

Regional Director's Honor Awards Ceremony

*Marriott Century Center
Century Ballroom
Tuesday, May 10, 2011*





Top: Pete Smith, president of Friends of St. Catherine Creek, at work on the refuge, USFWS; bottom: Ed Sprouse works on a bird house at Santee NWR, USFWS/Marc Epstein.

Top center: Sandy Cardenas and her granddaughter Cassandra pose with Ranger the Florida panther at the South Florida Ecological Services Office's Earth Day Open House, Trish Adams; top right: volunteer Ed Scott transports sturgeon eggs from Wisconsin to Tennessee for Warm Springs hatchery/ USFWS; bottom: Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges member Bonnie Schmidt leads a tour for the Bayou Gardens Open House, USFWS.

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Welcome, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Posting of Colors, Henry County Fire Department Honor Guard, McDonough, Georgia

National Anthem, Sarah L. Clardy, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Opening Remarks, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Presentation of Regional Director's Honor Awards for Volunteer Service

Doug Galyen, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

Ed Scott, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery

Ed Sprouse, Santee National Wildlife Refuge

Dr. Barnaby Watten, Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center

Edythe Williams, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.

Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge

Okefenokee Wildlife League, Inc.

Presentation of Regional Director's Honor Awards for Employees

Nicole Marie Adimey, North Florida Ecological Services Field Office

Robert "Bill" Alexander, Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

Melissa Bimbi, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office

Bradley Bordelon, Central Louisiana Refuges Complex

William Calvert, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

Sandy Cardenas, South Florida Ecological Services Field Office

Robert Clark, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

Charman Cupit, St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Jody DeMeyere, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex

Cheri Ehrhardt, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Rick Kanaski, Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex

Neil Lalonde, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex

Troy Littrell, Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

Presentation of Regional Director's Honor Awards for Employees - continued

Fernando Núñez García, Office of Federal Assistance, Regional Office

Betty O'Donnell, South Carolina Lowcountry Refuges Complex

Frank Parauka, Panama City Fisheries Resources Office

Gary Peeples, Asheville Ecological Services Field Office

Connie Saunders, Office of Law Enforcement, Regional Office

Judy Toppins, Fisheries, Regional Office

Vicky Viña, Office of Law Enforcement, Port of Miami

Jon Wallace, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

James Dale Welker, Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge

Jonathan Windley, Central Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Presentation of Regional Director's Honor Awards for Teams

External Affairs Landscape Conservation Cooperative Team

Ellen Marcus, External Affairs, Regional Office

Stacy Shelton, External Affairs, Regional Office

Jennifer Strickland, External Affairs, Regional Office

Kristi Watkins, External Affairs, Regional Office

Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge Bottomland Hardwood Restoration Team

Leif Karnuth, Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge

James Roberts, Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge

Multi-Species Transition Strategy Team

Daniel Nehler, South Florida Ecological Services Field Office

Heather Tipton, South Florida Ecological Services Field Office

Refuge Program Facility Management Team

Sarah Clardy, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Thad Clark, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Chris Hotaling, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Bill Lanahan, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Brad Long, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Robert Stewart, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Revenue Sharing Appraisal Team

Donna Cella, Division of Realty, Regional Office

Zebulum Matthews, Office of Evaluation Services, Regional Office

Laura Lee Sandberg, Contracting & Grant Services, Regional Office

Southeast Region American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Construction Team

Victor Bowman, Contracting & Grant Services, Regional Office

Ed Buskirk, Budget, Planning, and Financial Services, Regional Office

Don Calder, Contracting & Grant Services, Regional Office

Nelson Crawford, Contracting & Grant Services, Regional Office

Steve Denbow, Engineering, Regional Office
Joey Eldridge, Engineering, Regional Office
Brian Ellington, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Earl Higginbotham, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Justin Holsomback, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Jason Hopkins, Engineering, Regional Office
Emery Hoyle, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Phil Keener, Engineering, Regional Office
Paul Kelley, Engineering, Regional Office
Connie Lanahan, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office
Kimberly McClurg, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office
Terry McKitrick, Engineering, Regional Office
Gene Metzger, Engineering, Regional Office
Steve Seibert, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office
Chris Shope, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Steve Sponaule, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Ben Starks, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Mark Tapp, Emergency Recovery Team, Regional Office
Richard Warner, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office

Yazoo Tornado Response Team

John Branum, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex
Ben Bryant, Office of Law Enforcement, Lacombe, Louisiana
Sabrina Chandler, Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Brent Chisholm, Morgan Brake National Wildlife Refuge
Stephen Clark, Office of Law Enforcement, Slidell, Louisiana
Vic Coffman, Office of Law Enforcement, Jackson, Mississippi
Lamar Dorris, Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Hugh Durham, Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Mark Guinn, North Louisiana Refuges Complex
David Linden, Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Bart Marble, Morgan Brake National Wildlife Refuge
James McClelland, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
Ollie Morganfield, Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge
Bob Oliveri, Office of Law Enforcement, Jackson, Mississippi
Kash Schriefer, Office of Law Enforcement, Monroe, Louisiana
Gregory Scott, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Sonny Stubblefield, Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Mike Yelverton, Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge

Presentation of Distinguished Awards of Achievement

Federal Wage System Employee of the Year

Allen Hansen, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

Friends Group of the Year

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

Special Acknowledgement of Previously Presented Awards and Recognition

2010 Fish and Wildlife Service Environmental Leadership Award

Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex

National Refuge Manager of the Year – Paul Kroegel Award

Kenneth Litzenberger, Southeast Louisiana Refuges

National Recovery Champion

Robert Butler, Asheville Field Office

Regional Recovery Champion

Carolyn Wells, Asheville Field Office

National Wildlife Rehabilitator Association Achievement Award

Resee Collins, Migratory Bird Office, Atlanta, GA

Carmen Simonton, Migratory Bird Office, Atlanta, GA

North Carolina Association of Resource Conservation and Development Council

Anita Goetz, Asheville Field Office

2010 Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Special Agent of the Year

Hal Hamrick, Atlanta Port

Recognition of Military Duty of Southeast Region Employees in 2010

Keith Boliek, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, was deployed to Djibouti

David Simons, National Key Deer Refuge, was deployed to Afghanistan

Amir Lawal, Office of Law Enforcement, Memphis Port, was deployed to the Gulf of Mexico

Presentation of Regional Director's Conservation Awards

Brent Dykes, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Athens, Georgia

Dr. Cynthia Gaskill, University of Kentucky Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Lexington, Kentucky

Dr. K. Jack Killgore, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Vicksburg, Mississippi

Keith Ouchley, The Nature Conservancy, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Sanibel, Florida

St. Lucie County International Airport, Fort Pierce, Florida

The Nature Conservancy, Tennessee Chapter, Gainesboro, Tennessee

Cold-Stun Sea Turtle Rescue Operations Team

Dr. Candace Carter, National Park Service, Canaveral National Seashore, Titusville, Florida

Angy Chambers, United States Air Force, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida

Dennis David, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Ocala, Florida

Karrie Minch, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Melbourne, Florida

Lynne Phillips, National Aeronautical and Space Administration, Kennedy Space Center, Florida

Jane Provancha, Innovation Health Applications, LLC, Kennedy Space Center, Florida

Barbara Schroeder, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Silver Springs, Maryland

Shad in the Schools Program

Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School, Raleigh, North Carolina
Lead Mine Elementary School, Raleigh, North Carolina
North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, North Carolina

Three Sisters Springs Land Acquisition

City of Crystal River, Florida
The Conservation Fund, Arlington, Virginia
The Felburn Foundation, Silver Spring, Maryland
John Beasley, Social Circle, Georgia
Lace Blue-McLean, Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge
Hal Flowers, Three Sisters Springs, LLC, Tampa, Florida
Betty Gouge, Division of Realty, Regional Office
Jim Green, Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge
Tamar Hogan, Division of Realty, Regional Office
David Houghton, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Washington, DC
Michael Lusk, Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge
Ken Reecy, Florida Communities Trust, Tallahassee, Florida
Patrick Rose, Save the Manatee Club, Orlando, Florida
Elizabeth Souheaver, National Wildlife Refuge System, Regional Office
Helen Spivey, Save the Manatee Club, Maitland, Florida
Eric Sutton, Southwest Florida Management District, Brooksville, Florida
Susan Trokey, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge
Gary Williams, Southwest Florida Management District, Oxford, Florida

Presentation of Department of the Interior Honor Awards

Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award

Kenneth Litzenberger, Southeast Louisiana Refuges

Closing Remarks, Regional Director Cindy Dohner

Retiring of Colors, Henry County Fire Department Honor Guard, McDonough, Georgia

Social Hour, Refreshments immediately following the ceremony until 4:30 pm

Honor Awards for Volunteer Service

Doug Galyen
Clarks River
National Wildlife Refuge
Benton, Kentucky

In 1999, just two years after the Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge was established, Doug Galyen started the Friends of Clarks River. He worked with a local attorney to achieve the group's nonprofit status. Serving as the Friends Group president, vice president, and treasurer over the years, Mr. Galyen has contributed more than 4,400 volunteer hours.

When the Friends Group wanted to take out a \$10,000 loan to assist the refuge with the construction of an Environmental Education and Recreation Area, Mr. Galyen offered to co-sign the loan. He has represented the Friends Group in two official meetings with Congressional representatives to promote and demonstrate support for Clarks River NWR and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Mr. Galyen also recruited volunteers and participated in a stream mitigation project that involved planting more than 4,000 trees by hand.

A former teacher, Mr. Galyen works with other Friends Group members to write grants that ensure environmental education programs can continue on the refuge. To date, he has helped the group receive more than \$10,000 in grants. Mr. Galyen has also made sure refuge field trips are accessible to students with special needs, and has provided an electric wheelchair to the refuge for mobility-impaired students.

For 12 years, Mr. Galyen has been an invaluable resource for Clarks River and an integral part of the refuge's success. He is an exceptional person who cares deeply about wildlife conservation and environmental education, as well as the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Ed Scott
Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery
Warm Springs, Georgia

Ed Scott, formerly an aquatic biologist with the Tennessee Valley Authority, assists the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery staff with collecting lake sturgeon eggs in Shawano, Wisconsin. These eggs are gathered for the hatchery's restoration and reintroduction program at the French Broad River in the Upper Tennessee River in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Since 1998, the Warm Springs hatchery and three other hatcheries have been working on raising and restocking these fish to their native waters in Tennessee and the Coosa River in Georgia. Each year in April, Mr. Scott and three hatchery staff members travel on a 24-hour journey to the Wolf River in Wisconsin to collect and transport fertilized eggs back to Warm Springs. Mr. Scott helps net and collect fish; collect genetic and health tissue; collect eggs and sperm; record data; take pictures; and keep the eggs rolling smoothly in the incubation trailer. He also provides assistance to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources with its annual sturgeon sampling by recording data and injecting pit tags for recapture identification. When the field work is finished, he takes turns at the wheel on the non-stop drive back to Georgia to make sure the valuable sturgeon eggs arrive safely.

Mr. Scott, who has contributed 210 volunteer hours each year for the last seven years, also helps with lake sturgeon restoration activities in Tennessee. He collects water quality samples; coordinates stocking and distribution activities; records and maintains distribution data that he provides to the Lake Sturgeon Working Group; and assists with recapture and marking of stocked fish.

Ed Sprouse
Santee National Wildlife Refuge
Summerton, South Carolina

After retiring from his job as a park manager and supervisor in Ohio, Ed Sprouse brought his years of experience and a high conservation ethic to the Santee National Wildlife Refuge starting in 2009.

An accomplished carpenter and skilled craftsman, Mr. Sprouse has built and installed more than 100 bluebird boxes across the refuge. These boxes comprise the refuge's bluebird nest box project and are part of the climate change monitoring program. He has also donated pieces of his woodwork, such as bird nest boxes and walking canes, to the Santee Birding and Nature Festival.

Mr. Sprouse applies his skills in many other areas for the refuge. He repairs and installs signs, repairs and maintains more than 100 wood duck nest boxes, repairs fences and refuge facilities, and helps build interpretive displays and brochure racks. His contributions go far beyond carpentry. He arrives at the refuge early and stays late to help band ducks, ensure roads and trails are clear of debris, and assist with trash pick-up along Lake Marion.

Mr. Sprouse has earned the respect and trust of the refuge staff and other volunteers for his knowledge and skills in facility management. He is a member of the Santee family.

Dr. Barnaby Watten, Ph.D.
Warm Springs Regional Fish Center
Warm Springs, Georgia

Dr. Barnaby Watten was instrumental in developing a pilot system that demonstrated effective treatment of the water supplies at Warm Springs Regional Fish Center. He designed a system that made beneficial use of the high carbon dioxide levels in the center's springwater. Rather than being a water quality concern, with his design, the excess carbon dioxide became a valuable commodity. Accordingly, Dr. Watten's design was expanded to full scale and resulted in the construction of a new water treatment system at the Warm Springs Hatchery.

This new system was recently evaluated. The findings were excellent and reflected a net total operating cost savings — in terms of chemical use for alkalinity/lime addition, manpower to operate the system, and monthly energy costs. Moreover, the center now works with a benign chemical agent, limestone sand, to treat its water supply. The limestone sand has a neutral pH, but reacts with the carbon dioxide to add desired levels of alkalinity to the water. Fish and other aquatic species now benefit from stable, high quality water. This is in stark contrast to prior water treatment methods using caustic hydrated lime. Moreover, now the new treatment system works very simply, and eliminates the prior worry and dangers associated with "burns" from the caustic lime.

Dr. Watten, who started his professional career as a Service bioengineer conducting research at the National Fisheries Laboratory, in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, dedicated many hours of personal time and made many trips to the Southeast to ensure that his design would work. The Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center recognizes him for his professional approach to problem solving, and his commitment to getting the job done in a way that will benefit the Fisheries Center for many years.

Edythe Williams
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
Folkston, Georgia

Edythe Williams' 23-year volunteer career at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has many highlights, including her role in the 1989 founding of the Okefenokee Wildlife League (OWL), a non-profit Friends Group that supports education and public-use opportunities on the refuge. She served nine years as secretary for OWL and five years as its bookstore manager.

For more than 20 years, Ms. Williams also has served as an assistant to the refuge's Volunteer Coordinator. She developed a method for keeping track of volunteer hours and awards using Excel. She also provides leadership and guidance to new volunteers at the Visitors Center and trains more than 30 volunteers annually.

Ms. Williams contributes to the effective operation of the Okefenokee NWR and a quality education experience for the visiting public. With grace and finesse, she answers questions for thousands of visitors who come to the refuge and to the Okefenokee Wildlife League Bookstore/Gift Shop each year. She assists the Refuge Rangers by greeting visiting groups and giving them a brief orientation to the National Wildlife Refuge System and Okefenokee. When needed, Ms. Williams assists the refuge's office staff with answering phones, filing, and correspondence.

She helps prepare for six annual events at the refuge including the Okefenokee Festival, Christmas on Chesser Island, Earth Day, International Migratory Bird Day, a Fishing Derby, and the Sugar Cane Grinding/Syrup Boil. For several years, Ms. Williams has been the lead person for staffing the Visitor Center during special events, freeing the Refuge Rangers to stage the events.

Last year, when the Visitor Services program was understaffed, Ms. Williams assisted the only other Refuge Ranger with all Visitor Services aspects. During most weeks, she worked four or five days.

Always positive and admired by co-workers, Ms. Williams has done exceptional work for many years.

The Friends of Louisiana
Wildlife Refuges, Inc.
Lacombe, Louisiana

The Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges was formed in 1996, not long after Bayou Sauvage and Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuges became part of the eight-refuge Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex.

The complex's overriding conservation issue is the health and stability of the wetland habitats it encompasses, and 2010's Deepwater Horizon/BP Oil Spill in the Gulf really put the exclamation point on the importance of protecting these fragile areas. Before and after the spill, the Friends sought support and managed projects that channeled funds and volunteers to these critical resources. Its members are in an active dialogue with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Wildlife Refuge Association on proposals to mitigate spill damage.

The Friends have made the unusual grounds and gardens of the 110-acre Southeast Louisiana Refuges headquarters campus in Lacombe a focal point for people to learn, work, and get acquainted with each other and the Service's mission. Numerous Work/Play Days organized during the past four years have drawn extremely diverse groups together to restore the site from Hurricane Katrina's ravages and make it a community meeting place. An annual Bayou Gardens Open House attracted 400 people last year.

Last year, the Refuge Week event Wild Things drew more than 4,200 visitors. Its success would not have been possible without the Friends support through promotion, community outreach, volunteer recruitment, financial support, and managerial talent. A similar commitment has made the annual youth fishing day at Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge a "must" for local families for more than 15 years.

Much of what the Friends Group has accomplished has been due to successful grant-writing campaigns which have supported several programs at the complex including an Environmental Education intern program, exhibits at the refuge complex's new Visitor Center, and an interpretive canoe program.

Honor Awards for Volunteer Service

Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge Natchez, Mississippi

Since the Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge was established in 1993 with 10 members, membership has increased to 71. In the past decade, the Friends Group has logged more than 23,000 volunteer hours. As a result of their work, community presence, refuge promotion, and public use visits to the refuge have more than doubled in the last few years.

Their primary focus is education, with the belief that educating the public is the key to securing future conservation. They strive to provide the resources and materials that spark a passion for conservation that affects daily lives and transcends generations.

Friends Group members have contributed much to the refuge, including the creation and maintenance of the 4.5-mile Magnolia National Recreation Trail. Almost daily, members work in the office to greet visitors, sell permits, and answer phones. They host an annual event called Wild Things to promote their education focus and the refuge.

Last year, the Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge logged 2,755 hours to accomplish many projects, including:

- Installing 14 Animal Olympic stations where Magnolia Trail visitors learn about various animals found on the refuge and are challenged to complete an activity that mimics the movements of a particular animal. This project was done to support the First Lady's "Let's Go Outside" campaign.
- Creating the "Black Bear Obstacle Course" where children take on the role of a Federally listed black bear and learn the challenges a bear faces throughout the year to secure food, water, and shelter while avoiding interactions with people.
- Hosting the Grand Opening ceremony of the new headquarters and the refuge's contribution to the "Let's Get Moving Southwest Mississippi Program" in concert with the National Park Service and Mississippi River Trails. More than 200 people attended the refuge portion of the event. Members also hosted four work weekends prior to the event in order to get the facilities in top-notch condition.

- Working to secure \$3 million in funding to vastly improve the primary access road to the refuge headquarters and primary visitor facilities.
- Hosting a photography workshop limited to 20 participants on the refuge. This workshop has resulted in a dramatic increase in the interest of amateur photography and wildlife observation.

These projects will have far reaching benefits for the refuge.

Okefenokee Wildlife League, Inc. (OWL) Folkston, Georgia

The Okefenokee Wildlife League, Inc. (OWL), founded in 1989 in cooperation with the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, has more than 200 members from nearly every state.

Members have donated more than 1,600 hours to off-site and on-site programs in addition to operating a bookstore. All donations and funds generated from the sale of books, photographs, and other educational items are used to sponsor educational projects for the Okefenokee NWR and to purchase additional refuge equipment when necessary. OWL members have also provided more than \$8,000 to sponsor five annual events, including the Okefenokee Festival, Earth Day, and the Fishing Derby at Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and to help fund environmental education programs.

OWL members are instrumental in the development of positive relationships between the refuge and the local community. Their partnerships include volunteering at the local elementary school's Read-a-Loud Program and Halloween Program, Rail Days with the Chamber of Commerce, and litter pickups with Keep Charlton Beautiful, the City of Lakeland, and the Valdosta Bass Anglers.

During last year's Earth Day on April 17, 2010, OWL members led by Sally Webb hosted a Solar Car Sprint to educate the public about solar energy, partnering with Okefenokee NWR, Chesser Island Landfill and Charlton County eighth-grade science students. Volunteers built a level 60-foot, two-lane race track in the large parking lot. Engineers from Sandersville, Georgia made and assembled a computerized timing device. Judges presented various trophies awarded to the speediest cars, and others that exhibited the best Earth Day theme, the best craftsmanship, best design and best technical work. The event was a big success, and will be repeated again this year.

Honor Awards for Employees

Nicole Marie Adimey
North Florida Ecological Services
Field Office
Jacksonville, Florida

Nicole Adimey played a key role in securing more than \$2 million for three projects under the National Coastal Wetland Conservation grants program. The projects will restore 1,600 acres of wetlands near Mosquito Lagoon at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Atlantic Coast and protect 223 acres of important wetlands at the mouth of the Steinhatchee River in Florida's Big Bend region. The projects benefit several listed species, including the piping plover, wood stork and Florida manatee, as well as a host of migratory bird species. In addition, the Big Bend acquisition helps maintain the connectivity of a network of conservation lands.

Nicole, who is best known as the Service's manatee rescue and rehabilitation coordinator, has worked half-time in the Coastal Program since 2008. In this short time, her accomplishments have been nothing short of amazing. The three grants represent half the Southeast Region's total for the last two grant cycles.

Through her efforts, the next revision of the program's strategic plan will be expanded to include northeast Florida. This will allow the Coastal Program to be more responsive to conservation plans and designs being developed by the South Atlantic and Peninsula Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

The keys to success in any proactive conservation effort is networking with prospective partners and leveraging resources. Nicole's exceptional skills in both these areas have resulted in significant coastal conservation accomplishments in north Florida.

Robert "Bill" Alexander
Refuge Manager
Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge
Bald Knob, Arkansas

Robert "Bill" Alexander is deeply passionate about his stewardship role as the manager of Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is what it is today largely because of his 14-year leadership. Bald Knob never received "start-up" funding, so Bill has become the master of resourcefulness, innovation, and partnership. With only one other staff member until two years ago, Bill performed in all the roles that would be fulfilled at a refuge with several staff members. Bill and his Engineering Equipment Operator have fabricated and installed countless water control structures, maintained and repaired miles of levee and canal systems, built and maintained access roads, installed and repaired pumps, and constructed impoundments. The ingenuity and determination behind these in-house projects have saved the Service hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Under Bill's leadership, Bald Knob conducts a model cooperative farming program on 4,000 acres, one of the region's largest. It includes an extensive and intricate water delivery system that provides cultivated rice and other crops and facilitates an additional 400 to 700 acres of moist-soil units. These operations, along with other habitat management programs, make Bald Knob one of the most important migratory stop-over areas for pintail ducks in the Mississippi Flyway and the most important area for migrating shorebirds in Arkansas. Like the birds, visitors flock to the Refuge from around the country to view and photograph migratory birds and add new species to their life lists.

Bill also creates environmental education opportunities, so visitors can enjoy the refuge. Bill recruited volunteers who regularly monitor bird numbers and habitat use and also recently recruited a professional wildlife photographer to donate his services to photograph the refuge for production of a photo essay book. In the small community where he lives and works, Bill is also an outstanding goodwill ambassador for the Service.

Melissa Bimbi
Fish and Wildlife Biologist
South Carolina Ecological Services
Field Office
Charleston

Biologist Melissa Bimbi demonstrated her excellent team player and terrific facilitator skills as co-lead for the non-breeding piping plover workshop in Florida in December 2010. She guided the scientific program and logistics of the meeting that included more than 80 participants from across the range of the piping plover.

Melissa's past work on local wintering piping plovers and South Carolina's Shorebird Project has increased the Service's piping plover conservation knowledge and awareness in South Carolina and beyond. In addition, Melissa has actively collaborated with local, regional and national piping plover and shorebird researchers to obtain the information to advance piping plover and shorebird conservation measures. The respect and admiration that Melissa's colleagues afford her is testament to her hard work and professionalism. For these reasons and more, Melissa continues to "raise the bar" for herself and others with respect to piping plover and shorebird conservation in South Carolina and beyond.

Honor Awards for Employees

Bradley Bordelon
Wildlife Biologist
Central Louisiana Refuges Complex
Marksville, Louisiana

Bradley C. Bordelon has exhibited extreme expertise, relentless effort, and exceptional passion in his efforts to enhance the conservation of waterfowl populations through his work at Grand Cote and Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuges. When he transferred to the complex in 2007, Bradley immediately recognized the importance of lands being administered for migrating and wintering waterfowl populations within the Mississippi and Central Flyways. He reviewed and evaluated the goals and objectives for waterfowl in the recently completed Lake Ophelia and Grand Cote NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plans and then developed state-of-the-art management strategies to fulfill them.

Bradley successfully rectified numerous problems associated with the Cooperative Farming Programs for these two refuges that include 3,800 acres of fields and impoundments that are being managed to provide food resources for waterfowl. Correcting these deficiencies was no easy task. Bradley exhibited outstanding professional conduct and a can-do attitude. As a result, the deficiencies have been successfully rectified and there has been a two- to three-fold increase in the amount of food resources.

Also, Bradley initiated force account farming on Grand Cote in 2008 and has been instrumental in the planting of 300 acres of grain sorghum within waterfowl impoundments on an annual basis. This has resulted in an additional 5.5 million essentially needed duck energy days on the refuge. Additionally, Bradley has been responsible for substantially improving the quality of vegetation beneficial for waterfowl within approximately 700 acres of moist impoundments on Grand Cote by developing and implementing astute management strategies.

The response to these additional food resources by migrating waterfowl populations has been truly phenomenal. For example, a record peak of 177,000 ducks was observed on Grand Cote during a January 11, 2011 survey performed by Bradley. That constitutes approximately three times more ducks than have ever been previously observed on this refuge.

William Calvert
Supervisory Law Enforcement Officer
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee
National Wildlife Refuge
Boynton Beach, Florida

Officer William H. Calvert works closely with our law enforcement partners to develop a network of agencies that closely monitor area beaches for individuals poaching sea turtle eggs. This network includes Agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Palm Beach and Martin County Sheriff's Departments, and a number of local police departments. Local police can call on Officer Calvert 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For three years running, this collaboration has resulted in the apprehension and conviction in Federal Court of major sea turtle egg poachers. One poacher was caught with a tote bag containing 123 sea turtle eggs, the majority of which were returned to a nest on the beach. The poacher pled guilty.

Officer Calvert also took the lead in getting the South Florida Water Management District to clean up a diesel spill that had been leaking into the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge after construction of a water control structure. It was not until Officer Calvert informed the site manager that he planned to investigate the spill as a criminal case that the District acknowledged the problem. Significant diesel fuel had saturated the soil and leached into refuge waters. It took five months, but the site was cleaned up in January 2011 at a cost of more than \$60,000.

After getting a tip from two off-duty Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Officers, Officer Calvert apprehended two suspects who had hunted waterfowl and shot over their daily limit, then tried to hide the evidence. They each were fined \$500, banned from hunting or possessing firearms for two years, and had to forfeit their firearms estimated at more than \$1,500.

Officer Calvert manages a complex workload that requires coordination with multiple agencies, Federal Court Districts and U.S. Attorneys. He also mentors many newer officers.

Sandy Cardenas
South Florida Ecological Services
Field Office
Vero Beach, Florida

Sandy Cardenas has shown extraordinary initiative in creating an unprecedented connection between the South Florida Ecological Services Office and the Vero Beach community. Because of her leadership, the office came together and made a difference in several important ways. She played a pivotal role in sharing the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sandy organized and directed the office's Earth Day Open House. Through posters and activities with children, the Ecological Services office was able to connect with Vero Beach residents and educate them on the Service's conservation mission and strategies. Subjects included the conservation and recovery needs of the Florida panther; progress to restore the Everglades; efforts to reintroduce the Key Largo woodrat into its native habitat and address the species' primary threats; and the Service's work to understand the impacts of climate change and develop a strategy for wildlife adaptation.

Sandy also showed tremendous initiative through her work to collect food for the community during the Thanksgiving season. Because of her efforts, the office amassed a large amount of food that was provided to a local food bank. The organization expressed sincere appreciation for the energy and commitment of the office to this cause for the third year in a row. In addition, Sandy led our office's effort to collect toys during the holiday season. She organized a car wash by our office to raise funds for Toys for Tots, which resulted in a record amount of dollars despite the rainy conditions. Sandy also separately led the office's work to collect toys for the organization. Taken together, this work provided a significant amount of toys for children in our community.

Robert Clark
Fish Biologist
Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery
Jamestown, Kentucky

With more than 18 years of government service, including nine years at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Bob Clark is a valuable and critical contributor to Wolf Creek's success in meeting federal mitigation obligations. He is the second longest tenured employee at the hatchery.

Traditionally, Wolf Creek experiences poor water quality in the fall of the year due to the turnover of Lake Cumberland. During this time, employee experience is critical to ensure valuable fish stocks are not jeopardized. To add to the problem, for the past four years, the hatchery has pumped water from the river to the hatchery to maintain fish stocks because Lake Cumberland is 45 feet below normal. The lake's water level is low because of planned repairs to Wolf Creek Dam. The lowering of the lake has decreased the volume and quality of water available from the gravity flow water system.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery continues to be actively involved in culturing of threatened and endangered species. Bob has accepted these additional duties and used his many years of experience to ensure the success of this high priority program.

The fish production from this station contributes \$50 million annually to the economy. Without the dedicated experience of employees such as Bob this program would be in jeopardy.

Charman Cupit
Administrative Officer
St. Catherine Creek and Cat Island
National Wildlife Refuges
Natchez, Mississippi

Charman Cupit manages the budgets for St. Catherine and Cat Island National Wildlife Refuges, ensuring all purchases and expenditures are performed in accordance with policy and legal standards. She is the go-to person, delivering support with a smile. Due to a vacancy created last year, Charman oversaw the Youth Conservation Corps program, creating detailed work plans for the coordinator and enrollees. She also finished a time-consuming project to install a new touch screen display for visitors.

Some of Charman's accomplishments in 2010:

- Served as the contracting officer for the two refuges, as well as, Natchitoches Fish Hatchery, Baton Rouge Fisheries Office, Southeast Arkansas Refuges, and the Lower Mississippi Joint Venture office. She awarded 37 contracts in 2010.
- Served as the BTS Coordinator for Areas 1 and 2, spending an estimated 150 hours trouble shooting and training others.
- Provided general administrative training to new administrative officers at Southeast Arkansas Refuges and Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge.

As an outreach, Charman has:

- Coordinated 71 volunteers over ten years;
- Co-organized the annual Wild Things educational/fund raiser event, which in 2010 drew several hundred people and raised \$6,000 for the Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge;
- Co-organized the grand opening for the new Refuge office;
- Organized and hosted the first annual Nature Photography Contest;
- Co-organized the monthly Second Saturday outreach events and Bird Festival;
- Organized and hosted two photography workshops;
- Updated web pages for St. Catherine Creek and Cat Island Refuges.

Jody DeMeyere
Park Ranger
Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex
Lacombe, Louisiana

Jody DeMeyere's superior achievements in 2010 included the creation of several new educational programs. These programs include Louisiana Science Grade Level Expectations, for which Jody provided teacher workshops; Incredible Insect Pollinators, which explores the anatomy of an insect pollinator using the student as a model; Habitat is Where It's At, developed for fourth- to sixth-graders to provide a hands-on lesson in wetlands ecology; Survival Wetland Wildlife Style for second- and third-graders to understand such concepts as predator/prey relationships; and Paddling Through Time, a canoe exploration through the refuge to highlight land and habitat changes.

Jody also developed and supervised six Refuges a la Carte classes consisting of educational carts for home school students, scout troops, and others. Groups learn about topics such as Coastal Wetlands, Endangered Species, Exotic and Invasive Species through games, activities, and visual demonstrations. Jody also revised a program she created several years ago as a volunteer called Refugology. This program puts the students in the situation of a refuge manager; shows them the pros and cons of each decision, and then asks them to make decisions on how to manage the refuge.

All the programs Jody developed are original and creative in her own way of getting students into the outdoors, in some cases for the first time to get a Sense of Wonder or to have that one time experience that draws them into the love for nature.

Jody is also the volunteer coordinator for the eight-refuge Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex. She coordinated five groups of resident RV volunteers who worked on the refuge from fall to spring. In addition, Jody led several annual events, such as the youth fishing rodeo, Wild Things, and Atchafalaya's Step Outside Day. Wild Things utilized over 90 volunteers for the one-day event attended by 4,200 people. Jody created and continues to update an excellent website for the entire complex. Last year, Jody also served as Louisiana's Junior Duck Stamp coordinator.

Honor Awards for Employees

Cheri Ehrhardt
Natural Resource Planner
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
Titusville, Florida

Until recently, Cheri Ehrhardt has been working part-time as a regional planner for Refuges where her primary responsibility is to assist the region and Refuges in Florida with meeting their deadline for completing Comprehensive Conservation Plans by 2015. But, as Cheri's dedication and exceptional facilitation and planning skills and abilities became apparent, she was asked to increase her work hours to assist with a variety of complex and controversial issues at Refuges in the region.

In the summer of 2010, she was requested to assist with a challenging refuge expansion plan in Alabama at the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge. Cheri managed the crowd like a professional and facilitated the meetings even under pressure.

Later in the summer, Cheri was called on again to manage a change in regulations at Crystal River NWR relative to manatees and the public's use of Kings Bay. Comments from the refuge manager on Cheri's assistance with a series of public meetings say it all. Cheri did an "outstanding job. ... All I had to do was show up and look pretty."

More recently, Cheri has stepped up to the challenge of facilitating the planning effort behind the establishment of a new National Wildlife Refuge in Florida to be called the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge, recognized as one of the Service's highest priorities of the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative. She immediately started pulling her team together and drafted the outreach plan needed to kick-start the series of public meetings that would be needed to put this planning effort on the fast track.

Cheri's work with the CCP team at Archie Carr NWR received national attention when planning branches around the country started using climate change language she had developed relative to future goals for refuge management. She is also an instructor at NCTC for CCP courses which impact employees everywhere.

Richard Kanaski
Regional Archaeologist
Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex
Hardeeville, South Carolina

Richard Kanaski's extraordinary work ethic has significantly improved efficiencies on National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries. Year in and year out, Rick ensures the Southeast Region complies with various laws involving cultural and historical preservation on Service lands, including the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources protection Act, Executive Order 11593, 36 CFR 800, and the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act.

Last year, Rick raised the bar. He tackled several important and controversial projects. He provided leadership for the Service's approach to historical and cultural compliance involving Bonner Bridge at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina; historical landownership at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia; impacts of proposed hydrological restoration at Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge in Florida; and the preservation of the Civil War-era Camp Lawton at Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery in Georgia. Rick makes the process both efficient and productive. He assists Service Managers with project reviews, site inspections, sampling for artifacts, arranging for appropriate permits, and other activities necessary to comply with laws and mandates. Regularly, Managers describe Rick as extremely dedicated to the resource protection, hard working, dependable and thorough. He is highly respected among other agencies overseeing archaeological permitting. He does not cut corners and works to resolve potential conflicts well before decisions have to be made.

Rick's work leads to a better understanding of past land uses and likely habitat that existed for wildlife prior to the establishment of most of today's refuges, going back to many thousands of years of Native American land use. These findings are often important for considering how to best mix "natural" and "anthropogenic" influences for managing habitat and to better define desired future habitat conditions for many of our most vulnerable wildlife species today. Rick also works with other renowned archaeologists conducting research to better understand past climate change, which in turn is useful for understanding future scenarios.

Neil Lalonde
Wildlife Biologist
Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex
Lacombe, Louisiana

Neil Lalonde is responsible for the biological program on three refuges. Last year, he provided control of exotic nutria, assisted prescribed burning, and fought wildfires. He took the lead in editing brochures, planted 33,000 tree seedlings, developed and monitored brush cutting operations, and provided logistics of moving 700 people and planting 86,000 plugs of marsh grass in restoring refuge marsh. He started out this extraordinary year by lending a hand to other staff in repairing equipment, often staying after work to repair boats, ATVs, trucks, the marshmaster, and other equipment so coworkers could be fully ready to respond to the next day's needs.

Neil also took the lead with refuge staff and volunteers in constructing a 500-foot boardwalk, providing more than 100 hours of his own construction labor.

Last year, in light of the needs during the BP oil spill response, Neil stepped-up population management for the red-cockaded woodpecker, providing new recruitment cluster sites, the first squirrel relocation program, the first translocation program, and the first bird banding program. He also developed and coordinated with a contractor to install 13 new RCW cavity inserts. Neil took initiative in seeking out refuge staff to take part in this effort, increasing recognition for the program and support across refuge disciplines.

Additionally, Neil was intimately involved with developing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for two refuges this year. He created wildlife habitat and population goals, objectives, and strategies, developed appendices, and provided his excellent GIS skills to create maps.

Whether it's in his job description or not, Neil's willingness to get the task at hand done, and done right, earned him the respect and admiration of the refuge staff. Neil is like a gourmet Cajun chef cooking a four-course meal for some special dignitary. There are a lot of things going on at one time, but they all come together at the right time and "C'est Se bon" (It's all good).

Troy Littrell
Deputy Project Leader
Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge
Paris, Tennessee

While serving as the Acting Project Leader at the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge between May and October 2010, and even before, Troy Littrell steered the refuge through numerous management challenges. Those included completing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan; addressing a politically sensitive issue with the extension of the Cuba Landing Marina Concession permit; coordinating with all parties on the new Visitor Center and Headquarters building; coordinating the development of new exhibits; overseeing numerous American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects; and ensuring the smooth and continuous day-to-day operation of the refuge.

The refuge's CCP is a well-prepared document with a well-defined vision, clearly articulated goals, objectives, and strategies. Troy did an exceptional job in leading the staff in the various disciplines (i.e., biology, public use, law enforcement) to prepare the document. He pulled the staff together under a unified vision for the future management of the refuge and successfully communicated that vision to the public, cooperators, and the conservation community.

Troy successfully conducted numerous meetings with concession owners, marina users, and Congressional members and negotiated a ten-year contract through 2020 for Cuba Landing. The concession contract had been year-to-year since 2007 while the Service outlined a course of action to bring the marina operation in line with the original intent of the contract.

Tennessee NWR received ARRA funding for numerous projects including the rebuilding of the outer levee at Duck River, the construction of a flume ditch and pump from the Duck River to bring water into the waterfowl impoundments at Duck River Bottoms, and the construction of a new headquarters and visitor center at Britton Ford Peninsula. Coordinating three large projects plus successfully overseeing the daily operation of the complex and addressing several other high priority projects and challenges is exceptional.

Fernando Núñez-García
Wildlife Biologist
Office of Federal Assistance
Regional Office

Fernando Núñez-García oversees the use and protects the investment of more than \$350 million of lands acquired through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Farm Bill funds for Everglades Restoration projects. In that role, he defined the responsibilities of the Office of Federal Assistance and the South Florida Ecological Services Office and developed an efficient, interagency work plan between the Service and the South Florida Water Management District.

Throughout the year, Fernando worked on complex and time sensitive projects that required constant coordination, communication, and negotiations with other agencies, including the Department of Interior, the Regional Solicitor, and the U.S. Corp of Engineers. Frequently under considerable pressure and tight deadlines, Fernando managed to complete the projects on time, ensuring that all procedures and environmental compliance requirements were met and the projects approved in a timely manner. Among others, the projects include hydrological restoration and construction of Stormwater Treatment Areas in Compartment B and C of the Everglades Agricultural Area; land exchanges in the Caloosahatchee River basin Berry Groves Area to facilitate the construction of an Emergency Operations Center; land exchanges with the Florida Power and Light to obtain a flowage easement over their lands and increase the treatment capacity in the area; and boundary line reduction and potential property disposal. He also prepared affidavits for various legal actions and opinions. The complexity of each proposed project demands creative approaches and strong teamwork and communications skills.

In addition, Fernando worked to continue the development of our Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration programs in Puerto Rico. He provided valuable insight and practical solutions to resolve audit findings. Fernando is a firm believer in the Service mission and proactive communication emphasizing teamwork in decision making.

Betty O'Donnell
Administrative Officer
South Carolina Lowcountry
Refuges Complex
Awendaw, South Carolina

When the Administrative Officer position at Santee National Wildlife Refuge was eliminated last year, Betty O'Donnell stepped in to help. When the Administrative Officer for the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex and its seven refuges accepted a new position in Region 2, Betty stepped in to help there as well. In addition to her own ever expanding duties at the South Carolina Lowcountry Refuges Complex, Betty took on the job of paying bills, producing purchase orders, and reconciling end-of-year budget issues for the other stations. Without Betty's assistance and guidance during the four months that Savannah was without an Administrative Officer, that complex would have had tremendous financial and budgetary issues, and would have been totally overwhelming to any new Administrative Officer coming into the job.

Also, at the end of the last fiscal year, Betty expertly handled a large purchasing order for equipment for the new Inventory and Monitoring position stationed at Cape Romain NWR. All of the purchasing had to be completed by the end of the fiscal year in addition to the normal wrap-up for Cape Romain and Waccamaw NWRs, and the Savannah complex.

Betty started her Service career in 1996 at Cape Romain. Even before Waccamaw opened its first office in 2003, Betty was already providing administrative support. She helped open the new office by securing phones and faxes and thinking about the day-to-day needs often overlooked by an anxious new manager. Betty keeps up with the daily budget accounting, which in 2008 included the many grants and private donations used for Waccamaw's new environmental education center and Refuge headquarters.

In addition to her administrative duties, Betty volunteered to be a back-up operator for Cape Romain's air quality program in 2007. She has continued to assist the biologist as needed to provide complete coverage every Tuesday. With an exemplary work ethic and positive attitude, Betty has always gone above and beyond her normal job duties.

Honor Awards for Employees

Frank Parauka **Panama City Fisheries Resources Office** **Panama City, Florida**

Frank Parauka's name is synonymous with Gulf sturgeon status and trends research. Those who have worked with Frank on the rivers know his unsurpassed enthusiasm and inspirational passion. He is the sturgeon's goodwill ambassador.

Frank's annual sturgeon population monitoring projects are a sellout event with Service biologists, universities, organizations, and volunteers clamoring to participate. When the great sturgeon hits the net and he hauls them into the tank for work-up, you will hear him shout, "Come On!" It motivates all who are lucky enough to be there.

Frank joined the Service's Fish Hatchery System in 1968 and arrived at the Fisheries Resources Office in Panama City, Florida, in 1984. He has developed a world-renowned fish monitoring and assessment program that has helped countless National Wildlife Refuges, military bases, local communities, and foreign governments manage their fisheries resources.

He also has been instrumental in passing on his enthusiasm for the natural resources to younger generations. Over the years, he has mentored many students and volunteers, and loves taking them out in the field with him to show them a day in the life of a fish biologist. His ability to organize and inspire the work of a group of volunteers has been key to the mission of the Service and has facilitated the collection of a large volume of data. His work for our fisheries resources has consistently represented the professional and generous approach that we all aspire to emulate. He is a model of service that we can all be proud to know is working with us to further the Service's mission.

Gary Peeples **Asheville Ecological Services Field Office** **Asheville, North Carolina**

Gary Peeples' focus on education and outreach on the highest priority resources identified in the Asheville Field Office Strategic Plan include activities that go well beyond his primary responsibilities.

Under his leadership, the Service's partnership with Highland Brewing Company bore fruit with packaging and promotional materials featuring the Service logo, illustrations of imperiled species, and opportunities to contribute to the Southern Appalachians Highlands Conservancy, a key partner at the forefront of conserving our high country. Gary also helped lead hikes to the peaks the beers were named after (Clawhammer Mountain and Cattail Peak).

Gary served as chair of the Executive Committee of the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere (SAMAB) Cooperative, a consortium of 14 federal and state agencies focused on collaboration and information sharing. Under his leadership, SAMAB held its 19th Annual Fall Conference in Asheville in November 2009. It was the largest ever, with 260 participants.

Gary has also been active in the new Appalachian Landscape Conservation Cooperative, the Service's New Media Working Group, and the regional Connecting People with Nature Team. He helped author DOI talking points for America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Asheville event that were used in subsequent AGO events. Gary served as mentor for four STEP employees and actively participated in recruiting, evaluating, and selecting two new permanent employees hired through the Federal Career Intern Program.

In addition, Gary organized three water quality workshops for educators; wrote and recorded 52 Southern Appalachian Creature Feature radio commentaries aired on WNCW; maintained a strong Web presence for the Asheville Field Office with photos and podcasts; and led or participated in events with local schools and partners.

Connie Saunders **Financial Manager** **Office of Law Enforcement** **Regional Office**

Year after year, Connie Saunders provides strong leadership and effective performance management of her direct reports to support the Service's goals and priorities. She is a proven performer, managing the Office of Law Enforcement's \$13-plus million budget with optimal results. She tracks expenses region-wide, provides monthly feedback to the supervising agents, and gives sound advice to regional managers. She also coordinates effectively with Headquarters in the Washington Office, maintaining budget controls while making sure the Regional Office and field operations have what they need to do their jobs.

Connie maintains a high degree of integrity and ethics, providing excellent oversight and execution of financial transactions. She manages the Southeast Region Special Funds undercover bank account and handles disbursement according to policy. She is highly proficient in using the Law Enforcement Management Information System, which she uses to manage the Undercover Business account. Connie also serves as a collection officer and effectively manages the user's fee collections from the inspection program; manages the Fleet Vehicle program; handles payment for live evidence through the Reward account; manages the permits section by promoting teamwork and motivating the staff.

Connie is a mentor to the support staff in the field. They rely on her expertise on an ongoing basis. She is an invaluable asset to the Office of Law Enforcement.

Judy Toppins
General Biologist
Fisheries
Regional Office

Judy Toppins is the Fisheries Program's Regional Outreach Coordinator. Under her leadership, the Fisheries Program has made great strides in connecting children with nature, providing the American public with a greater sense of the Service's activities and securing and interpreting significant archaeological resources.

Judy was instrumental in developing the Biologist in Training program that was recently adapted for use by the Service nationwide to better connect children with nature. Judy is also involved with the new Visitor Center at the Mammoth Spring National Fish Hatchery. She has taken on a myriad of collateral duties associated with the design and construction of this major facility.

Judy also is heavily involved in all phases of securing, promoting, staffing, and planning for interpretation of the Camp Lawton archeological site at the Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery. The Camp Lawton site represents one of the most pristine Civil War archaeological finds of the last century and affords the Service the unique opportunity to reach a wider audience with its conservation message.

Vicky Viña
Supervisory Wildlife Inspector
Office of Law Enforcement
Port of Miami, Florida

Supervisory Wildlife Inspector Vicky Viña has been with the Inspection Program for 28 years. Her commitment to the Wildlife Inspectors and the Inspection Program goes beyond daily expectations. She met several challenges in 2010. When one of her inspectors could not return to work for medical reasons, Vicky took the majority of the inspector's cases herself. She maintained her caseload and kept her cases updated. Vicky willingly undertakes any task that will lessen the load of her Wildlife Inspectors, improve their educational growth, and contribute to the overall success of the Wildlife Inspection Program.

Last year, Vicky reviewed the Inspection Program for the Port of Miami. She overhauled how inspections were conducted, revised inspection scheduling, and updated the safety protocols for venomous shipments and the protocols for employee safety. The review and changes led to a more efficient and effective program.

Vicky enjoys and flourishes in her work because she takes initiative and makes multiple decisions quickly related to requests from the import/export community, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and other federal agencies for training. Last year, the Port of Miami also received numerous media queries. Local newspapers, national magazines and documentary television programs, such as Animal Planet and National Geographic, wanted to know what we do and how we do it. Vicky ensures that the Service's mission of conservation is the foremost message that is given and no misinformation is presented to sensationalize the article or show.

Vicky recognizes the contributions of others, and has mentored every Wildlife Inspector hired after her at the Port of Miami and the criminal investigators who trained in Miami. She is routinely contacted by other Supervisory Wildlife Inspectors from around the country for her guidance or opinions. Her knowledge and experience was requested in the initial stages of the Strategic and Workforce planning. Vicky's leadership style is guided by her deeply held values for collaboration and conservation of natural resources.

Jon Wallace
Prescribed Fire Specialist
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee
National Wildlife Refuge
Boynton Beach, Florida

Jon Wallace had an incredible year in 2010 as the Prescribed Fire Specialist for the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. He completed more than 21,000 acres of prescribed burning at the refuge, and three prescribed burns at the National Key Deer Refuge in the Florida Keys. He was the final evaluator for three Type 2 Burn Bosses and one Type 1 Burn Boss.

Jon started developing a Community Wildlife Protection Plan for Hobe Sound and Jupiter Island. He conducted the first fuels treatment at the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge and planned a complex prescribed burn for the refuge. He also conducted three prescribed burns with the Prescribed Fire Training Center and instructed several classes -- including Fire in the Urban Interface -- for the Palm Beach County Fire Department, the Florida Division of Forestry, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition, Jon created the Southeast Region's fire management unit layer for the Wildfire Decision Support System, which allows refuges to analyze strategic and management objectives. Jon created those objectives for every Southeast refuge that does not have a fire staff. He was also the Geographic Editor for the system, providing system support on wildfires in Alaska, Virginia, and Florida.

Jon also updated the Southeast Region's fire occurrence and weather database and coordinated with the Missoula Fire Lab to incorporate the data into the next run of the Large Fire Simulator.

Other accomplishments in 2010 include:

- Completed 120-day detail to the Boise National Fire Office as the National Ecological Modeling Decision Support subject matter expert. He assisted in developing the 2011 National Hazardous Fuels Budget and briefed the National Fuels Committee;
- Participated in model presentations to the National Fire Directors, National Fuels Management Committee and the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination;
- Began developing a National Soils Layer so organic soils can be included in the model.

Honor Awards for Employees and Teams

James Dale Welker
Maintenance Mechanic
Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge
Dover, Tennessee

James Dale Welker has served as the Maintenance Mechanic at Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge since 1978. During his 33-year career Dale has served as not only the Maintenance Mechanic but as an Equipment Operator, a Collateral Duty Law Enforcement Officer, and other positions. During the interim between Refuge Managers, Dale made sure SAMMS entries were up-to-date and continued those efforts as the new manager needed to oversee new and ongoing projects. During this and other interim periods, Dale has overseen the refuge's daily operations, including maintaining and monitoring all water levels on control structures throughout the year to ensure waterfowl habitat was at optimum production levels.

For several years, he has partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, assisting the local Resource Manager with road maintenance on the Corps' Bear Creek Water Management Area. This past year, Dale provided information to the National Park Service and Tennessee Civil War Heritage Trail concerning locations and significance of historical structures on the refuge.

On the first weekend in May 2010, when one of the largest rain events in Tennessee history occurred on the Cumberland River, Dale led his fellow employees in protecting the public and refuge resources. Dale also negotiated with a landowner adjacent to the refuge to open a temporary road to allow the refuge's staff to move the dozer, frontend loader, grader, and other refuge equipment. This saved the refuge equipment, valued at more than \$400,000, from being damaged by the rapidly rising flood waters.

Dale has had a long and dedicated career serving the mission of Cross Creeks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His leadership, skills and knowledge have proven invaluable.

Jonathan Windley
Deputy Project Leader
Central Arkansas
National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Augusta, Arkansas

For 13 years, Jonathan Windley, deputy project leader for the Central Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge Complex, has been a driving force behind many wildlife conservation successes. Jonathan, a true servant leader, does whatever it takes to provide staff members with the support, guidance, encouragement, tools, training and resources they need to excel. He spends long hours in front of the computer in the office and at home working with data submissions and report formulations so the staff are not overburdened by the frequent reporting requirements. Jonathan exhibits a deep caring for the welfare of staff and their families and is always available to help. He strives to promote professionalism and instill in staff an exemplary work ethic, community service spirit, sense of duty, and determination to succeed.

Jonathan also maintains a law enforcement commission, and in addition to patrolling the refuge, supports the two full-time officers whenever they need assistance.

Jonathan is dedicated to public use and visitor services in the refuge complex, and he works diligently to promote hunting opportunities for youths. During his tenure, youth hunts for deer, turkey, and doves were instituted on Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. Jonathan also conceived, planned, and implemented a youth waterfowl hunting program at Cache River, one of the best waterfowling places in the country. In the last two years, more than 100 youths hunted from five blinds in an area that Jonathan designed for the purpose.

Jonathan also coordinated, planned and designed the first Mentored Youth Waterfowl Hunt in Arkansas. He recruited partners such as Delta Waterfowl, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and Rich-N-Tone Duck Calls, Inc. Selected through an essay contest, five youths who had never before hunted participated in the three-day event. The hunters and their fathers were lodged and fed in refuge quarters and all classroom and field instructions, including the waterfowl hunt in which the youths bagged 17 ducks, were conducted at Cache River. Jonathan created memories that will last a lifetime and foster future wildlife conservationists.

External Affairs Landscape
Conservation Cooperative Team
Regional Office
Ellen Marcus
Stacy Shelton
Jennifer Strickland
Kristi Watkins

Red knots that depend on coastal habitats along the Atlantic coast are in trouble as a result of the impacts of accelerating climate change. Sea level rise and related habitat and species impacts are being monitored at coastal national wildlife refuges. Innovative carbon sequestration work at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and an adaptation project with Duke Energy, The Nature Conservancy, and the Service at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge demonstrate how the Southeast Region is responding to accelerating climate change.

These stories help illustrate how employees are getting their arms around one of the great conservation challenges of our time. And that's where this group of communications professionals shined in 2010 on one of the Service's highest priorities. As Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are established across the Southeast Region and our response to climate change takes shape, so are the stories that are already helping employees and partners see more clearly how expanded science capacity will benefit future management and the achievement of our conservation goals in the face of daunting challenges.

Videos produced for the LCCs continue to be shared, LCC banners are finding their way into the offices of Service employees and partners across the Southeast, and collaborations with non-traditional partners such as the Centers for Disease Control and Climate Central are some of the ways this team is charting a new course for communicating our work.

This team not only helped our region lead the way with creative communications and storytelling, a series of videos, and the integration of social media to expand our reach and web presence, they played a key role in supporting national climate and LCC communication. David Eisenhower recently expressed his appreciation for their effort to support the Service's presence at Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency's (AFWA) annual meeting.

Honor Awards for Teams

**Hatchie NWR Bottomland
Hardwood Restoration Team
West Tennessee NWR Complex
Dyersburg, Tennessee**

**Leif Karnuth
James Roberts**

On foot and under extreme environmental conditions that including sweltering heat and wetlands infested with mosquitoes and cottonmouth snakes, Leif Karnuth and James Roberts located and mapped 244 beaver dams that were cumulatively destroying the natural hydrology on Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge. The foresters removed 91 of those dams, some repeatedly, and drained an area of 1,476 acres to restore a bottomland hardwood forest.

For 30 years, beaver dams on the major drainages and tributaries of the Hatchie River had increased the sediment load in the forested habitats, resulting in timber losses extending over 2,500 acres. These dams have negatively impacted the Service's ability to manage water in the moist soil. With 96 miles of creeks, sloughs, and drainages on the refuge, the scope of the problem is significant.

Leif and Brian's initial work consisted of exploring the various waterways within the wetlands system to determine the natural drainage routes and removing the impeding dams. In support of these activities, 7.25 miles of trails were made passable by removing fallen trees.

Their work led to strategies for the future management of the Hatchie wetlands system, including prioritizing beaver management activities in those areas creating adverse impacts to the bottomland hardwood forest, and re-opening and maintaining access trails to facilitate future management activities. Their work has the potential to save thousands of acres of bottomland hardwood habitat which have been adversely impacted by beaver activities and associated siltation.

**Multi-Species Transition Strategy Team
South Florida Ecological Services
Field Office
Vero Beach, Florida**

**Daniel Nehler
Heather Tipton**

Biologists Dan Nehler and Heather Tipton showed vision and leadership in creating an entirely new approach to managing water levels in one-half million acres of the most extensive, relatively intact ridge and slough landscapes remaining in the Everglades ecosystem. Water Conservation Area 3A provides vital habitat for endangered species such as the Everglade snail kite, wood stork, and many species of wading and migratory birds. Management of water through the area also plays a key role in restoring the condition of Everglades National Park and Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow habitat immediately downstream. In addition, the Miccosukee Tribe has a perpetual lease to the western portion and relies upon Everglades lands to support its culture, religion, and economic survival.

From April 2008 to July 2010, Heather and Dan led a multi-disciplinary team of Service staff, working with academic experts and our partners at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the South Florida Water Management District, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Everglades National Park, to create the Multi-Species Transition Strategy. The strategy includes species-specific ranges that reflect water levels or depths believed to provide optimal conditions for breeding and foraging. The science-based strategy takes into consideration the needs of multiple species, inter-annual variability, spatial extent, and identified focal areas for certain species. It is used in bi-weekly interagency calls between agency biologists and water managers.

In their 2010 review of Everglades restoration progress, the National Academy of Science specifically recognized the value of this strategy and commended the Service for it. This new strategy is the cornerstone of an even larger effort, the Everglades Restoration Transition Plan, which originally arose as a modification to the Interim Operating Plan for the protection of the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, but now encompasses a broader array of species and habitats.

**Refuge Program Facility
Management Team, Regional Office**

**Sarah Clardy
Thad Clark
Chris Hotaling
Bill Lanahan
Brad Long
Robert Stewart**

Since October 2008, the Regional Refuge Facility Management Team has made a lasting contribution to the overall facility management success in the Southeast Region. The team established standardized operating procedures for all components of facility management and continues to consider new ways to educate field and regional office staff regarding the DOI and Service policies that guide facility management. The Washington Office heralded these operating procedures as a standard business model and encouraged their adoption by other regional facility management programs.

After starting out two years behind, the team finally caught up on achieving our Comprehensive Condition Assessment target of 80 percent completions by December 2010, bringing the region an impressive 88.32 percent completion percentage. Team members worked long hours in the field and the Regional Office to meet this goal while providing accurate cost estimates for all deficiencies based on current Service policies and procedures.

The team spent hundreds of extra hours updating deferred maintenance records for each asset assessed and provided accurate estimates for documentation. The team completed the assessments at 39 National Wildlife Refuges and five National Fish Hatcheries; assessed 1,592 assets while discovering 141 new Real Property Inventory assets; identified 50 assets that were removed from site but still listed in the database; and grouped 189 alike assets. Other noteworthy accomplishments in asset management included assessment of 119 buildings, 26 dams, and 9 bridges, and identifying 556 safety discrepancies at refuge and fish hatchery field stations.

Throughout the entire process, team members displayed exceptional leadership support for each other, the Regional Office, and field staff. Their ability to analyze and adapt while always displaying a high spirit of cooperation, willingness to help, and attentiveness to details are just a few noteworthy qualities.

Honor Awards for Teams

Revenue Sharing Appraisal Team Regional Office

Donna Cella
Division of Realty
Zebulum Matthews
Office of Evaluation Services
Laura Lee Sandberg
Contracting & Grant Services

Donna Cella, Zebulum Matthews, and Laura Lee Sandberg put in many hours outside their normal duty hours to meet Washington Office deadlines for ordering revenue sharing appraisals for 28 national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, and 36 Farm Service Agency tracts. A total of \$212,390 was obligated for these appraisals, within budget.

Accomplishing this annual task was a collective effort involving three different program areas. Zeb was responsible for developing the Statements of Work, seeking out and supplying the Service with a list of qualified appraisers, and providing the government cost estimate for each of the 50 appraisals.

Laura Lee was responsible for developing and processing bid solicitations and awarding appraisal contracts to the selected appraisers. She also administered the 50 contracts.

Donna has the sole responsibility for coordinating the entire appraisal process and serves as the liaison between the field stations, the Division of Contracting & Grant Services, and the Office of Evaluation Services. She was instrumental in collecting land data information including tract locations, timber values, property improvements, and updating records for any changes that would affect the value of the property. She worked closely with the cartographers in the Division of Realty to ensure accurate maps were provided to the contract appraisers enabling them to locate the tracts to be appraised.

Southeast Region American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Construction Team Regional Office

Budget, Planning, & Financial Services:

Ed Buskirk

Contracting & Grant Services:

Victor Bowman

Don Calder

Nelson Crawford

Emergency Recovery Team:

Brian Ellington

Earl Higginbotham

Justin Holsomback

Emery Hoyle

Judy Huffines

Chris Shope

Steve Sponaogle

Ben Starks

Mark Tapp

Engineering:

Steve Denbow

Joey Eldridge

Jason Hopkins

Phil Keener

Paul Kelley

Terry McKittrick

Gene Metzger

National Wildlife Refuge System:

Connie Lanahan

Kimberly McClurg

Steve Seibert

Richard Warner

The members of the Southeast Region ARRA Construction Team were instrumental in obligating more than \$50 million dollars in construction contracts on top of an already heavy workload of deferred maintenance, construction, hurricane recovery, and visitor facility enhancement funds. The members of this team tossed aside their bowling shirts and really demonstrated a “One Service” approach.

The team’s accomplishments include:

- Exceeding all ARRA obligation and project mobilization milestones while executing the largest regional ARRA allocation.
- Completing all NEPA and other required processes in time for projects to start on schedule.
- Developing a comprehensive acquisition plan and a robust project management database for more than 250 construction projects.
- Ensuring the region had a vast suite of acquisition tools, including two large multiple award task order contracts for design-build and construction; an indefinite delivery indefinite quantity (IDIQ) wetland restoration contract; four IDIQ architect-engineer contracts; strong ties to regional Small Business Administration offices; a solid list of reputable 8(a) contractors; and agreements with conservation partners.

- Developing risk management and project management plans for larger projects.
- Acting quickly when projects became at-risk for missing major milestones by making joint decisions and developing viable alternatives without sacrificing ARRA goals and progress.

Despite frequently accelerated ARRA milestones, the already tremendous procurement workload, and the devastating oil spill, this team ensured the region led the Service in prompt payment of invoices and obligated 100 percent of all ARRA funds before the deadline.

**Yazoo Tornado Response Team
Yazoo County, Mississippi**

Mississippi Refuge Staff:

Sabrina Chandler

Brent Chisholm

Lamar Dorris

Hugh Durham

David Linden

Bart Marble

James McClelland

Ollie Morganfield

Sonny Stubblefield

Mike Yelverton

Office of Law Enforcement:

Ben Bryant

Stephen Clark

Bob Oliveri

Kash Schriefer

Gregory Scott

Refuge Zone Officers:

John Branum

Vic Coffman

Mark Guinn

On the afternoon of Saturday April 24, 2010 an F-4 tornado, packing winds greater than 140 mph, touched down in Yazoo County, Mississippi, traveled across Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and continued on a northeast path into and through the town of Yazoo City. By the time the tornado picked back up it had left a path of destruction greater than ¾ mile wide and six miles long. The Service employees who lived in and near Yazoo City took immediate action to help in the community.

LE Zone Officer Vic Coffman climbed down into a 40-foot deep area to reach a woman with just her head showing above the downed trees and debris. The only way to free her was to carve away portions of the tree on top of her. Officer Coffman and other individuals covered her face with towels to help protect her from wood chips and heat of the saw and were able to successfully extricate her. The woman survived with just a broken ankle.

Deputy Project Leader Sabrina Chandler, despite damage to her own home, checked on other staff members then contacted the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and the Yazoo Sheriff's office to offer help. She called in three of the Service's Equipment Operators, Mike Yelverton, Ollie Morganfield and Brent Chisholm, and one Law Enforcement Officer, Jeremy (Bart) Marble to help clear the roads. Within 1 ½ hours, the team was clearing paths to provide ambulance access to trapped victims. At the same time, Engineering Equipment Operator Hugh Durham, even though his house had been severely damaged, was assisting his neighbors.

Engineering Equipment Operator Sonny Stubblefield and Forester Lamar Dorris were also assisting with the same type of operations through volunteer fire departments and individual assistance.

By Saturday evening and early Sunday morning, the two Refuge Officers, three Zone Officers, and four Special Agents were assisting victims in the rural areas of the county. During the patrols, the officers realized that the only assistance requested was for food and water. That evening, a 30-foot trailer full of water and Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) arrived from Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, delivered by Greg Scott. The supplies were delivered door to door. A total of 1,728 MRE's and 5,760 bottles of drinking water were handed out. The Service and its employees had been the first to provide and deliver such needs.

Their quick reactions likely resulted in saving many lives. Their assistance provided much needed comfort and safety to those in distress in the shortest time possible. They are shining examples of well trained employees reacting to dire circumstances and of the Service's commitment to supporting local communities.

Distinguished Awards of Achievement

*Federal Wage System
Employee of the Year*

**Allen Hansen
Maintenance Mechanic
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee
National Wildlife Refuge
Boynton Beach, Florida**

Allen Hansen has selflessly performed his duties, sought additional responsibilities, cut costs, and promoted the Service and its mission. He is highly respected by his fellow employees at the refuge.

Allen has suggested and implemented a number of cost saving jobs and ideas. He received the required training and certification and now serves as a state-licensed water plant operator in order to operate the refuge's potable water plant. This saves more than \$6,000 a year. He also took responsibility for the refuge's sewage treatment plant, which has resulted in additional savings for the refuge. Both plants are closely monitored by the state and Palm Beach County, who periodically do surprise inspections to ensure compliance with state standards. The plants have never failed to pass these inspections with flying colors. Allen's dedication is exemplified by the time he left a hospital where he was having extensive tests in order to perform emergency repairs on the refuge's water plant.

Allen is also the refuge's expert on the telephone and data system. He is the first responder for data problems and the coordination of those problems with the vendors. This saves the refuge \$300 to \$600 a visit.

Last year, the refuge was able to host resident volunteers for the first time because Allen planned and built three trailer pads. He also supervises several of these volunteers.

Friends Group of the Year

**Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society
Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge
Manteo, North Carolina**

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, the non-profit support group for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, took on several new projects last year while providing support for all facets of Visitor Services programs.

When the Service needed science support to undergird its position on the controversial Bonner Bridge Replacement Project, the Society stood in the gap for the refuge by contracting with Dr. Robert Dolan of the University of Virginia to complete an \$80,000 research project to analyze the data that had been collected since the terminal groin was constructed in 1989. Due to the fast action of the Society, the project was accomplished in record time.

The Society, which focuses on connecting children with nature, offered \$20,000 in transportation grants to bring classes to eastern North Carolina refuges. In addition, with the Society's support, 650 students participate in monthly wildlife clubs. Nearly 800 additional children participated in the Wildlife Olympics.

The Society has been active in Wings Over Water (WOW) since its inception more than a decade ago and last year was successful in convincing the WOW steering committee to designate profits to fund transportation grants for refuge field trips.

The Society, which helps offer canoe tours to the public and supports the intern and volunteer program, added support for a new tram for interpretive tours on Alligator River.

The Society consistently advocated for the North Carolina Gateway Visitor Center and Headquarters for 20 years. Their dreams were realized when the project was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Also last year, the Society funded 1.5 positions to support the Visitor Services and Volunteer Programs (\$75,000) for these refuges and provided an additional \$20,000 in support by purchasing needed equipment and supplies, paying for repairs and maintenance, and funding volunteer needs.

Regional Director's Conservation Awards

Brent Dykes
Executive Director, Georgia Soil
and Water Conservation Commission
Athens, Georgia

Thanks to Brent Dykes' extraordinary efforts and leadership, more than 180 private landowners have restored more than 140 miles of riparian and stream habitat throughout Georgia since 1995.

Mr. Dykes accomplished these achievements through his leadership of the Commission and working with many private landowners, the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, conservation districts around the state, and local governments. He helped create partnerships with private landowners and farmers to restore riparian habitats on their lands, mostly by installing livestock exclusion fencing and re-vegetating stream banks.

Another notable accomplishment of Mr. Dykes' is the establishment of about 20 outdoor education classroom projects throughout the state which connect people with nature, a Service priority.

Brent has worked with the Service to focus private land projects in priority watersheds identified by DNR and other conservation organizations. These focus areas have included the Altamaha River system, the Flint River watershed and Spring Creek, the Etowah River, Coosa River, Suwannee River, Ochlocknee River, and others. These projects are beneficial to several federal and state listed wildlife species including the swallow-tailed kite, wood stork, Altamaha shiner, bluestripe shiner, Cherokee darter, robust redhorse, amber darter, shinyrayed pocketbook mussel, oval pigtoe mussel, various neotropical migratory birds, and many other wildlife and plant species.

Mr. Dykes has been an inspiration to other individuals and conservation organizations, serving as a positive influence on others to accomplish the common goal of restoring important riparian and stream habitat which is important for many wildlife species and the public.

Dr. Cynthia Gaskill, DVM
University of Kentucky
Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
Lexington, Kentucky

Dr. Cynthia Gaskill's responsibilities include the identification of poisons determined to be the cause of death for animals submitted for necropsy by veterinarians across the state. These analyses include incidents where pets have come in contact with and were killed as the result of the unlawful application of restricted-use pesticides, such as Carbofuran [Furadan].

Knowing that restricted-use pesticides pose a significant threat to migratory birds, Dr. Gaskill goes to great lengths to put Service special agents in contact with pet owners when the Lab makes a cause of death determination of pesticide poisoning. Most wildlife poisoning investigations are initiated following the report of a poisoned family pet or hunting dog, where migratory birds also are discovered. This partnership has led to numerous investigations and prosecutions sought by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

Recently Dr. Gaskill referred a poisoning incident where, for the first time in Kentucky, it was documented that a Strychnine-based rodenticide was being intentionally and unlawfully used to kill wildlife. The product was labeled solely for the purpose of killing gophers, a species which does not occur in Kentucky. As a direct result of the referral, the Service, working through the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, succeeded in having the product removed from the list of pesticides and rodenticides registered for use in the state of Kentucky, resulting in the product being removed from store shelves statewide.

Dr. Gaskill also supports Service investigations by making the submission of migratory birds and other evidence a priority in her lab. Seldom do Service special agents wait more than 24-36 hours for toxicology reports. These quick lab analyses assist Service special agents with the timely identification of subjects and are instrumental to the investigations proceeding more rapidly, preventing the deaths of additional wildlife, and affording the opportunity to seize evidence before it decomposes, is removed, hidden, or otherwise tampered with.

Dr. K. Jack Killgore
U.S. Army Engineer Research
and Development Center (ERDC)
Vicksburg, Mississippi

Thanks to the research of Dr. Jack Killgore, the Lower Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Coordination Office, and the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC) have a better understanding of how to manage aquatic resources and document the benefits of ecosystem restoration.

Dr. Killgore conducts research in the Mississippi River and its tributaries and has written numerous articles on the environmental biology of fishes, threatened (sturgeon) and invasive (Asian carp) fish species, ecosystem restoration, and environmental impact assessment of federal flood control and navigation projects. In the mid-2000's, he was elected Chair of the LMRCC Habitat Restoration Technical Section and has led efforts to prioritize aquatic habitat restoration projects identified by the LMRCC Mississippi River Conservation Initiative.

Under Dr. Killgore's leadership, a decision-support model was developed by the ERDC research team to prioritize project construction and ensure the most cost-effective use of the Southeast Region's Fish Passage Program funds. He also has provided valuable pre- and post-construction monitoring data associated with restoring flows in Lower Mississippi River secondary channels by notching stone dikes used to maintain the river's commercial navigation channel. Dr. Killgore's team has sampled three secondary channels prior to the LMRCC notching dikes in them and continues to monitor the post-notching response of fisheries.

He also has developed an index to determine habitat quality of secondary channels using remote-sensed data. Based on the number of dikes requiring notching, this index provides a technique for prioritizing more than 100 secondary channels in the Lower Mississippi River for flow restoration and/or conservation of important resources.

Dr. Killgore's contributions to LMRCC's Mississippi River Conservation Initiative are significant as he continues quantifying ecosystem benefits and assisting in directing prioritization of aquatic habitat restoration activities in the Lower Mississippi River.

Regional Director's Conservation Awards

Keith Ouchley The Nature Conservancy Louisiana Chapter Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Keith Ouchley has played an instrumental role in the largest wetland restoration project in the U.S. More than 19,000 acres, or 25 square miles, of habitat was reconnected to the Ouachita River flood plain. This project will allow the "Mollicy Unit" of the Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge to function as a true deepwater, overflow bottomland hardwood forest.

The bottomland hardwoods had been cut and burned in the late 1960s to create Mollicy Farms, a soybean farm. Because the land flooded annually, the owners built a 30-foot tall, 17-mile long ring levee to prevent the Ouachita River from flooding the 19,000 acres of newly created farm land. The cost to maintain the levee coupled with the marginal farm ground spelled disaster for several different land owners that eventually bought and tried to farm Mollicy. The Service purchased most of Mollicy in 1997 and started replanting the farm back into native bottomland hardwood species. But, the Service realized it needed to breach the ring levee to allow the Mollicy unit to function like a true bottomland hardwood forest.

After three years of planning and failed attempts due to bad weather, Mr. Ouchley's actions helped make the Mollicy restoration a huge success in 2010. He traveled the country to raise money and promote the restoration project to industries like Caterpillar and many other private individuals. His efforts helped secure \$60,000 for a challenge cost-share project between the Service and TNC to survey Mollicy and determine the best locations to breach the levee. Mr. Ouchley also came up with an extra \$50,000 for the Service to rent heavy equipment to remove more soil from the levee.

Mr. Ouchley also has taken over the science and monitoring of the restoration project. He and TNC have contracted several universities to study Mollicy and the west side of Upper Ouachita NWR to determine the effects of the restoration project on water quality, amphibians, fish, and tree survival. He donates much of his time and efforts to see that not only the restoration project becomes a success, but that it becomes a model for many other wetland projects.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society Sanibel, Florida

In 2010, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society (DDWS) demonstrated their continued allegiance to the Service, its mission, and the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. One of the first Friends groups in the nation, this dedicated group works with staff to fund projects which enhance the visitor services program at the refuge. Their support significantly contributes to the refuge's ability to carry out natural resource management, conservation, and education efforts. DDWS made the following recent additions possible:

- Calusa Shell Mound Trail Kiosk and Interpretive Panels. These are part of a \$40,000 project which enhances the one-third mile boardwalk trail around multiple ancient Calusa Indian shell mounds. A six-paneled kiosk and ten new interpretive panels guide visitors on a journey into the past and educate them about the indigenous people.
- Enhancement of the Recent Sightings Board located outside the "Ding" Darling Education Center. The new board not only lists all the major animals seen daily on the refuge, but it also shows visitors how to identify them. New groups of species were added, such as mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies. The changes have greatly improved the refuge's ability to orient visitors about what is currently seen in the refuge. This project was funded through a grant written by DDWS.
- Reopening of the Buck Key Canoe Trail. After Hurricane Charley hit the J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR in 2004, the canoe trail was impassable and closed to public access. After finding private donors, the DDWS funded a project to hire a local contractor and successfully reopened the trail in coordination with the refuge and Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This half-mile trail winds through dense mangrove forests and is considered a paddler's paradise once again.

St. Lucie County International Airport Fort Pierce, Florida

As part of its expansion plans, the St. Lucie County International Airport made it a priority to help protect the threatened Florida scrub-jay. This ethic of strategic habitat conservation inspired the collective actions of the Service, South Florida Water Management District, St. Lucie County Environmental Resources Division, and the Airport's environmental contractors, leading to the creation of a 56-acre conservation area. The Airport enacted a conservation easement on this scrub area and immediately hit the woods with shovels, saws, and choppers to remove the nuisance vegetation that was excluding scrub-jays.

At least two scrub-jay families are occupying the previously unoccupied territory. This conservation area serves as an anchor habitat at the southern terminus of the Brevard, Indian River, and St. Lucie scrub-jay metapopulation, and will help ensure the survival of this genetic group for generations to come.

The success of this scrub-jay conservation area led to its inclusion in the Florida Greenways and Trails network. This action will allow hikers, bird watchers, and all wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy this wonderful conservation achievement.

The Airport's leadership and willingness to partner with the Service are models of the dedication and vision needed to conserve our region's imperiled species and restore their habitats.

**The Nature Conservancy
Tennessee Chapter
Gainesboro, Tennessee**

With more than 8,000 documented caves, Tennessee has the highest number of known caves in the United States. The Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy has made the preservation of these cave ecosystems one of its highest priorities and currently directs the leading cave protection program in Tennessee.

For 30 years, the Tennessee Chapter of TNC has provided invaluable leadership and resources to protect caves and cave-dwelling species. Some highlights are:

- The 1984 purchase of Hubbard's Cave and subsequent installation of a massive state-of-the-art cave gate. The cave houses seven bat species, including one of the largest hibernating colonies of the endangered gray bat. Since gating the cave, the gray bat population using the cave has grown from 50,000 to 500,000.
- The acquisition of Pearson Cave, another important gray bat hibernaculum, since transferred to the state with assistance from the Service's Recovery Land Acquisition grants program.
- The largest cave survey project ever undertaken in Tennessee. One hundred caves on the Cumberland Plateau were surveyed, resulting in the collection of 48 previously unknown species, as well as more than 150 rare species of insects. This information has been used to develop protection strategies for these delicate ecosystems.

More recently, the main focus of the Tennessee TNC Cave and Karst Program has been White Nose Syndrome (WNS). In addition to surveying 25 caves to monitor for WNS, working with federal and state partners to ensure that Tennessee's WNS response plan is thorough and effective, and assisting Bucknell University researchers with a multi-state WNS research project, TNC is also working on a test site for WNS treatments. In this pilot project, TNC is building an artificial bat cave that mimics the environment of a nearby hibernaculum.

**Cold-Stun Sea Turtle
Rescue Operations Team
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
Titusville, Florida**

**Dr. Candace Carter, National Park Service,
Canaveral National Seashore**

**Angy Chambers, United States Air Force,
Patrick Air Force Base**

**Dennis David, Florida Fish and
Wildlife Conservation Commission**

**Karrie Minch, Florida Fish and
Wildlife Conservation Commission**

**Lynne Phillips, National Aeronautical
and Space Administration**

**Barbara Schroeder,
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration**

From January 6-14, 2010, east central Florida experienced an unusually severe cold spell. Water temperatures in the shallow estuarine waters in and around Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge plunged to near 40° F with nighttime air temperatures at or below freezing. The duration and magnitude of low water temperatures were unprecedented, causing hundreds of sea turtles to become lethargic. They were unable to swim freely and dive to deeper, warmer water, or even lift their heads to breathe. These cold-stunned turtles were vulnerable to predators and death from the cold air exposure.

Starting January 6, the Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, NASA, and National Park Service deployed watercraft and helicopters to search local waters and transport turtles to a triage center at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge maintenance shop. Sea World, Disney World, and many other organizations provided equipment, facilities, and staff to help transport and care for the turtles. Ordinary citizens arrived with rescued turtles in the back of their vehicles and often stayed to help.

Staff and volunteers worked long hours with minimal rest to process 1,981 turtles, of which 1,665 survived. The seven individuals recognized today represent the partnering agencies and cadre of dedicated employees that came together as a team under a unified incident command structure to prevent what surely would have been a catastrophic mortality event for the local sea turtle population.

**Shad in the Schools Program
Raleigh, North Carolina**

**Centennial Campus
Magnet Middle School
Lead Mine Elementary School
North Carolina Museum
of Natural Sciences**

Before employees of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences got involved in the Shad in the Schools Program, it was available in only two schools in North Carolina. Now, 20 schools across the state offer it. As part of the program, teachers participate in a day-long workshop at the Museum where they learn how to monitor and raise shad in their hatchery tanks, learn about the life cycle of the American Shad and curriculum related materials.

The Museum directors saw the potential to engage students in an authentic conservation project (raising American Shad to release into their local river) that connects them to the natural world and enhances their scientific literacy. They were instrumental in getting the Museum to support this program and finding grant and partnership opportunities to fund it.

The Museum worked with the Service to bring the web-based curriculum alive. It oversees the development of the teacher workshop and the recruitment of new schools into the program. The Museum also is the liaison to the teachers in the field who are raising the American shad. In addition, it oversees the building and the supplying of the shad hatcheries.

Museum staff enhanced and fine-tuned shad husbandry. Through their efforts the original shad hatchery has been redesigned to cost less so more schools can participate in the program.

Through funding from grants provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Museum developed and leads a canoe camping trip each year through the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge. During this trip, teachers explore the bottomland hardwood swamp ecosystem.

Lead Mine Elementary School began to raise shad in their classrooms because they saw the value in hands-on learning activities. The program continues through the wildlife club at Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School and has validated this program for other schools to bring it into their classrooms.

Regional Director's Conservation Awards

Three Sisters Springs Land Acquisition Team Chassahowitzka NWR Complex Crystal River, Florida

**City of Crystal River
Florida**

**The Conservation Fund
Arlington, Virginia**

**The Felburn Foundation
Silver Spring, Maryland**

**John Beasley
Social Circle, Georgia**

**Lace Blue-McLean
Friends of Chassahowitzka
National Wildlife Refuge Complex**

**Harry "Hal" Flowers,
Three Sisters Springs LLC
Tampa, Florida**

**Betty Gouge
Division of Realty
Regional Office**

**Jim Green
Friends of Chassahowitzka
National Wildlife Refuge Complex**

**Tamar Hogan
Division of Realty
Regional Office**

**David Houghton
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Washington, D.C.**

**Michael Lusk
Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge**

**Ken Reecy
Florida Communities Trust
Tallahassee, Florida**

**Patrick Rose
Save the Manatee Club
Orlando, Florida**

**Elizabeth Souheaver
National Wildlife Refuge System
Regional Office**

**Helen Spivey
Save the Manatee Club
Maitland, Florida**

**Eric Sutton
Southwest Florida Management District
Brooksville, Florida**

**Susan Trokey
J.N. "Ding" Darling
National Wildlife Refuge**

**Gary Williams
Southwest Florida Management District
Oxford, Florida**

This project stands as a model for innovative partnerships. A diverse group of state, city, private and non-profit organizations made it possible for the Service to acquire one of Florida's last remaining urban springs. Three Sisters Springs is an ecological marvel that supports a winter population of the endangered West Indian manatees in excess of 150 animals that rest, breed, and give birth in the springs.

The Service's acquisition of the 57-acre Three Sisters Springs property was the culmination of a three-year effort. Together, the Service and its partners secured more than \$10 million in federal, state, county, city, philanthropic, and private funds to conserve the property in perpetuity as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. The acquisition was one of the most complicated ever attempted by the Southeast Region.

Securing protection for these springs and the associated upland has been a long-term pursuit by many conservationists. Located within the City of Crystal River, the property also filters stormwater runoff before entering the canals of Kings Bay.

Additionally, Three Sisters Springs is a critical element of local ecotourism attracting people from around the globe to see and swim in the proximity of manatees in the clear waters.

Beyond securing the significant habitat, another primary goal of the Three Sisters Springs partnership is to connect the American public with nature. Future developments are planned to include hiking trails, manatee viewing areas, an outdoor pavilion, and a state-of-the-art Wildlife Education Center.

Citation for Meritorious Service

Ken Litzenberger Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex



Ken planting trees, USFWS.

The Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award is the second highest Departmental honor award a career employee can receive. Established in 1948, this award is given for an important contribution to science or management; initiative in devising new and improved work methods and procedures; or other significant contributions.

Ken Litzenberger's 31-year career has been marked by many exceptional accomplishments. These include the management of national wildlife refuges, along with environmentally important management and restoration accomplishments, meeting external challenges; and contributing his leadership on important issues of regional and national concern. Under Ken's leadership, the Service has benefited from major renovations to key facilities including the office and visitor center, development of a highly productive volunteer program, and development of long-term partnerships.

Among a list of his many skills are his ability to work with staff, friends groups, volunteers, governmental agencies and the metropolitan New Orleans community to cooperatively accomplish work to maintain, restore, and improve wildlife habitats in coastal Louisiana for the future benefit of the American people.

He has worked on significantly complex issues including major oil spills at Breton and Delta National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), the rebuilding of the Maxent Levee protecting the city of New Orleans, and restoration of Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Ken continuously demonstrates integrity, honesty, and fairness, along with a unique ability to motivate people and form partnerships. The many partnerships he has developed, including those with the Service's Lafayette, Louisiana, Ecological Services Field Office, the State of Louisiana, St. Tammany Parish, the City of New Orleans and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and their accomplishments will be long lasting.

Thanks to these partnerships, two and a half miles of breakwater were constructed to protect coastal marsh; community volunteers were mobilized to plant marsh plugs purchased by the City of New Orleans and St. Tammany Parish; and, the National Guard flew Christmas trees, collected by the City of New Orleans, into the marsh to form fences to slow wave action, trap sediments, and combat erosion.

For his excellence and outstanding contributions, Ken Litzenberger is nominated for the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior.



Above: Breached beaver dam on Bear Creek, Hatchie NWR, USFWS/Leif Karnuth

Front cover: top left: Jen Utter, an intern, with her husband, the TR Bear, at the Bayou Teche Bear Festival, USFWS; center left: bluets on the trail to Cattail Peak, North Carolina, USFWS/Gary Peeples; bottom left: Florida manatee, USFWS/Jim Reid.

Top right: cold-stunned sea turtle rescue team at Pelican Island and Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuges, Grace Foleu/Brevard County; bottom right: Jim Brightened of the Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, helps kids at the annual youth fishing day at Bogue Chitto NWR, USFWS.

