Interim Report for Grant Award F14AP00332

Interim Report for Entire Grant Period

July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

The following summary is a compilation of reports received from project leads and recipients of small grants for Service Heritage and Youth Conservation Education objectives. During this term, the FWSRA funded 7 station anniversary events, 20 oral history interviews, and several youth conservation events including Monarch butterfly/pollinator programs. Station anniversary celebrations included Reelfoot, Muscatatuck, Kenai, Okefenokee, John Heinz, Santa Ana NWR’s, and Bozeman Fish Technology Center. The Association participated in and supported the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) programs and explored opportunities to increase conservation career awareness during state and international Envirothon competitions, and at Cape Romain NWR. We continued to maintain the retiree database and make it available for Service needs and will be coordinating the new 2017 grant with project leads. The database was updated monthly with new retirees and death notices. Work continues with Regional Offices and the Washington Office to connect retiring employees with the Association and gather information for database.

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 1: Support the Service Heritage Committee in collecting oral histories and artifacts [includes station anniversary events].

Oral History Report

A spreadsheet was developed for oral history candidates to be interviewed. Candidates are prioritized and the list is updated and distributed periodically. The Chairperson of the Oral History Committee (OHC) is the keeper of the list.
Guidelines for the OHC were developed and approved by Board of the FWS Retiree Association. Membership of the OHC was completed to include equal numbers of retirees and full time FWS employees. The FWS Historian is an ex-officio member.

During the past year, a minimum of 20 oral history interviews were conducted and sent to the transcriptionist at NCTC. Assistance with editing transcripts was provided by the interviewers before transcripts are posted on www.fws.gov. Transcription is completed and posted 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.

Four additional digital audio recorders were purchased to be available for new interviewers. Five additional interviewers were recruited. To date 10 additional retirees have agreed to be interviewed in future months. Retiree reunions provide excellent opportunities for interviews and outreach for the OH project.

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Station Anniversary Grant Reports

The Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association awards small matching grants to Service Friends Organizations to support anniversary events that promote the rich heritage and missions of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Anniversaries of 50, 75, 100 and more years are especially eligible. We send notice of these events to FWS Retirees’ in our database that live nearby or within the surrounding states of the event. For Anniversaries occurring in FY 2017, the Retirees Association has awarded grants as follows:

*Reelfoot NWR celebrated its 75th Anniversary, lease renewal with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and Open House of its new 4,700 sq. ft. visitor center in October 2016.

*Muscatatuck Wildlife Society for Muscatatuck NWR (IN) - 50th Anniversary $500 (celebrated September 17, 2016)

*Friends of Alaska NWRs for Kenai NWR (AK) 75th Anniversary -- $500 (celebrated December 16, 2016)

Okefenokee Wildlife League for Okefenokee NWR (GA/FL) 80th Anniversary -$500 (celebrated March 30, 2017)

Booth Society for Bozeman Fish Technology Center (MT) -125th Anniversary $500 (celebrated June 10, 2017)

Friends of Heinz Refuge for John Heinz at Tinicum NWR (PA) – 45th Refuge Anniversary and 20th Friends Anniversary - $500 (celebrating June 17 and November 4, 2017; no report)
Also, funded in 2017, but celebrating in 2018: Friends of the Wildlife Corridor for Santa Ana NWR (TX) – 75th Anniversary - $500 (celebrating January 2018)

It is hoped that the assistance of grants can help further public awareness and understanding of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the heritage and missions of the hatchery or refuge celebrating the anniversary. Grant information and application forms are available on the Retirees association web site, www.fwsretirees.org.

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, this may be a good opportunity to lend expertise and to collect oral histories from former employees.

* Reported previously for 2016 calendar year.

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**Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge 80th Anniversary**

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge celebrated 80 years during a public event held on April 15, 2017. The refuge’s true 80th anniversary was March 30, but staff planned a weekend event to allow for more activities and celebration. The “Oke is 80” event was sponsored by the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Okefenokee Wildlife League, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Retirees Association. It consisted of the first annual 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run. The race was held on Swamp Island Drive, the refuge wildlife drive, and was host to 78 participants total.

The race was the first event of its kind held on Swamp Island Drive. The staff and Friends group were delighted at the number of signups for the very first race. The race signup also consisted of a virtual option, which enabled supporters of Okefenokee NWR to sign up and do their race at any location of their choosing. The virtual race option had a substantial impact and had virtual race participants from 9 states! After the race festivities, participants could enjoy the refuge by completing an Oke is 80 Passport Challenge which enabled them to receive a free, limited-edition special refuge patch. Imitation “alligator eggs” were hidden at popular areas around the refuge and allowed visitors to receive special prizes from the Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center throughout the day. The event was overall successful and was host to nearly 350 visitors for the duration of the day. Special thanks goes to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Retirees Association for providing the grant monies which enabled the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge to purchase a beautifully made refuge cake to celebrate and funded the purchase of the Oke is 80 event patches.
Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge Anniversary Celebration- 9/17/16

Muscatatuck NWR celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sept. 17, 2016 with a full day of programs and activities. A $500 grant from the National Wildlife Refuge Retirees Association was used for a community lunch (with birthday cake) that was held at the Visitor Center during the event.

Morning programs held in a large tent in the Visitor Center parking lot (in heavy rain) featured Assistant Refuge Chief Tom Worthington (Region 3 Regional Office) followed by Complex and Refuge Managers Joe Robb and Alejandro Galvan. Other speakers included family members of Jim Endicott and Charlie Scheffe, Refuge historian Phil McClure, Professor Vicky Meretsky from Indiana University, and Muscatatuck Wildlife Society President Linda Sullivan. A video interview with the first managers’ wife (Lois Scheffe) was shown throughout the day. Families of former landowners were recognized along with former employees, interns, and volunteers. After the morning programs there was a catered lunch with birthday cake in the Visitor Center courtyard.

Afternoon activities for visitors included fishing for youngsters in Discovery Pond, an obstacle course in the Nature Discovery Area, information on native plants at the Endicott Grassland, nature sketching demonstrations at the Hackman Overlook, picture taking at Myers Cabin, and eagle nest viewing in the Waterfowl Sanctuary. There were special displays about former homes on the refuge, former volunteers and staff, and a video of Boy Scout Eagle projects on the refuge. The day was a great success and over 300 people turned out for the events despite the wet weather.

Refuge Blue Goose waits patiently for an opportunity at the salad bar.
Lois Scheffe and Joe Robb share a good time at the Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge Anniversary Celebration.

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Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge Anniversary Celebration

Reelfoot NWR celebrated its 75th Anniversary, lease renewal with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and Open House of its new 4,700 sq. ft. visitor center in October 2016. An estimated 400 participants enjoyed the day as guest speakers from various agencies kicked off the event. After the National Anthem and flag raising ceremony, vendors opened to showcase their expertise! Vendors included our local University of Tennessee at Martin, Wildlife Society, Quail Forever, TWRA, USFWS, Reelfoot Tourism Council, Delta Heritage Center, Discovery Park of America, TN Ornithological Society, and many more! Participants enjoyed hayrides, canoe trips, a live bird of prey program, bald eagle release, informative guest speakers inside our new classroom, and free chili/hot dog lunch and cake. Two retirees and two former employees attended the event. Every participant received an environmental education packet. Custom made 75th Anniversary T-shirts and hats were handed out to the first 150 participants, vendors, and speakers. The day was a success with the help of many partnerships and the FWS Anniversary Celebration grant!
Reelfoot 75th Anniversary Event – a beautiful day for families to enjoy a ride around the refuge.

Bozeman FTC 125th Anniversary Celebration

The Bozeman Fish Technology Center facility, Montana, celebrated 125 years of operation on June 10, 2017. The facility was established on August 5, 1892, as the first National Fish Hatchery in the northern Rocky Mountains to produce trout and other trout-family fishes for stocking into lakes and streams in Montana and Wyoming. The Anniversary Celebration was held in conjunction with the Watershed Festival and Kids Fishing Derby, which is an annual event cohosted by the Montana Outdoor Science School and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is dedicated to promoting appreciation of nature and showing kids the fun of fishing. The event
attracted over 2,100 people and included a incredibly popular fishing derby, other exhibits included fly tying and casting lessons, face painting, duck races, bear spray training, chances to see noxious weed-loving goats in action, live raptors, fish health demonstrations, pollinator plant information, music, food and an exhibition of how to use bear spray.

Local artist, Jim Dolan, created a metal sculpture of a pallid sturgeon (endangered spp) to commemorate the facility’s 125 years of operation. We would like to thank the USFWS Retirees Association for providing funding for the sculpture, as this will be a long lasting tribute to the importance and longevity of the facility.

Duck Races and showing off their catch
Family Fishing Event and poster (below).
Objective 2. Participate in and support youth and leadership training on FWS installations and colleges/universities.

Youth Leadership Training on FWS Installations and Colleges/Universities

- Participate in and support the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) (Measurement: support provided).
  - Some speakers for 2016 and all speakers for 2017 were paid this period. (10 total)

- Explore opportunities to increase conservation career awareness during state and international Envirothon competitions (Measurement: offer of assistance initiated).
  - Retirees discussed alternative approaches with the NCTC youth coordinator, the NWRS youth coordinator, and the NWR Urban Refuge coordinator. It was decided to pursue options that are already well established youth programs where conservation career awareness could be inserted and/or enhanced.
  - The Retirees Association entered a partnership with the Monarch Joint Venture and the University of Minnesota to support the Monarch Lab's funding of schoolyard gardens. Initially, ten schools have been selected and funded in MN, WI, MO, and GA to install gardens in August and September 2017. Two Retirees are coordinating with teachers to add career awareness materials and to find possible retirees to volunteer to at the schools. Over 200 students will be involved. Two other student events were enhanced with conservation career awareness information in the Panama City, FL area. One was support for the Emerald Coast Envirothon involving over 60 students involved in an international competition that includes studies of wildlife, fisheries, forestry, soils, and a special issue topic. The other was Arnold High School Bay Day involving about 30 students. The teacher led workshop was held at the campus of Florida State University-Panama City adjacent to St. Andrew Bay. Numerous agency professionals were enlisted to provide learning stations including water quality, seine netting, shark dissection, fish aging, science diving, fish and invertebrate photography, turtle watch, and fish and wildlife law enforcement careers.
September 2017

Images of students from Evirothon

Images from Hatchie NWR Event
• **Youth workshops on the conservation importance of plants and pollinators**
  - Supported youth event at Hatchie NWR in conjunction with Retirees Reunion. Students (45) from Memphis area participated. Cape Romain NWR and partnered with Windwood Farm Home For Children to implement a two-phased habitat and wildlife conservation project for boys who planted native pollinator plants at the Visitor Center. In Phase 2 - the children will build bat boxes to place on Bulls (Phase 1 report attached below). The University of Florida designed in conjunction with staff at Loxahatchee NWR a youth workshop for students in the West Palm Beach area. Several retirees from the Vero Beach area assisted.
  - The Retirees Association partnership with the Monarch Joint Venture and the University of Minnesota also supports education in pollinators. See above.

• **Employee leadership mentoring opportunities**
  - Nothing to report
Project Progress Report:
Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge
Boys, Bees and Bats: Conserving for Tomorrow
July 2017

Cape Romain NWR and Windwood Farm Home For Children have partnered to implement a two-phased habitat and wildlife conservation projects at the refuge’s Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center and Bulls Island. Phase 1 - In April, boys ages 8 – 15 years planted native pollinator plants at the Visitor Center. Phase 2 - In October, the children will build bat boxes and travel to Bulls Island, one of the refuge barrier islands, to place the boxes within the maritime forest on Bulls Island.

Phase I: The pollination plant project at the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center was successfully completed on April 18, 2017. Boys and staff from Windwood Farm Home for Children met the Refuge ranger, Friends staff and refuge volunteers from Cape Romain NWR and the refuge Friends Group to plant native plants in the Center pollinator garden. The boys planted a total of 97 plants (17 native species) that included the native Butterfly weed plants that the boys had germinated in their greenhouse for the project. The boys took several plants, donated by a refuge volunteer, to plant on the Windwood campus.

Cape Romain Park Ranger P. Midgett planting native plants with youth
16 native plant species, a total of 75 plants, were purchased from Naturescapes, Beaufort SC, for $352.00. Species included coral honeysuckle, woodland sunflower, oxeye, passion flower, false nettle, frogfruit, southern beardtongue, twistleaf goldenrod, frost aster, twinflower, wooly groundsel, mountain mint, downy phlox, and bluestem, black speargrass and blue-eyed grass. These plants will bloom at various times during the seasons and a few are found to be very good larval plants for butterflies. Butterflies, bees and other insects feed in the garden.

Cape Romain Park Ranger P. Midgett planting native plants with youth.

When seeds are ready for collection, boys from Windwood Farm will collect the seeds for germination in their greenhouse. In the Spring of 2018, the boys will plant the plants at the Sewee Center and Windwood in an on-going partnership for native pollinators.
Youth planting native plants at Cape Romain NWR.

Additionally, a presentation regarding fish and wildlife ecology and conservation carrier opportunities was provided by a FWS retiree (M. Epstein) to two classes at Windwood Farms.

FWS Retiree (M. Epstein) presenting a Conservation Career PowerPoint to youths at Windwood Farms.
On May 19th, 168 linear feet of cedar wood was purchased with project grant funds from Dawson Lumber Co., Georgetown SC. The wood will be used for the construction of bat boxes which will be placed on the Windwood Farm campus and on Bulls Island.

Phase 2: In September (date to be determined) refuge retirees will pre-cut the boxes. On October 19th, boys from Windwood will build the boxes at their education center. Retirees and the refuge ranger will work with the boys on the box construction and oversee their placement on the campus.

On November 1st, the boys will visit the refuge with refuge staff and retirees, traveling by concession ferry to Bulls Island. Bat boxes will be places at various locations in the maritime forest and, the boys will tour with island to learn about island habitats and its wildlife.

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

- Maintain database of retirees and make it available for Service needs including editors of Service publications (Measurement: bi-monthly updates to database, percentage of new retirees with information submitted).
  - The database was updated monthly with new retirees and death notices. Requests from Service staff were completed.

- Work with Regional Offices and the Washington Office to connect retiring employees with the Association and gather information for database (Measurement: Association regional captains identified for most Service regions and initial contacts made).
  - Regional Retirees continued to connect with Regional Office staff. The Region 4 representative made a presentation on the Retirees Association at an all-region project leader's meeting.