

Congratulations Bob Ebeling

National Volunteer of the Year 2013

A conservationist and Refuge advocate for over 50 years and volunteer for over 22 years, Bob Ebeling played a key role in the restoration of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge after it was laid to ruins by the flood of the Great Salt Lake in the mid 1980's. His contributions include professional engineering skills in reconstruction and subsequently visitor services in the Education Center. Over the years, Bob has given more than 10,000 hours of time, professional talents, and use of personal property. His first hours were logged in from 1989 – 1994 accomplishing on-the-ground projects. In the years since, Bob has volunteered in visitor services, providing information to visitors, as he is able, since the new Wildlife Education Center opened its doors in April, 2006. For more information please see official press release from the [National Wildlife Refuge Association](#).



Full Nomination follows: On a September afternoon in 1989, Bob weighed in as a champion for the Refuge. I (Al Trout) was the only refuge employee located in a small rented office space on Main Street in Brigham City. Bob burst in my door, introduced himself and said he "wanted a job". As I was trying to explain the lack of funds, Bob interrupted me and proclaimed he wanted to volunteer full time for two years. I had never worked with volunteers (my previous duty stations were in the Dakotas and Nebraska). I doubted the value of volunteers for large scale dirt work and construction. After thinking it over, actually talking to my wife about it that evening, I decided I had nothing to lose by bringing him on board. So, I invited him back to the office to accept his offer. When Bob arrived, I took an office key and a key to the refuge padlocks out of my pocket and handed them to Bob. I told him that he would be my Assistant and in charge of everything "outside", while I was tasked with "Inside duties" trying to do something to secure some funding for repairing the 50 miles of dikes and 50 water control structures which formed the heart of the refuge water management system.

On July 4, 1990 the refuge impoundments were holding water and vegetation was sprouting for the first time in 6 years. The public tour route was ready for the first refuge visitor since the flood. A ribbon cutting ceremony was organized and Congressman James V. Hansen attended and saw first hand the work of the volunteers. Bear River Refuge was back and the public knew it was the local community of volunteers who made it "happen". The truth was Bob Ebeling was the champion who carried the project forward each and every day. It did not end there. He worked tirelessly to support the refuge Environmental Assessment that called for a major acreage of land purchases, improvements and the construction of an Education Center. Over the next decade, every one of those lofty goals was accomplished and it was due in large part to the work and support of the volunteers under Bob's direction. Many formal partnerships enjoyed today can be traced back to the years when so much excitement was generated by a community of volunteers who refused to be discouraged by a task which seemed overwhelming. The Refuge is better off today than it was before the flood, testament to Bob's steadfast vision. - Al Trout, Refuge Manager, Bear River MBR, 1989-2006