

FWS Customer Service Center and USA Service Pilot

Background: For the past two years, External Affairs staff tracked a large volume of phone calls received on the NCTC publications line 1-800- 344-WILD and discovered it gets more than 109,000 calls annually. Because the majority of our national publications carry the 1-800-WILD number, it evolved into the de facto main phone number for the Service and the number of choice with various national directory assistance services. The toll-number was designed to function as an automated publications fulfillment line but we realized from the recorded messages that the majority of the calls were from people with Service-related issues and questions trying to reach a live person. Unfortunately only 10% could be addressed with the existing system.

Pilot: In early 2003, EA began preparations for a call center in Arlington Square to incorporate the Service's main Internet web e-mail reply system and 1-800WILD, eventually teaming with DOI in a 3-month call center pilot project financed and led by GSA and its E-Gov initiative, USA Services. On July 1, 2003, the FWS Customer Service Center pilot went live. Depending on volume requirements, anywhere from 3 to 20 contracted agents are online Monday through Friday 8 AM to 8 PM, handling large volumes of "frequently asked questions" from the 1-800WILD phone line and web-reply e-mail and escalating the more complex phone calls and e-mails to trained Service employees in Arlington.

Results: The pilot is extremely successful, averaging 8500 handled phone calls and more than 325 e-mails per month. In September, a customer satisfaction comment line was initiated and the public response is very favorable and complimentary to the caliber of service received. Data collected by topics shows the following:

- Hunters and anglers are the largest population segment seeking information through the 1-800WILD line, followed by questions for NWRS, Endangered Species and Permits. Another large segment of calls received concerned nuisance/injured animals.
- In e-mail, Employment topics led the way followed by Hunting/Fishing, Permits Endangered Species and Law Enforcement issues.

The pilot officially ended September 30, 2003 with an extension until October 31, 2003. The Service is working with GSA and currently exploring funding ideas to reduce costs without minimizing services to the public.

Message: The Customer Service Center has the potential to greatly improve FWS public service, in support of the President's Management Initiatives, and will provide greater service to people needing FWS permits and to hunters, anglers, and others seeking information about recreational opportunities. The Center will also prepare the Service for the expected growth in e-mail to Federal agencies and to meet anticipated OMB requirements for Federal call centers.

E-MAILS:

E-mails received July 1 – Sept.30, 2003 for both Tier II (FWS) and Tier I (USA Services) by category.

Service Category	Tier II	Tier I	Top Subjects
Comments	46	6	
Complaints	10	13	
Compliments	7	3	
Contaminants	4	4	
Duck Stamps	2	8	
Employment	64	75	1 st
Endangered Species	56	56	4 th
Fish	9	7	
Grants	3	8	
Hatcheries	1	2	
Hunting/Fishing	80	36	2 nd
International Affairs	5	10	
Invasive Species	3	4	
Law Enforcement	54	57	5 th
Migratory Birds	22	36	
Native Americans/Eagles	13	15	
Nuisance/Injured Wildlife	5	22	
Other	21	72	
Permits	47	66	3 rd
Personnel	9	0	
Photo/Video	11	8	
Publications	53	37	
Refer to Other Agencies	25	61	
Refuges	21	17	
Suggestions	0	3	
Training	0	2	
Website/Internet	22	15	
Wildlife/Habitat	56	46	
TOTALS	649	689	

TELEPHONE:

Snap shot demographic for the months of August and September. The 10 states with the highest volume of callers are in order as follows:

AUGUST:

-California – 369 callers	R1
-Florida – 289 callers	R4
-Pennsylvania – 138 callers	R5
-Texas – 104 callers	R2
-Missouri – 83 callers	R3
-Ohio – 80 callers	R3
-North Carolina – 77 callers	R4
-Washington State – 68 callers	R1
-Oklahoma – 51 callers	R2
-Louisiana – 49 callers	R4

SEPTEMBER:

-California – 240 callers	R1
-Florida – 162 callers	R4
-Ohio – 73 callers	R3
-Pennsylvania – 64 callers	R5
-Texas – 57 callers	R2
-Missouri – 42 callers	R3
-Oklahoma – 41 callers	R2
-Wisconsin – 36 callers	R3
-North Carolina – 36 callers	R4
-Indiana – 36 callers	R3

*Note: Call volume data can be gathered by State each month.

A drop down database with Service topics was implemented on September 5th to capture the general type of inquiry by the Tier I (non-FWS) telephone agents. Based on this database, the following are the types of inquiries and the volume per inquiry in September:

IVR Call Data

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) established for FWS completed 4,274 calls, or 56.3% of the total call volume. 2,752 of the 6,067 calls received during business hours were completed via IVR: 45.36% of all business-hour calls. (Source: USFWS Call Spreadsheet)

The following is a listing by topic of total calls that entered the FWS IVR during September:

- Hunting and Fishing Licenses, Regulations and Federal Duck Stamps – 1,377
- Situations involving Injured Animals or Nuisance Wildlife – 1,335
- National Wildlife Refuge System – 382
- Endangered Species and Permits – 781
- Publications – 364

Customer Feedback

On August 18, 2003, the Tier I implemented the customer satisfaction feedback voicemail option. Twenty percent of all callers were identified by the IVR system and offered the opportunity to leave a voicemail feedback message. Of this percent identified, one third are offered the opportunity to comment on the IVR, and two thirds are offered the opportunity to comment on live agent assistance. Here are some samples from September...

- "Uh, yes, I'd just like to leave a comment that I received excellent help. I called to get a number for Kentucky Wildlife Service and they were more than willing to help me. I totally support the Kentucky Fish & Game, and as far as that goes, the U.S. Fish and Game, and hope it continues on for better hunting. Thank you."
- "Yes, I just talked to a representative from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the lady was courteous and she helped me to contact Law Enforcement regarding a problem I have with an overseas shipment and I'll call Law Enforcement for further advice. Thank you."
- "I thought this was going to be a survey however I was looking for information on the volunteer program and was given the appropriate information that I needed. Thank you."