

# Friends Forward



Summer 2011

National Wildlife Refuge System  
www.fws.gov/refuges

## Siekaniec Appointed Deputy Director

Gregory Siekaniec has been appointed deputy director for Policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, leaving the position of chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a position he held since 2009.

In his new capacity, Siekaniec will provide strategic program direction and develop policy and guidance to support and promote program development and fulfill the Service mission.

“Greg has done an outstanding job leading the Refuge System during challenging times, and I’m excited to have the opportunity to work with him as part of our leadership team. I know his more than two decades of field and Washington experience will continue to be an invaluable asset as we move forward with the Service’s conservation agenda,” said Service Director Dan Ashe in announcing the appointment.

Siekaniec has led efforts to prepare the Refuge System to meet the challenges of the 21st century. He oversaw a process to create a reinvigorated vision to guide the National Wildlife Refuge System for the next decade. Americans submitted more than 10,000 comments on the vision, which was ratified at the *Conserving the Future* conference July 11-14 in Madison, WI.

“We face a host of conservation challenges of a magnitude we have rarely seen,” said Siekaniec. “But the Refuge System has risen to equal challenges in decades past. With a



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, former Refuge chief Greg Siekaniec and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe greet the crowd at the Madison conference.

## Taking the Vision into Implementation

Implementation of the Refuge System’s *Conserving the Future* vision is on the fast track.

Charters have been written and members are being selected for the first three teams established by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe when he closed the *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* conference July 14.

Those teams will focus on strategically growing the Refuge System, fleshing out details of an

urban wildlife refuge initiative, and developing the next generation of Refuge System leaders. Indeed the latter team—the Leadership Development Council—was charged by Ashe to build on the successful approach used to implement the leadership goals of *Fulfilling the Promise*, the previous guiding vision of the Refuge System.

Fast-track implementation was a direct consequence of passion for progress evident throughout the *Conserving the Future* conference.

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Nick Zakauskas

## Taking the Vision into Implementation—Continued from page 1

There, people who had never before blogged or tweeted took to new media to transmit their enthusiasm and fresh ideas.

### Awesome Speakers

Approximately 1,100 participants—including several dozen refuge Friends—heard from an array of speakers including Sylvia Earle, *National Geographic* Explorer in Residence and a former chief scientist for NOAA; a taped message from world famous chimpanzee scientist Jane Goodall; and environmental entrepreneur Majora Carter, who founded Sustainable South Bronx in 2001 when few were talking about sustainability and today travels the world with that same message.

Perhaps no one summarized the passion for conservation more than historian and award-winning writer Douglas Brinkley, who declared, “If I wasn’t a professor, I would want to be like you because of the integrity of the Fish and Wildlife Service. You undertake this as a spiritual mission.”

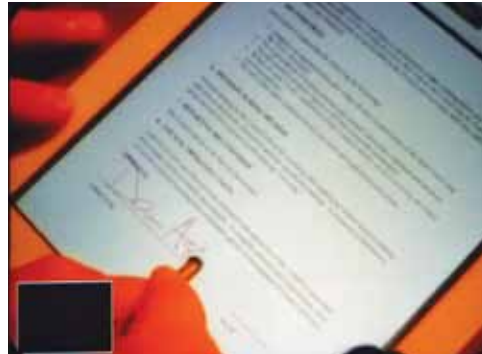
Brinkley specifically cited the importance of Refuge Friends groups, urging them and refuge staff to cultivate local journalists in the cause of conservation. “Call them up. Feed them stories. Invite them to photograph a sunset. Get your news on the Internet,” he encouraged as he recalled that eminent CBS Evening News anchor Walter Cronkite—whom polls found was the most trusted man in America in the 1960s-70s—became a conservationist after he covered the first Earth Day as a journalist.

The conference pulsated with excitement and activity. Scores of workshops, facilitated discussions and lectures offered participants opportunities to exchange fresh

ideas, call for refinements in the vision document and learn new ways to achieve conservation goals.

### Now the Work Begins

Overall implementation of the



*Service Director Dan Ashe signs the vision document on an iPad, visible on giant screens to everyone at the conference.*

*Conserving the Future* vision will be the work of the Executive Implementation Council, chaired by the chief of the Refuge System and supported by the Refuge System Leadership Team, and a council coordinator, a full-time position within the Refuge System. Other deadlines are:

- A refined and final vision document will be published by National Wildlife Refuge Week in mid-October, in accordance with the Director’s mandate.
- The *Conserving the Future* charter, signed by Ashe on an iPad, calls for development of an overall implementation strategy within 90 days of the vision document’s publication. The strategy is to identify teams or individuals tasked with implementing the document’s 24 recommendations—and deadlines to get it done.
- *The Conserving the Future* vision is to be largely

implemented within the next five years, according to the charter.

In chartering the strategic growth team, Service Director Dan Ashe noted during his closing conference remarks, “We need a rapid, top-to-bottom review of current land acquisition projects. We need clear priorities and biological objectives in order to decide how many new projects we can take on and how to select them.”

Calling the urban wildlife refuge initiative “exciting and innovative,” Ashe said, “There are many important wildlife and habitat management challenges in our vision for conserving the future. We will not succeed in these endeavors unless we have strong support from a connected conservation constituency. *People* must be a key component in our conservation strategy.”

The initiative seeks to identify what makes national wildlife refuges successful near cities like Denver, Minneapolis, San Francisco, New Orleans and Portland as the Refuge System works to expand programs in at least 10 cities in the next few years.

*For those who didn’t tune into the virtual conference, you have a chance to relive the excitement by reading stories on the Newswire or watching videos still available on [www.Americaswildlife.org](http://www.Americaswildlife.org).* 🦋



# Friends for the Future

“We can have great success in difficult times with vision and leadership,” said Jim Kurth, deputy chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, to the enthusiastic crowd gathered at the *Conserving the Future* conference.

The vision acknowledges that Friends are a refuge’s best ambassadors, noting that the Refuge System must “build on these successful citizen partnerships and take advantage of the opportunities that an aging but active baby boom generation provides.” Vision recommendation #11 calls for development of community partnerships so every refuge or refuge complex has a Friends group. Another recommendation calls for development of a national volunteer corps. National Friends coordinator Joanna Webb said there was overwhelming consensus among the 76 Friends attending the conference to support existing Friends groups, diversify programs for online accessibility and strengthen communication with refuge staff.

## Siekaniec and Friends

Webb moderated an open discussion among Friends, former Refuge System chief Greg Siekaniec, who is now deputy director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NwRA). When Friends expressed concern about future funding levels for the Refuge System, Siekaniec responded, “You will need to think about your vision as a Friends group and focus on your priorities.”

After that session, the NwRA’s Joan Patterson said, “We need to pull together, draw on our combined strengths, and find all the possible right answers to the challenges the



Former Refuge System chief Greg Siekaniec, now deputy director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, takes questions from Friends.

refuge system will face. Friends have an amazing capacity to find those right answers, when working with refuge staff to define challenges and brainstorm solutions.”

Like many who attended the conference, Gaye Lingley, representing Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges, CA, said, “It’s always a huge benefit to be reinvigorated and recharged by such inspirational speakers and to be with others of like mind.”


Susan Snider, Friends of the Norwalk Islands, CT, said she believes the vision’s urban refuge initiative should be a large part of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan discussion at Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. “It will become critical to think creatively about how to connect urban populations with nature.”

Laurie Peterka and Ike Cabrera, members of the Friends of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, traveled the furthest.

“We arrived at this conference empty and we left full of hope and vision,” said Cabrera. “We feel like we can bring the experience back to our community and continue the hard work, knowing there are partners who will assist us.”

In an exhilarating presentation illustrated with his own photography, former *National Geographic* photographer Dewitt Jones gave everyone four bywords to guide their actions in the weeks and months after the conference—vision, purpose, passion, creativity. “Celebrate what’s right and that will give you the energy to come up with something that is truly extraordinary.”

The vision document is available at [http://americaswildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Vision\\_Final\\_Conference.draft\\_.pdf](http://americaswildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Vision_Final_Conference.draft_.pdf)

For more information about *Conserving the Future*, go to <http://americaswildlife.org>. 



Nick Zukauskas / USFWS

Former Refuge System chief Greg Siekaniec talks with students from the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, ND.



Neal McLain

The Conserving the Future conference was held in the Monona Conference Center, just down the street from the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison.

# Conserving the F



Karen Leggett/USFWS

Green Fire, a documentary about Aldo Leopold, was screened for the public in Madison's classic Orpheum theatre.



Karen Leggett/USFWS

Puddles greets conference goers.



Karen Leggett/USFWS

The Science Poster Gallery featured 100 posters on topics ranging from changing climates and the role of refuges in conserving the Great Basin; invasive exotic earthworm populations within Great Lakes refuges; and the effect of enzootic plague on wild black-footed ferret survival in Montana. Details at <http://americaswildlife.org/conference/science>.





Karen Leggett / USFWS

*Kathy Woodward, Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, NJ, decorates a conference blackboard.*



Tom Llauro / USFWS

*Youth delegates meet with director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dan Ashe.*

# uture Conference



Nick Zukauskas / USFWS

*More than 70 Friends attended the Conserving the Future conference.*


# New Refuge Trail Finder

Whether you want to hike on a national wildlife refuge right near your home or find birding trails and boardwalks when you travel, the new refuge trail finder is just what you need. The new trails Web site—[www.fws.gov/refuges/trails/](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/trails/)—enables visitors to search for hiking trails by state, trail name or refuge. Details about each trail include length, grade, slope and special features such as a deck, boardwalk or designation as a National Recreation or National Historic Trail.

The new trails site also features stories about new trails or additions to trails, such as the Animal Olympics added to the Magnolia National Recreation Trail by the Friends of St. Catherine Creek Refuge in Mississippi (see *Friends Forward Winter 2011*).

Two newly designated National Recreation Trails are included on the site—the Froland Waterfowl Production Area Interpretive Trail,

winding for 1.7 miles through the prairie potholes of the Morris Wetland management District in

Minnesota, and Sandtown Nature Trail on Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. 



The new Refuge Trails Web site is at [www.fws.gov/refuges/trails](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/trails).

## Siekaniec Appointed Deputy Director—Continued from page 1



Greg Siekaniec

new vision as its beacon, the Refuge System will again overcome challenges to add to America's conservation legacy. I won't be overseeing the Refuge System on

a day-to-day basis, but rest assured, I will always have my eye on the Refuge System."


Just before taking the helm of the Refuge System, Siekaniec spent eight years as the manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, one of the Refuge System's most remote and

far flung units. Alaska Maritime Refuge encompasses more than 2,500 islands and nearly five million acres.

Among his many achievements at Alaska Maritime Refuge, Siekaniec is credited with developing a host of partnerships with national conservation organizations to restore island biodiversity and ridding islands of destructive invasive species—foxes and rats—that had nearly eradicated native seabirds and other wildlife. Alaska Maritime Refuge provides nesting habitat for approximately 40 million seabirds, about 80 percent of Alaska's nesting seabird population.

Siekaniec started his career at J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, ND, as

a clerk and moved into management positions in Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming in addition to Alaska. He served as deputy chief of the Refuge System before taking over leadership at Alaska Maritime Refuge in 2001.

Siekaniec earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Montana. He completed the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in 2008, the same year that he completed the Senior Executive Fellows Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. 



# Nature of Learning Grants Seed a New Generation

A native pollinator garden is now thriving at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, PA, initiated with a Nature of Learning grant to Friends of Heinz Refuge and planted by kindergarten students and their sixth grade habitat buddies at Longstreth Elementary School in Philadelphia.

In spring 2011, the youngsters created raised planting beds on the refuge, forming a steady line of containers moving between the mound of composted mushroom soil and the planting beds. There were excited announcements every time someone found a worm, snail or caterpillar. “All work stopped as our habitat stewards decided on a safe spot to place our new friends,” said Longstreth Elementary School teacher Chuck Lafferty. The pollinator garden also includes a pond complete with native emergent plants, mosquito fish, tadpoles and a variety of aquatic insects.

Lafferty called the project a “shining example of what is possible when a group of dedicated and devoted people get together.” In addition to the school and the Friends, the

partnership included the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Penn State University Master Gardeners and Project BudBurst.

## Watching the Water

Another Nature of Learning grant was used to train middle and high school students in South Carolina to test the quality of the water in three rivers in their county. The Great Pee Dee River is a defining feature of Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge so its health is key to effective refuge management.

The SEWEE Association, the Friends group for the refuges of coastal South Carolina, trained 15 students and six adult mentors to measure water quality, including salinity levels. “Similar to other citizen science projects,” explained executive director Karen Beshears, “the data collection is important, and we hope to keep this going for many years so that true trends can be noted.”


SEWEE partnered with an after-school program called Service Over Self to win and maintain student interest. “We are asking them to get up on Saturday morning in all kinds of weather to do the work—so they are dedicated. One student just graduated and is planning a career in environmental law.”

## New Grants

Friends organizations supporting national

wildlife refuges received nine of 23 Nature of Learning grants in 2011 to provide community-based conservation education.

Both Friends of Heinz and the SEWEE Association received new grants to continue projects or start new ones. Other 2011 Friends grant winners include:

- The Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, NM, will develop a 12-week, curriculum-based environmental education program on ecosystems of the refuge.
- Tamarac Interpretive Association, MN, will expand its citizen science program.
- Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, MN, will partner with schools and the Great Lakes Worm Watch to collect data about invasive earthworms.
- Friends of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex, FL, will provide a hands-on introduction to the refuge and its eco-system for elementary school children.
- Friends of Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge, HI, will partner with a local environmental educational program to implement a long-term climate change project.
- Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge, LA, will work with Cornell Lab of Ornithology to foster a conservation ethic in elementary school children.
- Friends of the Dunes will increase the number of schools and grades participating in hands-on field programs in the northern dunes of Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA. 



Students Teondre Bromell and Damien Franklin measure water quality in the Great Pee Dee River.



# from friend to friend

share your  
success  
stories

longstanding National Wildlife Refuge Week celebration and two newer family events—a wildlife walk and an International Migratory Bird Day Event. Only the date changes from year to year, so new dates are printed and affixed to the original signs. Inexpensive wire stands can be removed and re-used for each event.

## FLORIDA

Every Friday, teams of volunteers take to the waters of J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge to remove the nearly invisible monofilament

fishing line that can be deadly to birds and marine life. In the winter, more than 40 volunteers show up each week. In the summer, a steady crew of six hits the kayaks weekly, organized by team leader and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society board member Doris Hardy.

The Wildlife Society, the Friends organization for the refuge, purchased new kayaks for Monofilament Busters in 2010. The Society also provided new boat hooks and scissors made for cutting the fishing line.

In 2010, the crews brought in buckets of monofilament, in addition to coolers and cups, toys and plastic bags and lots of fishing gear. More than 120 birds and animals are treated each year for injuries caused by fishing line and hooks in the trees and water. “This is a much needed program that saves the refuge considerable time and expense,” said refuge ranger Jeff Combs. “The volunteers are saving wildlife from a horrible death.”



Teams of Friends and volunteers remove deadly fishing lines near J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, FL.

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society

The signs are stored at the refuge and distributed to Friends about a month prior to each event. Friend Becky Ham credits the signs sprinkled on lawns all over town for getting the word and boosting attendance especially at the newer refuge events.

## LOUISIANA

A deceptively simple bit of publicity has garnered attention for special Friends events at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge: lawn signs displayed in the yards of Friends members.

The Friends printed simple double-sided, campaign-style signs for three annual events: the

## MASSACHUSETTS

For 11 years, a beach-ready wheelchair sat outside the gatehouse at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, waiting for anyone who needed it to enjoy the beach—like Neil McManus, increasingly disabled by Alzheimer’s. One morning when McManus arrived at the refuge with his wife Heather, the wheelchair was in a hundred pieces



Brittany Petersen

Friends of Black Bayou Lake Refuge promote events with signs on members’ lawns.





Jean Adams

*Friends of Parker River Refuge helped purchase a beach-ready wheelchair.*

and Heather was in tears. Vandals had destroyed the chair as well as a nearby bike rack.

But the Friends of Parker River Refuge and the nearby community rallied. The Friends donated \$500, matched by \$500 from Matter Communication in Newburyport. With individual donations and a contribution from the Beach Buggy Foundation of Sagamore Beach, the refuge purchased a new \$1,300 buggy. The chair is made of PVC tubing and equipped with oversized plastic wheels and a large seat.

One of the first to try it was Neil McManus. Refuge outdoor recreation planner Jean Adams says several other people have used it as well—and now it's being kept under lock and key inside the refuge's newly upgraded visitor center. "It's a great story," said Adams, "because it shows how much people really do care."

## PUERTO RICO—GEORGIA

Intrigued by *Friends Forward* stories of Friends birding trips to Costa Rica, the Okefenokee Wildlife League (OWL) began

organizing its own trip—to visit Vieques and Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuges in Puerto Rico and their Friends groups in February 2011. The trip was planned for pleasure, cultural exchange and fundraising; each traveler was to contribute \$100 to OWL.

Okefenokee Refuge ranger Gracie Gooch said the Puerto Ricans are passionate about their island but needed encouragement to participate in national and regional Friends conferences.

"Each group was learning from each other," said Gisella Burgos, visitor services manager for the Caribbean Islands Refuge. All the Friends groups want to improve their fundraising, increase membership, work with the community. "It's easy to get sidetracked and important to keep an eye on the mission of the refuge," said Burgos.

TICATOVE at Vieques has many volunteers helping

with endangered sea turtles but needed help establishing a formal organization, fundraising and working with the community. The Friends group at Cabo Rojo—"Comité Caborrojeños Pro Salud y Ambiente" (People from Cabo Rojo for Health and the Environment)—would like to open a book store at the Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge's new visitor center.

The trip fell slightly short of its goals when only three of the original eight travelers went, but Gooch said some still contributed to the organization. In the future, she says the group will require a deposit and have a stand-by list of travelers. Nonetheless, it was a valuable first trip in many ways. OWL travelers shared a slide presentation with senior and civic groups, with many people eager to sign up for the next trip, which organizer Sally Webb is already planning for this fall. 🦋



LUSTWS

*Two Friends from Georgia explore the beach at Vieques Refuge, PR.*

# Q&A *send us your questions*

## FAQ: What is the key to a winning grant application?

Every proposal, no matter how modest, should reflect the Friends' passion for the refuge. Give the reader goose bumps!

**80 percent of your time is in planning the project;**

**20 percent in writing the grant proposal**

Why are you seeking a grant?

1. Discuss the need: a new educational program; more space; restore habitat; protect wildlife? Is your proposal innovative? Is it ambitious but realistic?
2. Is a grant the most effective way to fund your project? Are there local businesses that might be interested in providing cash or in-kind donations? Could a community fundraiser meet your needs?
3. Are there organizations or agencies with whom to partner? Who does the problem affect—just the refuge, the whole community, a watershed? Why might other organizations/agencies want to partner with Friends?
4. Do you have the skills within the organization or partnership to complete the project?
5. What outcomes are you expecting—how will the Friends, the refuge, the community, other partners benefit?

There are four main sources of grants: federal ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)), state, foundations and corporations. Be strategic in applying for grants. For each funding source, find out:



*Grant funding helped Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, WA, restore a full-scale Chinookan-style cedar plankhouse on the refuge.*

- Purpose and mission
- How much they give for each grant
- Grant criteria and timetable
- Current areas of interest
- Contact person for questions along the way
- Geographic, program and eligibility guidelines

### General tips:

- Follow directions carefully.
- Pay attention to deadlines.
- Be concise—don't change the font to fit more words into a smaller space.
- Have someone proofread your application.
- Call the program contact if you have questions; don't guess.

### Start writing!

- Write a succinct summary that will grab the interest of the reader. It may be the only portion of the proposal that is read during the first cut.
- Highlight your credibility. Describe your purpose and goals. Provide evidence of related accomplishments.

- Describe the size and nature of your constituency. Explain the importance of your project (and the negative results if the problem is not addressed). Use action verbs to explain what the project will accomplish and how you will measure its success.
- Include sufficient detail about how you will complete the project.
- Provide a reasonable and accurate budget, including partner matches.

Review what you've written. Watch out for:

- Lack of consistency or coordination
- Unrealistic budget
- Weak outcomes
- Need for ongoing support with no sure sign of funding

Funders are partners: be courteous, respect their time, know their interests, discuss opportunities, build relationships. If you don't win the grant, don't burn bridges. Ask about ways to make your next proposal more competitive. If you win, celebrate! 🦋



## Awards and Grants

**Jennifer Jewett**, education and outreach coordinator at Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, ND, won the 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Legends Award, presented to employees of federal land management agencies who excel in the field of recreation. Jewett oversaw two AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps crews that organized events such as Christmas bird counts, the North Dakota Junior Duck Stamp display and an endangered species day at a North Dakota zoo.

**Pamela Steinhaus**, visitor services manager at Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Savanna, IL, District, and **Lori Iverson**, supervisory recreation

planner at National Elk Refuge, WY, won this year's Beacon Award for employees who stand out in the field of information and technology.

Upper Mississippi River Refuge provides free Wi-Fi service to visitors who can use their own computers to access Web sites and download GPS coordinates identifying Earthcache sites on the refuge.

**Lori Iverson** integrated technology into a program titled "Journals and JPGs—Seasons on the Refuge" at National Elk Refuge, WY. The year-long program enables second graders to experience the refuge in different seasons, incorporating both scientific and artistic approaches to learning.

These awards are presented annually by the American Recreation

Coalition, in partnership with the Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration.

### Every Day Grants

Two Friends organizations won grants from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) intended to build their capacity and strengthen their organizational effectiveness—**Friends of the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, NY**, and **Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, LA**. 🦋

## Friends Academy in October

By Joanna Webb

In October, more than two dozen Friends' leaders will gather for the 4th annual Friends Academy at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

The idea of a Friends Academy germinated during the regional Friends workshops in 2006-2007, when Friends expressed a strong desire to learn more about refuge management and how to contribute nationally to conservation. The resulting course agenda includes training on Refuge System priorities, challenges and programs.

We are excited to announce that we are working with the Association of Partners for Public Lands to include almost two full days of organizational management training in this year's Academy.

Another exciting development is a joint training session with more than 30 refuge staff participating in Refuge Management Academy at NCTC during the same week. Bringing Friends and staff together is a huge opportunity for building the strength of this unique partnership.

For more information about Friends Academy, please contact [Joanna\\_webb@fws.gov](mailto:Joanna_webb@fws.gov) or call 703-358-2392. Friends Academy updates, agenda and presentations will be made available at the Refuge



*The National Conservation Training Center, WV, will host the 4th annual Friends Academy in October.*

System's Friends website at [www.fws.gov/refuges/friends](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends). 🦋

*Joanna Webb is national Friends and partnership coordinator for the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

# Climate Change Education Partnership



Greg Knealle/USFWS

Sea level rise is affecting salt marshes and beaches at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, VA.

The National Science Foundation awarded nearly \$1 million to a team to devise ways to better inform visitors to national parks and wildlife refuges about climate change. The team, led by Colorado State University, includes the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Partnering with the national parks and wildlife refuges creates a unique opportunity to use place-based learning to educate a diverse audience about the impacts of climate change,” says Jessica Thompson, project leader and assistant professor at Colorado State University. “Hopefully, visitors will begin to understand how


climate change is impacting America’s greatest treasures and be motivated to make choices to live more sustainably.” The team seeks to reach urban populations, tribal members, minorities and ethnic populations.

### Getting the Message Across

So far the team has held workshops in Florida, Washington, D.C., Colorado and Alaska. Each workshop included community groups, park or refuge staff, Friends and

other interested parties. There were discussions and surveys about such questions as current and future climate change impacts in the area—shrinking glaciers, changes in fishing and other wildlife-dependent recreation, changing species composition and phenology, including questions like, are trees blooming earlier. There were small group discussions about target audiences—teachers, young people,

policy makers—target messages and innovative ways to communicate the message. Reports from each workshop are available online at <https://sites.google.com/site/ccedpartner/>.

The ultimate goal is to integrate climate science with park and refuge interpretive and educational programming. As the partnership acquires additional funding, there are plans to develop interpretive signs, brochures and social media messages to help parks and refuges deliver climate changes messages. Friends will be able to help develop and use place-based education plans to engage visitors in hands-on climate change education. 

Check the Calendar online at [www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/calendar.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/calendar.html).

## FriendsForward

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