

Final Report

from the Association of Retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees for The Grant
Titled

Service Heritage and Building the Next Generation

FWS Grant Award F14AP00332

May 1, 2014 to September 30, 2017



**Final Report for The Grant Titled *Service Heritage and Building the Next Generation* –
May 1, 2014 through September 30, 2017**

Introduction:

This report summarizes grants, awards, amendments and accomplishments of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Retired Employees (Association) for the period from May 1, 2014 to September 30, 2017. There were three “Interim Reports” submitted during the grant-period. The initial grant, entitled “Service Heritage and Building the Next Generation” was originally \$55,000. This grant was amended three times. The first Amendment added \$20,000 (totaling \$75,000) to expand the Association’s support of station anniversaries and youth events (Amendment 1). The grant was amended twice in 2015: Amendment 2 added \$15,000 to support Objective 2 - partnering with NCTC and the Green School Alliance to support the Student Climate and Conservation Congress; and, Amendment 3 added \$22,800 to augment Objective 2 to increase Association involvement in connecting youth with the outdoors, enhancing conservation career awareness, and to continue to support database management. The amendments added additional funds (\$37,800) that brought the total grant to \$112,800. In lieu of continuing to amend an existing grant, the grant committee decided to apply for a new grant that was separated into “Service Heritage” and “Youth Conservation Education” grants, which started in July 2017. Development and approval of these grant proposals were processed during the grant period with much assistance from NCTC personnel.

These grants helped the Association further public awareness and understanding of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the heritage and mission of Service hatchery or refuge programs. An important aspect of the Heritage program helps to preserve elements of the Service’s rich history that might otherwise be lost. It captures the Service’s history by providing support to museum and archive collections, establishing the Fallen Comrades Memorial, and emphasizing the importance of the Oral History project. The Oral History Project has recorded over 700 digital recordings of retirees, capturing their history and institutional knowledge so it will not be discarded or forgotten. Training and necessary recording equipment purchases are vital to this project.

Grant information and application forms for station anniversaries are made available on the Retirees Association web site: www.fwsretirees.org and also by networking with Service staff to help disseminate the information. Service Retirees’ are notified of the program events by email and postings on the Association webpage. Any retirees living near refuges or hatcheries, which are hosting anniversary celebrations, are asked to offer their assistance and attend if possible. Besides assisting with the event, these programs are good opportunities for Retirees to lend their expertise and for the Association to collect oral histories from former employees.

The fund expenditures during the grant period were used directly to address the three objectives outlined below (May 2014 – September 2017). Additionally, throughout the entire grant period, Service staff and Retirees have graciously volunteered their time to accomplish these objectives.

Grant Period: May 2014 – September 2017

Objective 1: Support the Service Heritage Committee in collecting oral histories and artifacts.

An Oral History Committee was approved by the Association and FWS. Guidelines were developed and approved. The committee consists of three retirees and three active duty personnel with the FWS Historian as an ex-officio member. Equipment was purchased for the Oral History project including 18 audio recorders, microphones, and memory cards along with two digital video recorders, memory cards, and tripods. The equipment is stored at the Service Historian's office and sent to retirees doing oral histories. A priority list for oral histories was developed and continually updated. Oral histories collections were accomplished at NCTC, retiree's homes throughout the country, at field station (NWRs and Hatcheries) anniversary events, Retiree reunions, and the Law Enforcement Retirees gatherings in Oregon and South Carolina, and other locations. An astonishing total of 104 oral histories were conducted during the grant period. Twelve new reviewers were recruited to begin developing a nationwide network to facilitate oral history recordings in every region. Additional interviewers and equipment for them is needed as the network of interviewers is much smaller than the demand for oral histories. Even with the new recruits there are only about 20 active interviewers. Most interviews are transcribed at NCTC by FWS then returned to the interviewers and interviewees for final editing before transcripts are posted on the National Digital Library at <https://goo.gl/TiHh6i> by FWS. The OHC chair periodically reviews the index of completed interviews that have yet to be transcribed, prioritizes them for transcription and communicates the priorities to the FWS transcriptionist. The chair also updates an Oral History candidate list periodically. The Association and Heritage Committee have discussed reviving the HC Artifacts Committee and decided to initiate this process in early FY 2018.

The Association funded 16 Station Anniversary Celebrations during the grant period. Eligible stations are notified and include national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field offices, and Service administrative sites. Stations who applied and were approved for anniversary celebration (age) funding were: Sherburne NWR (50), Saratoga NFH (100), Leavenworth NFH (75), Havasu & Bill Williams River NWRs (75), Kodiak NWR (75), Muscatatuck NWR (50), Kenai NWR (75), Reelfoot NWR (75), Okefenokee NWR (80), Bozeman Fish Technology Center (125), John Heinz at Tinicum NWR (45), Tennessee NWR (70), Dungeness NWR (100), Mille Lacs NWR (100), Hatchie NWR (50), and Ridgefield NWR (50).

Attached are new reports from two programs and various images that were submitted by stations depicting the activities during these celebrations. Additionally, art of Bob Hines and Ding Darling were approved for purchasing to support Service Heritage and Museum collections.

Objective 2: Participate in and support youth and leadership training on FWS installations and colleges/universities.

Assisting the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3), the Association provided four speakers in 2014, eight speakers in 2015, and six in 2016. Youth conservation and pollinator workshops were supported for about 60 high school students at Aransas NWR and the 2015 Association Reunion. Meetings were held with the Green School Alliance founder to develop implement strategies.

Over 25 youth conservation events were supported during the grant period including Monarch butterfly/pollinator programs, youth career conservation awareness, and conservation education. Butterfly and/or native plant gardens were established in five states (SC, MN, WI, MO, & GA). Programs included four Envirothons and multiple career awareness events for grade school students and the general public. The Association participated in and supported the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) and WildStem programs that explored opportunities to increase conservation career awareness during state and international Envirothon competitions. Special youth conservation programs were supported at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee and at Cape Romain NWRs. New reports for the latter programs are included below. Allocation of funds by objective was discussed several times during the year with NCTC staff. Due to the reorganization of the Service Heritage Committee and development of a new five-year strategy, it was agreed to reallocate funds to objectives 2 and 3, which allowed for support of SC3 in 2017, the partnerships with the Monarch Joint Venture, and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars program.

Objective 3: Foster the continued involvement of retirees in the Service mission.

The Service Retiree's database was updated monthly with new retirees and death notices added. Regional liaisons were selected to network with Regional staff. During the move of the Headquarters to Leesburg Pike, the Association hosted an informal breakfast event for staff to continue connecting with Service employees, particularly those nearing retirement. Travel assistance was provided for Regional Representatives to participate in the Heritage Committee meetings. Service retirees are continuing to be involved with and support the Service mission. Although many retirees participate in Association programs, there are many other retirees that continue to assist field stations on a daily basis. The Association programs provide additional opportunities for retirees to become involved; they share their accumulated knowledge and experience with Service employees, offer mentoring and other opportunities to become or stay involved with the national programs that they supported during their careers and/or newer programs as they evolve in the agency. Moreover, participating retirees are also learning many new tricks and tools used by younger generations to advance the Service's mission. The Association is also working with the FWS's Division of Marketing Communications to produce short articles regarding FWS Retiree programs and opportunities for the Fish and Wildlife News publication.

Youth Conservation and Education project reports from Loxahatchee and Cape Romain NWRs are as follows:

FWS Retirees Association and the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Participate in WildSTEM

On Thursday, May 4, 2017 the FWS Retirees Association and the public service staff of Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge hosted: "Engaging Youth in WildSTEM"

Day. This event was organized by Dr. Rena Borkhataria with Doris Duke Foundation and University of Florida and Dr. Mamie Parker with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association. Thirty students from Glades Central High School's Outdoor Adventure Club participated in this field experience. Glades Central High School is located in Belle Glade, FL near Lake Okeechobee. This Tile 1 school is one of 23 high schools in the School District of Palm Beach County, FL. Refuge public service staff gave the 28 students and their two teachers an introduction to Everglades history detailing the KOE ecosystem and its importance to habitat, wildlife and people living in south Florida. Then the students were led in field exercises pertaining to water quality, birding, and invasive species management. After a catered lunch, the students participated in a career "speed dating" session with FWS Retirees Association members and refuge staff. Having the opportunity to talk about what their careers meant to them, FWS Retirees Association members and staff engaged the students and let them know real life scenarios, job tasks and what classes in college were most beneficial. The day ended with the students slogging in the marsh looking for non-native apple snail eggs with GPS units to record and monitor for their future visits to the refuge.



Slogging with the best of them at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR



Students and staff participating in WildStem at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR.

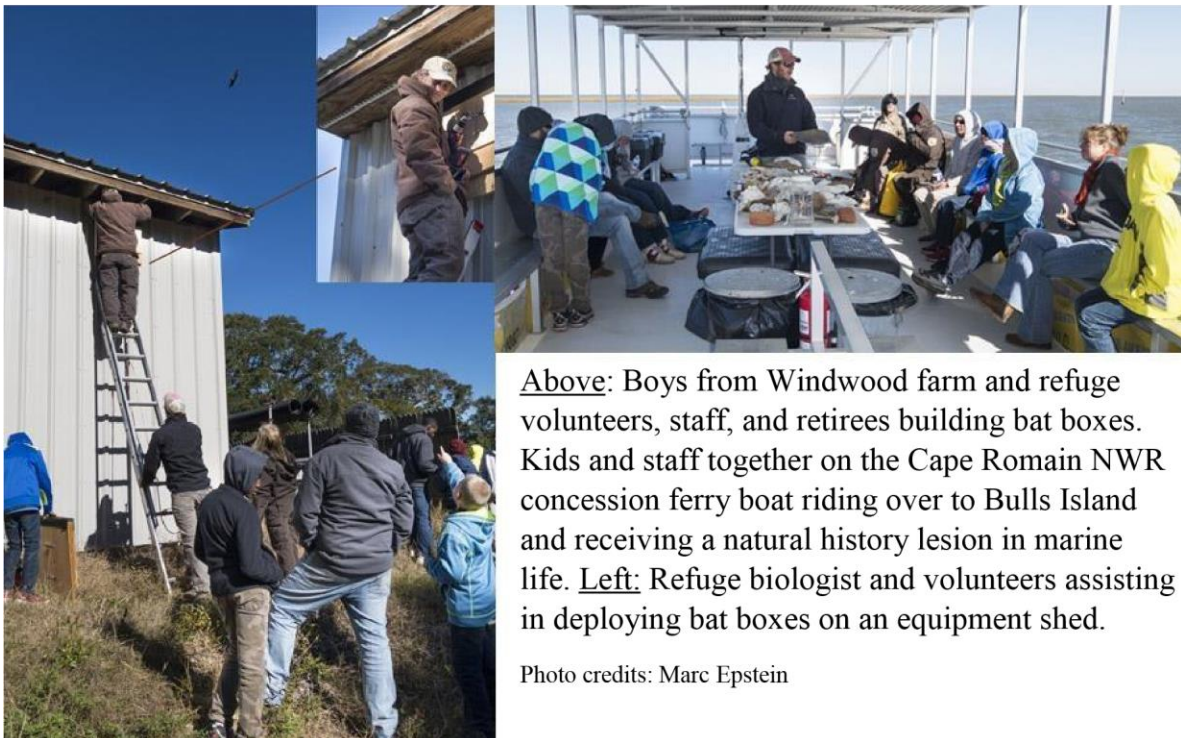
Photo Credits: Kenny Lutz

FWS Retirees Association and Cape Romain National Wildlife Partnership with Windwood Farm Home for Children School

Cape Romain NWR and Windwood Farm Home For [special needs] Children partnered to implement a two-phased program at the refuge's Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center and on Bulls Island. Phase 1 occurred in April and boys ages 8 – 15 years planted native pollinator plants at the refuge's Visitor Center. Phase 2 occurred in October and the children built bat boxes and travel to Bulls Island, one of the refuge barrier islands, to deploy the boxes within the maritime forest on Bulls Island. Phase 1 was previously reported in Interim Report (9/2017). The following images depict Phase 2 – building and deploying bat boxes.



Photo Credits: USFWS



Above: Boys from Windwood farm and refuge volunteers, staff, and retirees building bat boxes. Kids and staff together on the Cape Romain NWR concession ferry boat riding over to Bulls Island and receiving a natural history lesson in marine life. Left: Refuge biologist and volunteers assisting in deploying bat boxes on an equipment shed.

Photo credits: Marc Epstein

2017 FWS Retirees “Mini-reunion” at NCTC and Service Heritage Committee Meeting

Service Heritage Committee Meeting:

There were about 145 Retirees who attended the October 2017 “Mini-Reunion” at NCTC, and Retirees’ were graciously invited and offered rooms at the facility. The FWS Heritage Committee met on Tuesday, October 17th and discussed several on-going programs. It was a great opportunity for Retirees to again visit NCTC and included an enjoyable and very informative field trip to the Antietam Civil War battlefield. Other enjoyable activities included viewing several mini FWS films, an art display, and a campfire and dedication of two benches in memory of Denny Holland. The event included the celebration of the 20th anniversary of NCTC. Mark Madison arranged tours of the NCTC Museum and Archives, led by Mark and Jeanne Harold. Retirees were treated to a short play entitled: “Bully”, a one-man play starring Case Hicks, about the conservation efforts of Teddy Roosevelt. All inclusive, these programs and activities are all part of keeping FWS Retirees informed and engaged in the mission of the Service.



Left: Service Heritage Committee meeting at NCTC, October 2017. Mendal Stewart provides the committee members an update on recent programs.

Service Twenty-Year Dedication of NCTC as “Home of the Service, and Retirees Field Trip



Right: Dedication of NCTC’s 20th anniversary and Bob Heinz art. Jim Kurth, stands next to former NCTC Director Rick lemon, current FWS Deputy Director, Greg Sheehan, former FWS Directors’ Dale Hall, Lynn Greenwalt and John Turner, and NCTC Director Jay Slack.



Left: A group of FWS Retirees are being informed on the history and embattlement at the Antietam Civil War battlefield.

Photo Credits: Marc Epstein

Composite images from national wildlife refuge and fish hatchery anniversary celebrations, oral history collections, WildStem Evironthons, and other youth conservation educational programs, which are supported through grants provided by the Fish and Wildlife Retirees Association and partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, May 1 2014 through September 30 2017.

Acknowledgements: The final and interim reports are a compilation of images and reports from a host of Fish and Wildlife Service staff, volunteers, educators, and FWS Retirees all inclusive. Special thanks to M. Epstein, G. Carmody, N. Baldacchino, and J. Cornely (editors). We thank T. McCleaf, M. Madison, and S. Chase for providing substantial support. We thank the USFWS for its continued support of these special programs, which otherwise would not have been possible.

