



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)

<http://southwest.fws.gov>

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Contact: Kathy Whaley, Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Manager, 903-786-2826
Nancy Brown, Public Outreach Specialist, 512-339-9432

Friends of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Receives U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region Friends Award

The Friends of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (Friends), a Texas-based non-profit organization, received the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Southwest Region Friends Award*.

Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director for the Southwest Region, presented the Friends with the award due to their significant contributions to environmental education and outreach benefiting the Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

Tuggle said, "At a time when partnerships are paramount, organizations like the Friends of Hagerman NWR are one of the most important allies in the National Wildlife Refuge System's wildlife conservation effort."

Based near Sherman, Texas, just north of Dallas, the Friends were established to protect, support and enhance the 12,000-acre refuge that is managed for the benefit of wildlife. The all-volunteer organization was recognized for its significant accomplishments this past year, including:

- Serving more than 1,000 children and 400 adults who participated in Second Saturday, Nature'ology, and other environmental education programs hosted on the refuge by the Friends.
- The purchase and operation of an electric tram used to conduct free weekend tours on the refuge's Wildlife Drive, providing the visiting public an excellent opportunity to see and enjoy wildlife.

- The establishment of the Bluestem Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.
- Managing of the ‘Nature Nook,’ bookstore within the refuge’s Visitor Center. It is operated entirely by the Friends and volunteers with 100 percent of the proceeds benefitting the refuge.
- Hosting of a nature photo club, including two annual refuge photo safaris and a photo contest to foster awareness and respect while photographing natural resources.
- Creating and sponsoring BirdFest Texoma, a festival that will bring hundreds of birders and nature enthusiasts to the community in May 2013 for field trips, seminars, and workshops.

“These are local folks who devote a lot of time and effort to supporting their national wildlife refuges,” said Tuggle. “Their hard work and dedication directly benefits wildlife, as well as the visiting public who come out to enjoy refuges.”

The Friends of Hagerman NWR are one of several Friends organizations established to support 22 national wildlife refuges in the Southwest Region, which includes Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona. In the Southwest Region, these organizations help refuges by hosting environmental education programs, managing nature stores, conducting wildlife surveys, securing funding through grants, purchasing and protecting habitat, conducting outreach and much more.

To learn more about the Friends of Hagerman NWR, visit <http://www.friendsofhagerman.com>.

To learn more about the Hagerman NWR, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Hagerman/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.