

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
South Florida Field Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Phone: (772) 562-3909
Fax: (772) 778-5498
<http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/>

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2008

News Release Number: 02-2008
Contact: Ken Warren, (772) 562-3909, x-323

VERO BEACH FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE STAFFERS EARN REGIONAL AWARDS

VERO BEACH, Fla. – Three members of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's South Florida Ecological Services Office team here (Paul Souza, George Dennis and Spencer Simon) and John Galvez of the fisheries program were saluted May 12 in Atlanta with 2007 Regional Director's Honor Awards for outstanding performance. Excerpts from the winning nomination narratives are below:

Paul Souza
Fish and Wildlife Administrator
Ecological Services, Vero Beach, Fla.

As the Service's South Florida Ecological Services Field Supervisor, Paul Souza is continually involved in issues that are extremely high profile and critical to national interests. He has enhanced a strategic approach to conservation across the Everglades and all of south Florida and his interagency communication and relationship building within and outside the federal family has benefited the Service and trust resources he is entrusted to protect.

Paul worked to create a scientific forum for understanding the relationship between Everglades restoration and avian species. The panel recently finalized its Everglades Multi-Species Avian Ecology and Restoration Review, which includes a series of recommendations for further advancing the science and helping these species during the transition to full restoration.

Conservation Banking Team
George D. Dennis III,
Ecological Services, Vero Beach, Fla.
Spencer Simon,
Ecological Services, Vero Beach, Fla.

Spencer Simon and George Dennis have shown exemplary leadership with their tireless efforts to promote conservation banking in south Florida. Use of this tool in south Florida is now in its infancy, and Spencer and George have used their network of conservation partners to build a groundswell of support for this new and creative conservation approach. Conservation banking provides better mitigation for listed species than piecemeal "project- by-project"

mitigation because it is done at a larger scale, it has a higher likelihood of success because of monitoring and assurances, and, it provides economic incentive for conservation to both the banker and the developer.

Their work promises to revolutionize conservation through regulatory programs, by allowing large and contiguous tracts of habitat to be protected and managed in perpetuity for highly endangered species such as the Florida panther. The first conservation bank finalized will protect two thousand acres of the panther's most important habitat, and banks covering thousands more acres are now in review.

The leadership exhibited by Spencer and George has set the stage for further success in south Florida.

John Galvez, Ph.D.

Fish Biologist

Fisheries Resources Office, Vero Beach, Fla.

As the Fisheries Resources program sole representative to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program, John Galvez has taken on the daunting task of inserting professional fisheries management into a fast-tracked multibillion-dollar restoration effort. John not only met all of the challenges put forth by the Everglades Program during 2007, but he did it in such an efficient manner that he was also able to assist with other important Fisheries Program needs.

John has primary field responsibility for the survey and control of the exotic Asian swamp eel in the canals adjacent to the Everglades National Park. To date, several thousand eels have been removed and the number and size of this species is declining as a direct result.

John is also heavily involved with a major fish passage project in the Everglades National Park. He is currently overseeing the siting and placement of ten culverts that will restore water flows and fish passage to more than thirty-five thousand acres.

-30-

Photo Credit: Tom Mackenzie, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.