



FWS Retirees Association NEWSLETTER

November 2014

2014 Board of Directors

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Board Member Emeritus

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- A first class restaurant and lounge and within easy walking distance of local nightlife and other fine restaurants and drinking emporiums;
- Health and fitness facilities, including a steam room and lockers;
- An indoor/outdoor rooftop pool with a panoramic view of the marina;
- A business center and free in-room internet and wireless access;
- Airport shuttle and complimentary parking;
- Clean, comfortable room and beds; and
- All close to the Convention Center, the USS Lexington Aircraft Carrier, Texas State Aquarium, the Hurricane Alley Water Park and the Northshore Golf and Country Club.

Corpus Christi 2015

Hope you remember where you put your suitcases and field glasses. You're gonna' need them come March 2015. The time is now to start looking for convenient flights to Corpus Christi and to make your hotel arrangements. The best FWS Retirees Reunion ever is just a few months away and you don't want to miss it.

Scores of FWS Retirees will be descending on that historic city on the gulf coast from March 1st through the 5th, just ahead of the college crowd on spring break. Perhaps, in spite of our advanced ages and infirmities, we should also think of this as our "Spring Break" (although I don't really know what we might be "breaking" from). While the Kalispell Reunion was extraordinary, that was some 15 months ago. We think it's time for us to outdo that wonderful celebration of our careers and retirements and make Corpus Christi 2015 the next "best ever" reunion. We have a great week planned for you, jam packed with informative sessions, eye-opening tours and social activities that should please everyone. Best of all, lots of your friends from those days when you actually worked for a living will be there to socialize, reminisce, and share stories (and lies?) of their lives in retirement.

Venue.

The Holiday Inn at the Marina will host our 2015 Retirees' Reunion. The hotel is located at 707 North Shoreline Boulevard in Corpus Christi. It is immediately adjacent to the marina right on the Gulf Coast and has its own set of attractions for those inclined to stay close. These include:

Negotiated room rates for the Reunion are \$116/night (plus tax) and



that includes one full breakfast per room.

The hotel will honor this rate for three days prior to Saturday,

February 28 and for one day after the Reunion (on a space available basis).

A very limited number of rooms can be had at that rate for Friday, March 6: after that, none will be available at the preferred rate.



We urge you to make your hotel reservations early. The cut-off date for making reservations at our special rate is **Friday, February 20, 2015**. Reservations can be made in any of three ways:

1. Phone the hotel directly at 361-882-1700;
2. Use the hotel's "direct-link" website www.holidayinn.com/corpuscdtwntx ;or
3. Call the national Holiday Inn Reservation Desk at 1-877-424-2449.

A special reservation code has been set up for our retirees to make their reservations. The code is simply "**FWS**". If you have any difficulties, call Board member Jerry Grover at 503-684-1809 or e-mail him at Groverjerry.judy@att.net .

Any cancellations must be made not later than 48 hours before the reservation date. Otherwise, one day's room rate will be charged.

Draft Agenda.

The core dates for the Reunion are Sunday, March 1 through Thursday, March 5, 2015. While the agenda is still a work in progress, a lot has already been decided.

Saturday, February 28 will be arrival and work day for the Board and volunteers to set things up. For those who come early, touring on your own is encouraged and we will give you several options to connect with other retirees who want to do similar touring.

Sunday, March 1 in the AM will be work day for Board and volunteers. Registration will begin in the afternoon. Later that afternoon we will have the second "Greenwalt Walk for Wildlife" at the Nueces Wildlife Preserve followed by a picnic or barbeque. This will be an extra cost event (\$30/person) with the proceeds going to the Aransas NWR Friends group. For those not participating in the walk for wildlife, a no-host bar get-together will begin that evening. Alternatively, you may wish to connect with other retirees for some other interesting side activity. We will again have the "*Sign-up Genius*" program available to help folks make arrangements for other activities.

Monday, March 2 will be the official opening and welcoming. Registrations will continue while the opening "*meet and greet*" speakers (RD, State of Texas, Chamber of Commerce, etc) have the podium. Following that, we will have two "keynote" panelists. Bill Bartusch of the Fish and Wildlife Service and Larry McKinney from the Hart Institute on the Health of the Gulf. They will speak and answer questions on local hot topics, including the use of surrogate species, the Land Conservation Cooperatives, the recovery of the gulf following the recent storms and oil spills and how climate change might affect the resources of the area. We also hope to get an NGO conservation organization speaker to give us their perspective in how well the FWS is doing in meeting its mission goals and what future opportunities may exist.

The afternoon is free time for most but our Association Board Business meeting will be held and is open to all. In the evening, we will have our *Icebreaker Social* with hearty snacks and hors d'oeuvres.

Tuesday, March 3 will be tour day. We have arranged for tours of the Aransas NWR including boat trips to the best

whooping crane sites. We will do this in three shifts to be able to maximize the number of folks who can get on a boat. The boat's capacity is limited to 37 passengers, thus we can only accommodate a total of 111 people for the three shifts. Consequently, the first to register and sign up for this part of the tour will be able to participate. However, there is no limit on the number who can take the ground tours of the refuge. Lunches will be provided during the tour.

Note! If there is enough interest in the boat trip part of the tour and we can justify another bus for participants, we may be able to accommodate up to 148 boat passengers.

Wednesday, March 4. In the AM, there will be more on conservation topics. Regional Director Ben Tuggle and/or DRD Joy Nicholopoulos will fill us in on regional issues and Director Dan Ashe and/or Deputy Director Rowan Gould will let us know what's happening at the national level. There will also be a talk from the 2014 Duck Stamp contest winner and a very enlightening panel discussion headed up by Robert Jess of the Service. Panelists will discuss border issues and how they affect wildlife and wildlife management. For that panel, we hope to include representatives of both the U.S. and Mexican Border Patrols.

Also in the morning, we will again have representatives from the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) to fill us in on retirement benefits and pending legislation/policy of concern to retirees.

The afternoon is free time for whatever you choose to do.

That evening will be our **Silent Auction and Retiree Banquet**. For a banquet speaker, we have invited a noted nature photographer and videographer who, should they confirm, will certainly interest and entertain all who attend.

Thursday, March 5. Wrap-up day. The Heritage Committee will meet in the morning and we will also provide a summary of the results of our Association business meeting. This will be followed by a Remembrance of Colleagues, Reunion evaluation, and closing announcements.

Other Activities.

Whether you plan to come early, stay late, or just use your free time in the afternoons during the reunion, there are a myriad of activities to keep you busy in the Corpus Christi area. If you're into fishing, what could be better than the Gulf Coast, just outside your hotel doorstep? Charter boat fishing or just dropping a line from the shore can be productive. The timeframe for this reunion is still in the heart of the migratory bird season. There should be lots of neo-tropical migrants (including some exotics) as well as waterfowl, herons, egret and cranes (think whooping cranes) to help you fill out your lifetime bird lists. The Corpus Christi area is home to several loops of the Great American Birding Trails and the Great Texas Wildlife Trails system. Check them out online for more info.

For the avid golfer, there are several local courses to be considered, including the prestigious Northshore Golf Club, a tough links style course that has taunted many well-known professionals. For history buffs, this area is also loaded. Especially noteworthy is the presence of the USS Lexington, the historic aircraft carrier that played such a crucial role in the

Pacific during World War II. The Texas State Aquarium will provide an interesting afternoon as well. Or perhaps you'd prefer to visit one of the local restaurants with gulf coast specialties and/or a drinking establishment with concoctions to warm the innards of the casual imbibers. All are close at hand. Be sure to try the *Sign-up Genius* to coordinate and connect with other retirees with similar tastes in leisure activities.

Silent Auction.

The silent auction held on banquet night is one of our major fund-raising events and an opportunity for you to get some great bargains on high quality merchandise and other amenities. This year, as last, Steve Rideout has offered a one-week stay at his three bedroom vacation cabin on Lake Ambajesus in northern



Maine as one of the items up for grabs. The cabin has a full kitchen, ¾ bath, well water, electricity, satellite TV, and phone. It also has a canoe and kayak for your use. Just bring your swimsuits, beach towels, and your own food and drink; everything else will be provided.



Last year retiree Matt Perry won this prize and he and his group thoroughly enjoyed the swimming, kayaking and fishing on the lake and hiking at nearby Baxter State Park. The lake is part of a connected 5 lake system of over 18,000 acres with myriad islands, coves and great places to swim and



fish. There's also whitewater rafting on the nearby West Branch Penobscot River or, should you long for ocean views, Acadia National Park is just a 2 ½ hour trip from the cabin. The cabin will be available on a mutually agreeable week in July or August 2015.

We will also have a beautiful pair of hooded merganser



decoys for the auction. These were picked up by Denny Holland at a recent visit to Chincoteague specifically for the silent auction. They were carved by Roe Terry, a world renowned carver and are worth several hundred dollars each.

Wouldn't they look just great in your collection of wildlife art?

As at past reunions, we also expect to have a fine collection of other wildlife art and carvings, field glasses from Leupold-Stevens, other field equipment and clothing as well as some electronics. Our Board team is out right now scouting countrywide for more high-value goodies to tempt you to open your wallets and purses.

Registration.

We have been able to hold costs down so that we will charge a registration fee of only \$100 per person. This modest fee will include all break refreshments, the Icebreaker Social, all tour costs, and the Retiree Banquet. Only the Greenwalk Walk for Wildlife is extra (\$30/person) and that event is optional.

A **Registration Form** is attached at the end of this newsletter. To help us in our planning, *we urge all of you to register early*, especially if you want in on the boat trip for whooping crane viewing

Donations Welcomed

As indicated earlier, the silent auction and the raffle are major sources of funding for our organization, funding needed to help us do the good things that we do on your behalf. We are in need of your generosity, contributing items (large and small) that our reunion attendees would be willing to bid on at the auction or buy raffle tickets to take a chance on. Example items include artwork of all kinds (wildlife and landscape prints and paintings, carved decoys, decorative collectibles, etc.), books, bottles of wine, outdoor sports equipment (fishing, hunting or birding gear in great shape), even jewelry and kids toys. How about vacation options (do you have cabin or beach house that you would be willing to donate for a few days?) or guided fishing, hunting or birding trips. Consider a small breed puppy that would make a good companion for a retired couple. We urge you to think about what you may have to offer and contact our auction coordinator, Bob Streeter (rgstreeter@gmail.com) for further details about what you are willing to donate and on where and how to get it to the reunion. This is an opportunity to really help your Association and *Its Tax Deductible*.

Election of Board Members

Each year, the terms of three members of the Association's Board of Directors expire. And each year, every dues paying member gets a chance to run for one of those seats and every dues-paying member has the opportunity to vote for the candidates of their choice. New or re-elected Board members begin their terms in January.

We absolutely have to have a good and active Board to keep this Association running smoothly. This year, however, we attracted only three candidates to vie for these three seats, this in spite of our call for qualified retirees to step up to the task. Nonetheless, the candidates we do have are more than adequate to meet the challenge and we are glad for their willingness to serve. They are Mamie Parker and Bob Streeter (incumbents) and Robin Fields.

Robin joined the Service in 1971 and spent most of her FWS career in refuges, serving at Merritt Island, Back Bay, and Erie NWRs and in the Region 5 RO, also in Refuges. She followed that with stints in the Asheville, North Carolina, Area Office and in Jacksonville, Florida working on endangered species listings. Robin resigned in 1986 following the death of her father and moved to Massachusetts, where she spent the next 20 years managing the family business.

This year, because we have but three candidates and three seats on the Board of Directors, we have decided to forgo the process of an election and accept the three candidates as duly processed members of the Board for the three year period, 2015 through 2017.

Grant Funds Available

The FWS Retirees Association has a special account to support anniversary events that promote the rich heritage and missions of the Service. Station anniversaries of 50, 75, 100 and more years are eligible. Friends groups may apply for matching funds to support these events. Deadlines for application are April 30 and October 30 of each year. For more information and a grant application form, visit www.fwsretirees.org

2015 REUNION REGISTRATION

(Mail-In Form)



Corpus Christi, Texas –

March 1 - 5, 2015

Reunion registration is \$100 per person. It includes break refreshments, the icebreaker social, the banquet, and the tour of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. You will need to make Hotel reservations separately. See information below. Online registration at <http://www.fwsretirees.org/>

Your Name:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Name on Badge: _____

Spouse/Partner/Guest:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Name on Badge: _____

Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____
 Area Code Phone Number

I/We wish to go on the boat tour at Aransas NWR. _____ (Number of registrants wanting to go)

I/We will go on the Greenwalt Walk for Wildlife and BBQ Sunday March 1 (\$30 donation/person) _____ (Number going)

I'd be glad to help during the reunion (check as appropriate):

Registration Desk _____ Walk for Wildlife _____; Auction and Raffle _____; Leading morning birding _____

Check your other interest areas:

Morning birding _____ Fly fishing _____ Charter fishing _____ Hiking _____ Other _____
Specify

Registration and Dues (check as appropriate):

\$100 - Reunion Registration for Myself _____; \$100 - Reunion Registration for Spouse/Partner _____;

\$30 - Walk for Wildlife Donation _____; \$30 - Walk for Wildlife Donation for Spouse/Partner _____;

\$25 - 1-year dues _____; \$100 - 5-year dues _____; \$500 - Lifetime _____

TOTAL INCLUDED \$ _____

Mail completed form (with check) to:

"FWS Retirees Association"

c/o Pete Stine, 6609 Welton Court NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109-4084

Call Holiday Inn Downtown Marina for reservations (361)882-1700 – rooms \$116/night, group FWS

For more details on the reunion, see: <http://www.fwsretirees.org/>