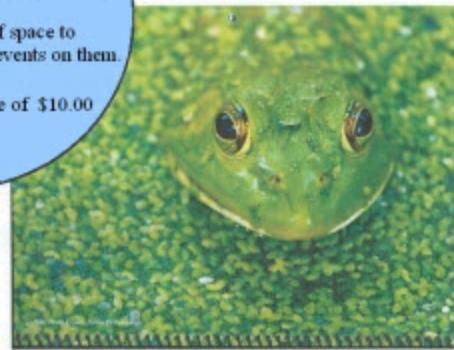


Newsletter No. 37

Fall 2016

We have 2017 Calendars available!

Just in time for Christmas gift giving. All the photos were taken by local amateur nature photographers. Twelve great photos in all for just \$10.00 each. All proceeds go to the Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge. Check our shop page on our web site to order now online. Or buy from one of our board members.



2017 Nature Photo Calendar
Calendar is a full 8 1/2 X 11 inches
Pages have plenty of space to
record all your special events on them.
All for the low price of \$10.00

The Friends Win Award At The 2016 French Creek Watershed Cleanup

The Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge team for the 24th Annual French Creek Cleanup won the "Most Weight (non-Corporate) Medium Team Award" by collecting 1,300 pounds of trash on the ENWR.

Below is more information on the Cleanup from the The French Creek Valley Conservancy's website at <http://www.frenchcreekwatershed.com/>:

Results of the 2016 French Creek Watershed Cleanup:

Total Weight: 26,305 pounds

Total Registered Participants: 720

Most Weight - Corporate Competition & the Traveling Hellbender Trophy: Meadville Medical Center - 2,760 pounds

Most Weight - non-Corporate Small Team (1-5 people) - Hohmann Helpers, 400 pounds
Medium Team (6-16 people) - Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge, 1,300 pounds
Large Team (16+) - French Creek Community Theater, 8,280 pounds

Most Unusual: First place - French Creek Community Theatre for the moss-filled intact work light, Second place - Acutec for the retriever hunting training dummy, Third Place - Unitarian Universalist Church of Meadville for the antique tire rim

Judge's Special - Team Blue Grips, for loading one of their boats with so much junk that it sank. (Update: Thanks to team Krabby Kelly's - experienced divers on their team will be assisting Team Blue Grips with boat recovery!)

Most Participant Awards: Community Civic Group - French Creek Community Theater, 52 participants, Educational Institution (Science/Environmental Science Award), sponsored by the Peter A. Yeager Memorial Foundation - Allegheny College, 134 participants

Final Improvements to 50-Year-old Regulations Governing Oil and Gas Development

As part of its ongoing commitment to preserve America's rich wildlife legacy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a rule to govern the management of non-federal oil and gas development on National Wildlife Refuge System lands.

The final revisions to the 50-year-old regulations allow for the continued responsible extraction of oil and gas, but require closer adherence to industry best management practices. The revisions will prevent the potentially hazardous abandonment of infrastructure and on-refuge disposal of debris.

Individuals and other entities retain ownership of subsurface minerals on many Service lands, including national wildlife refuges, and have the legal right to develop those resources. More than 100 refuges have oil and gas operations, including almost 1,700 wells actively producing oil and gas, and thousands more inactive or plugged wells.

The revisions will ensure that non-federal oil and gas operations are conducted in a manner that avoids or minimizes impacts to refuge resources and uses by providing: regulatory clarity and guidance to oil and gas operators and refuge staff; a simple process for compliance; and flexibility to incorporate technological improvements in exploration and drilling technology across different environments.

The final rule also ensures that all operations on refuges are reclaimed by plugging wells, removing all above-ground structures, equipment, roads and contaminating substances, reestablishing native vegetation, and restoring disturbed areas to productive habitat. The final rule requires oil and gas operators to immediately report spills, respond to them with oversight by the Service, and conduct restoration under Service-approved plans.

The final rule published concurrently with the record of decision as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Both published in the Federal Register on November 14; the final rule will become effective on December 14, 2016. More information, including the final environmental impact statement, is available at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/oil-and-gas/>.

Our Inaugural Issue of Digital Refuge Update

By Cynthia Martinez
Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

We were excited to welcome thousands of readers to the first issue of the digital, quarterly Refuge Update newsletter. It was distributed in mid-October.

The Refuge System launched its weekly online stories in mid-July, and they have been hugely popular. But we know that not everyone comes to our website every week. So we created the digital Refuge Update to bring some of the best stories directly to readers.

We picked the stories for the newsletter to show the extraordinary work that national wildlife refuges do for natural resource conservation. The stories illustrate the breadth of the Refuge System. Some are just plain fun – like “Try Not To Laugh.” We will have an equally varied mix of stories in each Refuge Update issue.

Many of the stories also have educational value beyond their online lives. Take for example “A Beginner's Guide to the National Wildlife Refuge System.” While you might know a lot about national wildlife refuges, the story can be a great tool to share with schools and others in your community that don't know nearly enough about us.

People and organizations are free to download any of the stories for use on websites and blogs. We hope that thousands of people will share them on websites and in social media.

Anyone interested in the digital newsletter should send their email addresses to RefugeUpdate@fws.gov. We hope to be sharing stories from your communities.

Friends of ENWR
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