

# Friends Forward



Fall 2010

National Wildlife Refuge System  
www.fws.gov/refuges

## From the Chief Celebrating a Dream



Greg Siekaniec

There is a host of momentous years in the annals of conservation – including, of course, 1903, when the National Wildlife Refuge System was established. Here are two years

whose significance you may not know: 1960 and 1980.

On December 6, 1960, the Arctic and Izembek National Wildlife Refuges were established. On December 2, 1960, President Jimmy Carter signed into law the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA.

With eight million of its 19.3 million acres designated as wilderness, the Arctic Refuge supports a greater variety of plant and animal life than any other protected area in the Arctic Circle. Three rivers – Sheenjek, Wind and Ivishak – are designated Wild Rivers. Here, the American frontier can be experienced on an epic scale. Millions of people find inspiration in just knowing that this wild piece of America exists.

At about 311,000 acres in a state that has nearly 77 million acres of Refuge System land, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is the smallest wildlife refuge in Alaska. At its heart are the 150-square-mile Izembek Lagoon and associated state-owned tide lands. Izembek Refuge's first manager, Sea Otter Jones, worked tirelessly to protect

*Continued on page 8*

## Vision Conference: Historic Milestone in Refuge System History



Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center

*The National Wildlife Refuge System Vision Conference will be held in July 2011 at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, WI.*

As many as 20 percent of the approximately 1,200 people expected to attend the mid-July 2011 Vision Conference in Madison, WI, will be Refuge System Friends and partners – people whose voices are essential as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service builds a new strategic vision and direction for the Refuge System that also recognizes the conservation legacy of the past 100 years. Thousands more around the country will be brought into the process virtually – through a host of cutting-edge technologies that will make this conference the “greenest” in Service history.

The conference will be hosted primarily at the Monona Terrace and Community and Convention Center in Madison, where Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife ecology, became the University of Wisconsin's first professor of game management in the late 1920s. The final vision document will guide the Refuge System for the next decade or so, raise its profile, and develop new conservation leaders.

While Service employees will be largely responsible for carrying out the new vision, the Service is seeking the insights of Refuge Friends right at the start. The first step revolves

*Continued on page 8*

## Service Releases Final Climate Change Strategy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released its final strategic plan on climate change, which will guide the agency's efforts to respond to the unprecedented threat posed by global warming.

The plan, titled "Rising to the Urgent Challenge: Strategic Plan for Responding to Accelerating Climate Change," provides a framework within which the Service will work as part of the conservation community to help ensure the sustainability of fish, wildlife, plants and habitats in the face of accelerating climate change. It is an integral part of an overarching Department of the Interior (DOI) strategy.

"The growing impacts from climate change on wildlife, plants, and watersheds call for a coordinated and strategic response from the Department and its bureaus," says Tom Strickland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for fish and wildlife and parks. "The Service's plan is both a call to arms and a clear roadmap for

action. It is firmly rooted in sound science, an adaptive, landscape-scale conservation approach, and collaboration with partners."

Service Acting Director Rowan Gould says the strategy has been shaped by more than 18 months of intensive work and input from employees, partners and the public submitted during a two-month comment period last fall.

"That input has given focus and clarity to the plan's discussion of key climate adaptation efforts such as a National Fish and Wildlife Climate Adaptation Strategy, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and species and habitat vulnerability assessments," Gould says. "Support from our partners – and the American public – is critical, because climate change is a challenge that is too large for any one agency, department, or government to tackle alone."

The plan has three key elements:

- **Adaptation** – helping to reduce the impacts of climate change

on fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats;

- **Mitigation** – taking actions to reduce greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere; and
- **Engagement** – reaching out to Service employees, local, national and international partners in the public and private sectors, key constituencies and stakeholders and the broader citizenry of this country to join forces and seek solutions to the challenges posed by climate change to fish and wildlife conservation.

The Service's plan commits the agency to be a leader in addressing the conservation challenges of a changing climate. An accompanying action plan details specific steps the Service is taking now and during the next five years to implement the plan. For more information, go to: [www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/index.html). 🦋

## Senate Resolution Designates Refuge Week

The U.S. Senate passed a resolution designating October 10-16 as National Wildlife Refuge Week. The resolution, introduced by Sen. Ted Kaufman of Delaware showcases the remarkable lands and waters of the Refuge System, and emphasizes their value to local communities and the vital support provided by refuge Friends groups and volunteers.

The Senate resolution was co-sponsored by Sens. Mike Crapo, ID, Benjamin L. Cardin, MD, Robert P. Casey Jr., PA, Patty Murray, WA, Blanche Lincoln, AR, Mary Landrieu, LA, Roland W. Burris, IL, Mark Udall, CO, Jeff Bingaman, NM,



John Kerry, MA, Jeanne Shaheen, NH, Dianne Feinstein, CA, Michael Bennet, CO, Russ Feingold, WI, Maria Cantwell, WA, Bob Corker, TN, Jack Reed, RI, Tom Udall, NM, Mark Pryor, AR, Debbie Stabenow, MI, Sheldon Whitehouse, RI, Daniel Inouye, HI, Carl Levin, MI, Lamar

Alexander, TN, and Daniel Akaka, HI.

The resolution "recognizes the importance of national wildlife refuges to wildlife conservation and the protection of imperiled species and ecosystems" and "reaffirms the support of the Senate for wildlife conservation and the National Wildlife Refuge System." Additionally, the resolution commends the more than 39,000 volunteers and Friends organizations that contribute nearly 1.4 million hours annually — the equivalent of 665 full-time employees — to the betterment of national wildlife refuges. 🦋

# Still Time to Speak Up

People still have time to comment and offer suggestions online about conservation as part of President Obama's national dialogue on the subject, launched in April with a White House conference. In-person listening sessions have been held around the country.

Suggestions can be posted online (<http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/>) on these issues:

- **Challenges** – What obstacles exist to achieving your goals for conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
- **What Works** – Share your thoughts and ideas on effective strategies for conservation, recreation and reconnecting people to the outdoors.
- **Federal Government Role** – How can the federal government be a

more effective partner in helping to achieve conservation, recreation or reconnecting people to the outdoors?

- **Tools** – What additional tools and resources would help your efforts be even more successful?

Thousands of comments collected will be considered by six teams of representatives from the Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Education, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The lead agency – the Council on Environmental Quality – is to present a report to the White House before year's end, offering recommendations on recreation, jobs (especially youth employment and volunteering), environmental education, private lands, federal land management and science.

## Join the Conversation

Both online and at the public listening sessions, people often offered examples of favorite projects in their communities. Federal officials would like to see more overarching ideas about how to improve efficiency and collaboration to meet conservation challenges.

One challenge mentioned repeatedly was access to National Wildlife Refuges and other outdoor spaces, including the need to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rail links and greenways. Education was another common theme, with suggestions that all sixth graders spend a week at an outdoor school or develop schoolyard habitats.

Here is a sampling of comments:

- “Make sure we have another generation ready and waiting to take over as stewards of our lands.”
- “We need to create more parks, trails and open space in proximity to urban areas.”
- “We must adopt a sustainable watershed strategy that protects high value fish and wildlife habitat.”
- “We must bring new voices into conservation.”

For more information or to share your stories and photos, go to [www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/](http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/). 



Nicholas A. Tonelli

*The public is asked to engage in a national dialogue about conserving America's Great Outdoors (Erie National Wildlife Refuge, PA).*



# from friend to friend

share your  
success  
stories

## NEW JERSEY

### Celebrate Urban Birds

Would you like your pasta with chopsticks, a toothpick or a spoon? The choice was presented to children at three urban schools in southern New Jersey to help them understand why the shape of a beak might be related to what a particular bird eats. About 85 students from first through fifth grade participated.

Responding to teachers' requests, the Friends of Forsythe Environmental Education Committee used the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Celebrate Urban Birds program to introduce city kids to birds.

The youngsters built bird feeders out of orange juice containers (and took home a starter bag of seed), planted sunflower seeds and created their own field guides. Their watercolor paintings of birds were showcased at the local public library. They studied three birds at each of five meetings so they could identify 15 local species. Friend Les Murray recalls one fourth grader who ran into the room shouting, "Mr. Les, I saw a mourning dove on the way to school."

After reporting their "citizen science" observations to the Cornell Lab, each class had a Celebrate Urban Birds party. Children received certificates from the Cornell Lab and backpacks from the Friends with a notebook, pencil and birding fact guide.

The Cornell Lab provided a \$500 mini-grant to the Friends and

featured the project online at [www.celebrateurbanbirds.org](http://www.celebrateurbanbirds.org), calling it an "inspiring adventure for students and instructors."

## TENNESSEE

### Holding a Wild Duck

"To turn someone on to the outdoors, there is nothing like having something wild your hand... its beating heart, looking in your eye. Everyone who leaves this event loves the refuge."

So says Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge ranger Joan Stevens in describing one of several special



Joan Stevens/USFWS

Friends and families at Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge band wood ducks during a member appreciation and recruitment event.

appreciation events held for Friends members. Since 2006, Friends have been invited to help band wood ducks on one summer evening.

This year, 75 Friends helped band or catalog 224 ducks, including 135 recaptured ducks. Each band provides the age of the duck and the location where it was originally banded. The information is used to help set hunting seasons and bag limits and gather more information about the ducks' migration patterns.

Ducks enter a trap baited with corn. Then, about 50 people enter the trap and walk in a line across the back to herd the ducks into smaller pens, where children and adults can pick up a single duck and take it to a biologist for banding.

About 15 staff and knowledgeable volunteers organize the event. "It's a big time commitment," says Stevens, "but no other event turns people on to the refuge more than this."

Friends president Dan Dziekonski says the event is a recruiting draw as well, with eight to 10 new families signed up as Friends members each year. "For many, including adults, it's the first time they have ever held a wild bird in their hands," says Dziekonski, "Many grandparents bring their grand kids to introduce them to wildlife and the outdoors."

## ALASKA

### Reaching Way Out

In an effort to attract members who visit the far reaches of the state, the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges – which represents all 16 wildlife refuges in the state – restored a live video link from the cliffs of St. Lazaria Island to two interpretive exhibits in Sitka. More than 560,000 seabirds are estimated to inhabit the island, one of nine monitoring sites on Alaska Maritime National Wildlife

Jason Sodergren



*Konrad Schaad, of Seemore Wildlife Systems, repairs a damaged video camera on a rocky cliff on St. Lazaria Island in Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.*

Refuge. About 125,000 people, including cruise ship tourists, visit the exhibits every summer.

The camera had been installed seven years ago but had ceased operation due to curious gulls that pecked at the installation and cables. Repairing the camera was a major challenge. At least eight Friends, volunteers and refuge staff hauled equipment up steep ridges on a rocky overhang 300 feet above the beach. "I got myself into more than I expected," said electrical engineer and Friends board member Jason Sodergren. "But we saw success back in Sitka. We had a good video feed of the murre colony and the ability to control the cameras. And we had audio from the microphone near the colony."

More than 100 people, including many children, attended a celebration in July, promoted widely through the Rotary Club, the local public radio station and personal invitations to local conservation and birding groups. A Sitka youth, shown measuring the length of seabird silhouettes, made the front page of the local paper. Refuge biologist Leslie Slater used a computer simulation game to show how biologists estimate bird populations.

Tlinget elder Duck Didrickson told of hunting eggs around St. Lazaria Island as a boy. And with the new live video feed, everyone observed hundreds of murre. About a dozen Sitka residents became members of the Friends.

The camera must be removed during

the rugged winter but Sodergren hopes that the Friends will be able to stream the video onto their Web site – perhaps even by next spring, when the camera will be returned to its precarious perch.

## MARYLAND Wild Goose Chase

Some 750 bicycle riding ladies toured Maryland's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in October for the third annual, non-competitive Wild Goose Chase, the brainchild of Georgena Terry. Proceeds from the Wild Goose Chase (for which riders pay a \$55 entry fee) have generated \$43,000 in the first two years for the Friends of Blackwater; another \$35,000 is expected this year.

Terry lives in upstate New York and is an active member of the

Friends of Montezuma Refuge; she visits family near Blackwater Refuge and is a passionate supporter. She is also founder and part-owner of Terry Precision Cycling, which sponsors the Wild Goose Chase and donated a bicycle rack to Blackwater Refuge.

Blackwater Friend Peggy Tillier says funds from the tour have been used to build boardwalks on two trails and purchase a spotting scope and interpretive panels. Refuge manager Suzanne Baird says this year's donation will help fund a large wetland enhancement project.

Bikers choose to ride 18, 25, 40 or 62 miles. Kayak tours and tours of historical buildings in the area are offered the day before. Post-ride offerings include door prizes, food and even a masseuse, all generating revenue for the town of Cambridge, MD.

Parking and other amenities are set up in a neighboring high school parking lot, with the route carefully mapped out to avoid disturbing wildlife. "It's beautiful the whole time," says Terry. "There is everything from marsh to deciduous trees and evergreen forests. Everywhere you look you see a bald eagle."

"We cannot imagine a more generous and loyal supporter," says Tillier. 



*The Wild Goose Chase draws more than 700 women bicyclists for a tour of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.*

Georgena Terry

# National Wildlife Refuge System Names New Leaders

Three new chiefs taking the helm of divisions within the Refuge System's Washington Office all rose through the ranks: Jeff Rupert, Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning; Cynthia Martinez, Division of Visitor Services and Communication; and James L. Hall, Division of Refuge Law Enforcement.

**Jeff Rupert**, formerly manager of Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, OK, grew up in Kearney, MO.

Rupert recalls his amazement when he first set foot on Quivera National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas as an undergraduate. "Up to that point I had no idea there was a National

Wildlife Refuge System. I can vividly remember thinking, 'Wow, you can have a job doing this. Incredible.'"

**Cynthia Martinez**, former manager for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex, NV, is a fifth-generation New Mexican. She began her 16-year Service career in the Student Conservation Education Program (SCEP), working as an assistant contaminants specialist in the Phoenix, AZ, Ecological Services Field Office. She was on the board of directors for the Southern Nevada Agency Partnership ([www.snap.gov](http://www.snap.gov)), which coordinates volunteer, educational

and networking opportunities among several federal agencies.

**James L. Hall**, a Refuge System law enforcement officer since 1992, is a native of Paulding County, GA. At age 12, while hunting with his father at Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge in Macon, Hall had his license checked by a refuge officer. The officer's conduct so impressed Hall that he decided to become a federal wildlife enforcement officer. Hall has worked at Harris Neck, Blackbeard Island, and Wolf Island Refuges, GA; Noxubee and St. Catherine Creek Refuges, MS, and Kenai Refuge, AK. 

## Close the Caves and Spread the Word

A colony of gray bats will eat nearly 10 tons of insects in a summer, including mosquitoes, flies and moths that can carry disease and damage crops. Several species of bats also take over the pollinator night shift: guavas, mangoes and bananas all depend on bat pollination.

Yet bats in the United States are increasingly threatened by white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fungus that has killed more than one million bats across the northeast and mid-Atlantic in the past four years. The fungus has been detected as far west as Oklahoma and is expected to continue spreading, so the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced new precautions to slow its spread on refuges.

Caves and abandoned mines on national wildlife refuges are being closed and the Service is leading a cooperative effort with federal and state agencies, researchers,

universities and other organizations to research and manage the spread of WNS. Friends groups are primarily involved in raising funds and publicizing WNS prevention activities.

In Alabama, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge manager Dwight Cooley has helped the Alabama Bat Working Group develop a WNS management plan, including public outreach programs at the Birmingham Zoo and a brochure

produced and distributed by the Friends of Wheeler Refuge.

Ozark Plateau National Wildlife Refuge, OK, is now limiting access to its caves only to scientists conducting WNS-related research. Small overnight camping trips at the newly renovated Mary and Murray Looney Educational and Research Center enable young people to watch bats coming out of one large cave with a night vision scope.

Ozark Plateau Refuge manager Steve Hensley also works closely with the Tulsa Regional Oklahoma Grotto, a chapter of the National Speleological Society. "This has put a crimp in their caving," says Hensley, "but most cavers are very conservation-minded: they understand why we are doing this."

*Additional information* at [www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/](http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/). 



*These little brown bats in New York show the white noses that give the syndrome its name.*

Nancy Heaslip, New York Department of Environmental Conservation

# First Service Honor Guard

A legacy of the untimely death of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam Hamilton is the creation of the first honor guard for the Service.

“With the tragic passing of Sam Hamilton, we had to borrow honor guards from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks in order to bury our own director,” says Jim Hall, the Refuge System’s chief of law enforcement. “When I returned from Mississippi, Refuge System Chief [Greg] Siekaniec instructed me to form a uniformed, law enforcement honor guard for the Service.”

The honor guard is available if a Service member dies in the line of duty and his or her family requests

its presence. It also will take part in wreath-laying ceremonies at the Department of the Interior, National Police Week events and competitions.



Audra Heidrick, Marenen/USFWS

The honor guard’s first duty was to represent the Service at a July 15 ceremony in which the Pennsylvania Game Commission dedicated wetlands adjacent to the Flight 93 National Memorial in memory of Richard Guadagno. Guadagno, 38, a refuge manager/law enforcement officer at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA, died on United Flight 93 on September 11, 2001. 

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Honor Guard members (back to front) Daniel Shamhart of Illinois River Refuge, IL, William Calvert of Loxahatchee Refuge, FL, and Amanda Hardaswick of Moosehorn Refuge, ME, at its inaugural ceremony in Pennsylvania.*

## Q&A *send us your questions*

### FAQ: How do we grow our membership?

Members must be nurtured. They must feel their contributions are valued, that their opinions are important, and that their time is well spent.

- Prepare selective mailings to target audiences – local birders, hikers, anglers.
- Offer benefits to members, including, for example, a discount to the visitor center store or even special events. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge has a very popular summer event for members to help capture and band wild ducks (see page 4) – the event itself is a membership-draw.

- Provide exhibit tables at community events and school career days to promote both the refuge *and* Friends membership.
- Offer a variety of membership levels (corporate, individual, family, lifetime).
- Produce a simple but eye-catching membership brochure and place it in libraries, sporting goods, birding stores, nurseries and other places where potential members may meet or shop.
- Offer a complimentary one-year membership to people who volunteer a certain number of hours.
- Welcome new members with a personal letter, including opportunities to volunteer or occasions to meet other members.
- Recognize volunteers and Friends members at an annual award event – both those who donate money and those who contribute time.

- Offer speakers to local civic organizations, youth groups; PTAs
- Put the membership application online.
- Libraries often offer book discussion groups: suggest a conservation book and lead the discussion, leaving your membership information with participants.
- Offer membership information at homeowners association meetings. Homeowners associations have become common in large suburban areas.

*The information above is drawn in part from Soaring to New Heights, Building your Nest Egg, and Taking Flight. Information about all three publications is available at [www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/publications.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/publications.html). *

## Vision Conference: Historic Milestone in Refuge System History—Continued from page 1

around five Core Teams – composed of about 70 Service employees – who have been conferring weekly since mid-July. Ultimately, each team will produce a paper that will form a part of the invigorated strategic vision.

The five Core Teams are:

- **Conservation Planning and Design**, looking at strategic growth, refuge planning and greening the Refuge System.
- **Conservation Delivery**, considering such issues as water quality, energy development, fire management, invasive species – all within the context of a changing climate.
- **Conservation Science**, discussing not only the Refuge System’s new Inventory and Monitoring Program,



Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, Madison, WI

but also the role of science and science-based partnerships.

- **Relevance to a Changing America**, addressing demographic trends to better understand how the Refuge System can raise its place in Americans’ day-to-day lives.

- **Leadership and Organizational Excellence**, debating such topics as workforce excellence, information management and law enforcement.

Refuge Friends can see the Core Teams’ outlines and provide reaction to those and to the Vision Process by going online to *www.americaswildlife.org*.

*www.americaswildlife.org*, a Web site created in partnership with the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), which is working closely with the Refuge System to enable a broad spectrum of people to participate in the conversations that are so central to the Vision Process. NWRA has held a series of Webinars and personal meetings with Refuge Friends and Refuge System partners to generate ideas and conversation about the Vision Process. 

## Celebrating a Dream—Continued from page 1

the entire watershed. Here, shallow, brackish water covers one of the world’s largest beds of eelgrass, creating a rich feeding and resting area for hundreds of thousands of waterfowl. Virtually the entire population of Pacific black brant, and Taverner’s Canada geese and emperor geese inhabit the lagoon each fall. Generations of Alaskan brown bear have worn trails in the tundra that are knee deep even on a tall man.

And then there’s ANILCA – often called the most significant land conservation law in the nation’s history. The act is a painstakingly crafted compromise that reflects the struggle for balance between development and conservation of public lands in Alaska. It protected more than 100 million acres of federal lands in Alaska. It tripled the acreage designated as wilderness. It established numerous conservation units, including Yukon Delta and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges.

Little wonder then that national wildlife refuges and Refuge Friends throughout 2011 and across the country are celebrating establishment of Arctic and Izembek National Wildlife Refuges – and the wilderness designation that defines them. These wildlife refuges are symbolic landscapes, ones that help all of us define for the American people what national wildlife refuges can do for our sense of grandeur and place, and how the efforts of our predecessors helped make a dream become reality.

For more about the Arctic Refuge’s 50th anniversary celebration, go to: <http://arctic.fws.gov/50th.htm>. 

## FriendsForward

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