



The Mountain-Prairie Review

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February 2003

National Conference Kicks Off New Strategy for Fisheries
By Karen Miranda Gleason, EA

At the first-ever event of its kind in the history of the Service, Regional Fisheries staff recently gathered in Washington, D.C. with more than 500 other personnel and partners from across the country for the National Fisheries Leadership Conference. The week-long, motivational conference included the official announcement and discussion of the program's new Vision for the Future, along with a new landmark \$58 million budget request, representing a 16 percent boost in program funding in Hatcheries.

The new strategy for the 132 year old Fisheries program is outlined in the document *Conserving America's Fisheries, Vision for America's Future*. The document represents a 3-year effort with the Service's partners and stakeholders to develop an innovative plan to accomplish common goals in six natural resource focus areas.

The Vision is expected to strengthen coordination among state and federal agencies, as well as tribes, conservation groups, and the sport fishing industry. It addresses all aspects of the Fisheries Program including Hatcheries, Management Assistance, Science, and Tribal Assistance.

More than 110 leaders from State fisheries agencies, the Sportfishing and Boating Council representing industry, Native American Tribes, and Fisheries friends groups were also heavily involved in conference sessions.

"This is the first solid, new direction the Fisheries program has taken in about the last 15 years

that has a great chance of steering us in a positive direction," said Mike Stempel, Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries. "It's a great opportunity to work cooperatively with States and other partners and stakeholders to achieve more than we ever could by ourselves."

Regional Director Ralph Morgenweck moderated a panel discussion on Strengthening Partnerships with state, tribal, internal, federal, not-for-profit, and industry representatives.

Other participants and moderators included Interior Secretary Norton and Assistant Secretary Manson; Director Steve Williams; Deputy Director Marshall Jones, and other top Service leaders, including several Assistant Directors and all Service Regional Directors.



"It's time to feed our fisheries program," remarked Director Williams, who participated in the conference throughout the week. Among goals for the new program strategy, he hopes for recruitment of additional anglers to enjoy America's fisheries resources.

Jim Martin, a leading partner representing anglers around the country, gave a rousing call to arms that challenged the Fisheries Program to "move the needle" and be value-added in fisheries conservation.

Steve Brimm, Project Leader for D.C. Booth National Historic Fish Hatchery gave a presentation on the history of the Fisheries Program, while retiree Arden Trandahl participated in a panel discussion on Perspectives from the Past. Retiree and former Regional ARD for Fisheries Mary

Gessner, instrumental in developing the Vision during her tenure, also participated throughout the week and was recognized by Director Williams and by others.

Conference sessions and exhibits portrayed the myriad of benefits that Fisheries provides to the American public. Over 70 informational posters were displayed from stations around the Nation. Mountain-Prairie contributions included over a dozen exhibits about work involving fish passage and screening, mitigation (stocking to maintain angling where Federal dams and other water diversion projects have eliminated fisheries), species recovery and restoration, Tribal assistance; and other topics. These regional exhibits will be displayed on a rotating basis in the Regional Office lobby during the coming months.

The Vision for the Future document, all conference exhibits, and other information are viewable on the internet at: <http://ifw2irm2.irm1.r2.fws.gov/fishery/natlfishconf/index.html>.

Table of Contents:

National Conference Kicks Off New Strategy for Fisheries.....	1
Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.....	2
Centennial Countdown.....	2
Bull Trout Team gets out and Meets the Public.....	3
National Wildlife Refuge System's 100th Birthday.....	4
Technical Support Hotline.....	5
View from the RD's Office.....	6
Congressional Affairs.....	6
Native American Affairs.....	6

Conservation Status of Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

By Sharon Rose, EA



At the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition, in the early 1800s, grizzly bears ranged throughout western North America. An estimated 50,000 grizzlies roamed between the Pacific Ocean and the high plains of the West. Over the next 100 years, as this region was settled, the number of grizzlies declined dramatically.

Today, approximately 1,100 wild grizzlies survive in five ecosystems in the lower 48 states, including Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Washington.

Many years of research conducted on grizzlies in and around the Yellowstone area indicate that the species is recovering in this ecosystem. We are approaching a time when Federal protection for this specific population under the Endangered Species Act may no longer be necessary.

Grizzly bear numbers in the Yellowstone ecosystem have increased since the 1980s, and are currently found in many areas where they have not been in 30-40 years. Ongoing studies on grizzlies in the Yellowstone area focus on food sources, habitat, reproduction, threats and causes of mortality. Due to this research, biologists have been able to gain knowledge of how to better conserve the bear and its habitat, resulting in recovering populations of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem. In fact, approximately 400 to 600 bears live in the Yellowstone ecosystem, meeting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's demographic criteria described in the grizzly bear recovery plan. As we move closer to a recovered grizzly bear population, State and Federal agencies are working together to create a unified management plan for the Yellowstone ecosystem that will ensure the continued existence of grizzlies and their habitat after recovery and delisting.

However, this good news does not apply to all grizzly bear populations. In some areas where grizzlies live, little to no research has been conducted and the status of the species is unknown. In some of these ecosystems, the bear numbers appear to be very low, which greatly concerns the Service.



Editor's Note

By Matt Kales, EA

As you read in the January issue, I have temporarily assumed editorial responsibilities for the *Mountain-Prairie Review*. My goal in this endeavor is simple:

I want to continue former editor Dan Sobieck's tradition of producing an informative and entertaining newsletter that celebrates the outstanding work you do to conserve fish and wildlife resources in the Mountain-Prairie Region. The best source for such content is you, the people with your hands on the resource, and so I ask that you keep sending me your stories, your photos, and your experiences so we can keep the issues fresh and real. I look forward to working with you all, and welcome any suggestions you may have to improve the *Mountain-Prairie Review*.

Centennial Countdown!

By Deserai Anderson-Utley, EVS

It's almost that time! Less than one month remains until the National Wildlife Refuge System celebrates its 100th birthday. Right here in the Mountain-Prairie Region, our refuge staff are gearing up for a huge celebration. You may ask: "What can I do to get involved?"

There are several things you can do to support the Refuge Centennial this Spring, and all year long. First, many of the field stations are planning wonderful events to commemorate 100 years of conservation. You can support the field by visiting a refuge or volunteering to help with their events. Second, you can leave your conservation legacy by donating a time-capsule item to the Regional Office time-capsule. This will be one measure by which future generations judge what the Service did and how important it has been to the conservation legacy of the nation. Every Service program, from Ecological Services and Fisheries to Migratory Birds/State Programs, and Law Enforcement have had an impact on the success of the refuge system. This is your chance to leave that mark for future generations to see.

You can also help by telling a friend or neighbor about refuges. These wonderful conservation areas provide wildlife habitat, wildlife observation, recreation, environmental education, fishing, and hunting. There are over 540 refuges throughout the nation, including one within an hour's drive of most major cities. From the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (CO), Fish Springs (UT), Crescent Lake (NE), Seedskaadee (WY), Red Rock Lakes (MT), Quivira (KS), Waubay (SD), J. Clark Salyer (ND), to the over 100 other refuges in the Mountain-Prairie Region, these wild places have great stories to tell and have something for everyone. Get out and experience them today!

Get excited! The National Wildlife Refuge System is a unique treasure of which we should all be proud. Help wish our refuges "Happy 100th Birthday" on March 14th!

Region 6 Bull Trout Team Gets Out and Meets the Public

By Diane Katzenberger, EA

The best way to gain citizen support for our conservation actions is to make sure citizens are informed in involved in the decision-making process. So throughout the months of January and February, the “Bull Trout Team” embarked on road trips to get out and meet the public. Representatives from Regions 1 and 6 hosted informational meetings and hearings in Montana, Oregon, Washington and Idaho to discuss our proposal to designate critical habitat for bull trout and the release of the draft recovery plan for the species.

Just to give you an idea of the scope of this issue, the critical habitat proposal for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout encompasses a total of 18,471 miles of streams and 532,721 acres of lakes and reservoirs in the four states. The Montana portion includes 3,310 miles of streams and 217,577 acres of lakes and reservoirs.

The draft recovery plan provides the overall plan for recovering bull trout throughout its range in the United States including 24 chapters each specific to a recovery unit. Each of the recovery unit chapters can be thought of as a mini recovery plan describing the steps we think will lead to the recovery of bull trout in that watershed.

Wade Fredenberg (lead Montana fishery biologist for bull trout from the Creston Fish and Wildlife Center) acted as the Region 6 point person attending meetings held in Polson, Missoula, Kalispell, and Libby, Montana as well as Spokane, Washington and Sandpoint, Idaho. Joining him at various locations were Mark Wilson, Lori Nordstrom, and Dan Downing (Montana ES Field Office), Mark Maskill, Tim Bodurtha, Paul Hanna, Ben Conard, Leslie Kubin and Marisa Henderson (Creston Fish and Wildlife Center), and Diane Katzenberger (External Affairs).

The purpose of the public meetings and hearings is to talk with as many citizens as possible – and that’s just what the team did. Citizens came equipped with thoughtful questions and concerns about how the critical habitat proposal might affect them, their livelihoods, and their recreational pursuits. After providing an overview presentation, team members engaged in discussions, listened to concerns, talked about recovery objectives, and even managed to squeeze in newspaper and television interviews. Last December, the team also traveled the state to meet with Montana congressional staffers, the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks leadership, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council to brief them on these bull trout issues.

The draft recovery plan is an excellent example of the Secretary of Interior’s Four Cs: “Consulation, Communication, and Cooperation, all in the name of Conservation.” Stakeholder involvement didn’t begin with the release of the draft recovery plan. On the contrary, the plan is the result of nearly 10 years of collaboration with more than 120 stakeholders. The plans were developed with the cooperation of Federal, State, Tribal, and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners, industry, and conservation organizations. And public involvement continues with our solicitation of comments and information which will be evaluated and incorporated into our final recovery plan.



Ditto for the critical habitat proposal – the Service will take a close look at the public comments before making a final determination.

The days were long, but the consensus of the Region 6 team is that public outreach such as these meetings and hearings is time well spent in our effort to inform and engage the public in our conservation efforts. As a result of these efforts, press coverage received on the Montana meetings was generally comprehensive and well-informed.

Kurt Fredenberg is all smiles after catching this bull trout on the Wigwam River in British Columbia, Canada. The bull trout was, of course, released after his proud Dad took the photo.



Celebrating a Century of Conservation



In Celebration of the National Wildlife Refuge System's 100th Birthday!

By Barb Shupe, Refuges

Hi! My name is Barbara Shupe. I am writing this on February 6, 2003, in preparation for the 100th Birthday of the NWRS on March 14, 2003. I wanted to share my experiences working at Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge Complex from 1976 to 1997.

I started as the Refuge Clerk on June 1, 1976, making \$7,976 per year. The office was located 5 miles south of Cayuga, ND. I was only 20 years old and fresh out of college with a Medical Secretary degree. The college was North Dakota State School of Science in Wahpeton. For the first few years, besides myself, there were only two other full time employees at Tewaukon: Refuge Manager Herbert Troester and Maintenance Man Chris Schuler.

Life was simple: only one telephone line and an old "IBM Correcting Selectric" typewriter. I performed the administrative duties which amounted to ensuring everyone get paid on time, ordering supplies, paying the bills, and balancing the \$300 Imprest Fund. We depended on the US Postal Service to deliver the mail. In the Fall, we were always busy answering questions from the deer and pheasant hunters.

The "Computer Age" hit in the mid-1980s. At that time, I was the only person on staff with a desktop model. I felt it didn't quite replace my IBM Correcting Selectric; I guess it was hard making the transition. I held a \$10,000 warrant authority for purchasing. VISA credit cards were issued to "simplify" our purchasing.

With the computer age came many changes in the administrative field. All of a sudden we were required to electronically enter the purchase orders and vendor payments. Vendors were required to have their payments electronically deposited to a financial account. No more depending on the US Post Office delivering checks. By this time, I was responsible for the \$2,000 Imprest Fund. We were also required to track the annual budget in the "Budget Tracking System." I was on the original team that created the first BTS in dBASE IV. Payroll was also all entered electronically; however, for several months we had to follow-up with the old "brown and white" T&As.

When I left Tewaukon in 1997, I was earning \$30,410. The composition of the staff had changed dramatically. We had 8 permanent full-time employees and would usually hire 5 to 10 more in the Summer. We still had the faithful answering machine and six desktop computers; only mine was hooked up to the 28.8 bps modem. We had not yet networked the computers or received voice-mail. My life was filled with acronyms: FFS, DCN, BTS, FPPS, RDE (Data), DFC, GSA, YCC, ASCS, SCS, and NDGFD.

How many employees now work at the refuge? Is the office still south of Cayuga on Sargent County Road 12? How many of these acronyms still exist? Do the geese still migrate through in the Spring and Fall in such large numbers that you can hear them cackling from inside the office? Do deer and pheasant hunters still swamp you with questions? Do you handle paper anymore or is everything electronic? And, most of all, do you have fun in your job taking care of and preserving the resources for the next generation?



Media Corner

News Media: The Interview

By Debbie Felker, Colorado River Info and Education Coordinator

It is critical that you identify your spokesperson (s) before you contact the media. Depending on the story, one or two spokespersons can provide the necessary information. Generally reporters like to talk to people in charge of organizations. Higher-level officials may have a greater understanding of a complex event, or perhaps more sources than others in the same organization. At the same time, reporters like to speak to experts in the field - those with hands-on experience with a project.

Here are some helpful tips for a successful interview:

Be prepared— Anticipate key questions and prepare key, accurate answers.

Listen carefully to each question. —Questions that are “off the subject” may mean the reporter doesn’t understand the topic and you may have to offer a quick overview.

KISS – Keep it short and simple. Be concise. This is especially important for radio and television interviews where soundbites are typically only 10 seconds.

Help the reporter understand the issue(s) that makes the story important – the “why.”

Don’t use jargon or technical language your audience won’t understand, including acronyms.

Be truthful and straightforward. Never lie and never try to fake it.

Resist any effort from the reporter to put words in your mouth.

Enjoy yourself and have some fun. Media interviews offer a great opportunity to tell your story.

Next month: Facing the Television Camera



Technical Support Hotline

By Heather Gonzalez, ITM

We started our Technical Support Hotline on last February 10, 2003 with fantastic IT specialists. We will provide more availability in technical support for our all Regional Office and Field Stations employees by using a communal technical support hotline.

The Technical Support hotline will open at 7:00 am Mountain-Time and end at 5:00 pm Mountain Time, with two IT specialists available to answer the calls and reply to e-mails. If you are in the regional office, you will get a personal house call from one of the IT staff on duty. If you are in the Field Stations, you will get a timely response via telephone, email or other appropriate medium.

You may call our Technical Support hotline at (303) 236-7926, or e-mail to FW6_Tech_Support@fws.gov or stop by the Tech Support hotline located in ITM office.

The program will continue for six months and include an evaluation of hotline performance and response time. The decision to continue the program will be made at the end of this six month pilot. If you have any good or bad feedback, contact Sue Zirbes, Chief Technology Officer at (303) 236-7917 x418 or Sue_Zirbes@fws.gov.

Classroom Experience Leads Youth to Pursue a Job and Biology Degree

By Debbie Felker, Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Kellen Keisling met his first razorback sucker during a science class at Page High School. Kellen and his classmates helped raise this rare fish species, found only in the Colorado River system.

Students at Page worked with biologists from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources’ (UDWR) Wahweap Fish Hatchery to raise endangered razorback suckers in public golf course ponds. They fed, weighed, and measured the fish and recorded research data. The students also tagged and released the fish into the Colorado River as part of an effort to restore populations of fish that reproduce in the wild.

Now in its seventh year, this unique, award-winning science course is a partnership among the school, UDWR, the City of Page, and the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

This experience led Kellen to pursue his dream of becoming a biologist. Kellen, 19, is now sophomore at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado, where his major is biology. He just completed his third summer on staff at the Wahweap Fish Hatchery.

“It’s awesome,” he said, referring to his summer job. “I’ve had the opportunity to confirm now this this is the career I want rather than wait until I graduate from college to see if I would like it. I’m getting a head start on getting work experience in my chosen field.”



Kellen Kiesling shows off an endangered bonytail

Refuges for Us All

By Ralph Morgenweck, RD

As you know, the Service is approaching a major landmark in its history: the Refuge Centennial. To celebrate National Wildlife Refuge System's 100th birthday, the Service and our partners are holding a series of events at our refuges around the nation to honor and highlight the tremendous contributions the Refuge System has made to fish and wildlife conservation in the United States. I am proud to be a part of this historic occasion, and encourage you all to participate in regional Centennial activities.

I also encourage you to think about the larger notion of "refuge" at what is perhaps best described as an interesting time in the history of our nation. Just as fish and wildlife need refuges to ensure their continued existence in a rapidly changing world, I suggest to you that we humans also need refuges, places to leave behind the "madding crowds," the pressures of everyday life, and, more recently, the uncertainties associated with larger, global trends. Such places can restore and refresh the soul, and bring back into focus the very reasons we choose to devote our careers to conserving biological resources for future generations.

In this sense, National Wildlife Refuges play a dual role, as places where "wildlife comes first," but also as places where we can go to recapture the vital connection between people and the living plant. The Refuge System is the premier public steward of such vital connections, and now, more than ever, a strong symbol of this nation's ongoing commitment to conservation.

CLA Staff Gather in R6 for Coordination Workshop

By Matt Kales, EA

In mid-December of last year, the R6 Congressional and Legislative Affairs program hosted a two-day workshop for national CLA staff. Representatives from the regions and from Headquarters convened in Lakewood to identify opportunities for enhanced coordination between and among regional and Washington Office CLA staff.

This was the first time in recent memory that CLA staff had gathered expressly for the purpose of program improvement, and all of the participants quickly discovered the benefits of "cross pollination," e.g., information sharing, networking, technology transfer, standardization, and protocol, all of which will make program delivery more effective and efficient.

The workshop featured presentations from all of the CLA programs, which served to highlight the diverse approaches regional CLA staff employ in consideration of each region's unique geographic and political profile. Other highlights included a discussion on working with the new Congress (led by WO/CLA staff), and a keynote address by Kit Kimball, the Department of Interior Director of External and Intergovernmental Affairs on the current Administration's policy priorities. Representatives from other Service programs also attended several workshop sessions.

Participants in the workshop evolved a lengthy list of measures intended to enhance coordination within CLA, many of which are already in place, such as regular, periodic communications between regional CLA and WO staff assigned to either specific regions and/or issues. The group agreed to meet annually going forward, and plans to hold next year's workshop in Washington, DC.

Native American Issues

By David Redhorse, EA

Atsaa bii yaaz- time of the eaglet, is the Navajo reference to the Month of February. Recently, I became aware that the Koyukon Athabascan referred to this month as tililzo'o", Eagle Month. This illustrates what I've been told - that Navajo and these northern people have cultural and linguistic ties. For this example, the words would sound different, but their meanings are the same.

In January, the Service issued guidelines that allow Canadian natives to bring eagle feathers into the United States for religious purposes. These directives supplement earlier Service provisions that accommodates American Indians to transport eagle feathers and parts outside the United States.

While Native people legitimately travel with eagle feathers, protection and conservation issues continue. This month a U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the conviction of Leonard Antoine, a member of the Cowichan Band of Salish, from British Columbia, for smuggling bald eagle parts into the United States. He had argued that he brought the eagle parts into the United States for use in religious ceremonies.

While Antoine maintained that he was not selling the parts for profit, but exchanged the parts for money or goods as part of the custom of "potlatch," he was found to have parts of at least 29 eagles in a storage facility in Washington and the parts of at least 124 eagles at his home in British Columbia. The government said Antoine was receiving things of value in exchange for the parts.

The Mountain-Prairie Review is a monthly publication produced by the USFWS Region 6 External Affairs Office. Publisher: Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director; Editor: Matt Kales, EA; Staff Writers: Karen Miranda Gleason, Diane Katzenberger, David Redhorse, Sharon Rose; Design and Layout: Heather Gonzalez, IRM/ Jean Clemens, EA. All contributions from Region 6 employees are welcomed and will be considered for publication.