

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration and Associated Grant Programs

Program Update September 2004

Including a Special Highlight Section of Region 4





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Comments from Paul Schmidt

Assistant Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs



A Look Back

I first became involved with the Federal Assistance Program in 2001, when the Federal Assistance Program was combined with the Migratory Bird Programs. We have come a long way in the past three years and the Federal Assistance Program is not the same Program that it was in 2001. There have been many changes, many initiated from within and many required by outside stakeholders. With pain came gain. The Program, its leadership and its dedicated cadre of professionals have overcome significant challenges to emerge stronger and more vital for the Nation's conservation mission.

Some of the greatest changes initiated by outside stakeholders occurred in 2000 as a result of the Office of Inspector General and General Accounting Office auditors identifying the Federal Assistance Program as having a material weakness. This finding set in motion several years of inquiries, audits, and reviews of every program process and policy in place at that time. Process Improvement Teams, established by the Director to identify corrective actions necessary to eliminate the material weakness, were composed of Service employees, as well as representatives of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. These Teams identified 46 corrective actions that fell into 3 operational areas of the Federal Assistance Program: 1) State audit review and resolution processes; 2) financial management; and, 3) grant operations.

The Program responded competently to these challenges and worked at all levels of the organization to implement each corrective action. By 2002, no material weaknesses were identified within the Federal Assistance Program during the annual audit of the Service's financial statement. Improvements continued through 2003 and the results of these labors were tested by the Service's FY 2003 Management Control Review of the entire Program. A thorough review and evaluation of new internal controls,

policies and procedures was conducted and no material weaknesses were identified and no vulnerabilities or deficiencies revealed. Based on the Service's management control review, the lack of material weaknesses identified by independent auditors and the timely documentation of revised policies and procedures, the Department of Interior reviewed the Program in the Fall of 2003 and now considers the material weakness identified in 2000 as resolved and implemented, removing the stigma of high risk from the Federal Assistance program.

The implementation of the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000 has had profound affects on the way we do business in the Federal Assistance Program. The Program acted promptly to meet the requirements of this act from both a fiscal and policy management perspective. It was no easy feat to drastically reduce administrative spending and continue to deliver the services and products expected by stakeholders; but it was done. Through meticulous planning and determined oversight, we went from a program of 150 FTEs to 104, we launched the Firearm and Bowhunter Education and Safety Program, revamped the Multi-state Conservation Grants Program and redesigned the audit function of the States with the help of the Inspector General.

The Federal Assistance Program has strengthened its working relationships with its partners and has earned their respect and trust through making decisions transparent and through open communication. During the past two years, the Joint Policy Task Force was established whereby leadership from the Service and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies identified over a dozen policy issues that needed immediate resolution.

The Federal Assistance Information Management System (FAIMS) came into service in 1998 and with it, recording and processing of Federal Assistance grants improved. FAIMS is so highly regarded as a management tool that other grant

programs within the Service now use FAIMS. FAIMS, in combination with the improved management practices of Federal Assistance grants managers, have garnered the respect of other Service grant program managers. They are now negotiating grant management agreements with Federal Assistance staff and relying on the Federal Assistance Program for many of their grant management tools and expertise.

We have successfully launched and managed the new State Wildlife Grants and Landowner Incentive Programs. The National Advisory Acceptance Team and

the Development Assistance Teams are working to make the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plans the best they can be to guide the future of wildlife conservation in this country. This is one of the most important Service responsibilities in the coming year.

Change is inevitable but the groundwork has been laid for smooth transitions. With the selection of Mitch King as the Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs, the Migratory Bird Program will separate from Federal Assistance at the

Washington Office level. The Department is working hard to implement Bureau-wide system changes that will replace FAIMS and other information management systems in a consolidated fashion. The Program and its leadership are well prepared to address the challenges of tomorrow.

It has been an honor and pleasure to have served as the Deputy Assistant Director and Assistant Director of Migratory Birds and State Programs over the past several years. This program is a true conservation success story!



Comments from Mitch King

Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs



Let me start by saying that it is a great honor to have been selected by Director Williams as the first Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. It is particularly humbling for me to reflect on the fact that I am leading one of the most important programs in our Nation's conservation history. The Federal Assistance Program and the laws that established it, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Acts, have resulted in some of the greatest success stories in the history of fish and wildlife conservation in America. In terms of importance for our mission and for conservation, I place these two Acts alongside other landmark conservation events, such as the creation of the National Fish Hatchery and the National Wildlife Refuge systems and the development of the Endangered Species Act.

Our Federal Assistance Program has been going through a rather exciting period of scrutiny, reshaping and reinvention. Over the last few years, the program has been put under a microscope and critiqued from every angle. After considerable buffeting, the program came out standing tall, and not by accident. You, the employees of the Federal Assistance Program in Washington D.C. and in the Regional Offices, are the reason, and you have a lot to be proud of. I am taking the helm of a program that is "healthy" and headed in the right direction. Thank you for that.

I've spent my first few weeks on the job connecting with our State and industry partners. I've talked to them about our Federal Assistance Program and listened to their praise, their concerns, and their recommendations. I'm excited to say that their praises are abundant, their concerns are minimal, and their recommendations are constructive. Everyone speaks of the improvements to the program over the last few years.

I also had the great opportunity to participate in the recent Federal Assistance National Meeting at NCTC and it is obvious from that meeting and

talking to you that I still have a lot to learn. I will be looking to Washington and Regional staffs and to our State partners for advice as we work through the next few months. There are a couple of key areas that I will be focusing on from the get-go.

The first area is you, the people who make the Federal Assistance Program what it is. You've endured a lot over the last few years, but we're not going to dwell on the past. We are going to be looking forward to what can be, and make it so. For example, I want you to stand with everyone else in the Service when it comes to professional development. I want to see more Federal Assistance people in Stepping Up To Leadership Training, the Advanced Leadership Training, and the Senior Executive Service Leadership Development Program. I want to see you taking advantage of opportunities to experience other programs within the Service through details or temporary job swaps. I'm interested in expanding the Service's "Walk a Mile in My Boots" program to allow you to exchange positions with State Fish and Wildlife agency partners so that you can experience how they spend Federal Assistance dollars, and so they can experience some of the challenges you face in reviewing and approving Federal Assistance proposals. I view these investments in you as a legitimate Federal Assistance activity that we can't afford not to make. You deserve it, and I want to work with you to make it happen.

Secondly, let me say something about our ongoing efforts relative to the State Wildlife Grants and the Comprehensive State Wildlife Conservation Plans. I just came from the "One-Year-Out Meeting" in Nebraska City, Nebraska, where I met with States to discuss their progress in completing their State Comprehensive Plans by October 2005. The energy and enthusiasm were incredible!

I'm convinced that right now, we are witnessing the creation of another of those landmark events in the history of

conservation. Ten or twenty years from now, the establishment of the State Wildlife Grant Program and the creation of the Comprehensive State Wildlife Conservation Plans will be recognized as a turning point in fish and wildlife conservation—and you and I will be able to proudly say we had a part in it. We weren't around to witness the birth of the Fish and Wildlife Service with the establishment of the first National Fish Hatchery. We didn't get to see Teddy Roosevelt establish Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge and kick off the development of the world's largest system of public lands set aside specifically for the benefit of wildlife. And we weren't part of the negotiations between the wildlife community and Congress as they hammered out the details of the Wildlife Restoration Program or the Sport Fish Restoration Program. But we're here now, as this amazing new conservation initiative is being birthed. This is our moment in history to exercise vision and leadership on behalf of our Nation's fish and wildlife resources.

The State Wildlife Grants and the Comprehensive State Wildlife Conservation Plans will be our top priority for the coming year. By October 2005, we will have approved or conditionally approved plans for 50 States and 6 territories. I left Nebraska City with no doubt that this will happen. With your commitment and the commitment of our State Partners, we can't fail.

Let me close with a brief statement of my philosophy as it relates to the Federal Assistance Program. These dollars were originally in the pockets of hunters and anglers. They were given to the Federal Government for the purpose of supporting the great things that the State fish and wildlife agencies do on the ground. The credit for creating this program rests with the States. They were instrumental in getting the legislation passed that established the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs. Likewise, it was the States who were instrumental in getting the momentum going to establish the State Wildlife Grant Program. Moving

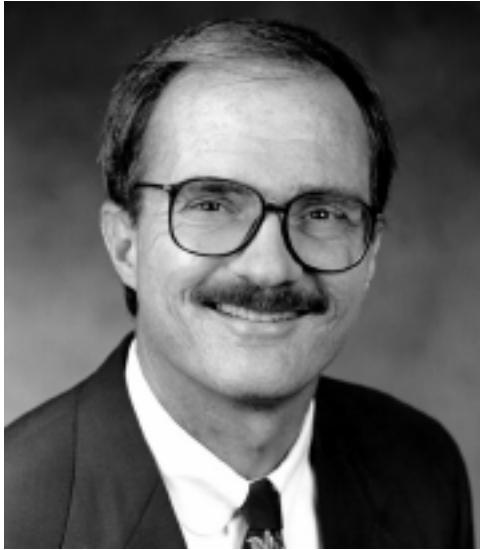
the money from Congress to on-the-ground projects is the work of a partnership between the Service and the States. In this partnership, our job is to make sure that the requirements of the legislation are satisfied and to help the States put the money to good use. At the same time, the partnership (including the Service and the States) must remain vigilant to maintain the integrity of the program. Based on all I have seen, I think this is precisely where we are, and I will work to make sure that is where we stay.

Let me close by saying "thanks" in advance for your support as I step into this exciting new adventure. Your efforts are making a difference in fish and wildlife conservation every single day, and I'm proud to be working with you.



Welcome and Comments from Sam Hamilton

Southeast Regional Director



I would like to welcome you to the Southeast Region, where we have a rich heritage of hunting and fishing. The Southeast Region covers an area of more than 430,000 square miles and encompasses the great states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, as well as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Our Regional Office is located in Atlanta, Georgia, a vibrant and exciting Southern city. From here, we oversee 125 national wildlife refuges totaling a little more than 3.7 million acres, 19 national fish hatcheries, 4 fishery assistance offices, 15 ecological services field offices and 28 law enforcement offices scattered throughout the Southeast. Region-wide, the Service has more than 1,200 employees working together to help us accomplish our mission.

Our Federal Assistance program is an integral part of fish and wildlife conservation in the Southeast. Traditionally, it started with two fundamental programs and has grown to more than a dozen grant programs. Grant funding through our two original programs—the Wildlife Restoration Program and the Sport Fish Restoration Program—continues to provide hunters, shooters, anglers, and boaters with wonderful outdoor opportunities. In 2004, Southeast states received more than \$41 million through the Wildlife Restoration Program and more than \$50 million through the Sport Fish Restoration Program.

Additional grant programs such as the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, State Wildlife Grants, and Landowner Incentive Program are providing funding for conservation projects that have lacked funding through a traditional means of license revenue. We are actively working with our federally recognized Tribes to assist them with fish and wildlife conservation efforts through the Tribal Wildlife Grants Program and Tribal Landowner Incentive Grants

Program. These programs have the added benefit of providing funding for the protection, restoration, and management of habitat to benefit threatened and endangered species, as well as species at risk, such as the red cockaded woodpecker, swallow-tailed kite, and paddlefish.

I believe the success of our grant programs is built upon the trust and cooperation between the Federal Assistance program staff and our State and Federal partners, who share common values about our Nation's fish and wildlife resources. We have worked together to develop strategies for solving complex grant issues using open lines of communication, fiscal and program workshops, and comprehensive site visits. Our collaborative partnerships have resulted in numerous successful fish and wildlife restoration, habitat enhancement, land acquisition, facility development and research grant projects. Moreover, the Southeast Region's pilot programs on Archery in the Schools and the CD-ROM component of the Hunter Education Program initiated the efforts for these program concepts to be implemented Nationwide.

I am proud that the Southeast Region has remained diligent in its efforts to be accountable to Congress and the American public. We have developed a unique, finance-related review that facilitates monitoring of Federal Assistance funds provided to our States and insular territories, promotes communication, and builds trust. With internal and external audits measuring the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs, these financial reviews help Federal Assistance and our partners remain in compliance with federal regulations, as well as Service policies and procedures.

As I reflect upon the successes within our Region's Federal Assistance Program, I am reminded of the great leaders who have contributed their talents and efforts on behalf of the Service and the Program.

There are four individuals in particular whom I would like to acknowledge on behalf of the Southeast Region's Federal Assistance Program:

I congratulate Mitch King, who is leaving his position as my esteemed Deputy Regional Director, to become the Service's first Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. Mitch will bring to the Washington Office a wealth of experience in developing and maintaining effective partnerships.

Emily Jo "EJ" Williams is our new Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs. EJ has an impressive background in migratory bird

management issues, as well as a noteworthy history of collaborating with partners to accomplish conservation goals.

Cleophas "Bob" Cooke, Jr. served as the Southeast Region's Federal Assistance Chief for 17 years until his recent retirement. His extraordinary abilities and skills to assimilate and recall information to reach sound decisions, and implement the Program with a team-based approach, helped build strong working relationships with our State and territory partners.

Our new Chief of Federal Assistance is Mike Piccirilli, who served as senior staff in Federal Assistance prior to his selection

as Chief. Mike is a competent leader in nurturing relationships and is dedicated to providing strong customer service to our Southeast grantees. As an avid fly fisherman and hunter, Mike has a great appreciation for the benefits that Federal Assistance programs contribute to our fish and wildlife resources.

In the pages that follow, the hard work and effective partnerships of our Federal Assistance program will become evident as we share some of our successes. Projects such as these help ensure that the Southeast remains a good place to fish, hunt and view wildlife.

News Section

Federal Assistance Employee Updates



Bob Bryant

Tom Barnes joins the Federal Assistance Division in Washington, DC as the new Chief, Branch of Grant Operations and Policy. Tom is a wildlife biologist who attended Florida State University and the University of Michigan. Early in his career, he worked as a forester for the U.S. Forest Service's Southeastern Forest Experiment Station in Virginia and South Carolina. After transferring to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), he worked on national wildlife refuges in Florida, Louisiana, and North Carolina and in the national office of the Refuge System. Two of his assignments involved major land acquisitions for the establishment of new refuges. While working with the Refuge System, he did a one-year detail with the U.S. House of Representatives Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. He also worked one year in policy development for the USFWS Private Lands Program. Before joining Federal Assistance, he worked for six years as a grant administrator and in policy development for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants Program.

Jerry Leonard is a new member of the National Survey staff. He will help plan the 2006 Survey, coordinate with state technical committee members, and prepare survey reports. Jerry got his MS in applied economics at Montana State and co-authored *Valuing Non-Market Goods: The Case of Elk Permit Lotteries*, published in the *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*. He grew up in Kennesaw, Georgia, and has a strong interest in outdoor recreation. Before coming to work on the survey on August 8, he lived near Orlando, Florida, where he was the chief economist for a private research firm.

New Federal Assistance Chiefs

Bob Bryant is the new Chief of the Division of Federal Assistance for Region 3 in Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Bob was formerly the Land Acquisition Branch Chief in Region 3's Division of Realty. His experience in Realty involves many of the

processes that are involved in administration of the Federal Assistance Program, particularly in the environmental compliance area. Bob has 29 years of Federal government experience, with various positions in Regions 1, 3 and 5. Bob has prior experience with the Federal Assistance program having served as Regional Review Appraiser on a number of Federal Assistance projects in Regions 1 and 3. Earlier in his career, Bob worked for the U.S. Forest Service and understands the complexities of natural resource management. He has extensive prior experience and training in negotiation and in building complex partnerships. He has received numerous performance awards over the past 20 years, including receipt of an award while in the Forest Service for superior performance in supervision and program management. A native of Massachusetts, Bob is a 1974 graduate of the University of Massachusetts.

Bob believes strongly in the State-Federal partnership and looks forward to meeting the needs of the State partners while managing the complex grant programs in Region 3.

Mike Piccirilli has a diverse background of experience working for land management and natural resource agencies that complement his employment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mike began his career as a Park Ranger with the Corps of Engineers in the Nashville Tennessee District. While with the Corps of Engineers, he developed mitigation plans to offset negative impacts of mineral extraction within the watershed and evaluated and processed special use permit requests for land and water development projects related to lakeshore management issues. In 1988 Mike moved to Casper, Wyoming to work with the Bureau of Reclamation as a Natural Resource Management Specialist. Here he gained experience working with partner agencies including county, state, and federal agencies on land use issues. Mike administered third party

agreements with partner agencies to manage all Bureau of Reclamation lands outside of Hydropower operation areas. This included approximately 150,000 acres of land managed for a variety of uses including grazing, agriculture, irrigation, wildlife refuges, state and county parks.

In 1991, Mike began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an Assistant Refuge Manager at Erie NWR. Here Mike was responsible for the daily operation of refuge activities and implementation of refuge biological and habitat programs focused on enhancing waterfowl nesting and brood habitat. After a little over 5 years of experience working directly with habitat enhancement projects at the refuge Mike saw an opportunity to combine these experiences with his skills to partner with agencies. In 1997, he joined the Division of Federal Assistance in Atlanta as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist. After 6 years of service in two regions he was selected as the Wildlife Branch Chief in Region 4 of the Division Federal Assistance. In April 2004, Mike was selected as the Region 4

Chief of Federal Assistance to replace Bob Cooke who retired.

Mike lives in Lawrenceville, Georgia with his wife Susan of 19 years and 15-year son Andy. He has enjoyed fly-fishing for trout, fly-tying, hunting and the shooting sports for over 35 years and he has a great appreciation for the benefits that the Federal Assistance programs contribute to our fish and wildlife resources.



Mike Piccirilli

National Meeting

During the week of August 9th, Federal Assistance held its National Meeting at the National Conservation Training Center. The Program has gone through many changes since the last staff-wide national meeting in 1998. Federal Assistance administers approximately \$733 million annually as part of 13 grant programs, with the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies as the primary recipients of these grant funds. We have more accountability requirements within and outside the Service and in times of limited resources, we are moving toward totally electronic grants administration. With highly experienced staff who are retiring over the next few years, this meeting provided an opportunity to network, introduce newer staff to program goals and objectives, and improve grant administration. Working sessions resulted in significant products and recommendations to the Federal Assistance Chiefs. The Fiscal Teams improved processes, enhanced cooperation and recommended increased monitoring. Program Monitoring Team initiated a new Monitoring Handbook for Federal Assistance staff that suggests creative monitoring methods, explores

considerations when writing a monitoring plan and recommended increased emphasis on monitoring in most every grant program. The Lands Team shared information on land status, explored considerations in using easements as a management tool, and recommended a central repository of lands data for the program. Other sessions addressed lessons learned from audits, a comparison and contrasting of the Aquatic Education and Hunter Education Programs, and comparing Regional approaches to assure compliance in CMS grants. This national meeting resulted in the production of several new management tools, new considerations to address evolving Departmental and Government-wide electronic grant and information management initiatives, and improved inter-regional consistency and coordination to meet future challenges. The Federal Assistance Chiefs have a myriad of recommendations to consider for adoption between now and October; all of which will contribute to increased program effectiveness and National consistency priorities over the next few years.



Kris LaMontagne speaking at the National Meeting.



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Kris E. LaMontagne, Division Chief

Doug Gentile, Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access

Jim Greer, Deputy Division Chief - Operations

Jimmye Kane, Lead Secretary

Pam Matthes, Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordinator

Hsia Franklin, Secretary

Branch of Budget and Administration

Tom Jeffrey, Branch Chief - Budget Development and Execution - Program Management

Vacant, Administrative Officer

Linda Muhammad, Program Support Assistant

Tracey Vriens, Program Analyst

Branch of Information Management

Vacant, Branch Chief

Lorinda Bennett, Fiscal Management - Audit Liaison

Ed Duda, System Developer

Jake Goodall, System Developer

Jeffrey Graves, Server Support - Web Site Support

Pete Hitchcock, Network Engineer; Security Officer

C. J. Huang, Database Administrator

Sandie Lehberger, Administrative Technician

David Washington, ADP Systems Support - ADP Acquisition Support

Debbie Wircenske, Help Desk and Fiscal Administration Training

Branch of Grants Operations and Policy

Tom Barnes, Branch Chief - National Issue Management

Brian Bohnsack, Sport Fish Restoration Program - Coastal Wetlands - Clean Vessel Program - Boating Infrastructure Grant Program - Regions 1 & 2

Kim Galvan, Regulations - U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual Chapters - Section 6 Grants - Regions 4 & 7 - Landowner Incentive Program

Tim Hess, Wildlife Restoration Program - Landowner Incentive Program - State Wildlife Grants - Regions 3 & 5,

Genevieve Pullis-LaRouche, State Wildlife Grants

Joshua Winchell, Regulations - Education Liaison - Region 6

Branch of Audits

Pat McHugh, Branch Chief - Audits

Ord Bargerstock, Systems Accountant - Audit Resolution

Branch of Surveys

Sylvia Cabrera, Branch Chief - National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

Richard Aiken, Economist - National Survey

Jerry Leonard, Economist - National Survey

Branch of Training

Steve Leggans, Branch Chief

Julie Schroyer, Administrative Analyst

Blake Weirich, Assistant Training Coordinator

Debbie Unbehagen - Fiscal Grants Management Specialist

Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Agreement

Lanny Moore, On IPA between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

The IPA allows Lanny to pursue full-time the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF), and Customs Working Group initiatives. The main goal is to ensure that States receive all funds due from these agencies in a timely and accurate manner. Through displays, workshops, and seminars, Lanny conducts training for IRS, BATF, and Customs staff who are involved in the paying, collecting, accounting, and transferring of funds.

Federal Assistance Program Overview

The goal of the Federal Assistance Program is to work with States to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, their habitats and the hunting, sport fishing, and recreational boating opportunities they provide. The Federal Assistance Program is responsible for administering the following Programs:

- Wildlife Restoration
- Sport Fish Restoration
- Clean Vessel Act
- Boating Infrastructure Grant
- National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant

- Multistate Conservation Grant
- State Wildlife Grants
- Landowner Incentive

In addition, Federal Assistance provides grant management support for endangered species tradition section 6, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition, HCP Planning, and Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Programs.

The following is an update on the accomplishments of the Federal Assistance Program and its partners with these grant programs.



Focus on Specific Programs and Activities

Wallop-Breaux Reauthorization Efforts Continue: Changes May Be Needed to ALAB Consensus Position

The American League of Anglers and Boaters (ALAB) and other conservation and recreation groups are continuing their efforts to gain reauthorization of several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recreation and conservation grant programs, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard's Recreational Boating Safety Program. To date, ALAB has been successful with getting their reauthorization position included in legislation for the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act (SAFETEA), also known as the SAFETEA Highway Bill. Action on the SAFETEA bill by Congress has stalled and its passage now appears likely to be postponed until some time in fiscal year 2005.

Some changes in ALAB's reauthorization proposal may be needed for Congress to reauthorize all affected programs. The changes result from Congress' concerns

regarding the amount of funds proposed for administrative uses by the Service. The current ALAB reauthorization proposal recommended that the Service receive 2.1% of the total receipts into the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund. Congress has indicated that they prefer that the Service receive the amounts indicated in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Improvement Act of 2000. This Act identified specific funding amounts for the Service's administration of the Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, as well as other grant programs administered by the Division of Federal Assistance. ALAB has responded favorably and quickly to the changes required by Congress to the ALAB consensus position. Specifically, ALAB has worked cooperatively to adjust its consensus position so that the various grant programs receive the funding amounts projected in the original consensus position.

For additional questions on this issue please contact Brian Bohnsack



Customer Service Survey Being Completed

The Division of Federal Assistance recently contracted with the Treasury Department's Federal Consulting Group and the University of Michigan to complete a survey of the division's customers. The Division plans to use the results to gain important feedback on performance in recent years. The results of the survey will be used to guide future management actions of the Division.

The survey began in late July and was completed by University of Michigan personnel. The survey was completed by telephone and is part of the widely used American Customer Service Index (ACSI). Many federal agencies rely on the ACSI to evaluate their customer service performance and the University of Michigan releases a report annually ranking the performance of federal agencies that participate in the survey. Approximately 1,300 individuals received letters notifying them that they may be interviewed for the survey and approximately 260 interviews will be completed for the survey.

A final report on the survey is expected in the spring of 2005. The Service appreciates the cooperation of all of its State partners.

For additional information on this issue, please contact Brian Bohnsack.

State Wildlife Grants

The Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2004, signed by President Bush into law on November 10, 2003 included \$70 million in Fiscal Year 2004 for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG) program, which is available to States and Territories for obligation until September 30, 2005. The Service will reappropriation any Fiscal Year 2003 SWG funds unobligated after September 30, 2004. At the time of preparation of this Update, it appears that

the amount of funds to be appropriated by Congress for FY 2005 will be similar to that of FY 2004.

The STWG program assists States by providing Federal funds for the development and implementation of programs that benefit wildlife and their habitat, including species that are not hunted or fished. It permits both planning and implementation activities. The Federal share for planning grants may not exceed 75 percent and may not exceed 50 percent for other types of grants. To establish eligibility for these funds, the States and Territories first had to submit or commit to develop by October 1, 2005, a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy or Plan (CWCS). All States and Territories have made this commitment, and have many active STWG projects being funded.

All States are currently working on their CWCS. The Service has been providing assistance to the States when requested, and otherwise facilitating development of these important documents. Staff from

the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Service have met with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Defense, and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service during the past several months to share information about the State Wildlife Grants program and the CWCS initiative, and to encourage agency collaboration.

On August 2-4, 2004 a "One-Year-Out" Conference was hosted by the State of Nebraska, IAFWA, and the Service in Nebraska City, Nebraska to create an environment where States and Territorial representatives could gather to discuss their varied approaches to the development of CWCS's. This Conference brought together CWCS coordinators from the States and Territories, along with some partner agencies and organizations, to share ideas, exchange information and products, and develop approaches to common challenges. The CWCS's are widely seen as an essential foundation for the future of wildlife conservation and an opportunity for the States, federal agencies, and other conservation partners to strategically think about their individual and coordinated roles in conservation efforts across the nation.



The members of the National Acceptance Advisory Team. From left to right, John Christian (Region 3 ARD), Nancy Gloman (Region 2 ARD), Paul Schmidt (Assistant Director from the Washington Office), Ron Regan (State of Vermont), Paul Gertler (Region 6 ARD), Noel Holcomb (State of Georgia), Jeff Koenings (State of Washington), Doug Alcorn (Region 7 ARD), Dean Hildebrand (State of North Dakota), E. J. Williams (Region 5 ARD), Chris McKay (Region 1 ARD), and Sherry Morgan (Region 4 ARD).

(ARD = Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs)

The Director initiated the formation of a National Acceptance Advisory Team in early 2004 to ensure that the CWCS's are reviewed uniformly and contain the eight essential elements required by Congress. The Team consists of a representative from each of the four regional Fish and Wildlife Agency Associations and the Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs from each of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's seven Regions. The Service's Assistant Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs, Paul Schmidt, serves as the chair of the Team with a representative of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Ron Regan, as the vice-chair. Specifically, the National Advisory Acceptance Team's role is to review and make recommendations to the Director for approval, conditional approval or disapproval of each State and insular territory's CWCS by October 1, 2005. The Team has drafted a Charter, a Review Reference Guide, and a Review Process, and is prepared to receive the first CWCS submission.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Tim Hess or Genevieve Pullis-LaRouche.



The Eight Elements Required for State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies or Plans.

1. information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;
2. descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to the conservation of species identified in (1);
3. descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;
4. descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;
5. proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;
6. descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy-Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years;
7. plans for coordinating, to the extent feasible, the development, implementation, review, and revision of the Strategy-Plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats; and
8. a description of broad public participation during the development and implementation of these Strategies-Plans.

Sport Fish Restoration Program Update

Congressional delays with passing a new Highway Bill have caused administrative difficulties for the Sport Fish Restoration program this fiscal year. Specifically, the Service had to withhold some funds from the apportionment total for the Sport Fish Restoration program to ensure that sufficient funds were available to fund other grant programs receiving temporary reauthorization extensions by Congress, e.g., Clean Vessel Act, Boating Infrastructure Grant, U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety grant programs. Since Congress recently extended the TEA-21 Highway Bill for the remainder of this fiscal year, the Service will make the funds that were being withheld from apportionments available in the Fiscal Year 2005 apportionments.

Some of the highlights of the program include the recent announcement by the American Fisheries Society Fisheries Administrators Section of their Sport Fish Restoration projects of the year.

An issue that remains of continued concern for the Sport Fish Restoration program is the status of the states with spending their motorboat access funds. The following table on page 15 shows the status of States and Territories with obligating boating access funds.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Brian Bohnsack.

National Unobligated Boating Access Allocations by Fiscal Year - as of July 30, 2004 (in dollars)

<i>State</i>	<i>Unobligated</i>	<i>FY-04</i>	<i>FY-03</i>	<i>FY-02</i>	<i>FY-01</i>	<i>FY-00</i>
Alabama	584,123.97	427,309.00	156,814.97	0.00	0.00	0.00
Alaska	1,719,735.39	1,719,735.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
American Samoa	437,719.11	130,263.00	132,620.00	146,393.00	28,443.11	0.00
Arizona	45,823.84	45,823.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Arkansas	953,926.87	538,718.00	415,208.87	0.00	0.00	0.00
California	3,412,588.91	1,953,952.00	1,458,636.91	0.00	0.00	0.00
Colorado	4,004,397.47	919,552.50	1,015,254.75	1,120,604.10	911,512.95	37,473.17
Connecticut	379,253.30	379,253.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Delaware	63,000.00	63,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
District of Columbia	266,862.60	0.00	0.00	146,393.40	0.00	120,469.20
Florida	2,559,381.08	1,762,213.00	797,168.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
Georgia	204,784.68	204,784.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Guam	417,464.00	130,263.00	94,675.00	75,930.00	116,596.00	0.00
Hawaii	787,173.08	390,791.00	396,382.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
Idaho	770,227.72	651,956.00	118,271.72	0.00	0.00	0.00
Illinois	1,631,687.33	802,346.70	800,499.30	28,841.33	0.00	0.00
Indiana	297,021.38	297,021.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Iowa	411,240.66	411,240.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kansas	821,851.04	821,851.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kentucky	236,288.80	236,288.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Louisiana	1,031,158.80	600,000.00	431,158.80	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maine	235,198.10	235,198.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maryland	1,299,072.70	390,790.50	397,861.95	439,180.20	71,240.05	0.00
Massachusetts	410,607.36	390,790.50	19,816.86	0.00	0.00	0.00
Michigan	5,936,648.80	1,313,463.30	1,342,043.40	1,427,378.00	1,319,482.53	534,281.57
Minnesota	1,334,787.75	1,334,787.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mississippi	208,500.45	208,500.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Missouri	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Montana	1,049,306.14	916,101.75	133,204.39	0.00	0.00	0.00
N. Marianas	15,570.00	15,570.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Nebraska	314,004.36	314,004.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Nevada	1,112,430.59	584,326.00	528,104.59	0.00	0.00	0.00
New Hampshire	1,160,138.57	390,790.50	397,861.95	371,486.12	0.00	0.00
New Jersey	1,726,611.20	390,790.50	397,861.95	439,180.20	361,279.35	137,499.20
New Mexico	1,547,352.29	698,201.85	714,348.45	134,981.99	0.00	0.00
New York	1,641,040.81	994,587.00	646,453.81	0.00	0.00	0.00
North Carolina	3,187.50	3,187.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
North Dakota	4,400.60	4,400.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ohio	1,692,420.51	902,230.65	790,189.86	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oklahoma	501,745.53	501,745.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oregon	1,321,964.83	956,200.00	365,764.83	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pennsylvania	1,910,396.68	994,203.75	916,192.93	0.00	0.00	0.00
Puerto Rico	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rhode Island	1,203,610.26	390,790.50	397,861.95	414,957.81	0.00	0.00
South Carolina	1,176,166.55	1,000,000.00	176,166.55	0.00	0.00	0.00
South Dakota	28,648.89	28,648.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tennessee	892,802.13	526,994.00	365,808.13	0.00	0.00	0.00
Texas	6,823,764.93	1,953,952.20	1,989,309.00	2,195,900.85	684,602.88	0.00
Utah	607,862.49	607,862.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vermont	33,999.65	33,999.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Virgin Islands	66,277.00	66,277.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Virginia	598,981.07	598,981.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Washington	1,029,851.45	871,236.00	158,615.45	0.00	0.00	0.00
West Virginia	716,123.40	390,790.50	325,332.90	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wisconsin	152,893.57	152,893.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wyoming	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Unobligated Balance	57,792,076.19	30,648,659.75	15,879,489.43	6,941,227.00	3,493,156.87	829,723.14

Wildlife Restoration Program

President Franklin Roosevelt on September 2, 1937 signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration into law. This Act, popularly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act (PR Act) after its cosponsors, has been administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since July 1, 1938.

Funds are derived from Federal excise taxes on the manufacture of arms and ammunition, including handguns, and on archery equipment. These taxes are collected by the Department of the Treasury and apportioned each year to the 50 States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands by the Service on the basis of a formula set forth in the Act that includes the area of each State and the number of paid license holders in each State. In the early 1970's States were first authorized to spend funds on hunter education and shooting ranges.

Wildlife restoration projects and State fish and wildlife agencies are reimbursed by the Program for up to 75 percent of the total cost of approved projects. Projects may include, but are not limited to, the acquisition of areas of land or water for wildlife; the management, restoration or improvement of habitat for wildlife; mammal, bird, and hunter research or surveys; hunter education; and the construction and maintenance of shooting and target ranges.

Over \$203 million was available to States and Territories for use in wildlife restoration and hunter education (including shooting ranges) activities in Fiscal Year 2004, which was a \$17 million increase over the average of the two previous years. Some of the current challenges faced by the State fish and wildlife agencies in the wildlife restoration program include the prevention and control of wildlife diseases; the prevention and control of invasive, habitat-altering plants and nuisance wildlife; and

sustaining wildlife populations and quality hunting opportunities in the face of increased human growth and development in many areas.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Tim Hess.

Landowner Incentive Program

Congress funded the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), authorized in the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2004, with \$30 million derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Fiscal Year 2004 fund awards were made based on the 75 program applications received prior to the October 15, 2003 deadline. This program provides competitive matching grants to States, Territories, the District of Columbia, and Tribes. The Service allocated \$2.9 million to Tribes, \$25.8 million to the States and Territories, and \$1.3 million for Congressional rescissions and administrative costs in Fiscal Year 2004. In February 2004, the Director announced that the State and Territorial allocation had been awarded to 40 of the 43 States that had submitted project proposals.

The grants are to establish or supplement landowner incentive programs that provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners for projects that protect and restore habitats of listed species or species determined to be at-risk. LIP projects involve activities such as the restoration of wetlands and grasslands, the removal of exotic plants to restore natural prairies, fencing to enhance important riparian habitats, instream structural improvements to benefit aquatic species, road closures to protect habitats and reduce harassment of wildlife, and conservation easements. The Service requires a minimum 25 percent non-Federal share of project costs.

The Program features two levels of funding, Tier-1 and Tier-2. Proposals can be submitted for either Tier-1 or Tier-2 competition (or both), with a maximum amount awarded to any individual State not to exceed 5 percent of the total funds available. Tier-1 grants (capped at \$180,000 per State and \$75,000 for D.C. and the Territories) are intended to provide a base for States to fund staff and associated costs necessary to develop a new or enhance an existing landowner incentive program. Tier-2 grants are



intended to 'implement' State landowner incentive programs by providing technical or financial assistance to private landowners through a variety of means to support on-the-ground projects. As of this same date, 24 of the States that received awards in Fiscal Year 2004 have obligated funds through one or more grant agreements.

On July 13, the Service Director sent a letter to the States requesting feedback on the current criteria being used to rank State LIP grant proposals. We are currently evaluating the comments received and will publish a notice with slightly revised criteria in the Federal Register (and grants.gov), along with a 60-day Request for Proposals in anticipation of some Fiscal Year 2005 appropriation for this Program.

The Service works with the States and other Federal agencies to streamline the program. We work with other Federal programs affecting wildlife conservation on private lands, such as those supported by the Farm Bill, to ensure complementary implementation of wildlife conservation actions. The Service assisted the States in Regions 3 and 5 during the past six

months by hosting workshops to share LIP implementation strategies among States and to facilitate this Program's implementation even further.

For more information on this Program, contact Kim Galvan or Tim Hess.

State Audit Update

We are continuing in the second cycle of State audits that are being conducted by the DOI office of Inspector general. there are currently thirteen audits in process. To date, fifteen second cycle audits have been completed for which we have received final audit reports. Our experiences and the feedback from the audits continue to be very positive. We are striving to maintain open lines of communication between the auditors, grantees, and Federal Assistance offices, and we welcome all comments and suggestions on our audit program.

Our audit policies are completed and have become part of the Service Manual. They can be found in the Fish and Wildlife Service, Service Manual, chapters 417 FW 1 through 6. The policies outline the responsibilities for audits, define terms

associated with audits, provide an overview of the audit process, and establish procedures for objectives, planning, conducting, reporting, resolution, and appeals.

For additional information on this issue, please contact Patrick McHugh.

Boating Infrastructure Grant Program Looks Toward the Future

The Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program remains one of the Service's most competitive grant programs. The program's popularity is likely to increase in the future years as demographic and economic forces combine to result in increased demand for facilities for large, transient vessels. In anticipation of the increased demands for BIG funds, the Service is making several changes in the administration of the program designed to improve its management. Some changes have already occurred and additional changes may be implemented in the future pending the results of an independent review of the BIG program that was requested by the Director.

One change the Service has already implemented is to delay the schedule for accepting proposals for the fiscal year 2005 grant cycle. The Service is requesting that proposals be received by late October, rather than in September, to allow marinas to concentrate on their businesses during the peak summer boating season. In addition, the BIG program became the Service's second national grant program to accept funding proposals electronically through the Grants.Gov e-grant initiative.

Additional changes in the BIG program's administration may result from a review of the program conducted by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC). The Director charged the SFBPC to review the program and to prepare a report on the group's findings and recommendations later this year. As part of this review, members of the SFBPC review committee and Service



personnel met in February to discuss the administration of the BIG program. The SFBPC is also seeking input on the program from both state agency coordinators of the BIG program, grant recipients, boating groups, and other individuals.

Funding for the BIG program is likely to increase in fiscal year 2005. The program has received strong support from the American League of Anglers and Boaters (ALAB), who have successfully lobbied Congress for its reauthorization, as well other programs funded from the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund. Under ALAB's proposal, funding for the BIG program would increase to approximately \$10 million annually, an increase of \$2 million.

The BIG program ultimately received full funding (\$8 million) in fiscal year 2004 and the Service has awarded out these funds. Authorization for the BIG program expired at the end of fiscal year 2003. Because its authorization was included as part of the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) Highway Bill passed previously by Congress, the program received temporary authorizations and funding enhancements throughout most of fiscal year 2003. This delayed the announcement of awards for the Tier-2 portion of the BIG program until late in the fiscal year. The Service received 32 proposals requesting a total of \$17.9 million of federal funding from the Tier-2 portion of the BIG program for Fiscal Year 2004. In addition, the States requested \$3.07 million in Tier-1 funding from the program.

For additional information on this program, contact Brian Bohnsack.

Federal Assistance Information Management System (FAIMS)

The Federal Assistance Information Management System (FAIMS) is used by Fish and Wildlife Service personnel to manage the complete life cycle of grants administered by the Service. FAIMS is critical to the reconciliation of grant

related fiscal information that exists in systems operated by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Federal Assistance, and the Division of Finance. The checks and balances built into FAIMS ensure the integrity of Federal Assistance's fiscal data as confirmed by the audit firm KPMG, LLP.

So far in Fiscal Year 2004 emphasis has been placed on:

- **Attaining Certification and Accreditation.** Full Certification and Accreditation for FAIMS was attained on July 1, 2004. Various governmental laws require that Federal Information Technology (IT) systems be put through rigorous evaluation processes to ensure their security. FAIMS was authorized to operate under Fish and Wildlife Service procedures in affect at the time the system was deployed. An increased emphasis on IT security in the Federal government resulted in new compliance requirements. FAIMS security had to be reevaluated under new guidance issued by the Department of Interior.

- **Consolidating the FAIMS databases.** Database consolidation was completed at the end of February, 2004. The number of servers required to operate the production FAIMS databases have been reduced from ten to four. The reduction has simplified operations and maintenance, reduced the cost of operations, and facilitated easier disaster recovery.

During the remainder of 2004 emphasis will be placed on:

Activities relating to implementing the eGrantsPlus module of the Department's Financial Business Management System (FBMS). This includes such activities as working with Departmental personnel, Bearingpoint, and its subcontractors to:

- 1) complete the analysis required to design and develop specifications for an interface between the eGrantsPlus module of FBMS and FAIMS,
- 2) complete the analysis required to successfully convert the data contained in FAIMS into the eGrantsPlus module, and
- 3) participate in the analysis required to configure the real property module of the



core FBMS system so that lands, buildings, and structures acquired with Federal Assistance can be stored in the system.

One additional note: Dale Beaumariage, Training Specialist, retired July 30, 2004 and Luther Zachary resigned in late August. The Service appreciates all that Dale and Luther have done to make FAIMS such a valuable tool to the Federal Assistance Programs. They will be missed.

National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation

The 2006 Survey will be the 11th managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1955. The Service has sponsored the survey every five years at the request of State fish and wildlife agencies. It is one of the Nation's most important sources of information on wildlife-related recreation.

The 2006 Survey will be similar in scope and methodology to those conducted in 1991, 1996, and 2001— so their estimates will be comparable. The Census Bureau will contact 90,000 households to identify samples of 31,500 sportsmen and 24,300 wildlife watchers to collect detailed information on participation and expenditures. Census will collect the information through computer-assisted telephone and in-person interviews in April and September 2006, and in January 2007.

The survey is funded by grants from the Multistate Conservation Grant Programs. The products will include preliminary reports, final national and 50 state reports, CDs with the data base, and quick facts brochures. All data and reports also will be available on a website.

The Service is planning the 2006 Survey. The Service, IAFWA, and Census staff met with representatives from the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies and with national non-governmental organizations to discuss survey content and reporting needs.

The Service also is analyzing and producing reports based on 2001 survey data. Three addenda to the 2001 Survey produced so far in 2004 include the following reports: *Participation and Expenditure Patterns of African-American, Hispanic, and Female Hunters and Anglers*; and *Fishing and Hunting 1991-2001: Avid, Casual, and Intermediate Participation Trends*.

Copies of the survey reports are available on request or are accessible through the following website: <http://federalaid.fws.gov>. For more information you also may contact the Service's survey staff.

For additional information on this issue, please contact Sylvia Cabrera.



Two New Survey Reports

In July 2004, the Service released two new survey reports based on the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, *Report 2001-4, Participation and Expenditure Patterns of African-American, Hispanic, and Female Hunters and Anglers*; and *Report 2001-5, Fishing and Hunting 1991-2001: Avid, Casual, and Intermediate Participation Trends*.

Participation and Expenditure Patterns of African-American, Hispanic, and Female Hunters and Anglers presents detailed information and comparisons on participation rates, participation levels (days and trips), expenditures, usage of public and private land, types of hunting and fishing, and species pursued. Also presented are models that predict the likelihood of participation in hunting and fishing. The models explain that regardless of other socio-demographic traits African-Americans, Hispanics, and women are less likely to hunt and fish.

The data can be used to improve hunting and fishing experiences of low participation groups. Data on participation rates, participation levels and expenditures help pinpoint certain groups of people more or less likely to participate in specific outdoor recreational activities, allowing managers to direct information toward the appropriate user groups. For instance, a large proportion of Hispanic anglers live in the West and fish for trout. Changes in trout fishing regulations or trout fish advisories in the West could have a large impact on this group. Wildlife professionals could target information to this group in Spanish and English and choose the best medium (e.g., newspaper, magazines, television, posters) to disseminate the information.

Expenditure information can provide the hunting and fishing industry with a better understanding of their customers. A key finding is that Hispanic anglers spend more on average on trips and equipment than many other groups. Furthermore,

the number of Hispanic anglers and their spending has increased significantly over the last decade.

Fishing and Hunting 1991-2001: Avid, Casual, and Intermediate Participation Trends sets forth the 1991-2001 trends in overall fishing and hunting and furthermore expands the analysis by examining important subgroups. Hunting and fishing are important to millions of Americans, with nearly one of five people participating in hunting and fishing in 2001.

From 1991 to 2001 the number of Americans who hunted and/or fished in the U.S. decreased 5 percent, with the number of anglers decreasing 4 percent and the number of hunters decreasing 7 percent. These drops occurred primarily during the second half of the 1990's.

We can better understand trends in overall fishing and hunting by examining the trends of subgroups such as avid and casual anglers and hunters. Avids, the 10% of all participants who fished or hunted the most days in a year; accounted for 40% to 50% of all days afield in 1991, 1996, and 2001. Another subgroup of all anglers and hunters were the casuals, those who fished or hunted one or two days in the year. The trends in casual angling and hunting have run counter to the trends in overall angling and hunting— with drops when overall trends were level and stability when overall trends declined.

The intermediate group between avid and casual anglers was the bulk of total participants. The intermediate anglers made up over 75% of all anglers in the three surveyed years, although they contributed only slightly more than half the days. The increase in intermediate anglers from 1991 to 1996 compensated for the loss of casual and avid anglers, maintaining the overall number of anglers. In 2001 the number of intermediate anglers dropped, and avid and casual angling did not increase, so the number of anglers decreased from 1996 to 2001.



The number of big game and migratory bird hunters in 2001 was the same as in 1991, while the number of small game and other animal hunters fell significantly. The 29% drop in small game hunting from 1991 to 2001 was led by the 47% drop in casual hunters' pursuit of small game, although avid and intermediate hunters also cut back on small game hunting. The significant drop in casual hunting from 1991 to 1996 was compensated by an increase in intermediate hunting, maintaining the overall numbers of hunters. The drop in intermediate hunters from 1996 to 2001 was not counterbalanced by an increase in avid or casual hunters.

Section 4 and 10: Hunter Education Program

Section 4 and 10 of the Wildlife Restoration Act provide financial support for state wildlife agencies hunter education and public recreational shooting programs. In 2003, states used this source of funding to support basic hunter education course delivery, curriculum development, advanced hunter education courses, development, maintenance and operations of public shooting ranges, and instructor training. Many states used these funds to develop and support hunter

education efforts that are uniquely suited to serve the needs of the state's hunting, and potential hunting, communities. One such example is Alaska's mobile Hunter Education trailer. The mobile unit consists of a 36-foot 5th-wheel mobile trailer fully equipped to conduct a wide variety of Hunter Education and shooting sports activities. State Hunter Education staff travels to events and towns and villages accessible by road or Alaska Marine Highway (state ferry) to offer clinics. The mobile shooting sports trailer is fully equipped with rifles, shotguns, and supporting equipment to conduct outdoor clinics in rifle marksmanship, shotgun wingshooting skills, muzzleloading skills, nontoxic shot waterfowl education, bowhunter education, hunter education, and both youth and women's beginning shooter programs. This is especially helpful in bringing certification to hunters in small villages where there are no certified instructors or limited facilities and equipment.

Arizona has used Section 10 funds to develop Hunter Education Program teaching materials in Spanish for its residents. Additionally, Arizona has made provisions to provide a person to sign for hearing impaired participants. The hunting communities served by state

wildlife agencies can vary greatly from state to state, Section 4 and 10 funds provide agencies critical funding for developing hunting and shooting programs that are custom tailored for their unique situation and needs.

The State of Kentucky used Section 10 Hunter Education funds to teach archery shooting and safety skills to 150,000 Kentucky physical education students in grades 4 through 12. The "Archery in Schools Program" gives many young people exposure to the sport. The state also constructed two unmanned barrel shooting ranges at Taylorsville Lake and Green River WMA's. These shooting ranges include a 100-yard tube range for rifles and pistols with four stalls under an overhanging shelter; a shotgun patterning area, and a parking lot for visitors. The ranges have an archery range with stationary targets and the shotgun range including target holders for patterning use and a clays launcher.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Joshua Winchell.

The Financial and Business Management System (FBMS) of the Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior is migrating to a centralized and comprehensive systems approach. This new system will manage all business aspects of the Department and will be called the Financial and Business Management System (FBMS). The Department contracted with BearingPoint (formerly KPMG Consulting) to align and integrate all its business processes under one umbrella management system.

The Department plans to deploy grant programs administered by the Federal Assistance Program currently managed through the Federal Assistance Information Management System (FAIMS) on October 1, 2006. Until that date, current FA grant application and award processes will continue using

FAIMS. The Service will continue to provide information, as it is received from the Department, regarding training opportunities for States and Territories and other grant recipients.

For more information on this issue, please contact Lori Bennett or Pam Matthes.

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Sets Precedent

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program became the first grant program administered by the Division of Federal Assistance to use the Grants.Gov web site and to accept funding proposals electronically. The Service posted notice of the request for proposals to the Grants.Gov web site and also made required proposal documents available online at this site. Although no electronic proposal applications were received this year, the Service anticipates this method of submission to increase in popularity in the coming years as knowledge increases about the site.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received 38 proposals from 16 states requesting approximately \$28 million of federal funds from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant program for the coming fiscal year (FY 2005). The Service anticipates that approximately \$15 million will be available for grant awards in this fiscal year, though the final amount will not be known until receipts into the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund are finalized later this fall.

The Service reviewed the proposals and is determining the project awards for fiscal year 2005. The announcement of award recipients will be made later this fall.

A variety of Service program areas work to ensure the success of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. In particular, the Regional Federal Assistance Offices are responsible

for financial administration and the Coastal Program in the Regions and Field provide technical assistance to the States.

For additional information on this issue, please contact Brian Bohnsack.



Clean Vessel Act Program Funds Released: Major Program Change May Occur in Future Years

Cooperators in the U.S. Fish and Service's Clean Vessel Act (CVA) grant program may notice a major change in the regulations of the CVA program in the coming years. Specifically, the coastal project scoring preference required by the original act may be changed to allow proposals from inland waters to compete equally for available funding. The change in direction for the program is supported by the American League of Anglers and Boaters (ALAB) and is the result of ALAB's and others' recognition of the increased demand for sewage pump out facilities for recreational boaters in inland waters. ALAB has included this program change in their consensus position and it has been incorporated into various versions of the reauthorization bills being considered by Congress. The proposed change remains to be approved by Congress, though it is included in versions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act (SAFETEA) being considered by Congress, also known as the SAFETEA Highway Bill.

In addition to this change, the recently released Oceans Report recommended that the CVA program be transferred to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Department of Interior has taken an official position against this proposed transfer of authority. Congress is likely to take action on the Oceans Report in the coming fiscal year, though their intentions for the control of the program remain unclear at this time.

The proposed changes did not affect the fiscal year 2004 grant cycle. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced the fiscal year 2004 funding awards for the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) grant program. The announcement was late this year due to the delays in the determination of the program's funding for this fiscal year. Funding for the CVA program was affected by Congress' deliberations on the Highway Bill. Authorization for the CVA

Fiscal Year 2004 Clean Vessel Act Awards

<i>State</i>	<i>Project Type</i>	<i>Final Award Recommendation</i>
Alabama	Inland	\$135,731
Alabama	Coastal	\$82,987
Alaska	Inland	\$256,800
Arizona	Inland	\$134,330
Arkansas	Inland	\$39,800
California	Inland	\$950,000
California	Coastal	\$1,091,548
Connecticut	Inland	\$108,682
Connecticut	Coastal	\$764,652
Florida	Inland	\$915,375
Florida	Coastal	\$1,550,694
Georgia	Inland	\$48,849
Kentucky	Inland	\$51,675
Maine	Coastal	\$261,997
Maryland	Coastal	\$602,000
Massachusetts	Coastal	\$743,350
Michigan	Coastal	\$60,000
Missouri	Inland	\$36,000
New Hampshire	Inland	\$20,170
New Hampshire	Coastal	\$58,830
New York	Inland	\$143,719
New York	Coastal	\$355,916
Ohio	Coastal	\$45,000
Oklahoma	Inland	\$51,045
Oregon	Inland	\$453,912
Oregon	Coastal	\$332,433
Pennsylvania	Inland	\$34,761
Pennsylvania	Coastal	\$55,227
Tennessee	Inland	\$430,000
Texas	Coastal	\$150,000
Washington	Inland	\$175,000
Washington	Coastal	\$725,000
Total		\$10,865,483

program expired at the end of fiscal year 2003. Because its authorization was included as part of the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) Highway Bill passed previously by Congress, the program received temporary authorizations and funding enhancements throughout most of fiscal year 2003. The CVA program received its full funding authorization for fiscal year 2004 in August.

Like other programs funded from the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, the CVA program has received reauthorization support from the American League of Anglers and Boaters (ALAB). ALAB has proposed that funding for the CVA program be reauthorized for future fiscal years and receive funding at approximately its current level of \$10 million annually.

The Service received 32 proposals from 24 States requesting \$13.6 million of funding in fiscal year 2004. The projects proposed for funding were reviewed by Division of Federal Assistance staff and by an inter-agency review committee consisting of representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The following is a list of the states and the activities planned with the project awards.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Brian Bohnsack.

Alabama

Coastal Areas- The state plans to install three (3) new pump out systems. In addition, program funds will be used to continue educational projects.

Inland Areas- The state plans to install five (5) new pump out systems. In addition, program funds will be used to continue educational projects.

Alaska

Program funds will be used to install pump out stations in Juneau (Aurora Harbor) and Seward. Rehabilitate existing pump out station equipment at



five locations. In addition, reprint and distribute a pamphlet that will increase boater's awareness of the need for proper waste disposal.

Arizona

The program awards will be used as part of the state's efforts to ensure that each major waterway in Arizona has the appropriate number of pump out facilities necessary to accommodate boats with on-board sanitation facilities. This year's awards will be used to add new pump-out facilities at Lake Powell and Lake Pleasant.

Arkansas

Program funds will be used to continue boater awareness and educational programs through the distribution of marine sewage disposal leaflets and flyers at all marinas on impounded lakes statewide, in addition, the distribution of Marina Environmental Newsletters. Newsletters will be sent to marinas, to update owners on current marine sewage disposal programs and proposed legislation.

California

Coastal Areas- The programs funds will be used to increase the number and availability of sewage pump out and dump stations into both public and private boating facilities in coastal areas throughout the state, and to actively educate targeted audiences about the problems associated with vessel wastes.

Inland Areas- The state plans to provide ten (10) floating restrooms, four (4) pump out or dump station installations, upgrades or renovations, and four (4) pump out barges. The floating restrooms are anticipated to be public projects and the pump out/ dump stations will be privately operated facilities.

Connecticut

Coastal Areas- The grant award will allow the state to increase the number of pump out and waste reception facilities statewide in coastal areas. In addition, the award will be used enhance existing pump out facilities. Program funds will also be used to continue the state's successful program to educate boaters about the importance of proper sewage disposal.

Inland Areas- The state plans to increase the number of pump out and waste reception facilities that are available to the boating public on Candlewood Lake. The state also plans use the funds to enhance existing pump out facilities. Program funds will also be used to continue the state's successful program to educate boaters about the importance of proper sewage disposal.

Florida

*Coastal Areas-*Based on available funding improve water quality and affected habitats by providing an additional 245 pump out facilities for safe and sanitary disposal of vessel sewage waste throughout Florida with continued emphasis on areas of high demand or increased sensitivity.

Inland Areas- The states goal is to improve water quality and affected habitats by providing an additional 54

pump out facilities for safe and sanitary disposal of vessel sewage waste throughout inland areas of Florida with emphasis in the state's inland areas of special sensitivity.

Georgia

Inland Areas- The program funds will help contribute to a dock and pump out facilities at the Victoria Landing Marina on Lake Allatoona.

Kentucky

The state plans to construct new pump out facilities at Lake Cumberland and Lake Barkley. These lakes are amongst the most popular in the state.

Maine

Coastal Areas- The states plan to install or upgrade ten (10) pump-out stations. In addition, the state plans to provide operation and maintenance funds to marinas in order to ensure continued access to pump out facilities for the recreational boating public.

Maryland

Coastal Areas- The programs funds will be used to construct new pump out facilities and upgrade existing facilities throughout coastal areas statewide. In addition, funds will be used to continue the state's educational efforts to inform boaters about the importance of proper sewage disposal.

Massachusetts

Coastal Areas- The state plans use the award for the operation and maintenance of sixty-two (62) pump out vessels, forty-five (45) shore side pump out vessels, and fourteen dump stations. Program funds will be also be used to purchase one (1) new boat engine for the Onset Bay Marine pump out vessel, which will ensure its continued service in the environmentally sensitive Onset Bay area. Funds will also be used to upgrade existing web sites with pump out locations, and updated links to other clean boating sites. As well as providing information and outreach at two (2) regional Boat Shows with newly designed promotional materials.

New Hampshire

Coastal Areas- The states plans are to upgrade an older pump out system that is nearing shows signs of failure. Install a new pump-out facility at a public access site or marina. In addition, introduce a new mobile pump out boat to the Hampton Harbor and Rye Harbor areas; accommodating approximately 300 moored vessels.

Inland Areas- The states plans are to construct a pump out facility on Lake Sunapee, which will help to protect the Town of Sunapee's water supply. In addition, the state plans to replace an existing dump station on Lake Winnisquam. In addition, the state plans to construct or update a boat pump out and/ or dump station facility at a private marina on Lake Winnepesaukee.

New York

Coastal Areas- As funds allow, the state plans to increase the number of pump out and dump stations available on New York State's coastal zone waters to the maximum number identified in the state's plan. In areas where visiting recreational boat traffic is particularly heavy, provide pump out and dump stations in excess of the maximum number identified in the state's pump out plan.

Inland Areas- Program funds will be used to help increase the number of pump outs and dump stations available on New York State's inland waterways.

Ohio

Coastal Areas- The state plans to install a pump out dock at Middle Bass Park, and to reprint clean vessel practices in the Ohio Boat Operators Guide and the Ohio Boating Education Course. In addition, the state plans to update available information on the location of pump outs and dump stations.

Oklahoma

The program funds will help with the installation of a marine pump out station at the Pioneer Cove Marina as a significant environmental improvement to Kaw Lake.

Oregon

Coastal Areas- Program funds will be used to construct one (1) pump out station, 1 (one) dump station and two (2) floating restrooms. In addition, the state will use the award to operate and maintain nineteen (19) publicly owned pump out facilities statewide. This includes fourteen (14) pump out stations, fourteen (14) dump stations and five (5) floating restrooms. The state will also use the award to continue its successful education program that informs boaters about the importance of proper sewage disposal. The program award will allow the state to continue providing technical assistance to public and private operators for their permit approvals and grants applications procedures associated with the state's CVA program.

Inland Areas- Program funds will be used to construct one (1) pump out station, two (2) dump stations and three (3) floating restrooms. The program award will also allow the state to operate and maintain 28 publicly owned facilities statewide. This includes thirteen (13) pump out stations, eighteen (18) dump stations and eight (8) floating restrooms. In addition, the grant award will allow the state to continue its successful educational program that informs boaters about the importance of proper sewage disposal. In addition, the Oregon Marine Board will be working in conjunction with marine dealerships to provide boaters information on proper vessels waste disposal.

Pennsylvania

Coastal Areas- The state plans to construct three (3) pump-out facilities and two (2) dump stations, and upgrade two existing units.

Inland Areas- Program funds will construct two (2) new permanent pump-out stations and two (2) dump stations.

Tennessee

Program funds will be used to maintain a state grant program that assists local municipal and private marinas with the development of sewage pump out facilities. In addition, the state will use the

award to fund its existing educational program.

Texas

Coastal Areas-Program funds will be used to construct six (6) pump out facilities, continue a boater education project regarding proper waste disposal, and fund administrative costs to develop strategies for the future of the CVA program in Texas.

Washington

Coastal Areas- Program funding will be used to help continue to expand the network of boat sewage disposal facilities throughout the state.

Inland Areas- Program funding will be used to help continue to expand the network of boat sewage disposal facilities throughout the state.

For additional information on this program, please contact Brian Bohnsack.

Federal Assistance National Training Program

The National Federal Assistance Training Program, located at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, is part of the Washington Office Division of Federal Assistance. The training program develops and delivers grants management training for Federal Assistance staff and State fish and wildlife agency grantees. These training courses increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of State and Federal personnel who manage Federal Assistance grants. This training helps to ensure that Federal Assistance grant managers consistently apply the laws, rules, and policies that govern Federal Assistance Program administration.

Since 1996, more than 1,300 State and Federal Assistance grant managers and grantees have received training through courses developed by, or offered in cooperation with, the Federal assistance Training Program. The majority of those

trained have completed Basic Grants Management (379 graduates) or the Project Leaders Course (597 graduates). Additional courses offered include: Federal Assistance Audit Training for Auditors, Boating Facilities Grant Workshop, Audit Training Workshop for State Federal Assistance Coordinators, Tribal Grants Management, and Group Systems Leader (Electronic Meeting Facilitator) Training.

A Basic Grants Management Course is offered each year. Interest and demand for the State specific Federal Assistance Project Leaders Course continues to grow. Eight project leaders Courses have been completed so far in Fiscal Year 2004. Additional Project Leaders Courses are being planned for FY 2005.

Several new courses and workshops are being developed: 1) Fiscal Management of Federal Assistance Grants and 2) Compliance Issues for Federal Assistance Grants, 3) Grants Management for Tribal Grantees, 4) Comprehensive Management System Grant Managers Workshop.

Current efforts also include revision of all courses and materials to incorporate changes anticipated by the implementation of the new Financial and Business Management System (FBMS), new Director's Orders, and guidance document revisions.

Course descriptions, an on-line application, training materials, and grant manager's resources are available on the Federal Assistance Training Program web site at: <http://training.fws.gov/fedaid/>.

For additional information contact Steve Leggans at the National Conservation Training Center at 304/876 7927.

Public Access Civil Rights Program

Although not funded with Federal Assistance funding, the Public Access Civil Rights Program is located within the Division of Federal Assistance. This Program is a vital link to our State agency partners because of its efforts to ensure States' compliance with federal civil rights requirements.

Liaisons with multicultural community groups is a key component of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Public Access Civil Rights Program. Increased partnerships among the Service, State fish and wildlife agencies, and minority and disability groups provide a pro-active framework for meeting civil rights requirements. Active minority liaison associations and disability liaison associations, conferring continuously with State government and Service partners, can help prevent civil rights complaints, and help resolve them at an early intervention stage. Women's groups accomplish the same objectives on gender equity in education programs such as hunter education and angler education.

Multicultural group liaisons and partnerships also facilitate conservation education in an increasing number of communities, thus enhancing the conservation mission of the Service and the State agencies. Including traditionally excluded or under-represented groups in State recreational programs translates into more funding for critical conservation initiatives due to the increased receipts from excise taxes on the sale of recreational equipment. Minority group partners in particular can be instrumental in ensuring equal access for public beneficiaries with limited English proficiency, and for helping to ensure that environmental policies and practices do not have adverse impacts on minority or low income groups, which is a focus of the Environmental Justice Program. An active presence by the Service and State agencies in diverse communities also provides greater opportunities to recruit diverse employees, given workforce

diversity challenges faced both by the Service and its State partners. Increased multicultural group liaisons is a win-win for all parties, with multiple deliverables; thus, the Service will be encouraging and promoting an ever-increasing number of such liaisons and partnerships in the months and years to come.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Doug Gentile.

Multistate Conservation Grant Program

The Multistate Conservation Grant Program, born out of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Improvement Act of 2000, has awarded over 75 grants since 2001 to States, groups of States, and non-governmental organizations throughout the United States. The Multistate Conservation Grant Program is a cooperative effort with and has shared responsibilities between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). These grants support products that solve high priority problems affecting States on a regional or national basis and allow for efficient use of limited resources to address the National Conservation Needs of States established through the IAFWA.

Research that enhances and improves the ability of States to administer their agencies is supported, such as the Multistate Conservation Grant funding a sole source testing to evaluate the effectiveness of commercially available pump out equipment. This grant is more cost-effective than each State conducting its own independent testing program to determine which equipment provides the best performance over the longest period of time. Many Multistate Conservation Grants meet the dual demands of improving the ability of States to administer their programs and developing new wildlife management tools, such as the grant that provided increased awareness and understanding among wildlife professionals, trappers, and other outdoor

enthusiasts of the available best management practices in trapping, as well as providing the public with a better understanding of trapping and its effectiveness as a wildlife management tool. Further, they assist States with keeping up with new legal, regulatory or policy changes occurring in one part of the nation that affects States in other parts of the country through providing support to the "Wildlife Law News Quarterly" and its online services.

Programs are supported that facilitate the evolution of new tools used by States to enhance their management capabilities. The evolution of new State licensing systems, such as the start of the Automated Wildlife Data System Program, developed techniques and standards to enable agencies to share and utilize data for administration, enforcement, improved resource management, customer service and marketing functions. Approval of new aquaculture drugs and chemicals are supported, such as a new sedative with a

short withdrawal time having applications

for cultured fish species which can increase survival after handling or for immersion therapy to treat diseases of cool and warm water fishes cultured on public fish facilities.

Partnerships are developed and encouraged through grants that provide development assistance, marketing tools and outreach for State conservation agencies, manufacturers, distributors, sporting goods retailers, scout troops, hunting and shooting clubs and civic organizations to sponsor hands-on introductions to hunting and fishing events, shooting sports and archery. These projects support recruitment and participation in hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation by providing funding to such Programs as Becoming an Outdoors Woman, Hooked on Fishing—Not on Drugs, Step Outside, Women in the Outdoors, National 4-H Sport fishing Initiative, and the Trailblazer Adventure Program.

As the Multistate Conservation Grant Program enters its fifth year of awards,



the good work of the Program needs to be continued by addressing the highest priority needs are growing in number even though resources that are remaining static. To do so, the Service and the IAFWA are working cooperatively to improve project selection criteria and grant management processes. The IAFWA improved the foundation for the solicitation and selection of grant projects for the 2005 grant cycle. The selection of National Conservation Needs (NCN) occurs annually through the IAFWA committee process. The 2005 NCN identification and selection process differed from previous years by requiring proposed needs to include a clear and specific statement of need and to articulate desired outcomes. NCNs should address IAFWA's five-year strategic plan so that the Multistate Conservation Grant Program contributes to solving critical issues of the highest priority to the States.

Also, IAFWA and the Service worked cooperatively in preparing technical scoring criteria that will be applied to project proposals that will, in turn, generate a relative ranking among proposals for grants to be issued in 2005. The technical scoring criteria award more points to proposals that benefit more States, use sound science, propose reasonable project costs and measurable products and/or deliverables, and clearly state the expected benefits to State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The proposals will be judged on the merits of the proposal, the proposal's adherence to formatting and content requirements, and the proposal's relative ranking. Also, applicants' prior experience and past performance on projects similar to proposed work will be evaluated and have bearing on the selection of priority projects. Consistent with previous years, the Directors of the State Fish and

Wildlife Agencies will approve a new priority list of grants for 2005, in consultations with non-governmental organizations, sportsmen organizations and industries that support or promote fishing, hunting, trapping, recreational shooting, bow hunting or archery. By October 1, the IAFWA will submit the priority list to the Service's new Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs for award in January 2005. We look forward to receiving high quality grant proposals that will continue the good work of the Multistate Conservation Grant Program throughout the Nation.

For additional questions on this issue, please contact Pam Matthes.



**Special Highlight
Section of Region 4**



Fiscal Monitoring Program Benefits Southeast States

The Southeast Region has developed a unique, finance-related program that facilitates the monitoring of Federal Assistance funds provided to each state, as well as promotes communication and builds trust with our states and insular territories. Just as each of us should have an annual physical checkup, we provide a fiscal checkup to each of our grantees every year to ensure their fiscal health.

The fiscal checkup is usually held in the State Capital at the headquarters of one of the state's fish and wildlife agencies. All state coordinators from each respective agency and program receiving Federal Assistance funds are invited to attend. These meetings are performed in the Spring, after states have received their final apportionment of Pittman-Robinson and Dingle Johnson funding. Federal Assistance staff in attendance

includes accountants, biologists, grant specialists, and often times supervisors. Our accountants conduct the sessions, while additional federal staff actively assist.

An array of fiscal topics are discussed including unobligated balances, estimated safety margins, and boating access funds. Other areas discussed are candidates for reversion, financial status reports, and freshwater projects versus saltwater projects.

One overriding goal of these fiscal checkups is to improve communication; not only between FWS and the states, but also among agencies within a state. It has been discovered that state coordinators are not always aware that actions of "sister divisions and/or agencies" can effect their safety margins and reversions potential. With busy agendas, many state coordinators do not get a chance to meet often. The fiscal checkups provide an

opportunity for wildlife restoration, hunter education, marine and fresh water sport fish restoration, aquatic education, and boating access coordinators to meet and discuss common issues and concerns. Regional office developments and national legislation are often covered, too.

Such in-depth and timely communication of information provides early indications of program and grant problems that can be addressed well before the Federal financial books are closed on the 30th of September. Moreover, since 2001 when these meeting began, agency personnel have expressed strong support and appreciation for such get-togethers. Providing this type of customer service to our state partners continues to be a priority in the Southeast Region.



*Top Left: Torre Anderson, Tom McCoy, Bill Hetzler, Jerry Vits.
Bottom Left: Kerri Heywood, Marilyn Lawal, Shari Brewer.*



Top Left: Bill McDowell, Bob Gasaway, Craig Rooke, John Stremple. Bottom Left: Nicole Jimenez, EJ Williams, Mike Piccirilli, Christine Willis.

State Accomplishments

Alabama

Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program (WCRP) Funds Help Produce Valuable Alabama Wildlife Publication

In July 2002, the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries hosted The Second Alabama Nongame Wildlife Conference with a portion of their WCRP funds. Approximately 140 participants were involved in the meeting, which consisted of discussion groups led by committees of wildlife experts on the various animal groups. The data compiled from this symposium resulted in an impressive four-volume set of books, entitled *Alabama Wildlife*.

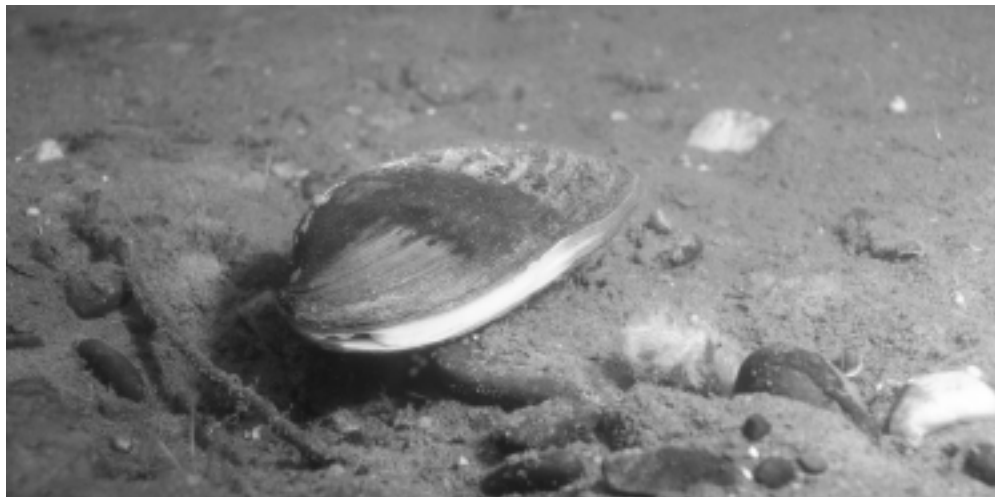
Volume 1 contains a brief review of the historical process and key people associated with the initiation of protection of the most sensitive taxa within Alabama, as well as a detailed annotated list of the aquatic mollusks and all the vertebrate taxa of the state. Those taxa from each group designated as Extirpated, Extirpated/Conservation Action Underway, Priority 1, or Priority 2 in Volume 1 were assigned to various experts for preparation of more in-depth individual species accounts that are contained in Volumes 2 and 3. Volume 2 specifically begins to focus on the most critically imperiled forms by updating the fishes portion of Vertebrate Animals in Need of Special Attention (Mount 1986)

and adding an entirely new section on the imperiled freshwater mussels and snails of the state. Volume 3 continues the focus on critically imperiled forms by updating the amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal portions of that text. In Volume 4 (Mirarchi et al. 2004c), conservation and management recommendations for all of the imperiled taxa reviewed in volumes 2 and 3 and their habitats are provided.

These volumes will form a basis for Alabama's Wildlife Conservation Strategy for State Wildlife Grant requirements and also will be used extensively by educators, researchers, students, recreationalists, governmental and private conservation entities, planners, and segments of the general public who may become involved in decision making processes that affect Alabama's wildlife resources.

Education Funds Used to Support Outdoor Expo

Alabama's Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division will utilize both aquatic education and hunter education funds to show citizens of Alabama how much fun they can have in the great outdoors. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will be hosting their Second Annual Outdoor Alabama Expo on September 25, 2004, at Oak Mountain State Park in Pelham, Alabama. Because of its close proximity to the city of Birmingham, Oak Mountain State Park is



a great location for attracting an urban population.

The Expo will consist of several hands-on activities that offer participants exposure to fishing, shooting sports, and archery in a fun, non-threatening atmosphere. Trained instructors managing each station will incorporate a strong emphasis on conservation. Events supported by Sport Fish Restoration include an aquatic touch tank, a fishing pond, aquatic educational activities, and fish art. Wildlife Restoration activities encompass several shooting sports such as shotgun, rim fire rifles, muzzle loading rifles, airgun and archery. Before enjoying shooting sports, participants must attend a brief lesson on firearms safety. Additional activities include rock climbing, wildlife viewing and camping.

With a national trend of declining fishing and hunting license sales, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division knows it must be innovative in attracting future shooters, hunters and anglers to the great outdoors. The Expo offers a variety of exciting outdoor activities to challenge each participant's interest and create new endeavors for the future.

National Coastal Wetlands Program Helps Save Important Wetlands Along Alabama's Coast

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, acquired 774 acres of coastal marsh, wet pine savannah and maritime forest. This acreage is adjacent to the 2,734 Grand Bay Savannah Nature Preserve acquired through Alabama's Forever Wild Land Trust in 1996. The 774 acres will serve as an addition to the nature preserve and be managed to complement the nearby Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge and Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. This acquisition was accomplished through the partnering of the Forever Wild Land Trust, the State Lands Division and The Nature Conservancy of Alabama. The 3,508 acres managed by the State Lands Division gives the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program an opportunity to host educational programs unique to this wetland ecosystem. In the spring of 2004, the State Lands Division continued its management and restoration efforts while conducting a prescribed burn of the Grand Bay Savannah Nature Preserve. This prescribed burn included 662 of the recently acquired 774 acres.

Coastal Grant: \$1,000,000

State share: \$954,341

Partner share: \$5,000



Arkansas

WCRP Funds Get Arkansas Youth Outdoors

With competing interests, students are spending less time outdoors. As a result, they are not learning about the environment, natural resources or wildlife that exists outside the classroom. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is utilizing WCRP funds to expose their youth to the wonders of the great outdoors. If children learn the value of the state's natural resources through personal experiences, they will be more apt to make informed decisions about wildlife and conservation issues as adults.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission received a WCRP grant titled Arkansas Wild School Yard Habitat Development Project, and they put their funds to good use. The purpose of the grant is to assist schools with planning and developing a schoolyard wildlife habitat, to teach students about wildlife management techniques, and to involve students in conservation education utilizing a hands-on approach to learning about natural resources. The agency was progressive in awarding grants to schools, distributing \$80,000 among 25 schools. The projects selected include several butterfly gardens, bird sanctuaries, aquatic study centers and wildlife trails with access bridges and plant signage.

Arkansas received another WCRP grant entitled Nature Mapping the Impacts of the Red Oak Borer Wildlife Habitats, that not only got students involved in the outdoors but also helped the agency with its conservation efforts. In recent years, the red oak borer activity has dramatically increased. The insect has infected both the Ouachita and Ozark Mountains, with damaging and dying oak trees reaching epidemic proportions.

Under this WCRP grant, home school students in grades 5 through 12 were involved in a one-day per week, 14-week program in which they actively worked in the field, learning how to nature map information related to the red oak borer.

Nature mapping was developed in Washington State as a tool for students and citizens to help determine a healthy future for fish and wildlife through the use of sound scientific techniques. Participants monitor natural areas, collect data, map observations, identify wildlife and then submit information to a database that will be used by land managers at both the state and local levels to make sound decisions. These Arkansas students can feel a sense of accomplishment knowing they've helped the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission learn more about the Red Oak Borer.

Involving our youth in fish and wildlife conservation is a wise use of grant funds. When students get outside the classroom and actively participate in nature, they become stewards of the land. Experiences such as these will hopefully last a lifetime and create future advocates for natural resources.

Sport Fish Restoration Dollars Help Arkansas Produce More Fish

Sport Fish Restoration funds are helping the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission produce more recreational fish at their Jim Henkle/Spring River State Fish Hatchery. The Jim Hinkle/Spring River State Fish Hatchery is located on a seven-acre island in the middle of the Spring River, near Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. The hatchery is one of the largest state owned trout producing facilities in the Southeast and the only coldwater facility operated by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The hatchery produces and stocks rainbow and cutthroat trout for Arkansas tailwater trout streams, spring creeks, and provides trout for their seasonal Urban and Community Trout Fishing Program as well as the South Arkansas Winter Trout Stocking Program.

In order to continue to serve the community well, repairs to the hatchery were imperative. The facilities required upgrades to ensure a safe, efficient and sanitary operation. Construction included a new fish production building, silos and

raceways. Renovation of current facilities consisted of renovating existing silos and modernizing spillways. A mechanical vegetation removal system and an overhead predator control barrier were installed. In addition, motorization of the hatchery's dam gate is underway.

Sport Fish Restoration funding has been utilized for two purposes at the hatchery—the design and engineering phase (\$594,530); and the construction phase (\$3,870,000).

Repairs to the hatchery dam will result in the drop/tilt gates to return to the vertical position if they are knocked over after a flood event and will no longer require manual resetting by hatchery personnel. The mechanical vegetation removal system will remove vegetation as it accumulates on the hatchery water supply intake screens during non-flood and flooding conditions, keeping water flows to the hatchery, constant. The new overhead predator netting will safeguard the fish stocks from great blue heron attacks.

Improvements made possible through Sport Fish Restoration have resulted in an increase in fish production from 400,000 pounds to 650,000 pounds annually. This increase in production will allow Arkansas to expand both their Urban and Community Trout Fishing Program and the South Arkansas Trout Program.

This project serves the angling community well through an increase in fish production that has resulted from renovations and additions made to the Jim Hinkle/Spring River State Fish Hatchery.



Florida

The Ladies are Fishing in Florida

There is one rule in the “Ladies Let’s Go Fishing” seminars and that is “No Yelling.” Founder, Betty Bauman felt that more women would fish if they were presented the sport in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. Like many women, Betty wanted to learn more about fishing but found it frustrating to ask questions in this male-dominated sport where some men weren’t so patient.

The weekend seminar begins with a welcome reception on Friday evening to begin the conservation message and allow participants to meet other women who fish. On Saturday morning, classroom instruction begins with a very strong conservation message led by Betty Bauman, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and reiterated by local anglers. Lectures continue throughout the morning and include topics such as fishing conservation and regulations, introduction to fishing, how to choose your gear, casting, and different types of fishing. In the afternoon, the ladies get to try their hands at skills including knot-tying, casting, gaffing grapefruit, net throwing, and backing up a trailer. The real fun comes on the second day of the seminar—that’s when the fishing takes place. Participants can choose from several fishing trips offered. The seminar

culminates with a fish fillet class and a chance for the ladies to share their experiences as well as some camaraderie—a lot of fun and instruction packed into one weekend!

Since its inception in 1997, the program has experienced huge success, expanding from several clinics throughout the state of Florida to areas such as Colorado, Alaska and Costa Rica. “Ladies Lets Go Fishing” has been featured on CBS/The Early Show, USA Today, and NBC’s Nightly News with Tom Brokaw. Betty Bauman has gained National recognition for her program and was named “Woman of the Year” by the American Sportfishing Association in 1999 and one of the Top 21 Most Influential Marine Industry Leaders for the 21st Century by Boating Industry Magazine. The testimonies from women who have completed the program are proof that this “No Yelling School of Fishing” is providing some valuable fishing experience as well as memories to last a lifetime. To witness some of the participants’ testimonies or to learn more about the program, visit www.ladiesletsgefishing.com.

**Ladies Let’s Go Fishing is a component of Florida’s saltwater aquatic education grant. Approximately, \$21,000 in Federal funds is dedicated to the program each year.*

Sport Fish Restoration Outreach Grant Produces Top-Notch SFR Videos

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has completed a series of four videos featuring Florida’s saltwater Sport Fish Restoration programs. As a product of Florida’s Saltwater Angler and Boater Outreach grant, these videos were produced and hosted by Mark Sosin, the award winning outdoor writer and television producer.

The first video in the series, *Maintaining Florida’s Fisheries*, explains to the angling and boating public how their SFR and saltwater fishing license dollars are being put to good use. The second video, *It’s in Your Hands*, focuses on how FWC’s marine fisheries research and management are utilized to protect and conserve Florida’s fish and wildlife. The video also highlights conservation measures, such as catch-and-release techniques that anglers can use to protect and conserve Florida’s fish and wildlife. These videos have received national and international awards. *Maintaining Florida’s Fisheries* received The Communicator Crystal Award of Excellence (2001) and a Telly Award (2002), and *It’s In Your Hands* received a Telly Award (2003).

The third video is entitled *Creating Marine Habitat: The Artificial Reef*. This video features the artificial reef program, which deploys and monitors artificial reefs statewide. It focuses on the various materials used to create artificial reefs, how locations are selected for deployment, and the overall importance of artificial reefs. The newest video, *The Science of Fishing*, is designed to help people understand more about the fish species they are catching.

These videos are available free of charge in either DVD or VHS, and can be ordered by logging on to <http://www.floridamarine.org/products/products.asp> or calling FWC directly at 727/ 896-8626 ext. 2072.



Participants in a “Ladies, Let’s Go Fishing” seminar display a dolphin caught during an offshore fishing trip.

September 2004

Florida's Landowner Incentive Program

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was awarded Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) funding in both 2003 and 2004 to provide financial and technical assistance to private landowners interested in improving habitat conditions on their properties for listed species and species at risk. Species at risk in Florida include 110 vertebrates, 7 invertebrates and 413 plant species. Landowner assistance is provided for projects such as restoration and enhancement of oak scrub habitats for the Florida scrub jays; management of native grasslands for grasshopper sparrows as well as other grassland species; and conservation of flatwoods salamander habitats in commercial forests.

Through their 2003 Tier 1 LIP funding, FWC constructed and implemented a GIS-based tool to provide a more standardized and objective way to score landowner application. The GIS system is comprised of several datasets such as recorded occurrences of listed species, scores reflecting species vulnerability to extinction, priority habitats for conservation, land cover data, and strategic habitat conservation areas. The query results have been used thus far to generate a GIS profile and score for thirty-one LIP applicants. In addition, FWC has hired a LIP coordinator to manage the program and a private accounting firm to handle application files and budgeting.

Outreach and education is an integral component of Florida's LIP Program. A LIP website, brochures and field days are utilized by FWS to promote the program. The objectives of these outreach efforts are to inform private landowners about the program, educate program participants about wildlife friendly land management practices and work with landowners to highlight successful projects. Program staff works with the University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Services within each county to help plan, deliver and solicit participation in the program.

The FWC is committed to working with Florida's private landowners to educate and encourage land management actions that will enable landowners to meet their personal objectives while maintaining or enhancing habitat conditions that benefit the needs of Florida's imperiled species.

A total of \$1,200,000 in LIP funding has been awarded to FWC thus far.



Endangered species include the Florida panther and the Florida scrub jay.



Georgia

Georgia's Black Bear Research

Prior to the eighteenth century, black bears were common in Georgia. However unrestricted hunting and degradation of habitat loss due to human development contributed to a serious population decline. Thanks to sound management practices of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), populations have recovered to approximately 2,200 statewide. Black bears are typically found in three distinct regions of the state-the North Georgia Mountains, along the Ocmulgee River drainage system in Central Georgia and the Okefenokee Swamp in the southeast. In order to keep populations at healthy numbers, ongoing research is necessary. In 2002, Georgia DNR launched a study to learn more about the Central Georgia black bear population

Wildlife Restoration funds are being used to determine the population density, productivity and distribution of black bears in central Georgia. A 1985 study (Grah) into the basic ecology of central Georgia's Ocmulgee drainage bear population estimated a population density of 66 bears on Oaky Woods and Ocmulgee Wildlife management Areas. This estimate is specific to a "core" area of suitable habitat, and it is likely that the densities have decreased significantly as the distance from large unfragmented forested areas has increased

Knowledge of the current Central population status is limited to sightings and nuisance reports from the public, reported road kills, and documented illegal kills. Currently, legal hunting is limited to one day annually on the Ocmulgee Wildlife management Area and there is public interest in an increased bear hunting season. This research is helping Georgia DNR learn more about Central Georgia's black bear population so that management decisions such as an increased hunting season can be implemented.



Home range and habitat use and preference is being determined by capturing, radio collaring and tracking bears in the Central Georgia population. Mark-recapture techniques are being utilized to estimate population size and to develop vital statistical methods for monitoring the population. Field counts of bear litters and examination of available female reproductive tracts are being used to determine productivity of the population. Age structure, productivity, survival, and mortality data observed by researchers will be used to make bear hunting decisions.

The number of black bears observed in Central Georgia was higher than anticipated. Georgia DNR captured 16 black bears between April 1 through June 30, 2003. Only one marked bear was recaptured. Fourteen bears (11 males and 3 females) were fitted with radio collars that were monitored twice per week. All bears captured and released were located within Oaky Woods and Ocmulgee wildlife Management Areas, with no mortalities reported.

Wildlife Restoration funds are enabling Georgia DNR to make future management decisions that are responsive to public interest as well as the ecological needs of the Central Georgia bear population.

Aquatic Conservation Initiative Benefits Rare Mussels

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is utilizing Section 6 Endangered Species grant funding to develop and implement a candidate conservation agreement for imperiled aquatic species of the Altamaha River. The Altamaha River drainage is one of the largest watersheds east of the Mississippi River and is the largest watershed located completely within Georgia's boundaries. The Altamaha habitat area supports several endemic unionid mollusk species, two of which are likely to become candidates for federal listing-the Altamaha spiny mussel and the Altamaha arc mussel.

In order to determine the status, condition, and threats of the Altamaha's endemic mussel species and robust redhorse populations, DNR is working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the University of Georgia, Institute of Technology. A GIS database has been compiled to gather important information on the distribution of Altamaha's aquatic species, land cover,



land use and land ownership along the river's corridor. This database will also be used to conduct a threat assessment, which will lead to a formal management plan for the watershed.

DNR and The Nature Conservancy have been quite progressive in getting the public involved in conservation efforts of the Altamaha. The Nature Conservancy has been hosting several hands-on workshops in which the public learns how to identify rare mussels and other freshwater species that inhabit the Altamaha River and why they are so

important to the health of the river system. In addition, private partners are actively assisting with the mussel surveys.

This Endangered Species grant is assisting DNR with their efforts to ensure the long-term protection of the Altamaha's endemic mussel species and redhorse population. In addition, DNR has applied for federal funding to acquire land along the Altamaha in order to protect this fragile habitat. Hopefully, these efforts will keep Altamaha's rare mussels off the endangered species list.

Kentucky

Kentucky's Archery in the Schools Program Gives Boost to the Shooting Sports

It all began in 1998 with one schoolteacher's dream to implement an archery program at her school. Jennie Richardson, who was competing, and winning, on the national tour as a professional archer convinced her school board to give this declining shooting sport a try. The results were remarkable. The first year, there were 25 students enrolled in the program. By the 2001-2002 school year, 232 students were enrolled.

Encouraged by the initial success of the program, the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife formed a partnership to implement the program statewide. The program exploded and currently, there are approximately 200 Kentucky schools enrolled, reaching around 150,000 youth. The 2-week program is taught to physical education students in grades 4 through 12. Consistent with the Hunter Education Chapter of the Federal Assistance Handbook, the course teaches students how to accurately and safely shoot bows and arrows; how to maintain archery equipment in a safe working order; how to practice and improve shooting accuracy; and how to retrieve arrows safely from a practice target. Before presenting the course, educators must undergo a 12-hour National Archery Association Level I archery training program.

The archery fever has spread to other states. Several Southeast states including Alabama, Arkansas and Georgia now have a program and personnel from several other state agencies have participated in a workshop to implement the program within their respective states. As each additional state joins the ranks, our hunter education program is further enhanced. New shooters are created, support for the shooting sports is increased, and demand for future hunter education courses will rise as these students seek to purchase equipment and employ their newfound skills.

That ambitious teacher who ignited the Archery in the Schools Program is now the Archery Coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. For information on implementing the National Archery in the Schools Program within your state, contact Roy Grimes at roy.grimes@ky.gov.

Where are the Crappie?

It is crucial for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to know where the fish are. Angling is big business in Kentucky. In 2003, anglers spent \$ 544,660,000 fishing in Kentucky. A popular spot for anglers hungry to get a bite is Kentucky Lake. Nearly 670,000 anglers visit the lake annually, catching more than 3.5 million fish, and spending that same amount enjoying their sport.

So naturally, when anglers' catch rate of the number one fishery in Kentucky-black crappie-declined, the agency wanted to know why. What perplexed Kentucky's fisheries biologists was the fact that anglers were not catching black crappie during the 2002 season but were successful in 2003. To add to the mystery, the average size of black crappie caught during 2003 was in the 1 to 2 pound range, meaning these fish were at least five years old. So why were black crappie that were being caught in 2003 able to allure anglers in 2002?

Sport Fish Restoration funds were used to help answer this question. As part of Kentucky's statewide fisheries investigation grant, a study into the behavioral patterns of black and white crappie and their potential impacts on sport fisheries at Kentucky Lake was added. Among many other discoveries, the study revealed that black crappie shift into shallow water much sooner than white crappie, and stay in shallow water much longer than commonly believed. The results of this study have helped Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources direct anglers to where and when they should fish for black crappie.



Dave Baker, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Black crappie

This project was featured in the Spring 2004 issue of the agency's publication, *Kentucky Afield*. If this project has piqued your interest, visit fw.ky.gov and go to the fishing link to learn the complete results of the study; and perhaps you will be the lucky angler to be catching black crappie the next time you visit Kentucky.

Transient Boaters Served Well at Kenlake Marina

Thanks to the Boating Infrastructure Grants Program, Kenlake Marina has constructed five 40' x 17' boat slips. Kenlake Marina is strategically located in the center of Kentucky Lake on the Tennessee River system. This complex of navigable waters serves a large number of transient boaters traveling from the Midwest United States to the Gulf of Mexico.

Kenlake Marina is a desirable stopover location for boaters. The marina is part of the Kenlake State Resort Park complex and offers enticing amenities for travelers such as a lodge and cabins, golf course,

campground, outdoor amphitheater, and indoor and outdoor tennis facilities. The marina itself is equipped with a store, restaurant, restrooms, sewage pump out facility and a new fuel dock. Now transient boaters have a convenient

safe harbor with the necessary amenities such as electricity, water, and television hookup for an overnight or short-term tie-up; and can enjoy all that Kenlake Marina has to offer. Funds dedicated to this project include \$50,000 from the Boating

Infrastructure Grants Program and approximately \$15,999 from Kenlake Marina.



Louisiana

Bird Banding—An Effective Tool for Wildlife Management

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries operates and manages 40 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) consisting of approximately 960,000 acres. These lands are managed to enhance the existing habitat conditions for wildlife species and to provide the public with hunting as well as other recreational opportunities.

As a part of efficiently managing their WMAs, Louisiana conducts population data surveys for hunted species, which serve as a basis for recommending and establishing the hunting season and bag limits. Capturing and banding birds provides biologists with important population demographics including age structure, distribution and relative abundance. Four species are the primary interest of Louisiana's banding program at this time and the extent of the banding depends on the species. Wood ducks and mourning doves are being banded statewide. Wild turkey are currently being banded in 3 broad regions of the

State—North Central, South Central, and Southeast, while woodcock banding efforts are limited to South Central Louisiana.

Wild Turkey: The wild turkey study was initially conducted in Southeast Louisiana and illustrated extremely high harvest rates for adult gobblers. Bandings in other regions of the state, even though many of the areas recorded large numbers of gobblers being harvested, do not show the same high harvest rates.

Wood Duck: Louisiana has banded more wood ducks (almost 16,000) than any other species during the past decade or so. About 40% of the wood ducks are captured in nest boxes while 60% are captured on baited sites. Over 1,000 birds were captured in 8 of the past 12 years, with southern locations in the state accounting for about 2/3 of the captures. This project was initiated as part of an effort to help hunters get an additional wood duck "in the bag." Other southern states are currently increasing their wood duck banding efforts so that the harvesting of more wood duck may become a reality. One thing this project has shown is that wood ducks banded in

the northern states are recovered by hunters about twice the rate of those banded in Louisiana.

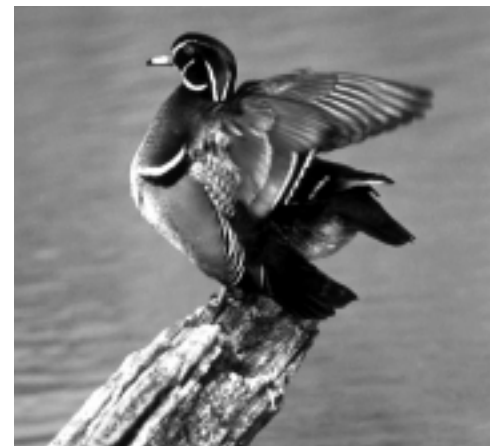
Woodcock: The initial purpose of the woodcock banding study in South Central Louisiana was to develop "worst case" harvest rates for woodcock. The term "worst case" is used because the site selected for banding is a heavily hunted public area and the birds are banded throughout the hunting season. As a result, birds may not have an opportunity to move off the area before exposure to hunting. Almost 3,000 birds have been banded during the past 12 years. The capture rate started rather slow—about 60 birds during the 1st year. Currently, 250-400 captures are now recorded per year. These banding efforts, in conjunction with a telemetry study during the early 1990s on the same site, suggested that woodcock harvest in the south was relatively low compared to other natural mortality factors. Additionally, while few birds have been recovered in other states, the vast majority of banded birds taken by hunters are onsite. Earlier work in Louisiana during the 1960s and 1970s illustrated a low recovery rate, but



Wild turkeys



Bird banding



Wood duck

biologists believed that woodcock frequently moved in response to cold fronts. Data from the current banding study does not support this concept. Birds are frequently recaptured during the winter suggesting that, at least at this site, woodcock are fairly sedentary once they arrive and do not make frequent multi-mile movements associated with frontal passages.

Mourning Dove: The mourning dove study was initiated this year. With the birds being banded this past July and August, little information has been assimilated thus far. Louisiana is one of 26 pilot states whose goal is to band some 85,000 birds during the next 3 years. (Louisiana banded almost 1,300 birds this summer.) Data will be used to develop long-term banding goals and population growth indices that will be used in management decisions for mourning doves

Biologists can learn much from capturing and banding birds; however, conservation efforts can be enhanced by hunters. Louisiana actively encourages hunters to report any banded bird they recover. Federal funding under Louisiana's Statewide Research and Development of Wildlife Programs grant has helped the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conduct necessary research to benefit the hunters who pay for wildlife restoration-making this a true user-pay, user-benefit grant.



Mourning dove

The Battle to Protect and Restore Louisiana's Marshes and the Sport Fish They Support

In Louisiana, intensive State and Federal conservation efforts are devoted to reducing the loss of wetland habitat due to coastal erosion and to restoring areas where erosion has occurred. Both saltwater and freshwater sport fishing will benefit from the restoration of marsh habitat. To help restore Louisiana's disappearing wetlands, man has created artificial islands, wetlands and water bodies where natural marshland previously existed. Minor alterations in these constructed wetland habitats can improve access and utilization by numerous sport fish species.

In a Sport Fish Restoration grant entitled "Evaluating Sport Fish Use of Created Wetlands in the Atchafalaya Delta," the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries contracted with Louisiana State University to examine how sport fish use constructed habitats, and how various design features can be most effectively incorporated. Researchers compare the number of breaks and cuts in levees and other lands with fish size, morphology and populations present in order to determine appropriate fisheries management strategies.

Research thus far indicates that access to created wetlands may greatly influence sport fish populations. In part of the study, twenty-one species of resident freshwater

fishes were found where the canal opening had been filled. If the canal had remained opened, marine fishes would likely be present as well. Increased knowledge resulting from this research will enable the agency to evaluate design features in order to effectively address sport fish usage.

As a result of the marsh degradation and erosion, saltwater intrusion is a serious problem in some areas. Artificial means are used to create freshwater wetlands in order to block saltwater intrusion.

In another federal project, largemouth bass were introduced into this restored freshwater marsh. Supplementary stocking from Louisiana's Beechwood and Booker Hatcheries were funded in part by a Sport Fish Restoration grant entitled "Fish Production." Fish recently harvested from this habitat indicate phenomenal growth, and genetic analysis indicated these rather large fish were stocked fish. The fishery created appears to be one of the best bass fisheries in Louisiana history

*This is a two-year research project, with approximately \$50,000 in Sport Fish Restoration funding dedicated annually.



Largemouth bass

Mississippi

Mississippi Artificial Reef Program Enhances Recreational Fishing

The majority of artificial reefs in Mississippi and adjacent marine waters have been built to support recreational fishing. Properly located, constructed and managed reef sites enhance the marine habitat for important sport fish as well as other organisms. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources utilizes sport fish restoration dollars to monitor and assess these reefs to ensure they are effective in providing anglers with better fishing opportunities.

Currently, Mississippi has 16 permitted offshore reefs which encompass approximately 16,000 areas of water bottoms. These reefs range in size from 1 acre to 10,000 acres. The material used for offshore reefs consists of 109 concrete modules, 33 steel hull vessels, 1 oilrig and some rubble. There have been around 223 total deployments since 1978 to these offshore sites.

Mississippi also has 24 permitted nearshore artificial reef sites. These reefs are located inshore where anglers fishing in small vessels, from a pier or wading in the water can take advantage of the fish that inhabit these reefs. The materials of the nearshore reefs consist of limestone, concrete rubble oyster shells and fly ash.

Sport Fish Restoration funding is used to map existing nearshore and offshore reefs by providing Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) coordinates of reef material utilizing side scan sonar technology on existing offshore permitted reefs. DGPS coordinates of nearshore artificial reefs are provided by setting transects and poling areas where new nearshore artificial reef material was deployed. Updated reef information is included on the agency's website for the sport fishing community to access. Through the work conducted under this grant, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is able to identify areas for reef development, enhancement or exclusion.

September 2004

Sargassum Research Project Receives Award from the American Fisheries Society

Mississippi's sport fish restoration project titled "Investigations of Larval and Juvenile Fishes that Utilize Sargassum and Frontal Zones as Essential Fish Habitat in Marine Waters of Mississippi and the Northern Gulf of Mexico" received AFS's 2003 Sport Fish Restoration Award.

This research project was recognized for providing valuable information about larval fish populations associated with sargassum and frontal zone habitats. Sargassum is a pelagic (floating) brown alga found in the Gulf of Mexico. Sargassum provides many benefits to sport fish including the following: serves as a refuge from predators for larval and juvenile fish; attracts small shrimp and crabs for the juvenile fish to feed on; provides a spawning substrate for fish and provides a physical structure for spawning fish to aggregate; and an area of shade and visual reference.

Prior to this project, almost no quantitative data existed to document the presence and density of selected larval and juvenile fish species utilizing

sargassum. This project resulted in over 48,700 fish collected, 55 families represented and at least 90 species present. The three most abundant families represented were *exocoetidae* (flying fishes), *carangidae* (jacks), and *balistidae* (triggerfish/filefish). Billfish and tuna were present in some catches.

This research represents a major breakthrough for many pelagic species in the gulf and provides a basis for management recommendations to help the restoration of sport fish such as billfishes, dolphin, amberjack, king mackerel and bluefin tuna. This research has helped to determine species diversity and relative abundance as well as seasonal patterns of abundance and habitat use at various life stages.

Approximately \$112,500 in federal funding is dedicated to Mississippi's sargassum research project annually.

Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Serves as Focal Point for Aquatic Education

The majority of Mississippi's aquatic resources education program is conducted through the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science located in Jackson,



Bull dolphin

Mississippi. The museum staff operates and maintains a 170,000 gallon native sport fish aquarium system. In addition, more than one thousand aquatic species including invertebrates, reptiles and sport fish are maintained in a humane manner.

The museum attracts a large number of visitors and is therefore a good location for educating individuals about Mississippi's aquatic species and associated habitats. The museum's average annual attendance is 125,400, of which 35% is children in grades preschool through twelve. This past grant cycle, Sport Fish Restoration funds were used to conduct fish feedings for more than 9,000 visitors, the majority children. The museum also utilized funding to host six summer camps in which Mississippi's youth learned about various sport fish species, fish adaptations and aquatic habitats.

Another popular education program supported by Sport Fish Restoration

funding is the museum's "Got Fish?" program, where anglers come together to learn more about fishing. Three sessions of "Got Fish?" reached 500 participants this year, with one session each on bass, crappie, and saltwater. The sports editor of Mississippi's largest paper moderated a panel of professional anglers. Visitors were invited to ask questions and provide comments. Youngsters attending "Got Fish?" were involved in activities designed to teach them about sport fish and their habitats.

This past June, the museum partnered with the Mississippi Wildlife Federation and Wal Mart to provide a fishing event for kids entitled "Kat Fishing Kids." Youngsters visited stations designed to teach them all about fishing. They received hands-on instruction from professional anglers and had the opportunity to bait their hooks and fish for stocked catfish. More than 550 children fished and over 700 parents and siblings joined the fun. At least 100 volunteers

helped make this a very special and successful event. Virtually every child caught at least one fish and they were allowed to take home three fish each. Any remaining fish were cleaned and donated to the Baptist Children's Village.

The Mississippi of Natural Science is serving the public well through the variety of programs it offers to teach the public about Mississippi's aquatic resources. In 2000-2001, the Southeastern Aquatic Resources Education Programs (AREP) underwent an extensive evaluation process conducted by Charles Teddlie, Ph.D. of K.T. Associates of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The study determined that Mississippi's AREP is an example of "Best Practices" in at least two areas and has strengths in three others. This study further stated that the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science is the most outstanding aquatic education facility associated with an AREP in the Southeast region.



North Carolina

WCRP Funds Help Build Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education

There is a wonderful little secret to be discovered in Outer Banks, North Carolina and it's the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education. The Outer Banks area, located in the northeastern part of the state, has a rich history of hunting, fishing and agriculture. For generations, the waterfowl and fish that abound within the sound and Outer Banks region of Currituck and Dare Counties have provided income to the locals as well as attracted visitors. The center hopes to revitalize that heritage by offering the public a look into the Outer Bank's past.

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission received \$540,000 in Federal funding through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) to make the center a reality. As North Carolina's coordinator put it, "Grant funding through WCRP has been very instrumental in our agency meeting the center's goal. Without the grant, we would have an empty building."

The WCRP grant funds many aspects of the education center including a 12,000 gallon aquarium, which will be the focal point within a freshwater marsh scene in the interpretive gallery. The aquarium will depict a wide variety of indigenous fish and plant life. The grant also provides funding for some fantastic educational exhibits that will present a primary focal point for the genre of the center. The exhibits will facilitate learning and present a basic educational platform upon which the center's staff can build their educational programs, workshops and field trips. The agency will also utilize grant funding to create an orientation video that provides a context for the center's exhibits and emotionally transforms the viewer into the atmosphere of the Currituck Sound and Outer Banks region.

Although the center is not officially scheduled to open until Spring 2005,

North Carolina has already accommodated 1,467 visitors by offering programs under a picnic shelter on the property. And the public doesn't seem to mind considering the fact they attended 117 programs including Tracks in the Sand, Fishing the Sound, Maritime Forest and Marsh Walk, Beginning Birding, Herp Hunt, Sound Habitat Exploration, Wildlife at Your Backdoor, The Living Sound, Shore Life and Marsh Ecology.

LIP Grant to Provide Habitat for Endangered Red Cockaded Woodpecker

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has been awarded nearly \$700,000 in LIP funds-during 2003 and 2004-to work with landowners to conserve and restore the habitat of endangered species and other at-risk plants and animals on private lands. Included in their efforts is work on private lands to provide suitable habitat for the Federally endangered Red Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW).

In 2003, North Carolina was awarded \$165,000 in Federal funds to work with private landowners to maintain and/or enhance habitat for RCWs on 2,000 acres of private lands. Lands of interest are longleaf pine savannahs in the coastal plain and sandhill regions of the state that RCW inhabit. The longleaf pine forests once covered an estimated 92 million acres but only about three percent of that acreage remains.

Grant funds will be used to assist landowners with long-term management of their lands to benefit RCWs. Restoration, enhancement and maintenance of suitable habitat will be achieved through prescribed fire on a recurring basis, chemical and mechanical treatment of vegetation, pine stand thinning as well as other management activities.

In addition to on-the-ground habitat management, North Carolina is actively promoting the LIP program and encouraging landowners' participation. Outreach efforts include information



The Federally endangered red cockaded woodpecker

about the program through newsprint, magazines, websites and brochures. Biologists give presentations to appropriate segments of the public, promoting the Safe Harbor Program and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem. Agency staff is actively networking with landowners, encouraging their participation in protecting one of the Southeast's imperiled species.

In addition to RCWs, many listed species and species of conservation concern have a potential to benefit from this LIP grant due to their association with longleaf pine savannas and related wetlands.

South Carolina

South Carolina's Clean Vessel Act Program Enhanced by Effective Awareness Campaign

Ranking ninth in the number of recreational boats in the water, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) understands the importance of reducing waste discharge by encouraging the use of pump out facilities throughout the state. South Carolina has been successful in working with marinas to construct, renovate and maintain pump out facilities. To date, 81 pump out facilities-located both inland and on the coast-are operational.

Simply installing the pump out facilities is not enough for ensuring a successful Clean Vessel Act (CVA) program. South Carolina has an aggressive CVA Awareness Campaign to educate the public about the environmental impacts of boat waste, the current laws and regulations regarding waste disposal, and instructions on how to operate pump out equipment. South Carolina uses several outreach techniques to get the CVA message out to various segments of the boating public.

South Carolina DNR constantly works with marina owners by conducting meetings and workshops to inform them about the program and discuss barriers that prevent marinas from participating. Efforts are made to target marinas identified as "priority" according to their proximity to premier resource water areas, primary contact recreational areas and areas suitable for shellfish harvesting.

South Carolina also offers a free boating course that includes information about sewage pollution. South Carolina has hired a CVA educator who works closely with law enforcement officers who teach the boating safety course. As part of the CVA agenda, boaters learn about the effects of sewage pollution, locations of pump out stations, and tips on keeping a boat clean. Educational videos, publications and promotional items are

used during the course to reinforce the CVA message.

Several additional outreach tools are used such as distributing CVA materials at trade shows and exhibitions, advertising in boating newspapers and magazines, and airing public service announcements. Through South Carolina's active CVA campaign, more marinas are participating in the program and more boaters are aware of what they need to do to help keep South Carolina's waters clean.

South Carolina's Red Drum Research

The red drum is one of the most important recreational marine species in the southeastern United States.

Population abundance declined in the 1980's resulting in imposition of progressively more restrictive harvest limits and closure of commercial fisheries in some states. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Marine Resources Division, utilizes funding support from three Sport Fish Restoration grants to study adult red drum populations along the Atlantic coast. Each of the grants focuses on a different stage in the life history of the red drum-larvae, juvenile and adult.

Because of the importance of red drum, the state of South Carolina is actively involved in programs to evaluate the use

of stocking hatchery-produced juveniles and larvae. South Carolina is stocking juveniles in the Charleston Harbor area where the effects of stocking a historically high catch per unit effort site is compared to the Ashley River, which had the lowest catch per unit effort. Results to date based on sampling data indicate that stocking juveniles has resulted in a 4-fold increase in red drum abundance in the Ashley River. Of particular interest is the possibility of stocking larvae rather than small juveniles as is currently being practiced. If stocking larvae proves to be successful, then considerable cost savings would be possible in regards to facility and equipment costs, and labor requirements.

Tagging of adult red drum in the ocean can define the extent of migratory activity and complement data on fishing mortality and emigration rates developed from tagging programs. The state expects this research to provide continuing data and broaden the geographic scope of work. Offshore populations of red drum and trends in movement of the older estuarine fish to offshore waters of South Carolina will be important to future fisheries management

Sport Fish Restoration dollars dedicated to South Carolina's red drum research is approximately \$338,000 per year.



Red drum

Tennessee

Keeping the Shooting Sports Alive in Tennessee

With the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) managing three hunter education facilities and a portable firing range, there is ample opportunity for citizens of Tennessee to get out and enjoy the shooting sports. Each of these facilities is supported by hunter education dollars generated through the Wildlife Restoration Program.

The “grandfather” of the hunter education facilities is the John Sevier Hunter Education Center, named after Tennessee’s first governor. This Knoxville, Tennessee, facility was established in 1879; at which time it was used by the military as a rifle range. It was also used during the Spanish American War for firearms training and during WWI as a prisoner of war camp. In 1999, the TWRA began managing the facility through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tennessee National Guard. Today, shooting enthusiasts can practice their pistol, rifle, shotgun and archery skills and new hunters can get certified at this 120-acre facility.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Hunter Education and Range Facility located in Bartlett, Tennessee, opened its doors in August, 2002. The facility consists of 14 shooting lanes and accommodates a wide range of uses such as hunter education classes, laser shot practice, handgun permits, gun club affiliations, youth shooting events, and the City of Bartlett law enforcement firearms qualifications. To date, 2,606 students have utilized this facility for hunter education. The project is the result of a cooperative agreement among the city of Bartlett, TWRA and FWS.

The Stones River Hunter Education Center is the most recent facility, opening in October, 2003. Stones River was made possible through a joint venture between the COE, TWRA, and FWS. The COE

donated 128 acres in Antioch, Tennessee, to build this facility consisting of 70 shooting stations.

And then there’s Big Bear—Tennessee’s mobile hunter education .22 firing range. This 6,000 lb. triple axle trailer began its tour in 1995. Big Bear travels throughout the State, bringing hunter education to those who otherwise may not have the opportunity to experience the shooting sports. Big Bear’s extensive travel includes schools, churches, fairs, sportsman shows, and the 2004 Southeast Federal Assistance Coordinator’s Meeting.

Rare Plants Near Murfreesboro, Tennessee Now Protected by State

One of only three known populations of the federally and state-listed endangered plant, Pyne’s ground-plum, is now protected thanks to a partnership between the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) Division of Natural Heritage and the Service. Pyne’s ground-plum is known to occur only in Rutherford County and nowhere else in the world.

Through a \$23,200 federal Recovery Land Acquisition (RLA) grant matched with \$75,000 in state funding, a 15-acre tract of land near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, that contains the rare plant is now in state ownership and will be managed to help ensure the species’ continued survival. Another population of the ground plum has been protected at nearby Flat Rock Cedar Glade and Barrens State Natural

Area, owned and managed jointly by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and TDEC. In addition, two new populations of Pyne’s ground-plum have been introduced. One population has been established at Stone’s River National Battlefield through a cooperative project involving FWS, the National Park Service, Missouri Botanical Garden and TDEC’s Division of Natural Heritage. The efforts to establish this new population, as well as new populations of the federally-endangered Tennessee Coneflower, led to a 185-acre portion of the battlefield being designated as a state natural area in 2003. A second population has been established at Sunnybell Cedar Glade State Natural Area through a cooperative project involving TNC, Missouri Botanical Garden and TDEC’s State Natural Areas Program. Sunnybell Cedar Glade, owned by The Nature Conservancy, was designated as a state natural area in 1995.

The RLA Grants Program provides funding to states for acquisitions of habitat that support approved recovery plans for federally-listed species. This program addresses one of the primary threats to federally-listed plants and animals nationwide—the loss of habitat—by protecting habitat important to the recovery of federally listed species. The Southeast Region of the Service awarded almost \$5 million in grants to Southeastern state agencies in 2002 under the RLA Grants Program.

Article provided by Tennessee Division of Natural Heritage.



Puerto Rico

La Plata Reservoir Fishing & Boating Access Project

Thanks to the La Plata Reservoir project in Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, the public will reap the benefits of better boating opportunities. The Reservoir is located between the boundaries of the Toa Alta, Naranjito and Bayamon municipalities in the lower section of the interior mountainous region of Puerto Rico and fairly close to the San Juan metropolitan area. The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, partnered with the Service, the municipality of Toa Alta, and the Puerto Rico National Parks Company, to construct the boating and fishing access facility to include a boat ramp, parking lot, rest rooms, gazebos, visitors' center, work facilities, and a manager's station. The total cost for the project is \$1.8 million dollars, of which approximately \$875,000 was provided by Sport Fish Restoration dollars.

The facility, with associated amenities and improvements, is now constructed and available for public use. Former Federal

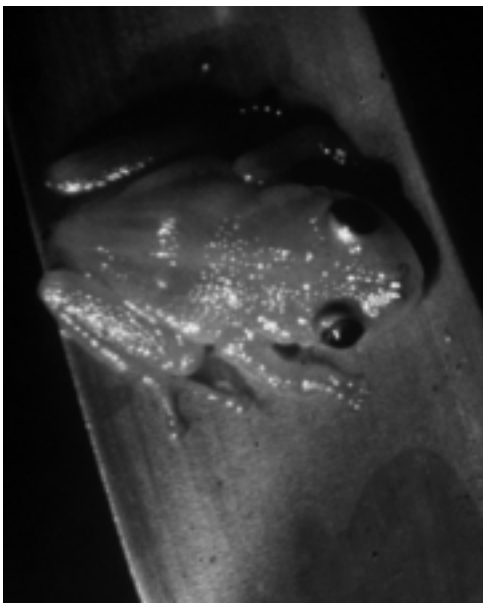
Assistance Division Chief, Cleophas Bob Cooke, Jr. and Marilyn Lawal, Branch Chief, Sport Fish Restoration Branch, represented the Service at the inauguration and dedication ceremony held on March 11, 2004. "This project is a great example of effective partnerships and wise investment of anglers' and boaters' tax dollars. We are pleased to support this project which will benefit the residents and visitors of the metropolitan San Juan area for many years to come," said Cooke.

Puerto Rico Utilizes Wildlife Restoration Funds to Help Students Conduct Valuable Wetlands Research

Puerto Rico is conducting valuable wetlands research at the Humacao Nature Reserve under a wildlife restoration grant titled *Puerto Rico Wetlands: Habitat and Wildlife Studies*. Humacao Nature Reserve, located in Eastern Puerto Rico, was established as a wetland and waterfowl reserve by Puerto Rico in 1984. The grant consists of two studies—Response of wildlife wetland habitat to manipulations and white-cheeked pintail duckling and hen survival at Humacao Nature Reserve.

Puerto Rican graduate students enrolled at Mississippi State University conduct the research for this grant. The students' charge is to determine the response of neotropical wetland habitats and the animal communities that rely on wetlands to mechanical manipulations and water level fluctuations. The students also describe mammalian and avian predators distribution, abundance and their impacts on white-cheeked pintail hen and duckling survival, recruitment, and cause-specific mortality rates.

Currently, this 5-year research project is in its 4th year. The students are currently analyzing data that has been collected over the past three years. They have also published a paper on predation of water birds by bullfrogs. The final project report, which is forthcoming, will provide valuable information to assist the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources with development plans designed to increase the number of white-cheeked pintail visiting Humacao Nature Reserve.



Golden Coqui, *Eleutherodactylus jasperi*

Virgin Islands

WCRP and SWG Grant Funds Assist the Endangered St. Croix Ground Lizard

The St. Croix Ground Lizard (*Ameiva polops*) is an endangered species of *Ameiva* formerly found throughout St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, and its offshore islands and cays. Due to ground predation and habitat loss, the species has dramatically declined. Currently, it is estimated that this lizard is restricted to three islets —Protestant Cay, Green Cay and Ruth Islands.

In 2001, the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources received a WCRP grant to help conserve and manage the St. Croix Ground Lizard. Now in its third year, the agency has been diligently working to determine the actual population at both Green and Ruth Keys, determine the genetic composition of both populations, and eradicate the lizard's predator population of rats on Ruth Key. If the St. Croix Ground Lizard's population has stabilized by the end of 2004, the agency plans to translocate individual species to Ruth Key. Through WCRP Funding, the Virgin Islands has begun the process of long-term protection of one of their critical species.

To further assist the St. Croix Ground Lizard, the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources was

awarded a SWG grant in September 2003 to study the ecology and behavior of the species. The ultimate objective of this work will be to develop management recommendations and a conservation plan to aid in the recovery of the St. Croix Ground Lizard.

With Federal funding provided through WCRP and SWG and the diligent work of the agency's biologists such as lead biologist, Doug McNair, the St. Croix Ground Lizard will hopefully experience a full recovery.

The Return of the Leatherbacks

As part of their endangered species program, the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources is conducting valuable research to help increase the number of leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) sea turtles nesting at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge. And they have been quite successful considering the fact that the nesting population has dramatically increased from the dismal less than 20 reported during the grant's 1981 inception.

Much has improved since 1981. During the 2003 nesting season, 172 adult leatherbacks were observed at Sandy Point. This total includes 58 previously untagged turtles and 114 remigrants. The highest number of recorded nesting

leatherbacks occurred in 2001, with a report of 186 nesting females. Sandy Point NWR was chosen as the research site because it contains the largest nesting population of leatherbacks in the United States.

In light of the continuing upward trend in number of nesting females, the focus of the project will continue to be saturation tagging and data collection of nesting females. This is important due to potential scientific breakthrough, which will result from the database that has been established from two decades of consistent research. By continuing the program to 2010, scientists will be able to determine the age of maturity of Sandy Point leatherbacks.

Through this grant, The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, in partnership with Earthwatch volunteers, has developed management measures that have significantly increased the number of hatchlings that leave the beach. In addition, valuable research information needed for the long-term management of the species has been collected through this partnership efforts. With the Virgin Island's limited resources, this grant has helped biologists study and significantly improve a species on the brink of extinction.

Monitoring of the Imperiled Least Tern

The least tern is one of only two regularly nesting seabirds in St. Croix where this species of concern breeds from late April to August. Although the St. Croix population ranges from 300 to 350 pairs, the least tern suffers from low nest success. The declining breeding population prompted the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources to initiate a series of studies to monitor this imperiled seabird.

The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources was awarded Federal funding to generate reliable estimates of breeding productivity, survival of nestlings and



The St. Croix Ground Lizard

population viability of the St. Croix population. The Agency contracted with the North Carolina Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Program to perform much of the research. The work under this grant consists of two distinct studies- population demographics of least terns and predator management of least tern colonies.

Mammalian predation is perhaps the single most important factor contributing to wide fluctuations in nest success but has not been addressed in previous studies. Least terns fall prey to feral dogs, cats and mongoose. The agency is testing mammalian predator schemes aimed at reducing egg and chick losses. Predator management includes the use of chemical deterrents during the egg stage and fencing a portion of the Sandy Point NWR.

Through this grant funding, The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources hopes to determine the status of the species and which demographic parameters have the greatest impact upon population persistence, and if management schemes could be implemented to improve persistence of St. Croix's least tern population.

*Wildlife Restoration funds in the amount of \$111,510 will be utilized to conduct this 3-year research project.



The least tern is vulnerable to predation.

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