



# RefugeUpdate

National Wildlife Refuge System

[www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges)



*Conserving the Future*  
SPECIAL ISSUE

## From the Secretary

### Looking to the Future

By Ken Salazar

**I**nsightful, long-term planning. Creative thinking. Transparency. Working beyond traditional boundaries. Staying relevant in Americans' daily lives.

These are the concepts that we are seeking to apply as we develop a vision plan to guide the growth and management of our National Wildlife Refuge System. The Refuge System is one of the crown jewels of our conservation efforts, and we must ensure that it has the right tools and guidance to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

I am encouraged that so many Americans have helped in developing the vision thus far, and I applaud all who are in Madison, WI—or joining online—to continue this important dialogue at the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference, July 11-14.

You are an important part of the *Conserving the Future* process as we stretch beyond traditional thinking and search for bold ideas about the future priorities and management of national wildlife refuges.

The federal government manages more than 671 million acres, roughly one-third of the lands in the United States,

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# From the Acting Director

## Perfect Time for Visionaries

By Rowan Gould

American inventor Robert Jarvik once said, “Leaders are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them.”

Read the vision document and you will conclude that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is filled with leaders—and supported by visionaries among refuge Friends groups and conservation supporters—whose bold ideas will chart a new future for conservation in America.

We could have played it safe. We could have decided that tough times mean keeping our aspirations modest. We could have delayed considering our future until our fiscal situation looks brighter. Instead, the *Conserving the Future* vision calls for us to make an immediate moral and personal commitment, and we will make that commitment.

By undertaking the vision process now, we have acknowledged that much has changed since *Fulfilling the Promise* became the guiding vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1999. Today, we face new conditions.

Consider the U.S. population. As of April 2010, 308.7 million people live in the United States, compared with 281.4 million a decade earlier. America has become more urbanized—with more fragmented habitat and fewer connections to the land. The Hispanic population increased 43 percent in the decade. Today, one in every six Americans is Latino. In 2010, more than 40 million people were 65 or older, up from 35 million in 2000. The trends are expected to continue.

*Fulfilling the Promise* was silent on climate change, but much has happened since. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s *Fourth Assessment Report*, issued in 2007, estimated that 20 to 30 percent of the world’s plant and animal species are likely to be at increasingly high risk of extinction as global mean temperatures exceed a warming of two to three degrees



George Gentry/USFWS volunteer

### *William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge Oregon*

Celsius above preindustrial levels. That report prompted the Service to adopt its climate change strategic plan in 2010, and we are in the process of implementing its five-year action plan.

And then there’s the way we communicate. Facebook, launched in a Harvard dorm room in 2004, has more than 500 million active users. The first Twitter message was sent in 2006; almost 200 million people now use it. When *Fulfilling the Promise* was written, we thought “social media” meant an invitation to a really great party.

The world has changed since we charted our future in 1999. We have had to change, too. That’s the job of visionaries.



## RefugeUpdate

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### On the Cover:

*Photograph of whooping cranes at  
Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in  
Texas by Klaus Nigge.*



Brett Billings/USFWS

## *Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge* Virginia

# From the Chief

## The Heavy Lifting Begins

By Greg Siekaniec

**A**s the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director calls us to action in Madison, WI, he launches the charge for an implementation team to get to work, set priorities and empower work groups to help move the *Conserving the Future* process forward.

I well remember 1999, when we released *Fulfilling the Promise* after the excitement of the conference in Keystone, CO. Then, we charged dozens of teams, which did great work to help move the National Wildlife Refuge System forward in many amazing ways. The excitement and energy of Keystone lived on in the work of the implementation team and work groups.

It is a different time now. In 1999, we had a strong economy, a budget with surpluses and a nation at peace. Today, we can't count on a big influx of new resources to accomplish the work at hand.

We will take the energy of Madison, based on our shared core values enunciated in Aldo Leopold's land ethic, and empower a new generation to make the vision become a reality.

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***We will take the energy of Madison and empower a new generation to make the vision become a reality.***

Our vision is clear, and the challenges are urgent. Conserving fish and wildlife and the landscapes that sustain them in the face of a changing world is daunting. We will muster the same energy and innovation our forebears found when they tackled the twin challenges of the Great Depression and the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl so many decades ago. The determined spirit of our incredible workforce, coupled with innovation and partnerships, will allow

us to move landscape conservation forward just as it did in the 1930s.

But we will not be able to do it alone. Hunters and anglers, state and tribal agencies, refuge Friends and nonprofit organizations, among others, will be as essential during this implementation phase as they have been for decades.

We must work with the urgency displayed in the '30s to build a conservation constituency today. We have bold ideas for new urban refuges, more community support groups, more volunteers, new recreational opportunities, and a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Those ideas will energize our fellow citizens, who must become the next generation of conservationists.

We will have the final vision document released by Refuge Week in October. By then, the work of implementing it will be under way. We will need all of you to join us on this journey of *Conserving the Future*. Let's get to work. 



Brett Billings/USFWS

***Kenai National Wildlife Refuge*** Alaska

## From the States

### Fish and Wildlife Agencies Stress Four Themes

By John Kennedy

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) represents the collective perspective of the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies. AFWA members have worked cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop policies affecting fish and wildlife management on refuges. This includes Policy 601 FW 7 (Coordination and Cooperative Work with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies), which recognizes the states' authorities on refuges and outlines procedures by which the Service will work with the states on refuges.

As one who was a member of the *Conserving the Future* vision process steering committee, I want to focus on these overarching themes:

1. AFWA and state fish and wildlife agencies, along with hunters and anglers, were instrumental in the deliberations leading to the passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. The act must guide the vision

process and future management of the Refuge System.

2. In 2002, the Service and the states agreed on a mechanism to fully engage the states in the development of refuge policies in a way that acknowledges the states' wildlife management responsibilities and authorities. With the Service, we completed the Mission, Goals and Purposes Policy; Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy; Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Uses Policy; Wilderness Stewardship Policy; and the Coordination and Cooperative Work with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies Policy. These policies must guide the vision process and future management of the Refuge System.

3. Hunters and anglers must be represented in the vision process and future management of the Refuge System. There must be meaningful coordination among the Service, states, the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council, and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership

Council throughout the entire vision process, including implementation. We also urge the Service to reflect in the vision document that the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is the foundation of fish and wildlife conservation in the United States.

4. All 50 state wildlife agencies have created Congressionally mandated state wildlife action plans that include strategies for addressing species in greatest need of conservation. The states also have landscape-level plans, including migratory bird joint ventures and fish habitat partnerships, and statewide strategic plans for single species, such as mule deer and sage-grouse. The vision document should include specific references to these plans and should provide guidance for coordination with the states in relation to these plans. 🦉

*John Kennedy is deputy director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and chair of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Federal & Tribal Relations Committee.*



USFWS

*Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge* Maine

## From Partners and Friends

### An Unprecedented Harvest of Ideas en Route to a Vision

By *Evan Hirsche*

Last year, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service invited the National Wildlife Refuge Association to lead the effort to engage refuge Friends groups, non-governmental organization partners and other constituencies in the vision planning process, I accepted enthusiastically. I had been involved in Service planning efforts at Keystone, CO, in the late 1990s, but, to my mind, this process was going to be even better. For the first time, the Service was opening the discussion of its future under a big tent, initiating an extremely open process of public engagement.

We rolled up our sleeves, and what a process it has been.

Over the past 10 months, my staff, Service team leaders and I have sat down for dozens of listening sessions with Friends groups, environmental advocacy organization CEOs and refuge gateway community leaders. We've

reached out to a variety of refuge users: tribal leaders, birdwatchers, hunters and anglers, environmental educators, wildlife photographers and others. Noted authors such as photographer Dudley Edmondson and law professor Rob Fischman have contributed insight. We've involved non-traditional partners in the discussion, too.

On *www.AmericasWildlife.org*, the online community we created with the Service to engage and inspire the public, we've invited—and received—bold ideas about the National Wildlife Refuge System's future. The ideas have come from a wide range of Americans who value refuges. We've incorporated their voices, along with those of Service leaders and field staff, in a lively blog that has helped the *Conserving the Future* vision process evolve and blossom since last fall.

When it opened up the planning process to such a wide circle, the Service did something truly unusual for a federal

agency, and Service leaders should be commended for taking that leap of faith. Looking back, I can honestly say that the process has yielded a harvest of ideas and public engagement that is unprecedented in Service history.

The ratification of the final vision in Madison, WI, will not mark the end. Instead, it will signal a new beginning, when the hard work of implementation will start, and it will be especially important that each and every refuge user, non-governmental organization and Friends group remains engaged. A vision for the Refuge System is not a destination. Rather, it is a journey. I look forward to sharing it with many fellow travelers. 🦋

*Evan Hirsche is president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.*

# Carrying the Legacy Forward

**R**efuge Update recently asked U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees who seemed particularly engaged in the Conserving the Future process to tell us, in 200 words or less, what they think is the most important thing that the National Wildlife Refuge System should do in coming decades to enhance wildlife conservation and make the System more relevant to conservation in America. Here are their abridged responses.

**Kipp Morrill**  
Assistant fire management officer,  
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge  
Complex, CA

The Refuge System is an amazing culture of can-do people, a unique breed of “conservation martyrs.” Yet, one of the biggest challenges we face is change itself. It’s scary. It’s uncomfortable. But we need to ensure that “That’s the way we’ve always done it” is purged from our collective psyche. Gone are the days when we could rely on tried-and-true techniques, procedures and attitudes that seemingly sustained conservation. We need to nurture and reward outside-the-box thinking. “It might not work” needs to be replaced with “Let’s give it a try.”

**Kristin Reakoff**  
Interpretive park ranger, Kanuti  
Refuge, AK

Conservation matters for many reasons, but reasons don’t always speak to the heart. Show people your passion and



George Gentry/USFWS volunteer

## *Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge* Florida

share your story instead. If you’ve stood in the desert in awe of the noonday heat, tell them that. If you’ve run with the wind at the ocean’s edge and known the exhilaration of the tide, tell them that. If you’ve admired the tenacity of a flower growing between sidewalk slabs and felt uplifted, tell them that. By all means, tell them how it is with you. Share with them what truly inspires *you* to work for conservation, and give them time to let your passion stir their souls. If they are ready, you will have successfully passed the torch and awakened in them a yearning to run the next leg of the conservation journey.

**Marilyn Kitchell**  
Wildlife biologist, Wallkill River,  
Shawangunk Grasslands and Cherry  
Valley Refuges, NJ, NY and PA

If we are to increase our relevance to conservation, we must serve the people *where they are*—whether on a refuge or not. Our public is everywhere, and most Americans don’t know about us. Serving them well means connecting with new

audiences while remaining true to the principle of “wildlife first.” This will require soul-searching, stretching our comfort zone and doing things we didn’t get in this business to do. We’ll need to use mainstream and social media, be present in urban areas, reach out to non-traditional audiences and assume outreach responsibilities because that is our job. We can improve our conservation delivery, but we can’t do it just for ourselves or by ourselves—we need the public we serve.

**Kofi Fynn-Aikins**  
Manager, Lower Great Lakes and  
Central Rivers Complex, NY

To be relevant in the 21st century, the Refuge System must pay close attention to America’s changing demographics. The System must be proactive in recruiting a talented and diverse workforce that reflects those demographics. This means the System must embrace differences in education, language, geographical location, socioeconomic status, generation,

marital status, gender, etc. It also means creating an inclusive workforce that reflects the face of a changing America. Putting into place such a workforce will take serious commitment from System leaders.

**Brian Salem**

**Refuge operation specialist/law enforcement officer, Lostwood Refuge, ND**

The Refuge System must attempt to manage not only refuge lands but the entire landscape they fall within. The only way to accomplish this enormous task is to properly utilize and inform partners, the community, Friends groups and others. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the Web site used to help craft the *Conserving the Future* vision document, have proved to be effective and should be used to accomplish landscape-level conservation. Social media provide a mechanism to keep all stakeholders involved; accept input from various sources; inform landowners and the public; share successful accomplishments; share the benefits of refuges; and compare management techniques.

**Heather Abbey**

**Wildlife biologist, Ecological Services Office, Ventura, CA**

We need to be thinking far into the future at a landscape scale. We cannot move forward without the backing of the American public and our partners, so we must work with them at every opportunity. I envision a Refuge System that is administered across jurisdictions and planned for across all relevant spatial scales—and where actions are based on a commitment to scientific excellence and transparency, sustaining the viability of our natural systems comes first and fostering people’s connection to these special places is a priority.

**Noah Kahn**

**Performance manager, National Wildlife Refuge System, Arlington, VA**

I envision a Refuge System with a few clear priorities designed to improve the



Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

**Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge Vermont**

biological integrity and environmental health of each refuge and wetland district—a System in which we evaluate each refuge’s condition using an “integrity index” that focuses our work and supports budget requests. A cooperative approach with partners is essential to improving existing refuges and to beginning new projects in nationally significant ecosystems. My vision emphasizes setting System-wide goals that *require* collaboration in order to be met. We’ll know we’ve aimed high enough if our fundamental goals *cannot* be achieved without collaborative partnerships. And if a refuge *can* achieve its goals without partners, then we’ve probably aimed too low.

**Paul Charland**

**Wildland-urban interface coordinator, Leopold Wetland Management District, WI**

The word “legacy” reminds me of the Duck Stamp, the Prairie Pothole Region and Ira Gabrielson. Theodore Roosevelt gave us refuges, but the Duck Stamp gave us a System. Those were days of a clear mission. We succeeded because we had a singular

purpose. To carry that legacy forward, we need to ensure our goal is as clear today as it was then. Who we are will always change, as will our constituency, but our singular mission must always be to conserve fish, wildlife and their habitat. We will not and cannot be everything to everyone. We need to be true to wildlife. If we’re successful at that, we’ll be relevant.

**Kathryn Owens**

**Deputy refuge manager, Back Bay Refuge, VA**

The opportunity now before us is to enhance how we deliver conservation. We must focus our energy and resources on the greatest ecological needs and, sometimes painfully, give up the less critical, and perhaps traditional, priorities. We must demand the highest scientific excellence from ourselves and our partners—sharing data and resources to build our collective capacity and impact the broadest landscapes. Most important, we must consistently deliver this message to the people around us who don’t have the benefit and privilege of seeing what we see.

*continued on pg 22*



Bret Wolfe/USFWS

***Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge*** Hawaii

## Conference Overview

**T**he *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, WI, is the culmination of an extensive process to create a vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System for the next decade and beyond. This new vision will be discussed and honed at the conference.

Below are highlights of a tentative schedule for the main portion of the July 11-14 gathering.

Please note that **all times are Central Daylight Time** and that this schedule is subject to change. For the most up-to-date, detailed schedule, go to [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org).

### **Tuesday, July 12**

*Theme of the Day: Celebrating Our Legacy, Envisioning the Future*

- General Session: 8 a.m. to noon (all times are CDT)
- Lecture Series, Douglas Brinkley: 1 to 2 p.m.
- Lecture Series, Curt Meine: 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

- Lecture Series, Ian Shive: 4 to 5 p.m.
- Facilitated Discussions and Workshops: 1 to 5 p.m.

### **Wednesday, July 13**

*Theme of the Day: Implementation—Ratify Your Role*

- General Session: 8 to 10 a.m. (all times are CDT)
- Lecture Series, Emilyn Sheffield: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- Facilitated Discussions and Workshops: 10:30 a.m. to noon
- Lecture Series, Juan Martinez: 2:15 to 3:15 p.m.
- Lecture Series, J. Michael Scott: 3:30 to 4:15 p.m.
- Facilitated Discussions and Workshops: 1 to 4:15 p.m.
- General Session: 4:30 to 5 p.m.

### **Thursday, July 14**

*Theme of the Day: Call to Action*

- General Session: 8 to 10 a.m. (all times are CDT)
- Lecture Series, Majora Carter: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

- Facilitated Discussions and Workshops: 10:30 a.m. to noon
- Lecture Series, Jeff Salz: 1 to 2 p.m.
- Facilitated Discussions and Workshops: 1 to 2:30 p.m.
- General Session: 3 to 4:30 p.m.

**For Real-Time Remote Coverage, Go to [www.AmericasWildlife.org/live](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/live)**

Much of the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference—including general sessions, lecture series talks and a midday news program—is scheduled to be broadcast live via streaming video at [www.AmericasWildlife.org/live](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/live).





Frank Miles/USFWS

*John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum Pennsylvania*

## How to Connect Virtually

An array of technologies will be in place to bring people across the country into the *Conserving the Future* conference from their own homes and offices.

The Web site [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org) will be the primary online avenue for nationwide participation. For instance, live streaming video of selected sessions will be aired at [www.AmericasWildlife.org/live](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/live).

You also can participate remotely at the following sites:

- Facebook—<http://www.facebook.com/americaswildlife>
- Twitter—<http://twitter.com/americaswild>
- YouTube—<http://www.youtube.com/americaswildlife>
- Flickr—<http://www.flickr.com/photos/americaswildlife>

Teams of Service employees and Friends acting as roaming journalists are scheduled to produce daily news feeds, stories, interviews and on-the-spot videos for the Web site. Social

media writers are lined up to post news from the conference to Facebook and Twitter pages. Photos will be shared regularly on Flickr. Employees, partners and youth interns with the *Conserving the Future* process are scheduled to blog about their impressions of the conference at [www.AmericasWildlife.org/blog](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/blog).

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***“Coverage of this conference is a huge technological advance for the Fish and Wildlife Service.”***

During the general sessions on July 12-14, individuals participating online will be able to submit their thoughts via Twitter or Facebook while speakers such as oceanographer Sylvia Earle and author Douglas Brinkley address the floor. Just put “@americaswild” in your tweet from your Twitter profile and it will become part of the conference Twitter feed.

With youth engagement being a conference hallmark, student and youth delegates brought to the conference are scheduled to share what they see and hear through the conference’s social media, too.

“Coverage of this conference is a huge technological advance for the Fish and Wildlife Service,” said Refuge System Chief Greg Siekaniec.

“We are excited to expand beyond the walls of the conference to allow individuals to connect online with the conference’s content,” said Michael Gale, the *Conserving the Future* communications coordinator. “Using social media and the Web, we will bring thousands of people into the ratification process as the Service minimizes its carbon footprint while expanding the circle of people engaged with the vision.”



# Keynote Speakers

The general sessions of the *Conserving the Future* conference feature several keynote speakers, including:



## Adm. Thad Allen

Thad Allen is a retired U.S. Coast Guard admiral and commandant who served as national incident commander for the unified response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. In that position, Allen oversaw all efforts to cease the flow of oil and mitigate the disaster's effects. He worked with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, Interior, Commerce and Health and Human Services on the federal response. He was also in charge of coordinating with state and local organizations and directing the efforts of BP, the responsible party in the spill. In 2005 and early 2006, he also directed the federal response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Gulf region. He was born in Tucson, AZ, graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, holds a master of public administration degree from George Washington University and an MS from the Sloan School of Management of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



## Douglas Brinkley

Douglas Brinkley is an author, a Rice University history professor and a fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. He is also a history commentator for CBS News and a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* magazine. He was born in Atlanta and raised in Perrysburg, OH. He received his BA degree from Ohio State University and his MA and PhD from Georgetown University in U.S. diplomatic history. He has taught at Princeton University, the U.S. Naval Academy and Hofstra University, and he has earned several honorary doctorates. Among the two dozen books he has written are: "The Mississippi and the Making of a Nation: From the Louisiana Purchase to Today" (2002, with Stephen Ambrose); "The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast" (2006); "The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America" (2009); and "The Quiet World: Saving Alaska's Wilderness Kingdom, 1879-1960" (2011).



Mark Thiessen


## Sylvia Earle

Sylvia A. Earle, an oceanographer who served as chief scientist of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) from 1990 to 1992, is a *National Geographic* explorer-in-residence. She was born in Gibbstown, NJ, received her BS degree from Florida State University, earned her MS and PhD from Duke University, and has numerous honorary degrees. She was curator of phycology at the California Academy of Sciences (1979-1986); a research associate at the University of California, Berkeley (1969-1981); Radcliffe Institute Scholar (1967-1969); and research fellow at Harvard University (1967-1981). From 1980 to 1984, she served on the President's Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere. In 1992, after her tenure as NOAA chief scientist, she founded Deep Ocean Exploration and Research (DOER), which designs, builds and operates manned and robotic equipment for deep marine environments.



## Dewitt Jones

Dewitt Jones is one of America's top professional photographers. In 20 years with *National Geographic* photographing stories around the globe, he has earned a reputation as a world-class photojournalist. As a motion picture director, he has had two of his films nominated for Academy Awards. As a businessman, he has risen to the forefront of creative marketing by photographing national advertising campaigns for organizations such as Dewar's Scotch, Canon and United Airlines. He has published nine books, including "California" and "John Muir's America." His most recent book, "The Nature of Leadership," was written in collaboration with Stephen R. Covey. Jones is a renowned lecturer. His inspirational messages are further discussed in his best-selling training programs. He graduated from Dartmouth College with a BA in drama and holds a master's degree in filmmaking from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Additional information about conference speakers is at <http://AmericasWildlife.org>. 

# Lectures, Workshops and Discussions

While the primary purpose of the *Conserving the Future* conference is to discuss, hone and begin implementing the National Wildlife Refuge System's vision for the next decade, an important component of the gathering in Madison is to share information with and among budding conservationists.

After all, the full name of the event—and the process—is *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*.

To that end, in addition to general sessions, the conference will include three distinct educational elements designed to foster communication across generations and across areas of expertise—lecture series, workshops and facilitated discussions.

Among the guest speakers in the lecture series are:

- Aldo Leopold biographer **Curt Meine**
- Author and historian **Douglas Brinkley**
- California State University, Chico, professor **Emilyn Sheffield**
- “The Promised Land” radio show host **Majora Carter**
- **Juan Martinez** of the Children and Nature Network
- Idaho professor and research scientist **J. Michael Scott**
- Adventurer, mountaineer and anthropologist **Jeff Salz**
- Nature photographer **Ian Shive**

Each lecturer will speak and take questions for one hour. All lecture series speeches are scheduled to be streamed online in real time at [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org) and then archived there.

There are more than 20 workshops on the agenda. Each will last roughly 75 minutes and will be an interactive “action studio” in which 100 or more participants are given tips and tools they can use in the field. Many workshops will involve a short group exercise or hands-on project designed to emphasize future implementation on refuges.



Dave Menke/USFWS

## *Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge California*

The workshop topics range from “Greening the Refuge System,” “Hiring the Next Generation” and “Marketing Your Refuge in the Digital Age” to “Refuges, Neighbors and Sea-Level Rise,” “Managing Marine Habitats and Coral Reefs” and “You Want to Burn What?” Most of the workshops are scheduled to be taped and archived—along with relevant PowerPoint presentations—online at [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org).

Dozens of facilitated discussions will be sprinkled throughout the conference. Typically, these discussions will last 45 minutes, involve 32 to 45 participants and conclude with a question-and-answer session. On the first day, they will focus on individual points in the *Conserving the Future* vision document; days two and three will focus on plans for the vision's implementation.

“Together, the lectures, workshops and discussions will offer Fish and Wildlife

Service employees and partners of all ages and from all corners of the country a chance to pick up nuggets of wisdom from one another,” said Rebekah Martin, the *Conserving the Future* process coordinator. “Because much of the material will be streamed live online and later archived, these breakout sessions will be a tremendous opportunity for people nationwide to be informed on a practical, hands-on level and to be inspired on a more personal level to a call to action to benefit refuges, wildlife and conservation across America.”

A complete schedule of conference lectures, workshops and discussions is available at [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org).



# Youth: Ready, Willing and Able to Lead the Way

By Mao Lin

If I hadn't been in the right place at the right time, I'd probably be working as a business consultant in Manhattan right now.

Instead, though, I'm a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Coastal Program. I'm in this position because an 11-week internship turned into a six-year career filled with amazing wildlife, exciting projects and professional growth.

Some friends I have met along the way haven't been so lucky. Even though they are exceedingly well-qualified wildlife biologists who support refuge programs, they move from one seasonal job to another; or they are retained through temporary authorities because field managers don't have the funds or mechanisms to hire them outright.

As we craft our vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System, we need to recommit to engaging youth, improving recruitment and retention, and providing gainful employment for people ages 15 to 24.

We need to hire youth before someone else takes all the talent. Let's get youth out on refuges engaging visitors, managing habitat, monitoring rare species and protecting plants and animals. Let's invite them to join us at the table with our partners. Let's offer them leadership roles and share power and responsibility with them so they can gain the experience necessary to be conservation leaders.



Steve Hillebrand

## *Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge* Missouri

Let's provide tools and resources to break down barriers between our employees and the vast potential for youth recruitment within their communities. Working with youth can invigorate veteran employees, ease negative attitudes, allow everyone to see how capable youth are and encourage thinking about the future of the Service and the Refuge System.

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***We need to hire youth before someone else takes all the talent.***

The *Conserving the Future* conference youth outreach campaign is bringing in youth from around the country. Some were nominated by refuges and partners to participate; others competed for a chance to attend through our multimedia contest. The goals are to provide leadership opportunities for them, mix up the

demographics of the conference and foster multigenerational discourse.

The conference will engage youth through a challenge project, a speed-mentoring workshop and various other presentations and discussions. Most important, perhaps, the conference will enable youth participants, Service employees, partners and others to network.

So, please reach across age boundaries and make a connection with the youth participants. Take the time to get to know them. They may be our future, but they are eager to be conservation leaders today. 🦋

*Mao Lin is chair of the Conserving the Future youth engagement team.*

# Bold Ideas Led to Visionary Document

Nearly 240 bold ideas were put forth. They gathered more than 10,000 comments. And, over a 60-day public comment period this spring, the *Conserving the Future* draft vision document garnered 9,500 comments online at [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org) or via e-mail. Little wonder, then, that the vision document for the National Wildlife Refuge System has changed dramatically from its iteration some months ago.

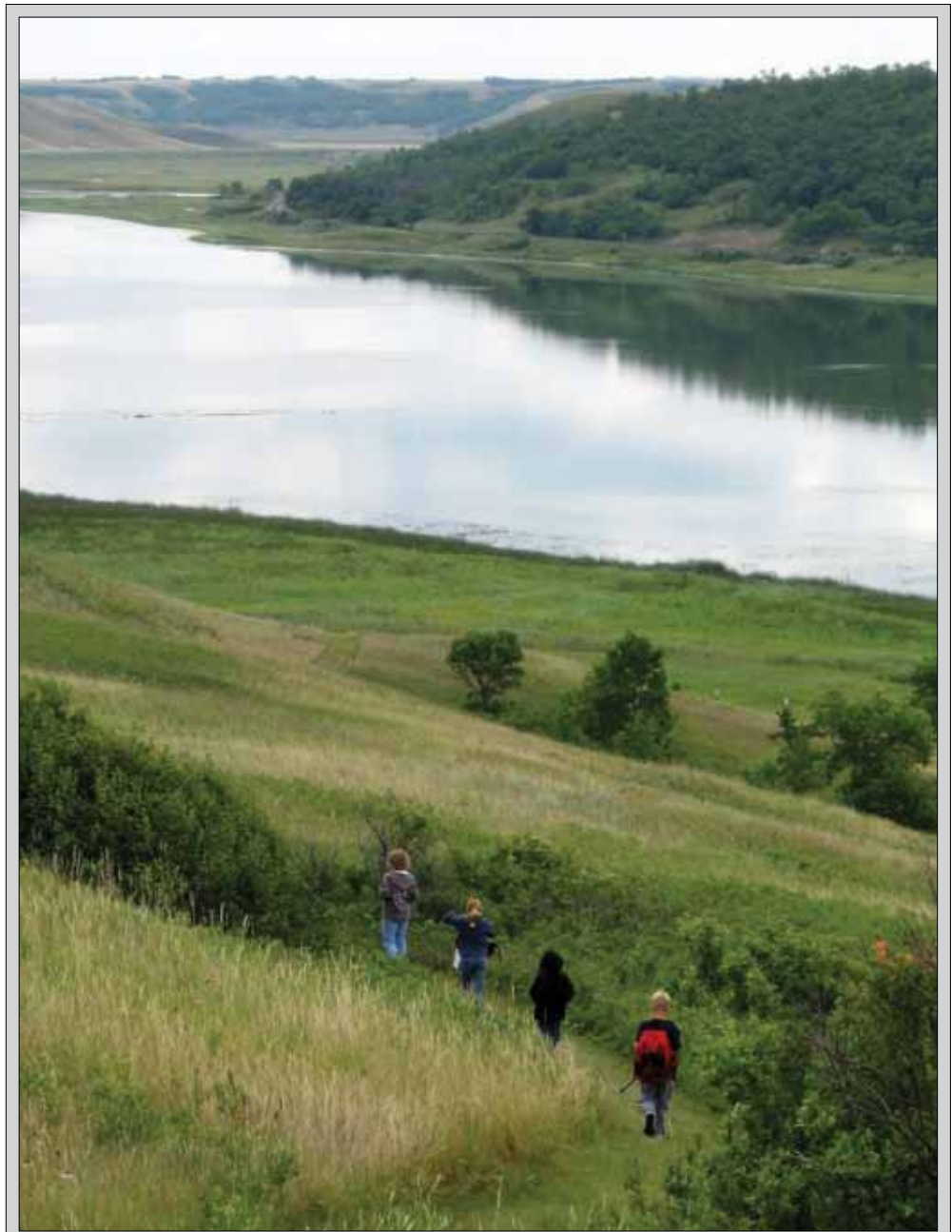
The document being discussed in Madison, WI, July 11-14 is far shorter than that version. It contains about two dozen recommendations—as compared with almost 100 earlier—and makes clear ties to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. It organizes recommendations around several broad concepts, including strategic growth, science and wildlife management; increasing a conservation constituency; and enhancing leadership opportunities for employees and potential employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Building on *Fulfilling the Promise*, the guiding document adopted in 1999, the new vision stresses that the Refuge System will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, providing an enduring legacy of healthy lands and waters managed in accordance with a 21st-century adaption of Aldo Leopold's land ethic.

It notes that the Refuge System, in carrying out its "wildlife first" mission, must use a landscape-level approach that focuses on science and environmental stressors to protect, restore and manage conservation lands and waters.

At the same time, the document recommends that landscape-scale habitat management be strengthened by a "beyond the boundaries" approach that leverages resources through partnerships with other government agencies, conservation groups and private landowners.

The vision document emphasizes that the Refuge System will continue to grow strategically by protecting ecosystems in



Jennifer Jewett/USFWS

## *Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge* North Dakota

concert with the efforts of conservation partners. The overriding vision establishes that national wildlife refuges are valued elements of local communities, cherished places for people to connect with nature and to learn about and assist in conservation stewardship.

"The vision document you see here in Madison is vastly different than earlier

versions—and that's in direct response to the comments we heard," said Cynthia Martinez, chief of the Refuge System Division of Visitor Services and Communications. "We heard that the draft document was too long, that its 98 recommendations were far too many, and that many of the recommendations were

*continued on pg 22*

# Green Goal: To Make the Conference Carbon-Negative

By Heather Dewar

Soon after a special “Green Team” of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees began working to make the *Conserving the Future* conference carbon-neutral, team members decided to toss that goal out the window. Not because it wasn’t attainable, but because it wasn’t ambitious enough.

“We need to go further,” says Green Team leader Paul Charland, a Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region wildland-urban interface coordinator

based at Leopold Wetland Management District in central Wisconsin. “In order to stop the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, we need to be carbon-negative.”

Charland and other team members believe the Service should lead the way to a carbon-negative future. So they are striving for a carbon-negative conference—one that, they expect, will result in a net reduction in atmospheric carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas fueling climate change.

The conference’s biggest fossil fuel use is attendees’ travel, Charland says. Madison, WI, isn’t served by direct flights on major airlines, so two flights are necessary for most of the 1,200 attendees. The second flight, on a commuter plane, uses proportionally more fuel. The Green Team urged regional leaders to ask attendees to skip the second flight and instead carpool with co-workers from a larger airport to Madison.



Dave Menke/USFWS

***Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge*** California

The switch from puddle-jumper to rent-a-van symbolizes the behavioral changes people need to make to reduce their carbon footprints, Charland says. “The goal is to initiate new ways of thinking and new ways of going about the things people do every day.”

In Madison, attendees are encouraged to use public transportation.

The decision to hold the event at the Monona Terrace Community and Conference Center helped shrink the carbon footprint. The center has been designated LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver by the U.S. Green Building Council, and it purchases all of its electricity from renewable sources, mostly wind power. The center’s caterer shuns petroleum-based plasticware in favor of reusable china and compostable cups made of corn resin.

The conference is scheduled to feature two presentations on how refuges can

reduce their carbon footprints. And John Knox, a *Conserving the Future* Fellow who helped plan the event, has prepared a collection of energy-saving “green tools” to be included in attendees’ take-home material.

A transportation consultant’s initial estimate found that about \$5,000 worth of carbon-offset credits would compensate for the fossil fuel used to fly participants to and from the conference, with a more comprehensive estimate to come. Meanwhile, Charland says, the Service has pledged to invest \$15,000 in carbon-offset credits administered by The Conservation Fund. The Green Team expects those credits will make the conference carbon-negative. In any event, the credits will pay for a reforestation project on a national wildlife refuge. 

*Heather Dewar is a writer-editor in the Refuge System Branch of Communications.*

## Did You Know ...

- ... that all 50 states and five U.S. territories have at least one national wildlife refuge; 286 of the 553 refuges are within 50 miles of an urban area; and 400 refuges are within 100 miles of an urban area?

- ... that the National Wildlife Refuge System manages 196.5 miles along the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada? That breaks down to roughly 103 miles on the Alaska-Canada border, 88 miles along the U.S.-Mexico border and 5 miles along the Lower 48 U.S.-Canada border.

- ... that there are approximately 1,400 bison roaming on six Refuge System units in the Lower 48 states—the National Bison Range in Montana, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, Sullys Hill National Game Preserve in North Dakota, Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska, Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado?

- ... that Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska is named after Karl Izembek, a surgeon aboard a Russian sloop, the Moller, that wintered in Bechevin Bay during the first coastal explorations of the area by white men in the 1820s?

- ... that Green Cay National Wildlife Refuge in the U.S. Virgin Islands is the easternmost unit in the Refuge System this side of the International Dateline?

- ... that there are 10 National Historic Landmarks, 89 National Register-listed



Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

### *National Bison Range* Montana

properties, 878 paleontological sites, 2,065 historic structures and 18,755 archaeological sites within national wildlife refuges? The Refuge System also manages almost 5.5 million museum artifacts.

- ... that Marianas Trench Marine National Monument protects the deepest point on Earth, which, at 35,760 feet, is deeper than the height of Mount Everest is above sea level?


- ... that of the approximately 5,000 miles of public roads on national wildlife refuges, only eight percent are paved? The other 92 percent are gravel or native material.

- ... that the namesake bird of Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge in Texas is named for Henry Philemon Attwater, a naturalist and conservationist who was born in England and immigrated to Canada before moving to Texas in 1889?

- ... that more than 90 percent of the threatened green sea turtles living in the

1,500-mile long Hawaiian archipelago nest on just a few beaches at French Frigate Shoals in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge?

- ... that the earliest effort to set aside an area of federally owned land specifically for wildlife occurred in 1868 when President Ulysses S. Grant set aside the Pribilof Islands in Alaska as a reserve for the northern fur seal? In 1869, Congress formally enacted legislation for this purpose.

- ... that national wildlife refuges generate significant revenue and create jobs for local economies? According to the *Banking on Nature 2006* study, refuges generate \$4 in economic revenue for local economies for every dollar appropriated to the Refuge System. 

# Growing Up Wisconsin

By Heather Jerue

**T**he crisp, refreshing outdoors of Wisconsin has been in my blood since I was a girl. It was an integral part of my life growing up. But I didn't fully realize the rich conservation history and ethic of my home state until I went to college.

Many people hesitate when a new acquaintance asks, "Where are you from?" Such people think twice before naming their university town or the most recent place they have lived. Not me. There is no uncertainty. For me, it's easy. I promptly and proudly say, "I'm from LaCrosse, Wisconsin."

I know how lucky I am to have been raised in such a great place—not only because of the city's remarkable sense of community, but also because of the area's absolute natural beauty. LaCrosse is nestled among the bluffs where three great rivers—the Black, the LaCrosse and the Mississippi—converge on Wisconsin's "west coast." And LaCrosse is situated on the longest river refuge in the Lower 48 states, the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Whether I was playing in our backyard, attending summer camp, camping with my family or fishing with my dad, the outdoors was an important part of my childhood.

Hunting and fishing were—and still are—bonding experiences for our whole family. Typically, we would go out on Lake Onalaska to catch bluegill. It could be on open water or ice fishing. In summer, my mom would come along for the boat ride, or read while the rest of us fished. It was together time. And, by the way, Dad makes the best bluegill fish tacos in the world.

He and my two brothers are avid hunters, too—duck, turkey, deer. Every Christmas, they give one another hunting and fishing gear. Whether the gifts are deer cams, duck decoys or turkey calls, the three of them tend to geek out over them while Mom and I good-naturedly look on.



Gary J. Wege

## *Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Wisconsin*

Dad instilled in all of us kids a healthy respect for and love of the outdoors. While our family regularly hunted and fished near the refuge, Dad taught us that the refuge itself was and is a sanctuary, a place where wildlife is safe and protected.

It wasn't until I moved a few hours southeast to Madison to study at the University of Wisconsin, though, that I began to truly appreciate the considerable conservation heritage of my home state. There I learned, of course, about Aldo Leopold, a professor at the University of Wisconsin in the 1930s and '40s who formed the school's wildlife management program, wrote *A Sand County Almanac* and became the father of the land ethic. I learned, too, about Gaylord Nelson and John Muir. Nelson, a former governor and U.S. senator who grew up in Clear Lake, WI, was the principal founder of Earth Day. Muir, the legendary conservationist who founded the Sierra Club, was born

in Scotland but immigrated with his family at age 11 to Portage, WI, where he spent his formative years before attending the University of Wisconsin.

I can't imagine a better place to hold the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference than Madison. Having the legacies of Leopold, Nelson and Muir—and the invigorating outdoors of Wisconsin—as backdrops makes this environment-friendly city the perfect setting for conservationists to gather to discuss the future of our national wildlife refuges.

Everything about this conference makes me feel right at home. 🦋

*Heather Jerue is a National Wildlife Refuge System Conserving the Future Fellow.*





Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

**Horicon National Wildlife Refuge** Wisconsin

## The Refuges of Wisconsin

**W**isconsin is home to 10 major National Wildlife Refuge System units.

Four of them are within a two-hour drive of Madison:

**Horicon National Wildlife Refuge**—The 21,000-acre refuge on the west branch of the Rock River encompasses the northern two-thirds of Horicon Marsh. The marsh, a shallow, peat-filled lakebed gouged out by the Wisconsin Glacier about 12,000 years ago, has been designated a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention.

**Necedah National Wildlife Refuge**—The 43,656-acre refuge includes the Rynearson Wetlands Observation Tower and Trail, where visitors can look for ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, whooping cranes, eagles, swans and other waterfowl; and the Lupine Loop Trail, where lupine and endangered Karner blue butterflies can be seen.

**Fox River National Wildlife Refuge**—1,054 acres of wetland and upland habitat along the Fox River in Marquette County.

**Leopold Wetland Management District**—A tribute to Aldo Leopold, the district manages more than 12,000 acres of waterfowl production areas in 17 southeastern Wisconsin counties. It also administers 45 conservation easements, totaling 3,000 acres, in 34 eastern Wisconsin counties.

The others are farther afield:

**Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge** (about 3 hours)—The 6,226-acre refuge along the Mississippi River is an isolated backwater that provides resting and feeding areas for waterfowl and other birds.


**Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge** (about 3 hours)—The 261-mile refuge is the longest river refuge in the Lower 48 states. It begins at the confluence of the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers near Wabasha, MN, ends near Rock Island, IL, and lies within four states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois.

**St. Croix Wetland Management District** (about 4.5 hours)—The district manages 41 waterfowl production areas

totaling 7,700 acres in eight counties and is responsible for 15 conservation easements that protect wildlife habitat on private land.

**Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge** (about 6 hours)—The refuge was established in 1999 as part of a wetland complex on Lake Superior, and it is still being created. Its purpose is to protect, restore and manage coastal wetland and spring-fed stream habitat. Up to 540 acres of coastal wetland in the Whittlesey Creek watershed will be acquired, and up to 1,260 acres will be protected through conservation easements.

**Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge** (no public use)—a 27-acre island refuge in Lake Michigan off the Door County Peninsula that is a breeding ground for native birds.

**Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge** (no public use)—three islands in Lake Michigan off the Door County Peninsula that are breeding grounds for native birds. 



Brett Billings/USFWS

## *Togiak National Wildlife Refuge* Alaska

# Thinking Like a Mountain

*Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife conservation in whose backyard and enormous shadow this conference is being held, was a prolific writer. Among his most insightful, influential and thought-provoking essays is "Thinking Like a Mountain," which was first published in A Sand County Almanac in 1949. It is reprinted here in entirety.*

**A** deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world. Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call. To the deer it is a reminder of the way of all flesh, to the pine a forecast of midnight scuffles and of blood upon the snow, to the coyote a promise of gleanings to come, to the cowman a threat of red ink

at the bank, to the hunter a challenge of fang against bullet. Yet behind these obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.

Those unable to decipher the hidden meaning know nevertheless that it is there, for it is felt in all wolf country, and distinguishes that country from all other land. It tingles in the spine of all who hear wolves by night, or who scan their tracks by day. Even without sight or sound of wolf, it is implicit in a hundred small events: the midnight whinny of a pack horse, the rattle of rolling rocks, the bound of a fleeing deer, the way shadows lie under the spruces. Only the ineducable tyro can fail to sense the presence or absence of wolves, or the fact that mountains have a secret opinion about them.

My own conviction on this score dates from the day I saw a wolf die. We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: It was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the foot of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: How to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and



Steve Chase/USFWS

## *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* Alaska

a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the

height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers.

I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. So also with cows. The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.

We all strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness. The deer strives with his supple legs, the cowman with trap and poison, the statesman with pen, the most of us with machines, votes, and dollars, but it all comes to the same thing: peace in our time. A measure of success in this is all well enough, and perhaps is a requisite to objective thinking, but too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men. 🦊

# Remembering Keystone: “It Made Us Talk to Each Other”

By Heather Dewar

For the 700 or so attendees at the Refuge System’s first national conference, in Keystone, CO, memories of the event remain vivid today. Most were refuge managers who scavenged spare parts for aging equipment and saw other managers only at occasional chips-and-beer get-togethers. A few were young biologists who rarely saw peers from other regions. For practically everyone, the five-day, October 1998 conference was packed with firsts:

Their first chance to shake the Interior Secretary’s hand ... to hobnob with guest speaker Ted Turner ... to meet distant colleagues who shared their vision of a Refuge System that is pivotal to global conservation.

“It really was the coming-out party,” says Mike Boylan, now a refuge supervisor in Alaska. In 1998, he was the Refuge System’s first chief of visitor services, deeply involved in the conference and its report. “All of a sudden within the Fish and Wildlife Service there was a sense of, ‘Whoa! The Refuge System is really stepping out!’ And we were.”

For some biologists, the conference was a chance to sell refuge managers on a new approach—managing for biological diversity, not just waterfowl, as many traditionally had, says Kathy Granillo, then a biologist in the Southwest regional office and now the refuge manager at Sevilleta Refuge, NM.

A team of 10 biologists had been meeting periodically since 1994, Granillo says, and had written a national biological assessment that made wildlife conservation the Refuge System’s official purpose. Another team, at headquarters, wrote “a pithy, strategic kind of document” with the same priorities, Boylan says. Both visions would inform the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

“There were some very visionary people in the national office” who, like the biologists’ group, “wanted to manage



Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

*Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Arizona*

for biological diversity,” Granillo says. The Keystone conference “was all about getting refuge managers involved in that process” because “it’s refuge managers who are actually going to have to implement this stuff.”

Deborah Holle, then and now refuge manager at Balcones Canyonlands Refuge, TX, sensed that a conglomeration of parts was being shaped into a whole at Keystone.

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*Even people who didn’t attend Keystone were shaped by it, says Jeff Rupert.*

Before the conference “we were very entrenched in certain things,” Holle says. “It wasn’t really a system. Everybody was doing their own thing.” Keystone helped change a culture in which refuges were independent almost to the point of isolation. “It made us talk to each other.”

Even people who didn’t attend Keystone were shaped by it, says Jeff Rupert,

then assigned to Lower Rio Grande Valley Refuge, TX. “I was a brand-new refuge biologist—in fact, so new that I barely even knew it was going on.” But in 2000, he helped plan the first national conference of refuge and regional biologists, a follow-up to Keystone.

“It was very inspiring,” says Rupert, now chief of the Refuge System’s Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning. “There were people thinking about these bigger things, applying science and biology consistently across the nation.”

Rupert believes Keystone “gave my generation of employees their definition of what the National Wildlife Refuge System is”—a place where “partnerships are essential, good science is the foundation of what we do, and the public has an important role to play.”



*Heather Dewar is a writer-editor in the Refuge System Branch of Communications.*

# “We’ve Become a Lot Better at Defining Our Goals”

By Heather Dewar

A year’s worth of work by dozens of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees went into *Fulfilling the Promise*, the 1999 post-Keystone conference report containing 42 recommendations for transforming the National Wildlife Refuge System. To help turn the printed words into action, Service leaders created a unique new position. It was officially titled the promises coordinator but was better known to co-workers as the promise keeper.

Larry Williams was managing Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi in 2004 when he was tapped to become the last of several promise keepers. After helping to implement *Fulfilling the Promise* recommendations for two years, in 2006 he recommended “sunsetting” the position. Williams, now chief of budget, performance and workforce for the Refuge System, felt most recommendations had been adopted as fully as they could be with the funds available. Service leaders agreed.

The first three recommendations, in the Wildlife and Habitat category, were “probably the most important,” Williams says, and enormous progress has been made on them. They called for setting goals for wildlife populations; establishing habitat priorities locally, regionally and nationally; and defining how each refuge and the Refuge System can contribute to biodiversity. Those recommendations are a major reason the Service created its systematic approach known as strategic habitat conservation.

“We’ve become a lot better at defining our goals,” Williams says. “We’re now a lot more strategic than we used to be”—especially in land acquisition, which is now guided by landscape-level planning and a comprehensive ranking system.

Refuge managers have eliminated many public uses that were inconsistent with wildlife conservation, and seasonally restricted other uses, Williams says. They also have forged more community partnerships, dramatically increasing the number of Friends groups to about 230.



Steve Hillebrand

*Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge* North Carolina

Law enforcement, which before Keystone was often a “collateral duty” for refuge managers, is “orders of magnitude better than it was 10 or 15 years ago,” Williams says. “Our law enforcement officers now get better equipment and better training”—and the majority of them are full time, which was not the case before Keystone.

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***Stepping Up to Leadership and the Advanced Leadership Development Program probably would not exist were it not for Keystone.***

Other improvements recommended by *Fulfilling the Promise* include leadership and career training. Stepping Up to Leadership (SUTL) for GS-11/12

employees and the Advanced Leadership Development Program (ALDP) for GS-13/14 employees probably would not exist were it not for Keystone. Neither would the series of Career Pathways Reports for employees in visitor services, realty, planning and refuge management, and one report under development for biologists.

One major work in progress is the new inventory and monitoring program. “There are places where we don’t even have a baseline assessment of our wildlife and habitat,” Williams says. “Last year, we got \$12 million to put in place the beginnings of our inventory and monitoring program.” To complete the inventory and monitoring program and establish the robust science programs the Refuge System needs would cost many millions more, he says.



*Heather Dewar is a writer-editor in the Refuge System Branch of Communications.*

## Carrying the Legacy Forward — continued from page 7

### Holly Gaboriault

Deputy refuge supervisor, Florida, Mississippi and South Alabama refuges

A computer crash recently reminded me of how dependent I have become on electronics. At some point in my career, I went from leading Youth Conservation Corps crews and conducting wildlife surveys to checking e-mail on my BlackBerry. I have learned to accept that, for many of us, electronics are now

as essential for our jobs as binoculars once were. So, I challenge all of us to embrace change when it is needed, to question it when it is not, and to reconnect with that passion we had for our jobs before BlackBerrys. My vision for the Refuge System is one in which each of us finds that perfect balance between getting our boots muddy for the resource and utilizing the new ways of doing business that emerge. 🦋



Greg Thompson/USFWS

**Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge** New Hampshire

## Bold Ideas Led to Visionary Document — continued from page 13

not visionary, but rather implementation steps. So we brought the vision document to the visionary level—to that 30,000-foot level of broad concepts that will truly guide the Refuge System for the next decade or so.”

In its very first recommendation, the document calls for an interagency team to develop a national collaborative conservation strategy that grows both the conservation estate and the conservation constituency. The document also:

- Calls for development of a research agenda for the Refuge System.
- Envisions that every wildlife refuge fully implement the principles of adaptive management. The Refuge

System recently established a national program to inventory and monitor wildlife and habitats with the goal of providing baseline information and informing planning and management decisions.

- Seeks improved communications to inform Americans about the benefits of the Refuge System’s conservation mission.
- Envisions a day when every wildlife refuge has a community partner. Today, 230 Refuge Friends organizations exist nationwide to work on behalf of individual refuges or, in the case of Alaska, for refuges statewide.
- Recommends development of an urban refuge program that evaluates

how existing refuges close to big cities—such as Minnesota Valley and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuges—have achieved excellence. The program also would work to expand partnerships with local parks and others to increase awareness of the Refuge System and the nation’s land ethic.

- Supports enhanced appropriate recreation, including updating relevant policies and infrastructure where needed.

The final vision document is scheduled to be available in October at [www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision). 🦋

## From the Secretary: Looking to the Future — continued from page 1

making the government the nation’s biggest land caretaker. How well the Refuge System manages the 150 million acres it stewards—including natural, cultural and historic resources—is critical to the physical and social well-being of the nation.

The lands we steward belong to the American people. That principle is at the heart of the *Conserving the Future* vision and the President’s America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative, available at <http://AmericasGreatOutdoors.gov>.

Both initiatives call for the federal government to be a better partner

and supporter of local conservation. We must maximize the conservation benefits of every taxpayer dollar, bring private landowners and a broad range of conservation partners into the picture and, ultimately, engage a new generation of Americans.

We must also enhance outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands, especially to involve young people who responded in great numbers to youth-specific AGO listening sessions held across the country. Doing so in partnership with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations—as noted in the vision document—is a great step.

There is no doubt that Americans are seeking a 21st-century approach to conservation. While we must be wise in how we spend taxpayer dollars, the nation also must be wise in investing in natural resources protection as an investment in the future. That future will be more secure thanks to the work that has gone into the *Conserving the Future* vision. The work and conversation are continuing in Madison, and will continue in the years ahead. 🦋

# Poetry From a Wisconsin Refuge

*Last fall, poet Kathleen M. Heideman was an artist-in-residence at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. She grew up on her family's dairy farm in Outagamie County, WI, and now lives in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She wrote these three poems during her Necedah Refuge residency.*

## What I Know About Whooping Cranes

What I know about Whooping Cranes isn't much, wouldn't fill a child's tiny spiral-bound notebook. Eastern Whooping Cranes – do they mate for life? Not even a blue-lined paragraph or two: We pushed them to the margins; they dwindled to a few. But we can learn; we can change. For I've heard wild cranes singing in sedges where I walked a brim-filled drainage ditch's edge thigh-deep in dew-soaked bluestem. A crimson sunrise dawned beyond Necedah Refuge, and burned the twin of every cloud into Rynearson Pond, feathering the edges with gold-leaf, calm, bronze lilies, blood-red ripples, gilt – an old Dutch Master's painting of dikes and reeds. All sound was stilled. Even scrub oak turned their brittle ears as deer will, listening with care. Glass-silence as the whooping cranes began their psalm, but instantly the air above Necedah writhed with fog! Mute fog-ghosts tossed diaphanous hair and whirled in joy and dissipated—a cue for every mute beak in the marsh to join the hymn in their own tongue: delicate wood-winds, harsh reeds, trumpeting and croaking, O cacophony of praise! Then wild cranes bugled once again, and a Great Blue Heron thrummed the gold-streaked water with her wings to say amen.

## Marsh: A Partial Menu \*

Look long enough, the wetlands offer something for every hunger: wild mint and walnuts a la carte, a bowl of cattail tuber, pike roe, translucent minnows, morels camouflaged in hardwood leaf litter, spicy bee-balm and clover honey in a hollowed oak hive, steamdried rosehip, sundried raspberry, smoky Labrador tea, an epithelial sweetness secreted under jackpine bark whose intricate galleries of bark beetles know no other planet; bark beetle grubs for the cuckoo, vast acres of rice-grass for acres of geese, and groves of tick-grass for the nervous mallard where whitetail deer leave haiku printed in the mud – offers sedge wren for the eagle, field mice for the weasel and owl, venison for the arrow, while some as-yet-unapprehended entrée awaits the fox who licks his black lips and sniffs the mud, who glows with hunger ruddy as an autumn oak, who rolls to practice-pounce upon his own tail but steps so softly even frogs don't notice his approach, as he slides his sharp nose like a letter opener between stems of grass and parts them, slipping through pages of sweet fern, down to read the slough with his teeth.

## The Odd Goose of Poetry

In nearly every sky-wide squadron of geese there's a straggler who falls behind, who falls away to one side of the slough, alone, or zigs when the others zag, maneuvering skyward. That's the odd goose, the poetry goose, the black sheep with a gimpy wing and a taste for adventure – she'll miss the way the other geese sing but she might meet up with some wolves tonight! Whatever comes, she won't make it to the Gulf of Mexico – some stranger fate awaits, some need to always *know*. She might join a circus down in Baraboo, let an old man tame her with cracked corn. She might write a psalm or a screed or a song. Tonight she waddles along the marsh's edge, scratching her thoughts into October mud. Overhead, the sensible geese are taking their leave as oak leaves abandon their oak trees—all but that one little leaf, I mean, who hangs by a stubborn, brittle stem, winging it. Curious what January will bring.



Courtney Celley/USFWS

## Necedah National Wildlife Refuge Wisconsin

\*—"Marsh: A Partial Menu" was published in Fox Cry Review (University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley), May 2011.



# RefugeUpdate

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## A Look Back ... Sam Hamilton

At age five, Sam Hamilton caught his first fish on Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, not far from his hometown of Starkville, MS. A decade later, he learned to band ducks and build waterfowl pens as a Youth Conservation Corps employee at Noxubee Refuge.

Hamilton continued to visit Noxubee Refuge during his 12 years as Southeast regional director and in the single year he was Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, before his untimely death in 2010. Visits typically coincided with football games at his alma mater, Mississippi State University.


With an MSU bulldog on his desk and football analogies in his conversation, Hamilton often acted like a coach, recalls Christine Eustis, deputy assistant director for external affairs, who was mentored by him in Atlanta. “Sam had a genuine passion and love for the Refuge System. He was like a kid in a candy store when he talked about refuges, and he always kept that enthusiasm. The field energized him.”

Pacific regional director Robyn Thorson says that Hamilton always saw national policies and politics through the lens of the field. He spoke of the need for refuges to “celebrate their legacy and focus on their future,” says Thorson, who describes Hamilton as an early champion of a new vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 2009 testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Hamilton used phrases that could easily appear in the new vision. He spoke of devoting his 30-year Service career to “building collaborative partnerships that allow for the development of ideas and the creation of solutions that are beyond what any one entity could have achieved or even envisioned.” And he believed that climate change would be the “transformational conservation challenge of our time.”



Sam Hamilton was a strong supporter of a renewed vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System. (Tom MacKenzie/USFWS)

Refuge System deputy chief Jim Kurth agrees that Hamilton strongly supported a vision to succeed the *Fulfilling the Promise* document “and gave the green light to begin discussions with the entire Service and the broader conservation community about our shared future. We are grateful to him. We missed him tremendously during this journey.” 

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