

On the Wild Side

WILDLIFE PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



USDA
FOREST SERVICE

JULY 2004

The Enterprise of conservation is a revolution, an evolution of the spirit. We call to the land and the land calls back. ~Terry Tempest Williams



Forest Service Wildlife Program Leaders and Get Wild Coordinators—working together for Wildlife!

NEWS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

(Excerpt from June 25, 2004 FS Today)

Partnership with the National Forest Foundation

I would like to reintroduce you all to the National Forest Foundation (NFF) established in 1990 by Congress. They are one of the most important nonprofit partners of the Forest Service.



Historically, the Forest Service has relied on traditional methods to engage the American public. It is my intention to find creative ways to communicate with the public about their national forests. We entered into partnership with the Foundation to meet the challenges of this difficult task. Nearly a year ago, the NFF asked us what, in addition to their ongoing programs, they could do on behalf of the Forest Service and national forests. After some thought, we asked for their assistance in outreach. NFF responded by developing the Friends of the Forest™ initiative. I am excited about this opportunity and the roll-out of the Region 6 pilot this week. I encourage you to log on to www.nationalforestfoundation.org and www.becomeafriend.org to learn more about this important effort. It is one that has the potential of reconnecting the American public with their public land and reconnecting us with the American public.

Dale N. Bosworth, Chief
US Forest Service



United States
Department of
Agriculture

<http://www.usda.gov>

FACT SHEET

United States
Department of
the Interior



<http://www.doi.gov>

PROGRESS REPORT: PRESIDENT BUSH'S HEALTHY FORESTS INITIATIVE AND THE HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT OF 2003

The President introduced his Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) in August 2002 at the height of one of the worst fire seasons the Nation has experienced in decades. The Healthy Forests Initiative, the combination of administrative initiatives and legislative changes, provides land managers the tools they need to reduce wildland fire risks, control insects and disease, and restore forest health. On December 3, 2003, President Bush signed the Healthy Forests Restoration Act into law. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) is the central legislative component of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative.

Decades of hazardous buildup of dense brush and undergrowth, coupled with drought conditions, insect infestation and disease make forests and rangelands in many areas throughout the country vulnerable to often intense and environmentally destructive fires. HFRA contains provisions for preparing and implementing hazardous fuels reduction projects on Federal land and for assisting the restoration of healthy forest and rangelands and watershed conditions on State, private and tribal lands. The following is a brief progress report on conditions and actions taken to implement HFRA and the Healthy Forests Initiative nationally.

Background: 2004 Poised to be a Challenging Year

An estimated 190 million acres of public lands are at elevated risk of severe wildfires. In 2000 and 2002, the United States suffered two of the worst wildland fire seasons in 50 years.

Nationally, we expect an above average fire season in several Western states and average or below average activity in the Eastern two-thirds of the nation. As of June 1, some 530,000 acres had burned, an increase of 125,000 acres from 2003 by this time last year, but below the ten-year average of 775,000 acres. Six fire-related firefighter fatalities have occurred in 2004 and more than 250 residences have been destroyed. The 2002 fire season saw 88,458 fires burn roughly 7 million acres, destroy more than 800 structures, and take the lives of 23 firefighters. New Mexico, Oregon, Colorado, and Arizona registered their worst fires in modern history.

In 2003, Southern California suffered its worst wildland fire season in modern history as wildfires burned over 739,000 acres destroying 3,600 homes claiming 24 civilian lives and costing \$157 million to contain. The total economic losses are estimated at \$123 million. The combination of continuing drought and an increase of drought stressed and insect damaged trees and brush has resulted in a greater potential for large wildfires in the West. Today, we have 35 percent more firefighting resources than we had in 2000.

The Healthy Forests Initiative

We are making a difference, treating some 10 million acres under the National Fire Plan since the beginning of fiscal year 2001. We see results in association with large fires, more modest blazes, and fires that made almost no impact.

On May 11, 2004 a lightning-caused wind driven wildfire that threatened the town Ortonville, Minnesota was halted at less than 350 acres because a fuels treatment on 35 acres of the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge the week before provided an anchor point for fire fighters and stopped the spread of the fire onto private lands with homes and farms.

Healthy Forests Initiative Administrative Improvements at Work

Under President Bush's leadership, the federal land management agencies have implemented several administrative initiatives to help expedite projects aimed to restore forest and rangeland health, as called for under the HFI, including:

- The Forest Service and Department of the Interior are implementing new procedures provided for by the National Environmental Policy Act to expedite completion of collaboratively chosen priority fuels treatments on thousands of acres in the coming years. The Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have used the Categorical Exclusion 306 times. This has resulted in 540 planned individual fuel treatments.
- Improvement of the Forest Service's administrative review process to encourage early and more meaningful public participation to project planning and implementation of forest health projects.
- Guidance to Federal agencies to make consultations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) more timely and better account for long-term benefits to threatened and endangered species.
- Guidance from the Council on Environmental Quality to improve environmental assessments (EAs) for priority forest health projects. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior have implemented this guidance by preparing EAs for 15 pilot fuels treatment project. Thus far, the agencies have completed EAs using the enhanced process on the 14 pilot projects and have moved forward with the new EAs for other projects as well.
- New regulations under ESA have improved the planning, review and implementation of fuels reduction and forest health activities.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003

On December 3, 2003, President Bush signed the historic and bipartisan Healthy Forests Restoration Act into law. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act is the central legislative component of the Healthy Forests Initiative. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior have responded swiftly and aggressively to implement this legislation. The Forest Service has issued a final rule for a special administrative review process for hazardous fuels reduction projects in national forests. The Forest Service and Department of the Interior agencies have also published an HFRA implementation guide and conducted training sessions for the field on the use of the HFRA authorities.

Other accomplishments include:

- The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Energy have signed a memorandum of understanding that provides the basis for the interagency biomass team to implement biomass projects.
- The Forest Service is working with state foresters and Tribes to develop guidelines that promote the use of forestry practices to sustain healthy watersheds through collaborative approaches. Guidelines will be in place by early fall.
- Implementing 2 landscape scale research projects across the country that will provide practical information on how to combat insect infestations and diseases threatening forest health.
- Developed and published the "The Early Warning System for Forest Health Threats in the United States," which describes for the first time the nation's system for identifying and responding to forest health threats, including web sites to obtain further information.

Funding the Healthy Forests Initiative

The Departments have developed an integrated interagency approach to fund activities that meet the objectives of the Healthy Forests Initiative, including those activities under the HFRA. In the proposed fiscal year 2005 proposed budget, a total of \$760 million is targeted for work to reduce hazardous fuels, restore forest and rangeland health, and reduce the risk of catastrophic fires.

This budget supports the Healthy Forests Initiative and Title I in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, focusing on forest and rangeland health restoration to achieve more comprehensive and effective results on the ground.

Stewardship Contracting Legislation

In December 2002, Congress enacted legislation expanding stewardship contracting authority, a key component of the HFI. The legislation allows the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to enter into long-term (up to 10 years) contracts with small businesses, communities and nonprofit organizations to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have already approved stewardship contracts using the new authority requested by the President and provided by Congress.

The new authority allows contractors, community groups, and others to keep removed wood material as partial payment for their service, while improving environmental conditions and complying fully with applicable environmental regulations.

In 2003, the Forest Service awarded more than 30 stewardship contracts and expects to award an additional 60 in 2004. Of the projects already approved, more than 20 are to improve fuels situations. BLM expects to carry out 35 stewardship contracts in 2004, 22 of which are hazardous fuel projects.

On January 9, 2004, the USDA and DOI announced guidelines to develop and implement stewardship contracts and agreements so there is consistency in contracting services across agencies.

Improved Coordination

In 2002, USDA and DOI formed the Interagency Wildland Fire Leadership Council to further implement the National Fire Plan. The council provides a coordinated, seamless management structure to all aspects of wildland fire policy under the Healthy Forests Initiative and integrates federal fire activities with those of states, tribes and local governments, including land restoration and rehabilitation.

Record Amounts of Hazardous Fuels Restoration Work Accomplished

- From 2001-2003, Federal land management agencies treated a total of 7 million acres. In fiscal year 2004, the agencies plan to treat an additional 3.7 million acres, bringing the combined total since 2001 to nearly 11 million acres. Nationwide, the number of acres treated has tripled since 2000.
- By the first week of June 2004 the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior reduced hazardous fuels almost 2.3 million acres.
- Approximately \$426 million of hazardous fuels reduction funds has been budgeted for work this year between USDA and DOI and will be supplemented with funding from other program areas. In fiscal year 2000, DOI and USDA spent \$117 million for hazardous fuels reduction.

For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the Healthy Forests Initiative, please visit <http://www.healthyforests.gov>

NWTF TAKES LEAD ROLE BY HOSTING “GET WILD” PARTNERS

June 22, 2004

**For more information, contact:
James Powell or Jonathan
Harling, 803-637-3106**

An extensive list of important conservation issues, especially the "Healthy Forest Restoration Act" were the spotlight at the "Get Wild" Partners Meeting at the Wild Turkey Center in Edgefield, S.C. June 14-18, 2004. Representatives from more than 14 conservation groups attended the meeting, including U.S. Forest Service employees from the Washington, regional and district offices.



"The Healthy Forest Restoration Act has the potential to do great things for wildlife. That's why the Federation has taken the lead in working to get appropriations to use for habitat improvement," said Dr. James Earl Kennamer, NWTF senior vice president for conservation programs. "In hosting the 'Get Wild' Partners meeting, at the request of the Forest Service, the NWTF brought together conservation groups with similar interests in healthy forests, abundant wildlife, clean water and air on public lands."

The last day of the meeting included a tour of the 200,000 acres Savannah River Site, which is one of the most closely monitored U.S. Forest Service management areas in the nation. The site, formerly a nuclear warhead material making facility, is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy. The site is monitored closely for security reasons, which tightly restricts public access. Because the area is not open to the public there is less likelihood for projects to be disturbed which allows researchers the opportunity to analyze more reliable data.

The partners also toured parts of the Sumter National Forest, where the NWTF assisted in prescribed burns earlier this spring through a stewardship contract with the U.S. Forest Service. "Not only did we talk about how the Healthy Forest Restoration Act can help our forests, we showed the other conservation groups first hand with the prescribed burned areas on the Sumter National Forest," said Kennamer. "Sportsmen and conservationists need to realize the importance of putting money toward this Act because our national forests are in need of help."

"Get Wild" Partners meetings have taken place every two to three years since the 1980s, with participating groups including the U.S. Forest Service, NWTF, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Boone and Crockett Club, Safari Club International, the American Bird Conservancy, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Wildlife Society and Quail Unlimited.

For more information about the NWTF, visit the web site at www.nwtf.org or call 1-800-THE-NWTF. About the NWTF: In 1973 when the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded, there were an estimated 1.3 million wild turkeys and 1.5 million turkey hunters. Thanks to the work of wildlife agencies and the NWTF's many volunteers and partners, today there are over 6.4 million wild turkeys and approximately 2.6 million turkey hunters. Since 1985, more than \$186 million NWTF and cooperator dollars have been spent on over 27,000 projects benefiting wild turkeys throughout North America. The NWTF is a half million member grassroots, nonprofit organization with members in 50 states, Canada and 11 foreign countries. It supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport. For more information on the National Wild Turkey Federation, call (803) 637-3106, check out our web site at <http://www.nwtf.org> or e-mail questions to nmatthews@ntwf.net.

NWTF IS FIRST CONSERVATION GROUP TO BECOME USFS STEWARDSHIP PARTNER

June 22, 2004

A new U.S. Forest Service program is saving taxpayers big bucks by involving private contractors in habitat improvement projects and selling the byproducts from these projects to fund future conservation work.



This spring, two of the program's pilot projects improved more than 1,300 acres of wildlife habitat in South Carolina's Sumter and Francis Marion National Forests. The projects, conducted in partnership with the NWTF, created nearly 1,000 hours of work for local labor forces and saved more than \$25,000 by selling 1,500 tons of wood chips that would otherwise have been wasted. The chips came from thick stands of small diameter pines removed to make room for higher quality wildlife habitat. Enough chips were produced to create nearly one million copies of a typical daily newspaper.

The two projects were the first partnerships between a conservation organization and the Forest Service under the USFS' new Stewardship End Result Contracting program. The program was passed into law in 2003 and allows the Forest Service to outsource timber and wildlife management projects to private contractors like the NWTF. The contractors help the USFS meet its management goals, which include:

- reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires,
- removing low quality hardwood brush habitat
- restoring stands of beneficial hardwoods such as oak and hickory trees,
- involving local economies in the habitat improvement process

"The NWTF was selected because of its 30 years experience in natural resource conservation, its staff of 15 professional wildlife biologists and its strong ties to many local communities," said Dennis Daniel, the USFS liaison with the NWTF. "We see these kinds of partnerships as the future of National Forest management."

The first pilot project, a series of prescribed burns totaling more than 1,300 acres, took place in South Carolina's Sumter National Forest. The burns cleared the area of forest fire-causing woody debris and created habitat for many wildlife species in the area, including brood habitat for wild turkeys.

The second pilot, a 62-acre project on the Francis Marion National Forest, removed thick stands of small diameter pine timber in preparation for a prescribed burn slated for winter 2004. The clearing and burning will restore open oak and hickory savannah habitat to the forest. Such habitat is more valuable to many species of wildlife. "The NWTF is currently planning stewardship contracts with the USFS in six states," said Robert Abernethy, the NWTF's director of agency programs. "These projects will improve more than 15,000 acres of wildlife habitat over the next year." For more information on the NWTF's participation in the USFS Stewardship Contracting program, contact Tina Bevington at 1-800-THE-NWTF.

CANADA LYNX DEN FOUND ON SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST (Excerpt from June 25, 2004 FS Today)



On June 7, Minnesota Lynx Study biologists located what they believe to be the first Canada lynx den to be documented on the Superior National Forest (MN). Three healthy kittens were located in the den, and were measured, weighed, and fitted with ear tags. This discovery is a milestone in the Lynx Study because it documents that Canada lynx are reproducing on the Forest. The Lynx Study team will monitor the kittens' survival. For more information, contact Ed Linquist, Superior National Forest, phone: 218-626-4380.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK (WHSRN) NEWS

WHSRN is very pleased to welcome South Texas Salt Lakes as an International Site for its remarkable number of Long-billed Curlews. According to US Fish and Wildlife Service Outreach Specialist, Patty Alexander, "biologists and volunteers counted as many as 2,261 Long-billed Curlews on the lakes at one time". This represents 10% of the estimated global population. The Long-billed Curlew is considered one of the most threatened shorebirds in North America.

The new WHSRN site includes two portions of the South Texas Salt Lakes: La Sal del Rey and East Lake (La Sal Blanca) where Long-billed Curlews roost during winter months on sand bars or in shallow water. In former days, the lakes were a valuable source of salt for native people, Spanish explorers, and western pioneers. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that birdwatchers come from around the world visit to view the diversity of wildlife and rare species. The site is of critical importance to thousands of Wilson's Phalaropes and Eared Grebes among great numbers of other birds. The Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR is also recognized as an Important Bird Area. For more information contact: Patty Alexander, Public Outreach Specialist at: 956-784-7632 or Patty_Alexander@fws.gov

You can also visit The South Texas Salt Lakes Site Profile on the WHSRN web site: <http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN/sites.php> and/or the USFWS website as well: <http://southwest.fws.gov>. This information is provided by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) Listserv. You are invited to respond to WHSRN@manomet.org to contribute news, offer comments, subscribe or unsubscribe.

MCCLOSEKY SEES COLORADO'S PASSION FOR WILDLIFE AS KEY INGREDIENT IN DIVISION'S FUTURE SUCCESS

June 22, 2004

Colorado Division of Wildlife



Thirty years of experience in wildlife management in Colorado will be an asset for the DOW's new director. The newly appointed director of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW), Bruce McCloskey, says the passion Colorado residents have for natural resources is vital to building the broad-based support needed if the state is to maintain and enhance wildlife. "There are so many people in this state who have such strong feelings about wildlife, and devote much of themselves to wildlife management and protecting species," McCloskey said. "As director, I want this agency to be able to capture that emotion and commitment and focus it on the challenges that we face to fulfill our mission." However, McCloskey emphasized, "We can't survive on the support of hunters and anglers alone. We need to capture the

passion of all of our constituents, and my goal as director is to unite different groups toward shared goals as advocates for wildlife.”

After 30 years at the DOW, including the last 15 as deputy director, McCloskey said he plans to be a director who spends much of his time out of the office working with employees and constituents. “I’ve been in the office in Denver for most of the last 20 years in various positions,” he said. “I think it’s important that the director spend as much time as possible in the field with employees to understand what they face day-to-day and learn what they think we can do to improve.”

But major changes aren’t on the horizon, McCloskey said. “I think we’re on the right course, and I give a lot of credit to Russ George, especially in the political arena where we frankly had problems prior to Russ coming on board.” George, the former state legislator who served as DOW director from 2000 to 2004, is now executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and remains McCloskey’s supervisor. “Russ and I have worked very well together. We share common goals and we will continue to work closely. I have the best relationship I have had with an executive director during my career,” McCloskey said. “Russ was the agency’s first director without a professional background in wildlife management during a critical time for the DOW,” McCloskey said. “Russ left an agency that is, by and large, well respected by the public and by legislators.”

McCloskey’s career is the classic example of a professional working his way through a variety of different jobs over a lengthy tenure. He began as a district wildlife manager in Kremmling in 1974, and became the hunter education coordinator in 1978, an area wildlife manager in Lamar in 1979, a regional manager in Colorado Springs in 1983, and a state wildlife manager in the Denver office in 1984. In 1988, he was one of two assistant directors, and in 1989 became the agency’s deputy director. “It was my goal to be a wildlife officer when I graduated from Pueblo East High School in 1970,” McCloskey said. He kept that goal in sight as he earned a degree in wildlife biology from Colorado State University in 1974 and later a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Colorado.

“I believe the DOW is on the right course,” McCloskey said. “I don’t foresee any major organizational changes, but as positions become vacant, we will look take a look at each one of them to determine if changes are appropriate. “This agency is rock solid, and I want to build on the good success achieved by top-rate professionals who are dedicated to the resource.” “The most immediate challenge is filling the large number of vacancies that are occurring as agency veterans retire,” he said. “We’re already grooming future leaders through our leadership program, and human resources is working to fill positions as quickly as possible,” he said. “The retirements present a difficult challenge, but they also provide an opportunity for younger employees with new ideas to move up.” Completing work on a new five-year season structure is also an immediate task for the agency, as is developing a legislative package for 2005. “We will continue to meet with sportsmen’s groups and other constituents to consider whether we go back to the legislature with a new proposal to increase license fees,” he said.

Even with all the success we’ve had over the years, I don’t want to stand in the same place. I want to encourage people to come up with new ideas. Not every new idea is going to be a good one. But everyone needs to be encouraged to bring ideas forward so that the best of them can be considered and adopted to help this agency grow.” McCloskey admits the challenges are daunting, with growth, energy development and habitat loss all combining to put more pressure on wildlife managers. “We have innovative, new cooperative programs to work with private landowners and others and we’ve had great success with species conservation. But there is much more work needed on species conservation and to protect habitat. I don’t think hunters and anglers should have to pay for that work alone. We need to look at new options that allow everyone to help pay for species conservation,” he said.

“Thank goodness we’ve had Great Outdoors Colorado money from the lottery over the years, or we would not have been able to move forward with lynx reintroduction and other important work. But we need to move beyond that and find a broader funding base,” he added. Despite the challenges, McCloskey is gratified to be the new DOW director.

"I am truly humbled by being named to this position. There is no greater honor for me. Over the last 30 years, I have learned a great deal about wildlife and this agency, and as I have matured. I have seen how important it is for the director to provide steady, calm leadership and to reach out to people with a wide range of interests," McCloskey said. "Hopefully, we have learned to do a better job of listening and understanding why so many Coloradans have such a strong passion for wildlife. Those who have disagreed with me personally or with the agency over the years are important players, regardless of our differences," he said. "We need to work together; there is so much for us to do in the future. We can only be successful if all of us unite behind our common goals for wildlife."

FOREST SERVICE CENTENNIAL CONGRESS, JANUARY 4-6, 2005, WASHINGTON, DC

The Forest Service Centennial Congress will commemorate 100 years of conservation, assess current challenges and opportunities, and initiate a dialogue for the 21st Century to meet the needs of present and future generations.



Objectives

- Initiate the Centennial year for the Forest Service in a meaningful, historic way, and recognize the significance of conservation in the 20th Century.
- Bring partners together to jointly identify the major challenges for the future, and document the complexity and diverse contributions to public land management in the 21st Century.
- Build advocacy and understanding for the agency.
- Provide a basis for looking forward by looking back through the unveiling of "The Greatest Good: A History of the Forest Service"
- Provide an opportunity to document international contributions to management of America's forests.
- Fulfill the expectation described in The House Appropriations Committee Report that the Agency will work to bring partners and interests together in a collaborative way.

Overview and Purpose

To commemorate the creation of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905, and provide a contemporary focus for the future by convening Congressional leaders, representatives from agency partners and interests, other agencies, leading academicians, select state and local government representatives, key governors, media leaders, and Forest Service leaders.

Forest Service Regions, Research Stations and State and Private Areas are convening Centennial forums throughout the United States, in advance of the congress, which will have national relevance in framing challenges for specific topics to bring forward in January for national and international audiences.

Planning Approach

The initial Centennial Congress planning group is made up of representatives from the National Forest Foundation, the American Forest Association, the Society of American Foresters, the Boone and Crockett Club, the Pinchot Institute, The Woods Institute, Forest History Society as well as staff from all branches the Forest Service.

Contact: Jacqueline Leonard, 202 205-0860, jaleonard@fs.fed.us

MORE ON THE FOREST SERVICE CENTENNIAL

From Susan Alden Weingardt, USDA Forest Service, National Partnership Office office: 510-559-6342; mobile: 202-236-8208; salden@fs.fed.us

There is an opportunity for partners to show the Greatest Good documentary at their annual conventions and meetings. For specific information on the Greatest Good and to schedule a screening, please contact: Alana DeJoseph, Venue Coordinator at: greatest_good@msn.com

If you have questions, ideas or centennial opportunities you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to call myself at 510/559-6342, or Wilke Nelson, National Forest Foundation at: 202/298-6740.

Please visit www.nationalforestfoundation.org/centennial for additional Centennial information.

HARVARD RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN ECOLOGY, CONSERVATION AND FOREST BIOLOGY

Since 1907 the mission of the Harvard Forest has been to promote research and education. Harvard Forest is one of the oldest and most intensively studied forests in North America. From a center comprised of 3000 acres of land, research facilities, and the Fisher Museum the scientists, students, and collaborators at the Forest explore topics ranging from conservation and environmental change to land-use history and the ways in which physical, biological and human systems interact to change our earth. There are dozens of publications generated from the research at this site and are available for downloading at <http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/publications/pdfarticles.html>

LAST PIECE OF GAME RANGE PUZZLE SAVED

May 18, 2004

For more information contact: Keith Lenard at 406-523-4500 or klenard@rmef.org



MISSOULA, Mont.—The last large parcel of private land within the Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area (WMA) took a giant step toward public ownership today.

Working with the Blackfoot Challenge, a landowner-based watershed organization, The Nature Conservancy of Montana and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation completed the purchase of 3,835 acres of land previously owned by the Plum Creek Timber Company for \$3.3 million. The land will be offered to FWP for the same price. "Lots of people have worked for a long time to see this day," said Mike Thompson, wildlife biologist with the FWP. "This is a great opportunity for wildlife in Montana."

The WMA is Montana's largest state-owned property dedicated to wildlife habitat, and it represents one of Montana's first efforts to match big game habitat preservation to the critical winter ranges of elk, deer and other wildlife. The state established the WMA in 1948 with the purchase of the 10,936-acre Boyd Ranch. The WMA now includes 67,000 acres. This acquisition represents the final step in securing the future of this long-term investment by the state and people of Montana. "The Elk Foundation is pleased to be a part of this effort spearheaded by the Blackfoot Challenge and The Nature Conservancy and supported by Montana's congressional delegation. Senator Conrad Burns, chair of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee is helping the Blackfoot Challenge secure funding for portions of the project.

This project demonstrates the power of partnerships and establishes a positive vision for the future," said Peter J. Dart, Elk Foundation president and CEO. "This transaction is an important contribution to maintaining the rural character and natural resources of the Blackfoot Valley," said Jim Stone, a rancher from Ovando and chair of the Blackfoot Challenge. This final purchase on behalf of the WMA is a spin-off

of the much larger effort by The Nature Conservancy in which TNC is acquiring 42,000 acres of Plum Creek lands in the valley this year. After closing on 19,833 acres in the second round of Plum Creek land purchases, the Conservancy immediately resold the 3,835 acres of WMA inholdings to the RMEF, which will hold the land until Montana FWP receives funding and approval to purchase them.

As of today, the Conservancy has acquired 38,300 acres of Plum Creek lands in the valley, and will hold them temporarily until the Blackfoot Challenge and local communities finalize plans for their eventual resale. This is the third acquisition in which the Elk Foundation participated on behalf of the WMA. In 1999, RMEF assisted in the acquisition of a key 333-acre parcel for \$422,000. In 2000, RMEF assisted the state in the purchase of another 523 acres for \$677,000. By the time RMEF gifted these lands to the State of Montana, its contribution to conservation in the WMA exceeded \$800,000. Over 1,000 elk currently winter every year on this crucial winter range. It also provides winter range for elk coming out of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. In 2004, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

Founded and headquartered in Montana, the organization has grown and evolved into an international conservation leader. Powered by volunteers, members, supporters and partners, the Elk Foundation has completed more than 3,800 conservation and education projects, impacting nearly 4 million acres of habitat for elk and other wildlife. To help pass-on an elk country legacy for future generations, visit www.elkfoundation.org or call 800-CALL ELK.

EXPERIENTIAL DETAIL OPPORTUNITY WITH THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Position: U.S. Forest Service Experiential Detail
Supervisor: The Wildlife Society
Where: Bethesda, Maryland
Salary: Provided by employee's home unit
Duration: From 6 months – 2 years

Background

What is The Wildlife Society?

The Wildlife Society is the scientific organization of professional wildlife biologists, managers, and educators. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. The Wildlife Society encourages professional growth through Certification, peer-reviewed publications, conferences, and working groups. Our national headquarters are located just outside the Capitol Beltway in Bethesda, Maryland, near the Grosvenor-Strathmore metro station (red line). More information can be found on our website www.wildlife.org.

What is The Wildlife Society Policy Program?

The Wildlife Society Policy Program addresses national conservation and policy issues that affect wildlife and habitat. The goals of the program are to participate in policy analysis and formulation, advocate the use of wildlife science and management information by decision makers, inform TWS members about the implications and opportunities of legislation and regulations for wildlife conservation, and engage TWS members in the policy process. These goals are achieved by communicating with elected officials and agency representatives through meetings, testimony, and correspondence - based on the best and most up-to-date scientific information - about bills and regulations that may affect wildlife and habitat. In addition, the program staff writes articles for three publications – our member newsletter, an electronic newsletter, and the Wildlife Society Bulletin – covering current policy proposals, action, and information.

Why would you work with The Wildlife Society?



If you enter an experiential detail with The Wildlife Society, we will provide office space and administrative supervision and support. You will work directly with Tom Franklin, Wildlife Policy Director, and other policy staff. We will contribute significant experiential learning with regards to the professional wildlife community and its contribution to wildlife science, policy, and management. You will receive hands-on experience in the use of science in wildlife policy, and how it relates to your other work within the Forest Service.

What kinds of projects and duties would you have?

The Wildlife Society can work with you to tailor the detail to meet specific interests you might have, provided they align with the goals of the Society, but some of the issues we envision working on include:

- Incorporating wildlife considerations into National Forest System land and resource management plans;
- Integrating wildlife habitat considerations into forest health and fuels reduction policies;
- Enhancing professionalism within the Forest Service;
- Improving communications between Forest Service leadership and the professional wildlife management community;
- Developing ideas for an independent review of the wildlife-related programs of the Forest Service;
- Updating the needs assessment for Forest Service biologist training and assisting in the design of training materials for new Forest Service employees to address traditional and contemporary wildlife management theories and practices; and
- Identifying ways in which higher educational institutions can better educate students to work effectively within the multiple use management environment and agency culture of the Forest Service.

MULTI-SPECIES INVENTORY AND MONITORING PROTOCOL

The Forest Service is in the process of updating its policy and direction for resource inventory and monitoring. Over the past two years, five technical guides have been in the process of the development, three of which have gone through a formal agency review (Existing Vegetation Classification and Mapping, Terrestrial Ecological Unit Inventory, and Aquatic Ecological Unit Inventory). Technical Guides are intended to contain very precise details regarding data collection that were formerly contained in the handbook. Final technical guides will be published through the WO Office of Communications. The series of all resource technical guides will be considered standards for the management of National Forest System lands.

Another technical guide is now ready for review, the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring (MSIM) Protocol. The MSIM protocol is a tool for generating information on the status and trends of populations and habitats of a wide array of wildlife and plant species to inform Forest Service managers, the public, and other interested parties about management effectiveness and desired conditions on National Forest System lands. We are seeking review comments from our partners and collaborators to ensure quality and effectiveness, as well as foster partnerships in inventory and monitoring. The draft MSIM technical guide is located on the Ecosystem Management Coordination website <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/rig>. Review comments will be incorporated into the final published technical guide. Please submit review comments electronically imbedded in the text or in narrative form referencing the associated page and line number.

Review comments will be most useful if they conform to these simple guidelines:

- provide specific comments;

- inspect for errors of fact;
- give suggestions for improvement in effectiveness and clarity;
- point out statements contrary to FS or USDA Policy;
- inspect for proper acknowledgment of the work of others; and
- consider the purpose and intended audience for the guide (Region and Forest-level specialists and contractors).

Send comments to Pat Manley (pmanley@fs.fed.us) by 15 July, 2004. Thank you for taking the time to provide comments to improve U.S. Forest Service inventory and monitoring programs and enhance future collaborations.

SOME RESTRICTED LAND OPENED FOR GRAZING

Associated Press

June 24, 2004

WASHINGTON - Responding to severe drought conditions across much of the West, the Agriculture Department on Thursday authorized emergency livestock grazing on some lands set aside for conservation and environmental protection. The expanded grazing "will allow producers to provide additional feed and forage for their livestock," Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said.

The department said that in areas of severe drought, ranchers and farmers will be allowed to graze livestock on land that is part of the Conservation Reserve Program. These are environmentally sensitive croplands that producers voluntarily retire in return for rent payment from the federal government. Veneman said much of the western half of the country has been affected by severe drought conditions, jeopardizing livestock. A new area of severe drought was reported along a stretch from southeastern Montana to western Nebraska in mid-June.

There are 34.6 million acres set aside for the CRP program nationwide. It's not known how much acreage will be used for emergency grazing because eligibility will be determined on a county-by-county basis, depending on drought conditions. To be eligible for grazing on CRP land, a county must have suffered at least a 40 percent decline from normal precipitation levels, or be declared within the two most severe drought condition levels cited by U.S. Drought Monitor, the department said.

After a county has been approved from emergency grazing, participants must make an application with the local Farm Service Agency. If a participant uses some of his CRP land for grazing, the rent he collects for having set aside the land will be reduced by 10 percent.

COMING EVENTS

MIXED SEVERITY FIRE REGIME CONFERENCE NOV 17-19, 2004

The Association of Fire Ecology and Washington State University (WSU) are pleased to announce that registration is now open for the Mixed Severity Fire Regimes: Ecology and Management conference to be held in Spokane, WA, November 17-19, 2004. There are also 4 pre-conference workshops on November 16. Details and online registration can be found at <http://www.emmps.wsu.edu/fire/index.html>.

FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

**Wyndham Palace / Lake Buena Vista, Florida
December 6-10, 2004**

This is a REMINDER that abstracts are due July 1st for the First National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) to be held December 6-10, 2004 in Lake Buena Vista (Orlando) Florida at the Wyndham Palace.

Scientists and managers involved in restoration efforts across the country are strongly encouraged to submit abstracts describing their projects. Special consideration will be given to work that synthesizes existing information. Abstract submissions will be used to select oral and poster presentations, and ALL abstracts, both oral and poster, will be published in a printed book and on CD ROM, and will be posted on a web site following the conference. The conference program agenda is tentatively slated to allow 20-minutes per oral presentation.

Researchers not wishing to give a talk are strongly encouraged to submit an abstract for poster presentations. Three formal poster sessions are scheduled to provide networking opportunities and facilitate scientific interaction among all participants. So make plans to join your fellow scientists, educators, restoration planners, managers and decision-makers to discuss similarities, differences, successes and failures of ecosystem restoration programs throughout the country.

One-page abstracts are due no later than July 1, 2004 and must be submitted electronically. Detailed instructions and event information is posted on the conference website at:

<http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ecosystem>

Program Topics: (detailed descriptions of subject matter within each topic are posted on the conference web site)

- Science Synthesis and Scaling
- Detecting Change Across Scales
- Planning Restoration
- Adaptive Management
- Effective Science Communication Within and Beyond Restoration Programs
- National Priorities for Ecosystem Restoration

Registration Information

Registration information and forms to register are now posted on the conference web site. We ask that all intended presenters register ONLINE as soon as possible. When registering, please note there are THREE optional post-conference field trips to choose from, and the conference will also feature a special hands-on workshop on The Role of Science in Adaptive Management. Limited space is available on a first-come, first-served basis to participate in the field trips and the Adaptive Management workshop, so you are encouraged to pre-register as soon as possible. Reduced conference registration fees are available to students with proper identification.

Registration

- **On Line:** Register on-line using a credit card via the secured conference website located at: <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ecosystem>
- **By Fax:** If you are paying by credit card, print out and complete the conference registration form and FAX it directly to the Office of Conferences and Institutes at 352-392-9734. (The registration form is located on the conference web site as a printable display file (PDF) under the registration section.)

- **By Mail:** Print out and complete the PDF of the registration form posted on the web site and mail it along with payment using the address and mailing instructions provided on the form.

Hotel Information and Reservations Instructions

The Wyndham Palace in Lake Buena Vista is the host conference site. The Wyndham is now taking hotel reservations and we recommend you make your guest room reservation as soon as possible to assure availability at the reduced rate of \$95 per night, single or double occupancy plus 11 percent tax. This rate is within the confines of the federal per diem for the Orlando area, and the rate will be honored from November 30 - December 15, based on availability. When making your reservation, be sure to specify you are attending the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration. All hotel reservations must be made by Friday, October 22, 2004. After this date, neither availability nor the discounted group rate is guaranteed, so don't delay. Make your hotel reservation as soon as possible. Hotel reservations can be made online via the Hotel & Meeting Site link on the conference web site. Additional links are provided to Avis Rent-a-Car, the Orlando International Airport, area maps and attractions among others.

Sponsorships and Displays

If you think your organization would be interested in becoming a sponsor or having an informative display at the conference, visit the conference web site to reserve display space ONLINE. For more information on sponsorship opportunities, contact Stan Bronson, Executive Director of the Florida Earth Foundation by phone at: (561) 682-2059 or by email at: stan@floridaearth.org

Publicity and Conference Details

If you could please take a moment to forward this message to colleagues who may be interested in attending, we would appreciate your help with getting the word out. There are two PDF files of promotional flyers that can be printed off the web site if you would like to post a notice on your organization's bulletin board, or if you would like to take copies to upcoming meetings you may be attending. We appreciate your help with publicizing this national event, and thank you for your assistance. We look forward to receiving your abstract and to seeing you in Orlando!

Ms. Beth Miller-Tipton, Director, UF/IFAS Office of Conferences and Institutes (OCI) -AND- Coordinator, First National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration
PO Box 110750 , Gainesville, FL 32611-0750
Phone: 1-352-392-5930 / FAX 1-352-392-9734
EMAIL: <mailto:bmiller-tipton@ifas.ufl.edu>
Website: <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ecosystem>

WETLANDS AND MIGRATORY BIRDS: PROTECTING AND RESTORING WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE 2004

This is a 2nd call for papers and invitation to attend this national symposium, October 19-20, 2004, Hilton Kansas City Airport, Kansas City, Missouri

There will be a Field Seminar: Wetlands and Bird Habitat in Living Landscapes, October 21-22, 2004, Great Bend, Kansas (Optional Field Trip)

Sponsored by: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Ducks Unlimited

Abstracts will be accepted until July 1. Everyone Welcome.

We hope a lot of you may be thinking of attending this symposium or presenting a paper. If you need additional time to submit an abstract or have any questions, please call Sharon at (518) 872-1804 or e-mail sharon.weaver@aswm.org.

Please visit the ASWM website at <http://www.aswm.org/calendar/wetlands2004/agenda2004.htm> for additional information.

Thanks!

Association of State Wetland Managers
1434 Helderberg Trail, Berne, NY 12023
518-872-1804

TRAINING, TOOLS AND INFORMATION

NEW!! ESRI VIRTUAL CAMPUS COURSES AND WEB WORKSHOPS



NEW!! ESRI Virtual Campus courses and web workshops have been added to the Forest Service Geospatial Training and Awareness website. The following courses and web workshops have been added to our Virtual Campus offerings

and are available FREE to Forest Service employees. To obtain these and other courses and workshops for free, you must register for them at the Geospatial Training and Awareness site at the following link: <http://fsweb.geotraining.fs.fed.us/vcgateway.php>.

Course descriptions can be found on the website by clicking on the individual titles as follows:

- Understanding Map Projections and Coordinate Systems - multi-module course
- Customizing ArcGIS - multi-module course
- Creating and Editing Linearly Referenced Features - multi-module course
- Working with Map Topology in ArcGIS - web workshop
- Introduction to ArcScan for ArcGIS - web workshop
- Introduction to GIS Data ReViewer - web workshop

The following courses and web workshops are FREE and available directly through the ESRI Virtual Campus. The titles below are a partial listing of ESRI on-line training. A complete listing and course descriptions can be found at the above link.

Course access codes for these courses and workshops do not need to be obtained through the Forest Service Geospatial Training and Awareness website (since they are free anyway).

- Introduction to ArcGIS Geostatistical Analyst – multi-module course
- Getting Started with ArcObjects in ArcGIS – web workshop
- Introduction to GIS Data ReViewer, Part I – web workshop
- Migrating from ArcView 3.x to ArcGIS – multi-module course
- What's New in ArcGIS 8.3 – web workshop
- What's New in ArcGIS 9.0 – web workshop
- Working with Geodatabase Topology – web workshop
- Working with Map Projections and Coordinate Systems – web workshop

- Exploring the VBA Environment – web workshop
- Working with ArcPad – web workshop

Stu Gregory
Geospatial Training
USDA Forest Service
Geospatial Service and Technology Center
801-975-3833
sgregory01@fs.fed.us
<http://fsweb.geotraining.fs.fed.us/>

Federal job announcements can be found at:
http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/agency_search.asp

HOTLINKS!

Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants: <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/wildlife/>
 Working with Partners for Bird Conservation <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/>
 2004 News Releases: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2004/releases.shtml>
 FS Today Newsletter: http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/pao/fs_today/
 National Fire Plan: <http://www.fireplan.gov>
 Roadless Area Conservation: <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/>
 Large-Scale Watershed Restoration Projects: <http://www.fs.fed.us/largewatershedprojects/>
 Land and Resource Management Plans: <http://www.fs.fed.us/forum/nepa/nfmalrmp.html>
 Watershed and Air Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/clean/>
 Lands and Realty Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/>
 Road Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/roads/>
 Recreation, Wilderness and Heritage Resources: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/>
 Forest Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/fm/>
 International Programs: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/>
 Research: <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/scientific.html>
 Healthy Forests Initiative: <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/HFI.shtml>
 Partners in Planning: <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/planning/guide/index.html>
 Landowner Assistance Programs:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/programs/loa/index.shtml>
 Forest Service's Annual Fall Foliage Hotline: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/fallcolors/>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Once you select a link, please be sure to hit the “Refresh” button to ensure that you are loading the most current version of the web page!

On The Wild Side is a monthly update provided by the National Forest System Wildlife Program of the USDA Forest Service. Contributions are welcome and should be submitted to Debbie Pressman at dpressman@fs.fed.us or Jina Mariani at jmariani@fs.fed.us no later than the 25th of each month. We reserve the right to edit contributions for clarity and brevity.

Positions listed are for outreach purposes only and are not full announcements. Interested individuals should contact the forests referenced or consult the USAJOBS website.

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