



Newsletter No. 29

Fall 2014



## Most Junk By Weight!

No, that's not our new motto but it should be. "Most Junk By Weight - Small Team" was the award won by our Friends of ENWR group when they participated in the 22nd Annual French Creek Clean-Up organized by The French Creek Conservancy held on September 6th. 35,245 pounds of trash was collected from the French Creek watershed that day and it filled 2 trash dumpsters and one metal dumpster. Our contribution was 1600 pounds from the Erie National Wildlife Refuge!

Weigh-ins and a community picnic for volunteers were held Saturday afternoon at Sprague Farm and Brew Works near Venango. Live music was supplied by local bands. The Friends of ENWR was been participating in this clean up for the last few years cleaning along the tributaries on Refuge property. This year was our largest group and our first award. We hope to continue to build on this year's success in the coming years.



Our French Creek Cleanup Team: Kody Goodge, Jim Bock, Bill McCarthy, Autumn White, Linda Anerson, Vicki Muller, Lisa Helmbreck, and Kathy Palmer. Micheal Vargo not shown. Photo Credit-Michael Vargo

# Culture of Community Anchored in Refuges

By Jim Kurth  
Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

I sometimes wonder how many professions can claim to have friends like we do.

I doubt there are “Friends of the IRS” or “Friends of Podiatrists.” Not that those aren’t noble enterprises, but I doubt that they would draw a loyal following.

What is it about our profession that draws people to volunteer their time and offer money to help? Honestly, it really isn’t about us. People care about the wildlife they find at national wildlife refuges. There is a special sense of place that refuges evoke. People experience more than mere “fun” at refuges. They find deeply personal meanings that are essential to self-identity.

You will hear people talk about “*the* swamp” or “*the* beach” or “*the* marsh” as if there were no others. They talk about *my refuge* with a reverence and a sense of stewardship. Our Friends and volunteers have a personal relationship with these special places and the wild creatures that live here.

I remember a volunteer who was the first treasurer of the Seney Natural History Association, the Friends organization at Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Harold Peters was an 86-year-old retired game warden. He came in every day to count the money from the bookstore and deposit it in the local bank. He would recount stories about his career – stories a lot older than I was.

He told me about the time he was on patrol during the second week of deer season when a big snowstorm blew in and his Model A Ford was stuck in the backwoods all winter. He went back in the spring to discover that porcupines had eaten the wooden spokes off of all the wheels.

His stories were the stories of his connection to the place, and he wanted to share those connections with me.

Refuges draw people from local communities together for a common cause. Many times local communities have rich histories with places that are now called national wildlife refuges. The culture of communities is often anchored in a long-standing relationship with the land. Friends groups are special communities that share a strong connection to their refuge and its wildlife.

These two characteristics – a sense of place and a sense of community – are the essential keys to effective stewardship. Conservation is like politics: All effective conservation is local.

Our Friends and volunteers are the essential core of support for effective conservation. Their collective efforts make a huge difference for the National Wildlife Refuge System. And they know how to have fun. They have my thanks and admiration.

## **New York Artist Jennifer Miller Wins 2014 Federal Duck Stamp Contest**

Jennifer Miller, of Olean, NY, won the 2014 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. Miller's acrylic painting of a pair of ruddy ducks will be made into the 2015-2016 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or Duck Stamp, which goes on sale in late June 2015.

The Federal Duck Stamp sells for \$15 and raises about \$25 million each year to provide critical funds to conserve and protect wetland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Ron Louque of Charlottesville, VA, placed second with his acrylic painting of a red-breasted merganser. Frank Mittelstadt of Beaver Dam, WI, took third place with his acrylic painting of a Canada goose.

More than 6.5 million acres of waterfowl habitat have been protected by funds provided through the purchase of Duck Stamps. "The Duck Stamp is one of this nation's most successful conservation efforts," said Jerome Ford, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Assistant Director for Migratory Birds. "Buying a Duck Stamp is the simplest way to help save our nation's disappearing wetlands and ensure ducks, geese and thousands of other species of birds and other wildlife don't lose their homes."

Waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase and carry the current Duck Stamp. Conservationists, stamp collectors and others also may purchase the stamp in support of habitat conservation. A current federal Duck Stamp can be used for free admission to any national wildlife refuge open to the public.

Ninety-eight percent of the proceeds from sale of the \$15 Duck Stamp goes to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which supports the purchase of migratory bird habitat for inclusion into the National Wildlife Refuge System. You can contribute to conservation by buying Federal Duck Stamps at many national wildlife refuges, the U.S. Postal Service or online at <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/stamps.htm>.



## **Annual Meeting Moved to Saturday**

The Annual Meeting of the Members moved to Saturday this year. We offered a hike along the Tsuga Trail at the Erie National Wildlife Headquarters at 3:00 PM which a few members and guests took part in. Later everyone agreed the pot-luck dinner at was delicious.

After dinner Tom Roster, manager at Iroquois NWR, gave an informative presentation about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's new Friends Policy. Then Vicki Muller, manager at Erie NWR, presented the year in review of the Refuge. This included pictures showing how industrious beavers have completely changed the landscape of part of the Trolley Line Trail. Since fighting the beavers has proven to be a losing battle, helping to reroute the trail around that area will most likely be a project we will be undertaking in 2015. Finally Linda Anderson showed a slide show illustrating the Friends activities of the past year.

The next order of business was the election of the Board of Directors. Douglas Copeland, Sheldon Kauffman, Ann Zurasky and Ronald Leberman were all reelected to another two year term. We would also like to welcome Amanda Kimball who was elected as a new member of the board.

The evening ended with the drawing for door prizes including scented candles, Friends calendars and a deer figurine. We are hoping even more members will participate in the fun next year.

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