

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: DREAM



Salt Lake City, UT

community

Utah's Greater Salt Lake Valley is home to approximately 1.8 million people. Our targeted urban areas include Weber and Salt Lake Counties, home to the broadest representation of culturally-diverse residents within Utah and within an hour's drive of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. In these counties people who speak a language other than English at home overwhelmingly speak Spanish.

The biggest barrier to minorities in visiting public lands is a perception that they aren't welcome. This is a multi-component issue compounded by lack of: minority staff, cultural relevance in programming, insufficient multi-lingual support, and unfamiliarity on the part of staff with cultural norms, preferred activities, and preferred communication modes.

project summary:

Distance Refuge and Mentoring Program (DREAM) addresses the need to engage young people who might otherwise not have a connection to nature. Connections will be cultivated with stewardship education, activities and work experience. Through these experiences; the conservation heroes of the future may be cultivated. DREAM's focus is to provide the opportunities for underserved and urban youth to choose careers in conservation, starting with awareness and education, and cultivating the critical steps along the way.

Bear River seeks to advance engagement of urban young people and families with conservation education activities through a traveling trailer that will be filled with exhibits including an interactive model of the Bear River. The "Blue Goose Mobile Refuge" and its associated nature activities will also provide a mentoring program and curriculum for summer camps/after-school programs. Distance classroom programming through "Aqua Kids" with instructor guides, educational resource materials, social media and experiential field-trip programming will serve Weber and Salt Lake School Districts. Youth from both Weber and Salt Lake School Districts will be invited and encouraged to work and volunteer at their National Wildlife Refuge through the use of bi-lingual Refuge Ambassadors, young adults that can serve as role models.

Partners include: Friends of the Bear River Refuge, Ogden Nature Center, Utah Conservation Corps, Dual Immersion Academy, U.S. Dream Academy, Sorenson Multicultural Center, U.S. Forest Service, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Utah State University Extension Service, Utah Watershed Coordinating Council, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Aqua Kids Adventure Productions.

play

- A traveling “Blue Goose Mobile Refuge” for schools, festivals, summer camps and after school programs will provide an introduction to Bear River and the Great Salt Lake ecosystem.
- Transportation for summer camp/after school program students to the refuge for on-the-ground, hands-on conservation.
- Development of an iPhone and iPad app for a refuge scavenger hunt.

work

- Partner with the existing Utah Bi-lingual Conservation Corps to expand to Weber and Salt Lake Counties – summer jobs for 20 Urban Youth.
- Expand outreach for Bear River’s existing Youth Conservation Corps program; again partnering outreach efforts with UCC.
- Partner with sister agency National Park Service and National Monument Golden Spike for inter-agency work experience for all crews.
- Hire Pathway(s) student during the school year that are also bi-lingual for outreach and education components of DREAM.
- 20 -40 Youth Jobs per year.

learn

- Public television program “Aqua Kids,” produced at Bear River, will provide distance education for students while promoting learning through social media.
- Grade-level and site-specific conservation curriculum, instructor guides, and activity books will correlate to Utah’s Core Standards and provide follow-up to “Aqua Kids” television programs; Volunteers will serve as mentors to bring the curriculum to the schools, sharing their passion for conservation and connecting to youth.
- The “Blue Goose Mobile Refuge” with other outlets, will reach 100,000 people in its first year of service.

serve

- AmeriCorps and Student conservation Corps volunteers will be Crew Leaders for Utah Conservation Corps, Youth Conservation Corps and will be serve as bi-lingual environmental education specialist and Refuge Ambassadors. Volunteers will assist in development of DREAM curriculum and work with audiences and organizations/partners.
- 5 - 10 SCA/AmeriCorps positions per year.

Urban National Wildlife Refuges

INTRODUCTION

The future success of conservation lies ultimately in our ability to inspire Americans to connect with the outdoors and nature, and to become stewards of the environment. With over 80% of Americans living in urban areas, spending less time outdoors, and becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, our challenge is to become relevant in their daily lives. Without public awareness and support, our conservation mission will not succeed.

Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation challenges us to enhance the relevance of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to this rapidly changing America. Building a connected conservation constituency requires connecting with the ever-growing urban population in order to ensure that Americans care about conservation. To this end, the *Conserving the Future* document contains a specific recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 13:

“Create an urban refuge initiative that defines excellence in our existing urban refuges, establishes the framework for creating new urban refuge partnerships and implements a refuge presence in 10 demographically and geographically varied cities across America by 2015.”

Urban areas present a strategic opportunity to reach new audiences that are currently not visiting nor aware of the Service. Refuges that are in the heart of where the people are located provide the best opportunity to engage new audiences, whether through an urban refuge or an urban wildlife refuge partnership. Building this constituency ultimately benefits the entire System and the broader conservation community by nurturing new supporters who care.

The goal of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Program is to engage surrounding urban communities in wildlife conservation as partners. Excellence may be achieved through eight standards that serve as a framework for collaboration between the Service and urban communities on and off Service lands:

- 1. Know and Relate to the Community**
- 2. Connect Urban People with Nature via Stepping Stones of Engagement**
- 3. Build Partnerships**
- 4. Be a Community Asset**
- 5. Ensure Adequate Long-Term Resources**
- 6. Provide Equitable Access**
- 7. Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome**
- 8. Model Sustainability**

In order to demonstrate the potential of urban refuges to reach new audiences in their communities, the Service requested innovative proposals from each region for one urban refuge to receive \$1 million in base funding in FY14. The Service received strong proposals from our 101 existing urban refuges that are within 25 miles of a population of 250,000 or more. **San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC)** received the funding as announced in August 2014.

The approach to excellence for urban national wildlife refuges must be as flexible and unique as the communities the refuges serve. The Service must strive to understand both human and natural environments in order to understand the expectations of the urban community. The Service must strive to provide programs and leadership on conservation initiatives that are relevant to their communities. Service staff, volunteers, and partners must engage urban communities to develop meaningful connections to wildlife that last a lifetime. This starts by building awareness, fostering deeper understanding, and growing participation through programs that bring more people from the urban world into the larger conservation community.

Urban refuges are great places to build a broader conservation constituency, but the challenge is far too big for any one agency or organization to tackle alone. The Urban Wildlife Refuge Program recognizes the importance of embracing traditional and new collaborations. Various entities whose interests may be conservation, education, human health, or other subjects ultimately can help achieve conservation of wildlife, plants, and their habitats that are essential to maintaining a healthy planet for people.