



Focus on "Friends"

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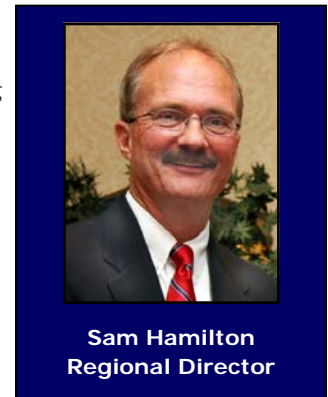
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Note From Sam Hamilton, Regional Director

Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter that is for and about you, our Southeast Region Friends Groups. Our commitment to "Focus on "Friends" recognizes the role that you play in making the Southeast Region a success story. At present, we have 53 Friends Groups across the Region's 10 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. You, along with our outstanding cadre of volunteers, serve as the "wind beneath the wings" of our national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries.

Across the Region, Friends Groups are piling up accomplishments as only you can. You bring a spirit of "can-do," innovative thinking that is getting thing done on the ground for fish and wildlife and for people. For example, in just the past year:

- Friends of Felsenthal brought in a \$1,000 donation from Georgia Pacific that will allow this Arkansas refuge to remove nuisance vegetation from its 15,000-acre Felsenthal Pool.
- Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery received a gift from Wal-Mart Distribution Center in LaGrange, Georgia that will be used to support the Friends Group's programs at the hatchery.
- In support of the first-time arrival of whooping cranes at Florida's St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, the St. Marks Refuge Association invited civic groups and schools in the community to donate "Coins for Cranes." This project to collect spare change is sponsoring, among other things, a satellite camera with a live feed of the whooping cranes into the refuge's visitor center.
- Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge has started a "Refuge Discovery Series" to raise community awareness about wildlife on the refuge and in their own back yards.
- In Lee County, Florida the Ding Darling Wildlife Society has raised \$15,000 of the estimated \$75,000 that will be needed to build a 200-foot extension of the Refuge's Indigo Trail and link it to the Sanibel School property.
- Friends of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge is partnering with the Southern Conservation Corporation to restore land where stream mitigation is underway. The Friends Group and volunteers helped to plant more than 4,000 trees in the area.



These are just six examples of what Friends Groups are doing that I know are multiplied many times over across the Southeast Region. As Regional Director, I want to continue to use this newsletter to herald your accomplishments. I also want to use it to keep you informed of the highest-priority issues facing the Region so that you can contribute your ideas and skills to help us move forward.

At the present time, for example, there is no greater challenge we face to the long-term future of fish and wildlife than the threats posed by changes in the earth's climate. As a Service and a Region, we have organized ourselves to address climate change impacts that are already altering habitats and threatening the sustainability of fish, wildlife, and plant species. I would ask you as trusted Friends to learn as much as you can about the issue of climate change so that you can help us confront this challenge. A good place to start is on the Region's web page at <http://www.fws.gov/Southeast/climate>, where you will find a world of information. Climate change will also be a major topic of discussion at your upcoming 2009 Friends Unite! conference next month in Washington, D.C.

Climate change is requiring that the Service approach its conservation mission very strategically. With that in mind, we are implementing a new paradigm for getting our work done called Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC). SHC is a systematic, science-based, focused approach to landscape-level conservation where the desired results for fish and wildlife populations are explicitly defined. Simply put, SHC has four key elements: Plan, Do, Learn, and Adapt. You can learn more about SHC in the Southeast Region at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/SHC>.

Thank you for all that you do to help the Southeast Region accomplish its mission on behalf of the American people. We know we couldn't do it without you. I believe the poet Robert Yeats summed it up well when he wrote, "Think where man's glory most begins and ends, And say my glory was I had such friends." As a Region, we are blessed to have "such Friends."

Sam

NEWS NEEDED!

"Focus on Friends" will be sent out each quarter. You are encouraged to submit articles, pictures, and special event information for inclusion. If you would like to contribute, please have your submissions to Stacy Armitage (stacy_armitage@fws.gov) by April 1st, July 1st and October 1st.

-Thank You!



New to the Region

Hello! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Stacy Armitage. I am new to the Southeast Region by way of the Rocky Mountain Prairie Region's Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. I spent almost five years at the Arsenal as their Education Specialist; and prior to that, I had the privilege of teaching secondary science.

In the coming months, I will be Garry Tucker's, Chief of Visitor Services and Outreach, point person for responding to all Friends Group queries. Coming from a field location, I know first hand how the activities and advocacies of you, our Friends Groups, help ensure that we are able to accomplish our mission. In Visitor Services, we want to do all we can to support your efforts in ways that allow you to continue to excel. I invite you to contact me directly with how we might best accomplish that goal.

I am thrilled to be on board and to be involved with such a progressive region. Thank you for everything you do for the National Wildlife Refuge System. If I can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (404-676-7817) or send me an email at stacy_armitage@fws.gov

Sincerely,

Stacy Armitage

Stacy Armitage
Regional Visitor Services Specialist

If your Friends Group has a newsletter, please put me on your list. I would like to stay cognizant of all the happenings within the Region.

Friends Group Events

- To promote awareness and appreciation of the refuge, the **Friends of the Loxahatchee Refuge** is sponsoring its 26th Annual Photography Contest. Visit www.evergladesphotosociety.org/loxcontest/ for more information.
- 17th Annual Pelican Island Wildlife Festival** -
The 106th Birthday Celebration of
Pelican Island and the NWR
Saturday, March 14, 2009
9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Riverview Park -- Sebastian, Florida
(www.pelicanislandfriends.org/2009fest-index.htm)
- On Friday, February 13th, **Friends of Wolf Creek Fish Hatchery** will host a Biologist-in-Training Facilitator Training for any interested educator.
<http://friendsofwolfcreeknfh.com/>

FWS Events

- 2009 National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Conference: Friends Unite! is fast approaching.** What may be the largest gathering of representatives of nonprofit Refuge Friends organizations and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is planned for **February 21-23** in Washington, D.C. The 2009 National Friends Conference, sponsored by the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, will feature nearly two dozen training sessions and special forums. If you have questions regarding logistics, costs or reimbursement please contact [Stacy Armitage@fws.gov](mailto:Stacy_Armitage@fws.gov) (404/679-7178).



FWS News

National Conservation Training Center's Division of Education Outreach has developed a new **Neighborhood Explorers** website that encourages kids to explore nature where they first encounter it, right out their front door. The target audience are kids who spend much of their time in front of a screen and who have not had a lot of exposure to nature. After exploring the many resources on the website (posters, glossary, field guides, and games), it is their hope that kids will be motivated to explore the natural resources in their own neighborhood. A major component of the website is NX Explorers where kids **GO OUTSIDE** and report nature they discover. They can even access a map of the U.S. to see who the top explorers are in each state.

Visit www.fws.gov/neighborhoodexplorers and start exploring today!



- ✓ www.fws.gov/friends

This FWS website is bursting with helpful information.

- ✓ www.refugenet.org/new-friends-connect/Media.html

Great "tool kit" for how to work with media.

- ✓ www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/newswire/

A Set of stories that you might want to run in your online or print publications. You can find the stories under the subhead "January Downloads" on the Friends NewsWire website.

"Tip of the Quarter"

Did you know...The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with three primary partners to implement the goals of the Refuge Support Group Program. They are the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the National Audubon Society. Each partner manages a different component of the Program, providing a wide array of services to assist Refuge Support Groups with their fundraising, organizing, communications and training needs.

www.nfwf.org

www.refugenet.org

www.audubon.org