

Friends Forward



Winter 2011

National Wildlife Refuge System
www.fws.gov/refuges

From the Chief A Community of Ideas



Greg Siekaniec

I love reading the comments posted on the *Conserving the Future Web* site (www.americaswildlife.org) where people now can air their grand ideas in a “community of

ideas,” participate in topic-specific groups or read and comment on the full vision document. Many of the comments have been eloquent. They’re all insightful and thought provoking. The differences of opinion may be the best part. After all, debate is healthy.

The ongoing conversation highlights something especially interesting: The online discussion crosses an experience continuum of Refuge Friends and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, from those new to the world of national wildlife refuges to those you might call “old hands.”

The Web site has brought together people who are different ages, from far flung parts of the country – people who might not otherwise have met or talked about the single issue that always brings us together: conservation.

You can read the cohesive vision document, the culmination of the work and ideas of more than 70 members of five Core Teams. The team wrote the individual documents that fed into this one piece. We are taking comments until Earth Day, April 22 – lots of time for

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Debbie McCrossky

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is studying the possibility of creating an Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area in Florida. See page 3.

Make Your Voice Heard on Refuge System’s Future

Earth Day, April 22, merits special attention this year. That is the last day for Refuge Friends, partners and others to comment on the *Conserving the Future* vision document before it goes to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director and other leaders within the Directorate. The vision document will guide the direction of the Refuge System for the next decade or so.

Comments can be made on the *Conserving the Future* Web site, www.americaswildlife.org, recently redesigned and continuously monitored by the Refuge System and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, partners in the project.

The vision document carries the ideas assembled by five Core Teams composed of about 70 Service employees. It presents ideas on how to make the Refuge System more relevant to a growing America that is becoming more urbanized, more ethnically and culturally diverse, and older even as it faces accelerating climate change and such attendant environmental stressors as the growth of invasive species and the increasing demand for water.

The document devotes considerable space to a range of scientific issues as well as recommendations for organizational changes. It also delves into ways to enhance leadership programs as the Refuge System faces

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New Director Nominated for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service




Dan Ashe

Dan Ashe has been nominated as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Ashe would succeed Sam Hamilton, who died last February. Rowan Gould has served as Acting Director since February 2010.

Ashe has served as the Service's deputy director since August 2009. From 2003 to 2009, he was the science advisor to the Director with broad responsibility to provide counsel and leadership in developing the agency's scientific policy and scientific applications for resource management. Ashe served as the Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System from 1998 to 2003.

Ashe joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1995 as assistant director

for external affairs and also worked for the former Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries in the U.S. House of Representatives. Ashe has a bachelor of science in biological sciences from the Florida State University and a graduate degree in marine affairs from the University of Washington. 

Outdoor Classroom Projects Win Funding

Fifteen projects that promote the use of national wildlife refuges as outdoor classrooms will receive funding this year from the Nature of Learning program, a federal-private consortium co-sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge System. Winners will share about \$130,000 in grants from the program, open to schools and nonprofit groups, including Friends organizations.

Among this year's grant winners are:

- Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District in Minnesota, for its plan to develop a wetland and grassland ecological laboratory at Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota.
- SEWEE Association's Earth Stewards program, which brings 750 students, K-12, to Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina for a water quality testing project to gauge the impact of climate change on freshwater marsh habitats.



Kindergartners at the William C. Longstreth Elementary School in Philadelphia mix soil to start plants destined for a new butterfly garden at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. A Nature of Learning grant helped fund the Friends project.

- Friends of the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum in Pennsylvania, for its plan to develop a kindergarten pollinator interpretive garden. This project will include activities from Project Budburst (www.budburst.ucar.edu/)

as well as eight refuge field trips.

Under the grant program, new projects are eligible for start-up grants of up to \$10,000. Existing programs can apply for follow-up grants of up to \$5,000 a year. This year's grant application deadline is April 1; projects should focus on citizen science and climate change. Friends organizations are encouraged to apply. More information is

available at www.nfwf.org/natureoflearning. For additional information, contact Deborah Moore at deborah_moore@fws.gov. 

A New Refuge is Born

Establishing a new national wildlife refuge is often a years-long process that can be initiated by Congress, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or even citizen groups. In all cases, the process involves extensive study and public input.

Refuge System conservation planners write a Preliminary Project Proposal (PPP), which is reviewed by the Service Director to ensure the project meets national management objectives and priorities for wildlife habitat.

The detailed planning process that follows culminates in a Land Protection Plan (LPP) that is developed with public participation and includes an environmental assessment. States and tribes are always invited to participate in the development of both PPPs and LPPs. If Congress authorizes a refuge expansion or an addition to the Refuge System, only the detailed planning process is set in motion.



Greg Thompson


Establishment of the new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, PA, was a goal of the Friends of Cherry Valley as far back as 2003.

The Service Director uses the LPP to decide whether to approve a project. If the Director signs the proposal, it becomes an “authorized” refuge. A new refuge is not established until the

first parcel is bought or transferred to the Department of the Interior. The National Wildlife Refuge System now includes 553 refuges plus other units, such as wetland management districts.

In the case of a 2010 addition to the Refuge System – Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Pennsylvania – establishment of a refuge was a goal of the Friends of Cherry Valley as far back as 2003.

The first 185 acres were purchased in October 2010 with money appropriated by Congress from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Friends president Debra Schuler considers that parcel a doorway to the entire area because it includes the headwaters of Cherry Creek as well as established trails and woodlands. The refuge’s acquisition boundary spans more than 20,000 acres.

Now the Friends are writing new goals for their organization centered on conservation/preservation, partnerships and educating adjacent landowners about conservation. 

Possible Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with private landowners, conservation groups and federal, tribal, state and local agencies to develop a new national wildlife refuge and conservation area to preserve the community’s ranching heritage and conserve the headwaters and fish and wildlife of the Everglades.

The Service, along with its partners, is conducting a preliminary study to establish a new National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area of approximately 150,000 acres of


important environmental and cultural landscapes in the Kissimmee River Valley south of Orlando.

Secretary Salazar said, “The partnerships being formed would protect and improve water quality north of Lake Okeechobee, restore wetlands, and connect existing conservation lands and important wildlife corridors to support the greater Everglades restoration effort.”

The proposed area includes 50,000 acres for potential purchase and an additional 100,000 acres that could be protected through conservation

easements and cooperative agreements, keeping the land in private ownership. The Service will only work with willing sellers to purchase land rights.

In addition to improving water quality, the proposed conservation area and refuge would protect important habitat for 88 federal and state listed species, including the Florida panther, Florida black bear, whooping crane, Everglade snail kite and the Eastern indigo snake.

Learn more by visiting www.fws.gov/southeast/greataeverglades. 



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MIDWAY ATOLL The Race is On

What will get there first — the marine debris or the cleanup crew?

So far the debris is winning, as evidenced by the nearly 20,000 pounds of debris collected in 2008 alone. But the Friends of Midway Atoll (FOMA) hope a new online game will raise public awareness and promote better stewardship. Marine debris, from plastic bags to cigarette lighters, toothbrushes and bottle caps, has been found in the stomachs of Laysan albatross nesting on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

Located on the FOMA Web site (www.friendsofmidway.org/game/game.htm), Race to Midway Atoll involves two teams (debris and cleanup crew) competing to answer questions about albatross, monk seals, green sea turtles, ocean currents and marine garbage. The game was developed with a \$100,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with matching funds from Dow Chemical Company. Grant funds are also being used to monitor, identify and remove the debris.

Marine consultant Seba Sheavly designed the game to call attention to marine debris caused “not from activities on Midway but transported there by currents.” Throughout the game’s development, Friends



Susan White

A new online game is intended to build awareness about the growing problem of ocean debris.

members provided feedback; members’ children tested the game. The game Web site includes fact sheets, maps and other resources for teachers and parents.

Some Friends have volunteered on Midway Atoll to help collect and monitor debris. Refuge biologist John Klavitter led the development of the monitoring and waste removal strategies.

FOMA president Darlene Moegerle says the project “is just a piece of the effort to educate people about being

environmentally responsible. Hopefully we can publish the findings to a national audience and use them to educate Congress about the need to address this problem.”

MISSISSIPPI

Run Like a Bear, Hang Like a Bat

Pretend you are a bear and get down on your hands and knees. Now how fast can you walk? The Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge installed 14 activity stations along the newly extended Magnolia National Recreation Trail, giving youngsters a chance to waddle like a duck, jump like a grasshopper, hang like a bat and run like a bear. A special certificate awaits those who complete the new Animal Olympics.

Each station on the self-guided trail includes a sign in the shape of a particular animal, one fact about the animal and a suggestion to imitate a behavior of that animal. The stations stretch for about a quarter mile from refuge headquarters and are featured on all recreational maps offered to the public. St. Catherine Creek Refuge has also inaugurated



USFWS

Children hang like bats at the new bat station on Magnolia National Recreation Trail at St. Catherine Creek Refuge, MS.

a new fishing pier, where children scoop up frogs, tadpoles and other pond critters at a Discovery Station.

During last fall's grand opening for the newly extended trail and the fishing pier, the Friends also offered their Black Bear Obstacle Course. Members set up stations representing a year in the life of a bear: one station includes berries hanging from a tree, another has a den, and one station includes a simulated highway where bears try to cross the road safely. Children wear a fur vest as they make their way around the stations with Friends who provide explanations. At the end of the course, children get a bear paw stamp on their hand and a black bear activity sheet to take home.

NEW JERSEY Refuge Readers

By Kathy Woodward

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey were delighted when a member suggested forming an environmental book group, Refuge Readers. Monthly meetings are facilitated by different participants.

In celebration of Great Swamp's 50th anniversary in 2010, the group read *Saving Great Swamp* by Cam Cavanaugh, detailing the citizen effort that created the refuge. The group was charmed by Mardy Murie's renowned *Two in the Far North*, tracing the creation of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Other selections included two New Jersey authors: Pete Dunne's *Bayshore Summer* and John McPhee's classic, *Pine Barrens*. Mary Oliver's nature poetry was the focus of one meeting. The Friends Board approved a small budget to purchase several copies of each book for loan.

The book group meets at the visitor center on Friday afternoons to help draw more people to the center.

Book selections are posted about two months in advance, both on a notice board at the visitor center and in the monthly events postcard sent to members. Friends plan to send a press release to the local newspaper and open the discussions to the general public.


NEW MEXICO Through the Eyes of Children

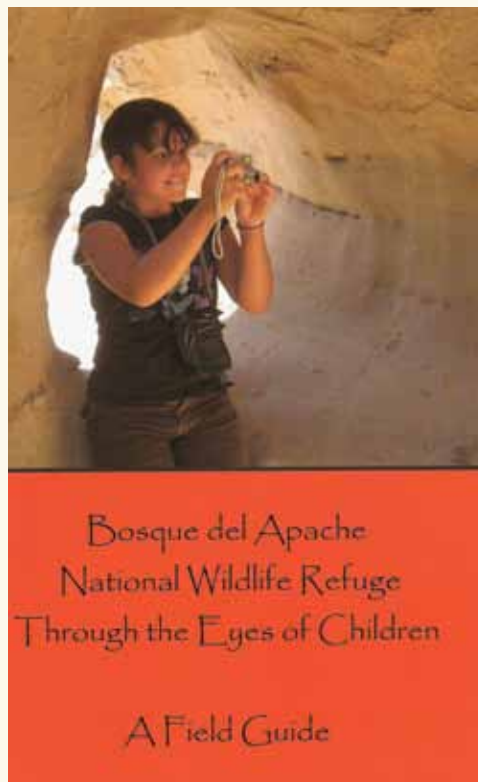
Creating a field guide to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge was a natural extension of the Friends Mapping the Rio Watershed Education Project, in which children from San Antonio Elementary School have been learning about water, ecology, restoration, pollution and

the National Wildlife Refuge System for the past five years. The Friends purchased three digital cameras and several field journals, and worked with an eager group of fourth and fifth graders to produce *Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge Through the Eyes of Children: A Field Guide*.

This full-color, 106-page book is the culmination of a year-long, intensive project to document, photograph and otherwise describe the refuge from a child's perspective. As an outreach tool, the book is like a visitor center in your pocket. It summarizes refuge history and resources, highlights particular species, describes management techniques, and presents tidbits of information. Dozens of photos and quotes from the children are strikingly poetic and insightful.

Watershed education director Alexis Rykken explained, "We started our work in September when the whole refuge is golden. Every Tuesday the big yellow school bus rumbled to a stop in the parking lot . . . We placed a great deal of emphasis on behavior and ethics and walking with awareness. The kids took their work seriously . . . Their voices will guide us into the future."

The field guide is available for \$12.95 at the Bosque Nature Store and through the Friends online store (www.friendsofthebosque.org); proceeds benefit refuge outreach and education programs. 



Friends of the Bosque provided resources to help fourth and fifth graders produce a field guide to Bosque del Apache Refuge.

Chiefs Corner—Continued from page 1

everyone who cares about the Refuge System to help set the direction for the next decade or so.

We hope you will encourage others – whether Refuge Friends or people who are simply concerned about conservation – to bring their opinions to the Web site. Working with the National

Wildlife Refuge Association, we have made the site easy to use and the comment area simple to find.

Don't hold back when you visit the "Your Bold Ideas" section. No idea is too far out. No new way of doing business should be squelched before it is articulated. Here, you can go wild intellectually.

In fact, the Web site is probably the most unbridled communications avenue I have seen in my 25 years of working for the federal government. Take advantage of it. Invite your Refuge Friends and partners to participate. We want to hear everyone's most insightful opinions. Keep the eloquence coming.


Roads and Trails

Four transportation projects will provide safer and more appealing bicycle and pedestrian access to national wildlife refuges in 2011:

Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia – A three-mile bike/pedestrian trail along an abandoned rail line runs from US Route 13 to the refuge visitor center and also connects to Cape Kiptopeke State Park. The \$363,000 project was funded by the Virginia Department of Transportation, Northampton County and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia – A .5 mile bike/pedestrian connection between the refuge entrance and the Town of Chincoteague traffic circle is being funded through the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program, under the Federal Transit Administration.

National Elk Refuge, Wyoming – The first five miles of a bike/pedestrian trail that will one day connect the town of Jackson with Jenny Lake in Grand Teton National Park opens in May. The Sarbanes Program paid \$3 million for 4.2 miles of the graded trail. The remaining mile was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act through the State of Wyoming and Teton County. Once complete, the trail will provide 20 miles of off-road pathway between the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Interagency Visitor Center in Jackson and the Jenny Lake Visitor Center.

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma – The first phase of a \$1 million project, slated for completion in 2011, will widen two miles of road to the refuge entrance which will eventually intersect with the off-road Cache Fitness Trail. 

Calendar

March 14

108th Birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System

April 1

Deadline for Nature of Learning grants (see page 2)

April 22

Earth Day – deadline for public comments on National Wildlife Refuge System vision statement at www.americaswildlife.org

May 14

International Migratory Bird Day

Make Your Voice Heard on Refuge System's Future—Continued from page 1

the possibility that 20 percent of its workforce could retire in the next five years or so.


"The viewpoints of our Refuge Friends are critical," said Refuge System Chief Greg Siekaniec.

"There are probably no stakeholders closer to the Refuge System than the members of our 230 Friends organizations. We take very seriously what they say."

The Director will have about 60 days to review the vision document before it is prepared for the *Conserving the Future* conference in Madison, WI, in mid-July.

Over the coming months before the July conference, the Web site will be continuously updated with the latest news about the vision process and the conference. "The redesign has made the Web site more intuitive,

easier to use in every way," said Siekaniec.

"The Refuge System has been excited to see people follow on the Web site as the vision document was being assembled. Many people have asked me when they should comment," said Siekaniec. "The answer is easy: the time is now." 

Trails and Transit

A new federal report has highlighted 10 national wildlife refuges with strong connections to public transit and six more with a high potential for developing such connections. The John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, part of the Department of Transportation evaluated transit and trail connections at 142 refuges.

More than 80 percent of Americans lives in urban or suburban areas. One strategy to connect this increasingly urban population to the mission of the Refuge System is improved public transit to refuges.

Among the strongest examples of good public transit access cited by the Volpe Center are:

- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, where a paved trail connects a light rail station to the refuge visitor center;

- San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA, where a shuttle runs regularly between a trolley station/ bus stop and a privately operated nature center on the refuge; and
- John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, PA, which is close to three bus routes and two rail transit routes.

The Volpe Center report concluded that such refuges as Shiawassee, MI, Edwin B. Forsythe, NJ, and Kealia Pond, HI, could benefit greatly from enhanced connections to existing transit services.


The report also identified trails that connect refuges to nearby urban areas. The 24-mile Bayshore Bikeway, for example, loops around San Diego Bay and connects with units of the San Diego Refuge. Assabet River Refuge, MA, is located along the Assabet River Rail Trail, and J. N. "Ding" Darling Refuge, FL,



Minnesota Valley National

A light rail train in Minneapolis, MN, stops close to the visitor center at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

benefits from more than 26 miles of paved bike trails on Sanibel Island.

The Volpe Center report recommends that refuges work with transit agencies, Friends groups, local governments and private developers to plan and promote non-motorized trail networks and transit routes – including bicycling – to bring more visitors to refuges. 

Growing a Festival

By Carolyn Uyemura

The Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon received a \$60,000 grant from the Washington County Visitors Association to help plan a three-day, county-wide songbird festival May 13-15. The Friends have put on one-day festivals for the past 14 years.

The Visitors Association hired a professional event planning company to help with overall guidance and make sure we don't miss any important steps in carrying out this ambitious project.

Events are being planned in various county venues with the aim of keeping visitors busy for



Eric Vogt


Visitors to the newly expanded Tualatin River Songbird Festival may see spotted towhees.

three days. There will be nature photography workshops, a bike ride, river paddles, native basketry and writing workshops, art and music, a winemaker's dinner and appearances by Teddy Roosevelt himself!

We are encouraging other nature and recreational organizations in the county to host their own events in conjunction with ours.

Letterhead and a logo have been designed, and there will be a dedicated Web site, with additional information at www.friendsoftualatinrefuge.org.

A major focus of Tualatin Refuge is outreach. The expanded festival will be an opportunity to bring more people into nature.


Carolyn Uyemura is a member of the Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge. 

Q&A send us your questions

FAQ: What are some good ways to get to know refuge staff?

- Solicit “wish lists” from all staff members for areas in which they need help. Carefully choose projects the Friends can realistically accomplish.
- Run an “ad” in the Friends newsletter if the refuge needs specific volunteers-“mowers wanted,” “part-time carpenter needed,” “office help needed two days a month.”
- Offer staff “grants” of a specific dollar amount from the Friends

- for an unfunded project, especially work that would involve volunteers.
- Write up a staff-volunteer project for the Friends newsletter or even a local newspaper. Thanks and praise are always welcome!
- Host a Staff Appreciation Day. Volunteers and Friends might provide a lunch or a dinner and invite spouses and children.
- Interview new staff for a Friends newsletter/local newspaper article.
- Once a year, include a picture of the staff in the Friends newsletter, with names and positions.
- Talk the language. Ask the refuge manager to see a copy of the RAPP (Refuge Annual Performance Plan) and CCP (Comprehensive Conservation Plan), which is often available on the refuge Web site. Ask a staff member to discuss these

- documents at a Friends meeting and discuss ways Friends can assist in achieving goals.
- Recommend that staff members host a table at the annual volunteer recognition event.
- Invite staff to be members of the Friends group and keep staff in the know by circulating your Friends newsletter and electronic media to them.
- Jointly host an annual Friends and Neighbors Picnic attended by refuge neighbors, Friends and staff.
- Be available in a crisis. Who better to help when things go wrong than Friends? 


Compiled by Kathy Woodward, Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, NJ

The Book Shelf



George Fenwick, Michael Parr and Daniel Lebbin of the American Bird Conservancy have co-authored *The American Bird Conservancy Guide to Bird Conservation*, “showing that many species we manage for in the Refuge System spend half their year in Central and South America. On top of that, it recognizes how important our refuges are to so many individual species,” says Larry Williams, chief of the Refuge System

Division of Budget, Performance and Workforce. The 456-page book is filled with color photos and summarizes threats and needed conservation actions for each species.

Mardy Murie Did! Grandmother of Conservation introduces a conservation icon to young children through the poetry of author Jequita Potts McDaniel and expressive illustrations of John Van Zyle. From Murie’s love of all that is wild to her nationally-recognized efforts to preserve wild lands, children learn that it is indeed possible for one person to make a difference. 

FriendsForward

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