration projects, the Lake Hermitage and Lost Lake Marsh Creation projects, to benefit 5,367 acres at a cost of more than \$61 million. As project manager, his duties include working with engineers, biologists, land-rights specialists, landowners, and consultants during design according to Strategic Habitat Conservation principles.

Richard Shelton
Hatchery Manager
Mammoth Spring National Fish Hatchery
Mammoth Spring, Arkansas

Richard Shelton has displayed remarkable leadership in overseeing construction of a new Visitor's Center at the hatchery. Richard has worked diligently for many years to bring this project to fruition. This facility is only the second visitor center located at a National Fish Hatchery and will be a showplace for the visiting public to learn about the hatchery, the Regional and National Fisheries Program and the Service. In addition, Richard leads an active aquatic species restoration program. Richard works tirelessly with his many partners to make sure that the programs are in keeping with the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation principles and consults with many entities within the Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

Ariel Vazquez
Resident Agent in Charge
Office of Law Enforcement
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Resident Agent in Charge Ariel Vazquez, while serving in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, successfully obtained convictions on violations of the Lacey Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act. When Ariel became a Service SA, he committed to learning all the knowledge and job related skills involved in the successful prosecution of wildlife crimes, including Service policy, regulations and laws. His most significant conviction to date came as part of an effort to stop the illegal trade of black coral. In 2011, GEM Manufacturing LLC, headquartered in St. Thomas, pleaded guilty to seven counts of violating the Endangered Species Act and the Lacey Act. GEM was sentenced to pay a criminal fine of \$1.8 million that will be apportioned to the Lacey Act Reward Fund. Vazquez now works in the Service's Southwest Region in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

John Watkins
Natural Resource
Biologist/Grants Specialist
Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration
Regional Office

John Watkins took lead responsibility for lands reconciliation in the Southeast Region. In order to review and reconcile Federal and State records, John participated in meetings with Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration and State agency staff, reviewed lands records, deeds and grants sources, and conducted site visits. To date, John oversaw the completion of WSFR lands records reviews for the State fish and wildlife agencies in the Southeast, and the completion and signing of the reconciliation reports by Federal and State officials. In addition, John provided assistance to other regional WSFR staff on our lands reconciliation process. He also assisted with complex lands issues working with Service and Solicitor staff and meeting with representatives from state agencies and private corporations on issues such as the J.W. Corbett WMA Mitigation Bank eligibility and Orange Beach, Alabama Coastal Wetlands grant land exchanges. John recently retired from the Service.

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Teams

**Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge
Pains Bay Fire Team
Manteo, NC**

Donnie Harris, along with a host of others at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, battled the Pains Bay Fire near the southern-most point of the refuge caused by a lightning strike in May 2011. This team worked as a cohesive unit with members of the incident management team to fight and ultimately control the fire that burned 45,294 acres of the national wildlife refuge and the Dare County Bombing Range administered by the U.S. Air Force. They kept local communities informed on current fire activity, road closures, and other public safety concerns. In addition, they ensured refuge equipment and facilities were prepared by making sure water dip sites were located and ready, fire breaks were planned and installed, and roads were maintained and ready for use.

Donnie will accept on behalf of the team. Team members include himself, Art Beyer, Lisa Borel, Mike Bryant, Eric Craddock, Bruce Creef, Tom Crews, Helen Czernik, Kelley Van Druuten, Jay Eddy, Kris Fair, Adam Fauth, Bobby Govan, Cindy Heffley, Scott Lanier, Kathy McMahan, Eric Meekins, Amy Midgett, Michael Morse, Ryan Nordsvan, Jonathan Powers, David Rabon, Abbey Reibel, Dennis Stewart, Bonnie Strawser, Jeff Swain, Brian Van Druuten, and Cory Waters.

**Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
Honey Prairie Fire Team
Folkston, Georgia**

In April 2011, a lightning strike started the Honey Prairie fire on Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, burning more than 300,000 acres. Prior to the start of the fire, the group that later formed the Honey Prairie Fire Team had the foresight to begin preparations for what would become the longest and most expensive fire season in Service history. They worked with the Georgia Forestry Commission, Florida Forest Service and the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners to hold multiple public meetings alerting the public to the severity of drought and elevated wildfire potential. Internally, members of the team were instrumental in ensuring numerous fire payments were made promptly to vendors assisting with the fire, a great accomplishment in the midst of this challenging fire. These combined efforts proved invaluable in protecting refuge resources, neighboring commercial forests, state forests, transportation corridors and all surrounding rural communities.

Mindy Gautreaux is accepting on behalf of the team. Team members are Sara Aicher, Robert Alonso, Brantley Boatright, Pat Boucher, Cory Bryant, Dartha Campbell, Vince Carver, Rocky Chesser, Joan Collier, Tom Crews, Beverly Derouin, Mike Dueitt, Frank Enright, Judy Drury, Dean Easton, Reggie Forcine, Gracie Gooch, Margaret Hale, Mike Housh, Terri Jenkins, Patricia Johnson, Stiner Jones, Pete Kubiak, Jamie Lanier, Sherrie Matthews, Curt McCasland, Howard McCullough, Josh O'Connor, Sarah Olscamp, Fed Privett, Kevin Seasny, Patricia Schick, Jim Shelton, Sarah Sorenson, Glen Stratton, Kimberly Turner, Art Webster, and Sue Wilder.

Regional Director's Honor Awards for Distinguished Achievement

Outreacher of the Year

**James "Kevin" Chapman, Archeologist,
Deepwater Horizon
NRDAR Case Management Team
Regional Office**

Kevin Chapman is the Consultation and Permits Coordinator for the Deepwater Horizon NRDAR Case Management Team's office here in Atlanta. From 2009 to 2012, Kevin was the lead archaeologist studying the excavation and examination of a Civil War Prisoners of War Camp in Millen, Georgia. Camp Lawton was constructed in 1864 and located on the grounds of the Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery. Through a stroke of great fortune and thorough research, Kevin managed to pinpoint the occupied zone of the POW Camp that has been determined to be among the most pristine Civil War archaeological sites found in modern history. The amount of public interest has been overwhelming. Kevin hosted public open houses at the site, conducted numerous interviews with local, national and international media outlets, and represented the Service at several archaeological conferences.

*People Exhibiting Excellence
in Regional Service Award*

**Laurel Barnhill, Supervisory Biologist,
Inventory & Monitoring
National Wildlife Refuge System
Athens, Georgia**

Laurel Barnhill, recognized as a national Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) leader while serving as regional branch chief for I&M, represents the Southeast Region on the National I&M Bird Monitoring Team. She expertly unites multiple partners and programs to identify and coordinate bird monitoring and other wildlife survey priorities. She also works with refuge staff and partners on a strategic approach to monitoring on refuges that ensures science-based contributions to conservation actions are implemented at the local, regional and national levels. Co-located with the National Park Service I&M program, Laurel developed organizational efficiencies between the agencies. She led a request for proposals process to fund on-the-ground I&M

efforts. The response was overwhelming, and further emphasized the need for I&M work within the Service. Recently she spearheaded a collaborative effort to develop fundamental objectives related to monitoring, adaptive management and conservation efforts within the Service.

*Federal Wage System
Employee of the Year*

Dwayne P. Sanders
Crane Operator
Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin
National Wildlife Refuge
Hollywood, South Carolina

Dwayne Sanders played an integral role from design to completion of levee restoration project on the Combahee Fields Wetland Management Unit. The project to restore three linear miles of riverine levee required installing 250 linear feet of bulkhead and the successful use of low ground pressure-tracked/pivoting dump truck on the peat embankments. Most notably, the project was completed for 35 percent less than the projected contract cost. Dwayne has provided technical expertise to partners on numerous projects related to wetland management enhancements. In addition, he readily supports construction and maintenance activities on other refuges. He plays a leading role on the Southeast Region's Wage Grade Committee and serves as its Heavy Equipment Safety Instructor.

Biologist of the Year

Vivian Negron-Ortiz
Botanist
Ecological Services Field Office
Panama City, Florida

Vivian Negron-Ortiz is recognized for her exemplary commitment to the conservation of federally protected plant resources in the southeast and across the nation. She created partnerships with experts nationwide and led a nationwide conservation initiative for federally listed and at-risk plants. Under her leadership, the team defined goals and objectives for national plant conservation and is now working towards implementation. On a local level, she implemented numerous recovery actions including monitoring and genetic studies on Miccosukee gooseberry, seedling recruitment evaluation for telephus spurge with private partners, and setting priorities for Harper's

beauty conservation. In addition, Vivian completed a recovery plan for the endangered Gentian pinkroot.

Friends Groups of the Year

Friends of Norfolk National Fish Hatchery
Mountain Home, Arkansas

With more than 350 members, the Friends of Norfolk National Fish Hatchery has the largest membership of any hatchery Friends Group in the Service and an impressive sphere of influence. Among the numerous events hosted by the group is a Kids Fishing Day, Oktoberfest and an Outdoor Adventure Day that collectively attract thousands of people. The Friends Group also raised more than \$20,000 to purchase 24 raceway diffusers that are critical to increasing the water quality from Norfolk Dam and improving fish health, and provided volunteers to assist in the installation. Another \$6,000 was donated for materials to build a shelter for the hatchery picnic area, a kiosk at the visitor center, and to repair a boardwalk. Additionally, the Friends maintain an informative website and publish a monthly newsletter that is distributed to Congressional staff and fisheries offices nationwide, as well as to all Friends members. Friends President Leon Alexander is active in the National Friends Group. The group is an outstanding ambassador for the Service, maintaining great working relationships with other government agencies, Congressional offices, area business and the general public that translates into strong support for the Service and the Fisheries Program. Mr. Alexander is accepting this award on behalf of the Friends of Norfolk National Fish Hatchery.

Friends of Red River
National Wildlife Refuge
Shreveport, Louisiana

Since the Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2005, its members and volunteers have contributed more than 10,000 hours, raised more than \$200,000 and partnered with more than 35 organizations to benefit the national wildlife refuge. They actively promote the refuge, engage kids in on-the-ground projects and educational programs, and assist refuge staff with maintenance and renovation of facilities. One major accomplishment

was completing the renovation of a 1930s farm house on the Bayou Pierre Unit that will be used as a visitor contact station, education and research center. In addition, they have several ongoing programs, including Backpacks for Birders, developing a Bird Finding Guide to the refuge and implementing a Nature of Learning citizen science project. In addition, the Friends Group received two Invasives with Volunteer Grants from the Service to train high school-age students in assisting with monitoring to guide control of tallow trees. Mr. Isaac Burson, III is accepting this award on behalf of the Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge.

Strategic Habitat Conservation Champion Awards

Strategic Habitat Conservation Champion Award (Team)

Advancing Conservation Core Team

The Southeast Regional Core Team advanced Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) in our Region through the development and implementation of SHC Workshops convened throughout the Southeast during the fall of 2012. Specifically, the team provided extraordinary leadership throughout the surrogate species training process. Each member was instrumental in making the surrogate species workshops a great success across the Region. In addition, each member provided significant review and comments to the Draft Technical Guidance for Selecting Surrogate Species; developed presentations for the training to illustrate many of the steps in the DTG; and organized and led the surrogate species training in seven venues that collectively engaged hundreds of Service participants from across the Southeast Region, and included many partners in the Southeast. The team compiled notes and feedback from the training as well as encouraged individuals to provide their comments and perspectives on the draft guidance. Behind the scenes, its members helped leaders at field stations and in the Regional Office fill diverse roles and ensure a strong foundation was laid for the Region’s continued implementation of SHC as our way of working. Finally, the team provided help throughout the training process to other regions, and developed regional summaries and updates for the Washington Office and shared documents from training with the national team.

Team members include: Barron Crawford, Bob Ford, Catherine Phillips, Keith McKnight, Laura Brandt, and Roxanna Hinzman.

Strategic Habitat Conservation Champion Award (Individual)

Bill Pearson

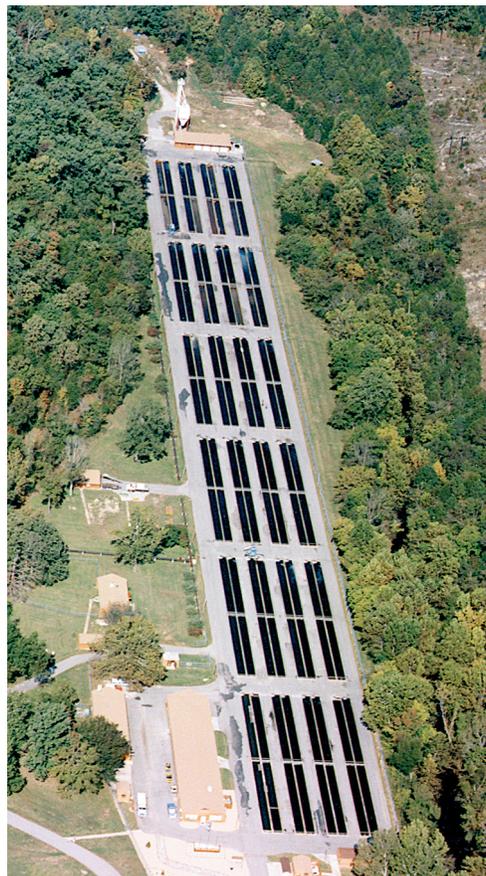
Over the past two years, Bill Pearson has taken aggressive steps with his team to integrate Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) into his office structure and function. Specifically, Bill led his Alabama Field Office in partnership with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Geological Survey of Alabama to develop and identify Strategic Habitat Units (SHUs). The purpose of these units is to facilitate and coordinate watershed management and restoration efforts. Staff and funding are now focused on implementing conservation activities to manage, protect, restore, and recover populations of rare fishes, mussels, snails, and crayfishes, many of which are currently protected under the Endangered Species Act or are considered “at risk.” The SHUs include a substantial part of Alabama’s remaining high-quality rivers and streams and reflect the variety of small stream to large river habitats occupied by these species historically and/or currently.

The Service and its partners identified the SHUs based on best available information about the essential habitat components required by the aquatic species, including:

- geomorphically stable stream and river channels;
- stream flow regimes that support normal behavior, growth, and survival of the animals;
- acceptable water-quality conditions necessary for normal behavior, growth, and viability of all life stages of the animals;
- a diversity of channel substrate types, with minimal amounts of fine sediment and filamentous algae;
- for mussels, the presence of fish hosts with adequate living, foraging, and spawning areas; and
- few or no competitive or predaceous nonnative species.

Bill did not stop there. He identified the need to connect the SHU process to the larger landscape. As a result, he successfully implemented changes in the field office’s organizational structure and created a position dedicated to support the Gulf Coast Plains and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative. This position is now a key component in advancing the LCC and bringing the conservation community together at a landscape level.

Through his leadership and ability to create strong partnerships, Bill has developed an exceptional field office model for implementing SHC. His stellar efforts in Alabama serve as an outstanding example of how the Service nationally and this Region want our leaders to more effectively address the challenges and opportunities in front of us, to shape the conservation landscape of the future. For adapting and positioning field staff, field office and our agency, to a partner-driven, results-oriented, landscape-level and adaptive approach to conservation, Bill Pearson is the Region’s first individual SHC Champion.



Top to bottom, left to right: Botanist David Bender with the South Florida Ecological Services Field Office plants a Key tree cactus in the Florida Keys, as part of a relocation effort with the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, USFWS; Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Art Webster; leatherback sea turtle, David Rabon; Norfolk National Fish Hatchery, USFWS; wood ducks, Ronnie Maum/USFWS; Mississippi sandhill cranes, © Bill Campbell.

