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Southwest Region

San Andres National Wildlife Refuge

Heroes in our Midst

As U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees (Service), we make positive contributions to our country on a regular basis. The Service is also paying tribute to continued national service by placing veterans, convalescing service men and women, and persons with disabilities in volunteer positions.

The San Andres National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is proud to welcome Mr. Gerry Dolan on board through the Operation Warfighter (OWF) Program. Gerry, a Lieutenant Colonel with the U.S. Army Reserves – Civil Affairs Branch, has worked in austere environments: five years in deserts (Iraq, Egypt, Mauritania, Djibouti) and four years afloat in riverine/maritime environments (Italy). His experience includes managing environmental compliance for U.S. facilities in Italy, Germany, Iraq, and New York; organizing advocacy campaigns to protect the Great Lakes Watershed and reduce domestic pesticide usage; serving as a Senior Customs Border Control Agent for US military operations in Djibouti, and enforcing U.S. Department of Agriculture (DOA) entry requirements. Mr. Dolan also



Dolan outside the visitor center at the refuge. Credit: Mara Weisenberger, USFWS.



Dolan in the field viewing Chihuahuan Desert flora and fauna. Credit: Mara Weisenberger, USFWS.

developed plans for reducing disease non-battle injuries for countries supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia; ensured US military compliance to field sanitation and public health standards; planned U.S. Army response operations to Ebola outbreak in West Africa; and provided humanitarian assistance for Economic Community of West African States and United Nations response to crisis in Liberia. He completed a Bachelor's degree in Biology at John Hopkins, an Associate degree in Arabic Studies at the Defense Language Institute, and then entered the military and served overseas on staff, as a team leader, and as a manager.

The program by which Gerry joins the Service is one of four veteran programs conducted in collaboration with the Department of Defense (DOD), the OWF Program is a DOD temporary assignment and internship program for service members that are convalescing at military treatment facilities nationwide. Operation Warfighter is designed to provide recuperating service members with meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment which assists in wellness and offers a formal means of transition back to the military-related or civilian workforce. OWF provides

opportunities for service members on medical hold to build their resumes, explore employment interests, develop job skills, and gain valuable Federal Government work experience that will help prepare them for the future. Military service members are still in active duty status; therefore, they are paid by the Department of Defense.

Gerry is currently studying the Chihuahuan Desert flora and fauna to prepare for the volunteer Texas Master Naturalist Program through Texas A&M. Gerry is also applying to Masters Programs in Natural Resource Management in Fall 2017. While volunteering at the San Andres NWR over the next six to nine months, Gerry will be working on invasive species management, bird banding, Integrated Pest Management plan development, and cataloging native plants for an herbarium.

We are proud to be the first Refuge in the Southwest Region collaborating with the OWF Program. This internship at San Andres NWR is a win-win situation which provides valuable help to our office with no-cost assistance and valuable career experience to our transitioning service member.