

Inside Region 3

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Interagency Agreement Allows For Creation of New Refuge Plans Call For Former Army Firing Range to Become Big Oaks NWR

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army recently reached an agreement that allows for the creation of a new national wildlife refuge on a former munitions testing area in southern Indiana. The planned Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge will occupy 50,000 acres of former firing range at Jefferson Proving Ground, near Madison, Ind. The 55,265-acre site operated as a testing site for Army ordnance from 1941 to 1995. In September 1995, the Army ended its use of the site as a result of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act.

A joint news release announcing the agreement was issued by the Army, Air Force and Service May 24. Under the agreement, the Army will grant a 25-year real estate permit to the Service for establishment of Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge will encompass approximately 50,000 acres. Limited public access will be allowed for hunting, fishing, and escorted tours, beginning in late summer 2000.

The area to become Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge contains a wide diversity of habitats, ranging from prairie-like grasslands to mature woodlands. Fires set to keep areas open for the Army's ordnance testing maintained a large area of grasslands, while wooded areas were allowed to grow to mature forests. This portion of the former proving ground has



-USFWS Photo by Ron Austing

Now and Then. (Above) Jason Lewis and Teresa Vanosdol-Lewis, SCEP students at Muscatatuck NWR, record measurement data while banding young Henslow's sparrows at Jefferson Proving Ground last year. (Right) U.S. Army photo of opening day activities at Jefferson Proving Ground, May 10, 1941. (U.S. Army Photo courtesy Jefferson Proving Ground)



been virtually untouched for decades, and is considered an ecological treasure of wildlife and plant diversity. Biological surveys, conducted by both the Service and Indiana Department of Natural Resources, have documented more than 40 fish and

120 breeding bird species, including the federally-endangered Indiana bat. The Indiana DNR has also identified 29 rare plants on the site. Thirty one caves have also recently been documented. The American Bird Conser-

Challenge Cost-Share Program Provides \$2 Million for Fish and Wildlife Conservation

At least 120 projects valued at more than \$2 million are being carried out by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) through its 2000 Challenge Cost-Share Program (CCSP) in cooperation with a variety of local, state and regional partners.

The CCSP is conducted annually by the Twin Cities Regional Office. Since beginning in 1987, the CCSP has successfully leveraged federal dollars with non-federal funds and in-kind services to cost-share projects that support fish and wildlife conservation projects on Service, other nonfederal, private and tribal lands.

Projects also enhance public recreational opportunities and facilities on Service lands; conduct fish and wildlife research; provide for conservation outreach and environmental education; and assist the recovery of endangered species.

Service funds through the CCSP are matched 1:1 by partners interested in local conservation projects. From 1987, when the CCSP began, through 1999, at least 1,000 partners have cost-shared more than 850 regional projects valued at approximately \$10 million. The Service has provided more than \$3.5 million in funds to those projects.

Approximately 11,000 acres of wetlands and 9,000 acres of grasslands have been restored during this period. Many of the projects provide high-quality fishing and hunting opportunities and new recreational fishing opportunities; diverse self-guided interpretive programs and Service facilities; wildlife observation and photography; and are enhancing opportunities for youth and physically challenged refuge visitors.

Steve Kufirin, R3-Private Lands

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Agreement Paves Way for New Refuge

vancy designated Jefferson Proving Ground a Globally Important Bird Area in 1998 because of its importance to the state-threatened Henslow's sparrow, a species that depends on grasslands.

The Service has managed wildlife resources at Jefferson Proving Ground since 1997, with the Army funding the project. Since then, the Army and Service have been negotiating an agreement that allows for the establishment of Big Oaks NWR on the site.

While the majority of the site will

become refuge land, military use of a small portion of the site will continue. The Army is also granting a 25-year real estate permit to the Air Force for continued use of its existing conventional bombing range in addition to a laser bombing range. These two ranges encompass approximately 1,000 acres.

The bombing ranges will only be used for training munitions and laser energy. Safety areas for the Air Force ranges, encompassing approximately 20,000 acres, will be off limits during flight training.

McGregor Refuge District Featured on Iowa Public Television

A crew from Iowa Public Television (IPT) visited the McGregor District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge May 11, to film portions of an educational unit about the Mississippi River.

IPT's Deanne Edwards interviewed District Manager John Lindell and Assistant District Manager Clyde Male during an airboat ride on the river. The topic was the importance of the river and the Refuge as a flyway for migratory birds. Other segments of the series included information on locks and dams, and a Mississippi River model built by an eighth grade class in McGregor, Iowa. The Iowa Public TV educational units will be for elementary and middle school students and will be available to other public television affiliates. *Cathy Henry, R3-UMRNW&FR-McGregor District*

74 Species Tallied at Mark Twain NWR During Illinois Bird Survey

Seventy-four bird species were seen on the Delair Division of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge during a state-wide bird count May 6.

Refuge staff participated in the Illinois bird count by spending the morning birding on the 1,700 acre Division. One hundred forty-three species were reported for Pike County with more than half being found on Delair Division. Seventy-one species were recorded on the Division in 1998 and 1999.

Rick Cantu, R3-Mark Twain NWR, Annada District

New Fish Pumps Debut at Region's Lake Trout Hatcheries

Looking like a giant vacuum cleaner on wheels and saving the backs of many employees, a new fish pump debuted April 18, at the Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery in Brimley, Mich.

Manufactured by Magic Valley of Twin Falls, Idaho, three new fish pumps will be used by Pendills Creek, Jordan River National Fish Hatchery, Elmira, Mich., and the Iron River National Fish Hatchery, Iron River, Wis.

The pumps are used to move lake trout fingerlings from rearing ponds into trucks that carry the fish to the Service's vessel, M/V Togue, where they are stocked over rocky reefs and shoals of the Great Lakes. The three Service hatcheries are scheduled to stock over 3.4 million--more than 250,000 pounds--of lake trout this year into the Great Lakes.

The M/V Togue can hold up to eight truck-loads of fish every trip. Each morning, between two and eight truck-loads of lake trout fingerlings are loaded by hatchery staff for the trip. Each load contains 1,000 to 1,300 pounds of fish, resulting in a daily load of 2,000 to 10,000 pounds of fish loaded each morning during two consecutive months of stockings. Also included



-USFWS Photo by Robert Pos

Fish Mover. Staff from Iron River National Fish Hatchery use their new fish pump to transport lake trout fingerlings from hatchery ponds to a truck that will take the fish to the M/V Togue.

are about 800 gallons of water (6,600 pounds), 400 to 800 pounds of ice, and 21-25 pounds of salt that go into each truck-load.

After some initial adjustments and repairs, the fish pump at Pendills Creek is working fine. With some further modifications and experimentations, it is hope that the fish pumps will not only save on labor, but also time in the future.

Since April 18, 2000, Pendills

Creek has successfully produced 372,725 or 20,190 pounds of lake trout fingerlings for Lake Huron (averaging 18.5/lb.), and 343,260 or 20,360 pounds of lake trout fingerlings for Lake Michigan (averaging 16.9/lb.). The total for Pendills Creek is 715,985 fish or 40,550 pounds averaging 17.7 fish/per pound. *Robert Pos, R3-Pendills Creek NFH*

Surviving Civilian Conservation Corps Members Unearth Time Capsule Honoring Original Builders of Squaw Creek NWR

Surviving members of the 1935 Mound City Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and students from the Mound City High School were united at Squaw Creek NWR May 12, for the opening of a buried time capsule containing letters to the Mound City High School Class of 2000.

In 1986, members of the Civilian Conservation Corps buried items in the capsule to honor CCC crewmembers that built the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in the 1930s. Forty people participated in the event.

The event concluded with members collecting additional

items and letters to be reburied for the Mound City Class of 2025.

Jim Kurth, chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Washington, D.C., and Greg Siekaniec, deputy chief, attended the event. *Charles Marshall, Squaw Creek NWR*

Overton Bottoms Project Reconnects Missouri River to Floodplain; Creates Wetland Habitat on Big Muddy NWR

A construction project that will reconnect parts of the Missouri River with its historic floodplain has begun at Overton Bottoms North, a 1,300 unit of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in central Missouri.

The mitigation project, funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will restore riverine habitats for fish and wildlife that thrive on wetlands, such as the rare piping plover, least tern, and pallid sturgeon.

During the next year, contractors will construct a pilot channel and small berms to retain water at historic wetland areas and add gravel to roads and small parking areas to improve public access. Additionally, native bottomland hardwood species will be planted this fall to increase the plant diversity in the Overton Bottoms, lo-

cated on the Missouri River about 10 miles west of Columbia, Mo.

The Missouri River and its flood plain have undergone dramatic changes in the 195 years following Lewis and Clark's epic journey of 1804-1806. The pre-development river was a vast complex of chutes, sloughs, backwaters, sandbars, braided channels, bottomland forests, wet prairie grasslands, and other wetlands resulting in dynamic conditions producing a diversity of riverine and floodplain habitats.

The construction of dams, levees, and riverbank stabilization structures such as rock revetments and pile dikes changed all that. Channelization altered over-bank flooding patterns, isolated the flood plain from the river, and increased water velocities in the

channel. These alterations along the Missouri river have eliminated much of the habitat for native fish and wildlife.

The mitigation project at Overton Bottoms allows a small portion of the Missouri River flood plain to revert to a more natural state and provide more diverse fish and wildlife habitat.

An informative, locally-produced pamphlet has been developed by staff at the Big Muddy NWR to help educate neighbors and others interested in the project. The pamphlet can be obtained by contacting the Refuge (573) 876-1826.

Partners include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer and Missouri Department of Conservation. *Barbara Moran, R3-Big Muddy NWR*

Trumpeter Swan Release Highlights IMBD Events at Union Slough NWR

More than 120 people participated in Union Slough NWR's celebration of International Migratory Bird Day Saturday, May 13.

Refuge staff and several members of the Friends of Union Slough hosted the public event. Events included a bird hike, a dedication to the new elementary education site including a release of a trumpeter swan, and the opening of the auto tour.

Thirty-five people attended the bird hike, 40 attended the Environmental education site dedication and 62 attended the trumpeter swan release. Partners included the Friends of Squaw Creek, Kiwanis Club of Mound City, Mo. and Midwest Interpretive Association.

Rod Hansen, R3-Union Slough NWR

Service Transfers Sturgeon Eggs to Help Restore Species in Upper St. Louis River

Staff from the Service's Ashland Fishery Resources Office, Ashland, Wis., is working with the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation to restore a self-sustaining lake sturgeon population in the upper St. Louis River.

Approximately 50,000 sturgeon eggs were recently transferred from the Menominee River to the St. Louis River, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. To maximize the recruitment potential, this project calls for the transfer of fertilized eggs from a riverine population that resides year around in a section of the Menominee River. Sturgeon eggs were stocked using egg nest boxes. These boxes are much like those used for the "off shore" stocking of lake trout eggs (the boxes help to protect eggs from

predation during the incubation process). The sturgeon population in the upper St. Louis River system is virtually extinct. Records of a remnant population relate how some sturgeon were caught about 30 years ago. However, the last sturgeon reported to be caught was in the mid 1970s.

Hydroelectric dams have blocked any connection with the lower St. Louis River and Lake Superior since the construction of the first dam in 1908. In order to restore a self-sustaining lake sturgeon population on the upper St. Louis River system, a river resident" population must be used. Partners include: Fond du Lac Indian Reservation and the Wisconsin Department of natural Resources

Frank Stone, R3-Ashland FRO

Volunteers Plant 4,000 Trees at Three Units of Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge

Thirty five volunteers assisted staff from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge plant 4,000 trees May 20, as part of the Refuge's efforts to restore native forests on the Rapids Lake, Louisville Swamp and Wilkie units of the Refuge.

The planting areas were formerly agricultural fields that will become native forests. Refuge staff hosted a barbeque for volunteers at the end of the day. *Terry Schreiner, R3-Minnesota Valley NWR*

Wapello District's Prescribed Fire Program Yields 2,200 Acres Burned

The Wapello District of the Mark Twain NWR completed its spring burning season, completing nine prescribed burns totalling 2,200 acres. Most of the prescribed burning was conducted to maintain and restore native prairie, wet meadow, and moist soil habitats. Four refuge employees and two other firefighters conducted the burns.

Kathleen Maycroft, R3-Mark Twain NWR-Wapello District

Muscatatuck NWR Supplies Seed for Prairie Restorations

This spring, Muscatatuck NWR and the the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program supplied prairie restoration seed for partners at five sites ranging in size from five to 35 acres.

Total prairie restored will be 68.5 acres. *Susan Knowles, R3-Muscatatuck NWR*

Birders Descend on Hamden Slough NWR During Fergus Falls Birding Festival

More than 130 birders participated in refuge tours and workshops at Hamden Slough NWR during the three-day Detroit Lakes Birding Festival May 19-21. Birding tours were conducted daily, with a shorebird identification workshop on Friday and Sunday. Birders toured the refuge both Saturday and Sunday. Seventy two species of birds were found Saturday; 78 species were counted Sunday, including Black-bellied plover, red necked phalaropes, rudy turnstone, and LaConte's sparrows and marbled godwits.

Internationally known birding authors Don and Lillian Stokes were the featured speakers during the festival. The

Stokes are know internationally for their 23 books on birds and their PBS television series on birds and birding areas. The Stokes were members of Sunday's Refuge tour, where they filmed the refuge and its various birds. They were delighted with the refuge and the participation of the tour group. They returned on Sunday afternoon for additional footage of birds and interviews with the refuge manager. Partners include the Detroit Lakes Chamber of Commerce, Lakes Area Birding Club, Tamarac NWR and Itasca State Park. *Michael Murphy, R3-Hamden Slough NWR*



-USFWS Photo by Cynthia Samples

Backwater tour. (From Left) Dan McGuiness, National Audubon Society, Columnist Ted Williams and Refuge Manager Bob Dreislein survey oak savanna on Krats Island.

Audubon Columnist Tours Upper Mississippi Refuge

Audubon Magazine columnist Ted Williams motored through the backwaters of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge with Winona District Manager Bob Drieslein, and Park Ranger Cynthia Samples April 5. Mr. Williams is writing an article about the Mississippi River, with

a segment of the article focusing on the Refuge. Williams toured Krats Island near Wabasha, Minn., getting an up-close look at one of the Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects (HREP's) of the Environmental Management Program (EMP). *Darla Wenger, UMRNW&FR*

Accomplishment Reports Received

The following Accomplishment Reports were processed by the Accomplishment Reporting System May 25, 2000. Accomplishment reports received after that date will appear in the next issue of Inside Region 3.

1. **Offsite Exhibit**
Charles Marshall, Squaw Creek NWR
2. **Wapello District's Prescribed Fire Program Yields 2,200 Acres Burned**
Kathleen Maycroft, Mark Twain NWR-Wapello District
3. **Horicon NWR Celebrates Earth Day With Boardwalk Dedication**
Molly Stoddard, Horicon NWR
4. **Wild Trout Removal at IRNFH**
Frank Stone, Ashland FRO
5. **Region 3: Federal Aid Sponsors An Intra-Service Consultation Workshop**
Angela Boyer, Reynoldsburg FO
6. **Federal Aid Sponsors Section 7 (ESA) Workshop**
Julie Morin, Federal Aid
7. **Birders Descend on Hamden Slough NWR During Fergus Falls Birding Festival**
Michael Murphy, Hamden Slough NWR
8. **Volunteers plant over 4,000 trees on Wildlife Refuge**
Terry Schreiner, Minnesota Valley NWR
9. **Muscatatuck NWR Supplied Seed for Partners**
Susan Knowles, Muscatatuck NWR
10. **800 Investigate Service Careers at St. Louis Career Fair**
Michael Dixon, Mark Twain NWR-Riverlands
11. **Shiawassee NWR Marks IMBD With Bicycles and Binoculars**
Becky Goche, Shiawassee NWR
12. **Overton Bottoms Project Reconnects Missouri River to Floodplain, Creates Wetland Habitat**
Barbara Moran, Big Muddy NWR
13. **Challenge Cost-Share Program Provides \$2 Million for Fish and Wildlife Conservation**
Steve Kuftrin, Private Lands
14. **Union Slough NWR Dedicates New Environmental Education Site and Boardwalk**
Rod Hansen, Union Slough NWR
15. **Dedication of the Mike Callow Memorial Trail**
Joannie Foster, Squaw Creek NWR
16. **Trumpeter Swan Release Highlights IMBD Events at Union Slough NWR**
Rod Hansen, Union Slough NWR
17. **Necedah NWR Holds International Migratory Bird Day Event**
LuAnn Rochester, Necedah NWR
18. **Migratory Bird Day Celebrated at Sherburne NWR**
Nancy Haugen, Sherburne NWR
19. **Dedication of the Learning Center in Savanna**
Cynthia Samples, UMRNW&FR-Complex HQ
20. **Bird Walk Highlights International Migratory Bird Day at DeSoto NWR**
Cindy Myer, Desoto NWR
21. **Services Helps Columbus Zoo Expand Celebration of IMBD to Two Days**
Kenneth Lammers, Reynoldsburg FO
22. **Mound City Civilian Conservation Corps Unearths Time Capsule Honoring Refuge Builders**
Charles Marshall, Squaw Creek NWR
23. **Service Transfers Sturgeon Eggs to Help Restore Species on the Upper St. Louis River**
Frank Stone, Ashland FRO
24. **New Fish Pumps Debut at Federal Lake Trout Hatcheries**
Robert Pos, Pendills Creek NFH
25. **Necedah First Graders Visit Necedah NWR**
LuAnn Rochester, Necedah NWR
26. **Keweenaw Bay Tribal Fish Stocks Get OTC Markings**
Frank Stone, Ashland FRO
27. **McGregor District Refuge Featured on Iowa Public Television**
Cathy Henry, UMRNW&FR-McGregor District

28. What's A Watershed?

*Cynthia Samples, UMRNW&FR-
Complex HQ*

29. Necedah NWR Hosts Whooping Crane Outreach Committee

LuAnn Rochester, Necedah NWR

30. LaCrosse District Biologist Completes Spring Woodcock Surveys

*Lara Hill, UMRNW&FR-
LaCrosse*

31. Service Present at Wings and Wildlife Festival

Cindy Myer, Desoto NWR

32. IMBD Celebration Held in LaCrosse

*Mary Stefanski, UMRNW&FR-
LaCrosse*

33. Necedah NWR Exhibits at Wisconsin Home School Conference

LuAnn Rochester, Necedah NWR

34. Friends of Big Muddy and Refuge Staff Clean Up at Lisbon Bottoms

Barbara Moran, Big Muddy NWR

35. Audubon Spring Bird Count at Mark Twain NWR-Brussels District

*Russell Engelke, Mark Twain
NWR-Brussels District*

36. Seventy Four Bird Species Tallied at Mark Twain NWR During Illinois Bird Survey

*Rick Cantu, Mark Twain NWR,
Annada District*

37. Big Stone Bird Festival Draw Birders From Five States

Ron Cole, Big Stone NWR

38. Sparta Gifted & Talented Visit Necedah NWR

LuAnn Rochester, Necedah NWR

39. Woodcock Singing Ground Survey at Ottawa NWR

Christy Smith, Ottawa NWR

40. St. Louis Sixth Graders Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day

*Michael Dixon, Mark Twain
NWR-Riverlands*

41. Detroit Lakes WMD Staff Mentors Fourth Grade Students

Les Peterson, Detroit Lakes WMD

42. U.S Policy Committee Celebrates Lakewide Management Plans

Bob Kavetsky, East Lansing FO

Inside Region 3

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