



Friends *Forward*

WINTER 2007

Friends Academy: Advanced Capacity-Building

The doors of a new training seminar will open in July 2007 when the first-ever Friends Academy will debut on the campus of the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. Thirty Friends from 30 organizations will be invited to the advanced training, which will be held on the NCTC campus during the same week as the Advanced Refuge Academy. Participants at both academies can meet at meals, breaks and in the evenings.

The concept of a Friends Academy won special support in the wake of regional Friends workshops that brought together hundreds of Refuge Friends to explore how to plan projects over several years, using the Refuge System's 12 strategic goals. During the regional workshops, many individuals

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The National Conservation Training Center will be the site of the first Friends Academy.

From the Chief

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Friends Forward!* A new edition will be arriving every three months.

Our goal is to keep Friends of the National Wildlife Refuge System up to date on noteworthy developments and opportunities in our community—and to underscore our deep-felt appreciation for all of your good works.

For more than 100 years, America's wildlife refuges have, to one degree or another, depended on the good will of their neighbors. And these days, in an era of tight federal budgets, the support of our Friends and neighbors has never been more important.



In places where we simply do not have enough staff, Friends have cheerfully pitched in. Refuge Friends and volunteers last

year donated more than 1.4 million hours—equal to about 700 full-time employees—to welcome our visitors, help with wildlife monitoring and generally support the conservation work that all of us in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service think is so vital. And then there is the important financial boost that national wildlife refuges get from your bookstore sales.

Along the way, Friends have helped make millions of Americans more aware of the importance of the extraordinary

nationwide network of wildlife refuges. We look forward to continuing our partnership. Together, we can ensure that the National Wildlife Refuge System remains the center of wildlife conservation that it is today.

We want your stories and your Friends group in this newsletter. So, please, tell us what you want to see in these pages and send news about your Friends group's projects. Send your information and your ideas to Martha_Nudel@fws.gov.

Geoffrey L. Haskett

New Friends Policy Will Help Establish and Sustain Friends and Their Success

A first-ever National Friends Policy is being developed to help expand the Refuge System's growing partnerships with Friends organizations and promote consistency on several administrative questions. The policy primarily seeks to improve how Friends partnerships are established, implemented and sustained, and will help streamline the administrative aspects of these community partnerships.

The policy, still in formulation, will assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in helping community partnerships flourish. It will also provide Service employees with administrative procedures for working with Friends organizations. The policy will provide clarification on:

- What should be included in an appropriate and required agreement to formalizing a relationship with a Friends organization;
- The Service's definition of a Friends organization, and when and how the Friends' work overlaps with the Service's volunteer program;
- The types of insurance that are encouraged/required for various Friends activities on refuge or other Service property;
- Fundraising methods that Friends are permitted to employ on refuge property, including installation of donation boxes;
- The Service's role in establishing a new Friends organization, as a member or as a board member; and
- The roles and responsibilities of the Service and of Friends organizations when a Friends organization manages revenue-generating operations on Service property.

A draft policy is expected to be shared this summer with the Service's regional offices for review and comment. The policy will be made available for public

and Friends comments through the *Federal Register* before it becomes official Service policy. 🌱



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New Titles Bring New Ideas

Refuge Friends and managers who want pragmatic, solid information on how to start and run a Friends organization will have a new source of ideas later this year. Meanwhile, some tried and true books are still available online or just for the asking.

Beverly Heinze-Lacey, author in 2000 of *Taking Flight: An Introduction to Building Friends Organizations*, is putting the finishing touches on a companion book, titled *Soaring to New Heights*. The book is filled with case studies that use the experiences of national wildlife refuge mentoring teams and Friends organizations to make observations and recommendations

on topics ranging from successful collaborations to the start-up experience.

Other information is already as close as a click of your computer mouse. You can download two of Heinze-Lacey's books: *Taking Flight: An Introduction to Building Friends Organizations* and *Building Your Nest Egg: Raising Funds for Your Refuge Support Group* from <http://www.refugenet.org/>. Limited copies of *Building Your Nest Egg* are also available at no charge; contact National Friends Coordinator Trevor Needham by e-mail at Trevor_Needham@fws.gov. 🌱

What Happened to our Boardwalk: *The Budget Process*

Whether the project is construction of a new boardwalk, maintenance of an observation tower or the continuation of a successful environmental education program, the first question Friends organizations ask is, “How do we get our project noticed when the budget is being put together?” The budget process is a long one. Let’s go step-by-step.

The Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 established specific procedures for formulating the federal budget. By law, the President’s budget is submitted each year to Congress on the first Monday of February.

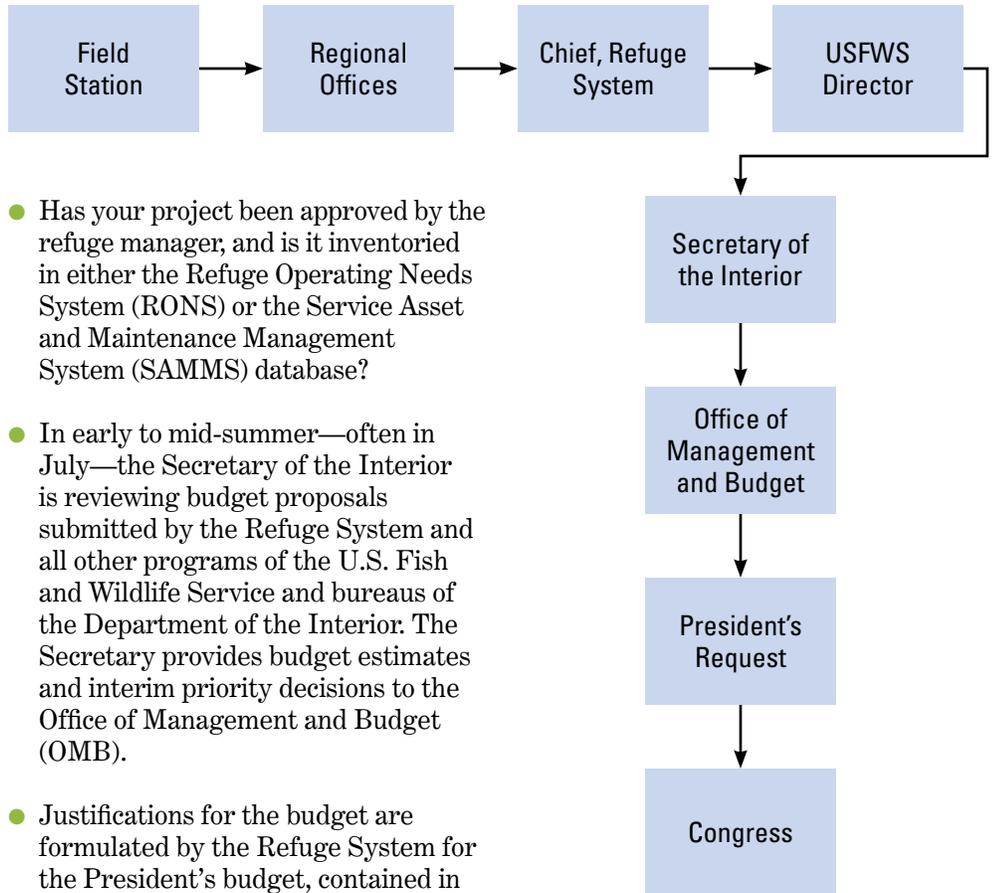
Also by law, a budget resolution is drafted annually and concurrently by the House and Senate Appropriations committees. If Congress follows the traditional calendar, both committees finalize their drafts by early April. The House and Senate budgets are then submitted to the floors of each chamber of Congress for consideration and adoption. For the Congressional primer on the budget process, go to <http://www.house.gov/budget/budget-process-brf.pdf>.

To understand how the federal budget is formulated, consider what happens in November:

- The Office of Management and Budget—essentially, the President’s budget office—reviews the fiscal year 2008 proposal submitted by the Secretary of the Interior before making recommendations for the President’s budget proposal.
- At the same time, the refuge manager is considering the fiscal year 2009 budget and what projects might be pursued. Have you discussed with your refuge manager how your project advances the Refuge System’s mission and fits into its strategic goals?

Where Does the Friends Organization Fit?

The chart identifies several places where Friends organizations can get information and provide opinions:



- Has your project been approved by the refuge manager, and is it inventoried in either the Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS) or the Service Asset and Maintenance Management System (SAMMS) database?
- In early to mid-summer—often in July—the Secretary of the Interior is reviewing budget proposals submitted by the Refuge System and all other programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and bureaus of the Department of the Interior. The Secretary provides budget estimates and interim priority decisions to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- Justifications for the budget are formulated by the Refuge System for the President’s budget, contained in the “green book,” named for the color of its cover.
- Congress begins to discuss the budget and schedule hearings when the President delivers his proposal in February.

Formulating the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget:

The federal government’s fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. The budget process for the fiscal year 2009 budget actually starts much earlier.

August 2006: All Refuge System priority projects must be in the RONS or SAMMS database.

January 2007: Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified budgetary priorities.

March 2007: Director announces his priority in his “passback” to programs within the Service.

July 2007: Director provides budget recommendations to the Interior Secretary.

September-October 2007: Secretary provides justification for budget to OMB.

Thanksgiving 2007: President’s proposal goes back to Department of the Interior as the “OMB passback,” indicating how much the Department should seek in its budget.

February 2008: President proposes Fiscal Year 2009 budget.

March-April 2008: House and Senate hearings are held.

June-July 2008: House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees have “marked up” the President’s proposed budget request.

August 2008: House and Senate conference committee enact an appropriation. 🌱

From Friend to Friend

Launch Pad

Is your Friends organization just getting off the ground? Does your Friends group want to expand its membership? Three of the nation's newest Friends organizations—all started in 2006—talk about their growing pains and lessons.

- The Friends of Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota got help from the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, which shared many of their documents. “One of our biggest strengths is the diversity of our board,” according to President Irene Strong. “We have natural resource teachers, a small business owner, department of natural resources people, an aquatic biologist, a construction person, an accountant and a business management person. We have a variety of ages—some in their 30s, others nearing retirement.”

- In Washington, the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards support three refuges: Franz Lake, Pierce, and Steigerwald Lake. Their first step was to tour the refuges, and develop a list of potential Friends projects in consultation with the refuge managers. The group also “did

not reinvent the wheel” in its start-up, and recommends that new groups ask other Friends groups for their bylaws, mission statements, goals, and work plans. The Stewards created a board that included a CPA who can help with foundation-building activities, and several people with nonprofit board experience. “We know that any of the projects we undertake in the coming year must be ‘owned’ by one of the board members,” said President Gay Leslie. They have also identified milestones and completion dates for those projects.

- The Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho was launched by a group of Treasure Valley citizens who were concerned about the impact of rapid growth in the Valley on the refuge, according to President Lee McGlinsky. The Friends right away formed committees for refuge projects, fundraising, membership, and action to protect the land surrounding the refuge. A regular schedule of frequent public and committee meetings keeps the Friends group visible and open to new members.

The group quickly created a Web site, and started publishing a bimonthly newsletter. Members initially looked for



Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge formed committees immediately.

guidance from other Friends groups, which inspired them to take on creation of a gift shop as one of the Friends' first projects.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is here to help new and growing Friends groups as they face challenges and search for answers. Courses and books are two sources (see calendar on page 6 and “New Titles” on page 2). For more information, contact Trevor Needham, National Friends Coordinator; 703-358-2392, Trevor_Needham@fws.gov.

Introducing Middle School Students to North Carolina Refuges

Gail Dreis came up with the idea for the Junior Friends of the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Club because of her twin dedication to teaching middle school students, and appreciating the beauty and fragility of North Carolina's Outer Banks. Dreis, a language arts teacher at First Flight Middle School in Kill Devil Hills, last year created the Junior Friends group at the school, where students support both the Pea Island and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges.



Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards support Franz Lake, Pierce, and Steigerwald Lake Refuges.



Junior Friends group supports both Pea Island and Alligator River Refuges.

With Dreis and fellow teacher Amy Redford as co-sponsors, the club's 20 students meet six times during the school year, and go on at least two Saturday field trips. At meetings, the Junior Friends learn about birds in the neighborhood and on the refuges, bears and red wolves of eastern North Carolina, wildlife tracking and identification methods, and sea turtles. The students regularly maintain the grass garden at Pea Island Refuge, and work with rangers and the Friends of the Alligator River Wildlife Refuge on various projects. The Junior Friends are also involved in wildlife projects at school, including creating a wildlife habitat garden on the campus.

Environmental Film Festival Debuts in New Mexico

The Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge held their first Environmental Film Festival January 19-20, when a global community of environmental filmmakers and producers showcased their work at the Macey Center of New Mexico Tech in Socorro. The RioFest International Environmental Film Festival used the power of film to link the Friends group, the community of Socorro and

the film community to promote environmental awareness and appreciation. "I want our films to present the environment in all its beauty, but also show the often funny and frequently cautionary side of our communal environment," said RioFest Executive Producer Cat McGrath-Farmer, a Friends member who organized the event with Friends President Jon Morrison.

The festival also sought to enhance stewardship and awareness of the ecology of the Chihuahuan Desert, and generate enough interest to produce an annual film festival focusing on environmental themes. For more information, contact the Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge at 505-838-2120, or go to www.riofilmfest.com.

Alabama Dunes: Getting a Lot of Help from our Friends

The coastal beach dunes along Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in

Alabama, battered in recent years by Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, are being built up by a huge dune restoration effort that includes the Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. The Friends group has long been dedicated to restoring the dunes for the endangered beach mouse, found only in Alabama. Friends are now part of beach restoration that includes the use of a gel that helps sea oats establish their roots in beach sand, according to Friends President Ralph Gilges. The absorbent gel, similar to substances used in disposable diapers, is placed in the holes where sea oats are planted and retains large amounts of water. "It's extremely valuable because it supplies the plants with a steady source of water while the roots get established," Gilges said.

The Friends are also helping to build protective fences in the dunes. Refuge beaches serve as nesting sites for green, loggerhead and Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. 🐢



Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus

Friends groups have a new group of friends in the nation's capital: the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus. At least 120 members of the House of Representatives have joined the caucus, representing 36 states and 168 refuges. The caucus seeks to:

- Increase awareness of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- Create a voice for refuges in Congress;
- Support adequate budgets for the Refuge System;
- Encourage the growth of the System; and
- Support wildlife-dependent recreation that takes place on national wildlife refuges.

One of the caucus's first acts was to introduce the Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response (REPAIR) Act, which promotes greater cooperation among federal, state and private interests to control non-native species. REPAIR would make permanent the Cooperative Voluntary Invasive Species Monitoring and Control Program, which has for the past three years enabled hundreds of Friends to detect invading plants and



John and Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS

The Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus is seeking to support adequate budgets for the Refuge System and create a voice for refuges in Congress. So far, at least 120 House members have joined.

control established invasives. Caucus Co-Chairs Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Jim Saxton (R-NJ) introduced the legislation, along with Caucus Vice Chairs Reps. Michael Castle (R-DE) and Mike Thompson (D-CA).

Budget Message

The Congressional Caucus has also called "essential" an increase in the Refuge System's budget for fiscal year 2008. In a letter to the federal Office of Management and Budget, Reps. Kind

and Saxton wrote, "Though the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had previously been able to absorb cuts through cost-saving measures, the Refuge System has now reached a tipping point and is no longer able to fulfill its basic mission."

Refuge Friends can see if their House members are also members of the Caucus by going to <http://refugenet.e-actionmax.com/showalert.asp?aaid=2110>. 🌱

Calendar of Friends and National Events

March 6–8: "Federal Agencies and Non-Profit Partners: Building Blocks for Sustainable Funding Revenues," Sanibel, FL. For more information: Angela Graziano: angela_graziano@fws.gov, 304-876-7479.

March 10: The 15th Annual Pelican Island Wildlife Festival, coinciding with the 104th birthday celebration of Pelican Island Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Riverview Park

in Sebastian, FL. Sponsored by the Pelican Island Preservation Society. For more information: www.pelicanislandfriends.org.

March 15: Refuge Friends Mentoring Program applications are due. To request application kit: Trevor_Needham@fws.gov.

March 24–25: Revolutionary War battle re-enactment and wildlife expo, Santee National Wildlife

Refuge, S.C. For more information: www.santeerefugefriends.org.

April 2: National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program applications due. To download application: www.nfwf.org/programs/nwrgp.cfm.

May 14–16: "Grant Writing for Conservation," National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. Contact: Ora Dixon, ora_dixon@fws.gov, 304-876-7314.

Question: What types of skills and traits should we seek as we organize or expand our board of directors?

Answer: Especially in the early organizational stages, a Friends board typically fulfills two roles: as the governing body with fiduciary, legal and fiscal responsibilities; and as staff responsible for carrying out the organization's mission and translating goals into accomplishments.

Desirable skills may include experience in non-profit or organizational management/administration; accounting or finance; legal issues; communications, publications and public relations; fundraising; recruiting and working with volunteers; strategic planning and developing work plans; partnership and community-building; advocacy; and working with the federal government.

Additionally, you should consider seeking people who, among other traits, share a commitment to the cause; work well in groups; can assume responsibility and follow through on tasks; can contribute personal and financial resources; can open doors in the community or provide access to resources; are able to start, lead and finish projects; are well-regarded and respected in your community; and are opportunistic, creative and problem solvers.

If you have events to publicize, write to Martha_Nudel@fws.gov. Space will limit the number of events that can be publicized. Please provide information for events that will take place in the second half of 2007.

With a little work and networking, you'd be surprised at how many people would appreciate the opportunity to help.

Question: What are some of the less complicated events we can organize as a startup group?

Answer: Initial events don't have to be large or extravagant, but they are chances to introduce your national wildlife refuge and your organization to a wider audience. Here are a few suggestions, including some events that can be held off the refuge:

- "Discover Your Refuge" series: Including fall and spring special excursions or tours of the refuge with a well-known local naturalist
- Backyard Habitat Tips: Slide show at the refuge on how people can entice wildlife into their own backyards. Check out the National Wildlife Federation's Web site on the subject, <http://www.nwf.org/backyard/>. If your refuge has a backyard habitat, it is the perfect tour for this event.

- "Feeding the Birds" session at the refuge, including a slide show of the birds that can be seen on the refuge and a special program to let youngsters make their own homemade feeders with peanut butter and seeds.
- "Just Lunch": Provide free food—especially with a local flavor—and people will come to see your refuge. One Friends group sold memberships, T-shirts and caps during the "free" lunch event. 🌱

Send us your questions and suggestions: *Because this is your newsletter, we want to hear from you. Please send your questions and your stories to the National Friends Coordinator Trevor_Needham@fws.gov. We would love to feature your Friends activities.*



Friends Groups Will Gather *Beyond the Boundaries* in March

The *Beyond the Boundaries* workshop, scheduled for March 2-5 in Washington, DC, will bring together 75-80 participants, including refuge managers and members of 30 Friends organizations, to expand the ability of citizen conservationists to meet the growing conservation challenges of the 21st century. The workshop is



David Haggard

The *Beyond the Boundaries* workshop will include a series of focused presentations on such issues as water quantity and quality, the nation's changing demographics, and how local land use decisions affect national wildlife refuges.

sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The forum will include a series of roundtable discussions and focused presentations on such issues as water quantity and quality, the nation's changing demographics, how local land use decisions affect national wildlife refuges, and the potential partnership with state wildlife plans, among other topics. The forum will offer Friends groups a chance to discuss:

- Where national wildlife refuges fit into the larger conservation picture.
- Community engagement strategies.

- Land conservation tools and green infrastructure.

Plans are to invite different Friends representatives to similar conferences in future years. Additionally, the Refuge Association will use the conference as a forum to present its awards for outstanding accomplishment by a refuge manager, Refuge System Employee and Volunteer of the Year, and Friends Group of the Year.

All Friends organizations will garner benefit from the *Beyond the Boundaries* workshop. Information is expected to be on the Web shortly after the workshop. For questions about grassroots activities, contact Desiree Sorenson-Groves toll-free at 1-877-396-6972. 🌱

Friends Academy

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expressed a strong desire to learn more about how they can contribute nationally to conservation.

Friends invited to the Academy will include those who have faced challenges and had nonprofit experience. During the week-long Friends Academy, participants will explore the Refuge System's wildlife conservation mission and core operations. They will gain a better understanding of the implications of pending national conservation challenges, including climate change and large-scale invasive plant decimation. "Ultimately, we will further fortify the strength of the Friends movement," said Refuge System Chief Geoff Haskett.

Addressing Conservation Challenges

The regional workshops were the first chance for many Friends members to move from concentrating on such critical but traditional topics as the basics of managing a constituent conservation nonprofit organization to addressing conservation challenges. "Those who attended the regional workshops will have a broad context in

which to strategize solutions to national conservation challenges," said Haskett. "We know that Friends grow from the opportunity to share intellectual, creative and practical resources, and that they are seeking workshops and courses where learning is the focus and strategic planning is the path to results."

Under the tutelage of seasoned refuge managers and expert scientists, Friends at the Academy will explore strategies on how local communities can work to help diminish threats to wildlife conservation. The National Wildlife Refuge Association will join the Refuge System in developing the coursework and teaching sessions.

"The big bonus is that refuge managers in the Advanced Refuge Academy will be on campus, too," said Liz Bellatoni, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service planning coordinator. "As future leaders of the Refuge System have the chance to exchange ideas with the leaders of the Friends movement, they set a course for the conservation initiatives of tomorrow." 🌱

Friends *Forward*

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This newsletter is published on recycled paper using soy-based ink.