



The Balance Wheel

Newsletter of the Association of Conservation Information

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NATIONAL NEWS

HUNTING HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS UPDATE

Submitted By: National Shooting Sports Foundation

The Balance Wheel originally ran a story in the Fall 2003 issue discussing a new grant program sponsored by The National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. The following is a follow-up to that program*

In March 2003, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) launched a program backed by over one million dollars to increase hunting participation nationwide. The Hunting Heritage Partnership program provides direct grant funding to state wildlife agencies specifically for hunter recruitment and retention efforts. To date, the NSSF has awarded grants to over 18 state wildlife agencies totaling over \$500,000. The result has been to provide a badly

needed financial boost to state agencies and has translated into introducing more individuals to hunting opportunities and extending hunters' time in the field.

Each new hunter or any hunter who spends more time engaged in our sport has a tremendous economic impact at the state and national levels. A 2001 report found that hunters spend a total of 228 million days in the field. This translates into \$21 billion in spending each year. Hunting dollars boost state tax coffers and generate badly needed jobs – especially in our rural areas. Each hunter that takes to the woods, a field, or duck blind, or purchases licenses, equipment and clothing fuels our economy. Moreover, license fees and monies collected from the Pittman-Robertson tax play a primary, critical role in conservation efforts.

The Hunting Heritage Partnership is an industry commitment to build our sport one hunter at a time. State wildlife agencies understand that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to recruiting and retaining hunters. Unique, carefully tailored, state-based programs are the key to perpetuating our sport and building our membership. NSSF welcomes the opportunity for a public-private partnership in stretching grant dollars even farther.

2003 Hunting Heritage Partnership Grants

State: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

NSSF Grant: \$26,000

Theme: Mentored Youth Dove Hunt

Summary: 1700 youths participated in 54 hunts statewide with over 550 first-time hunters

State: Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

NSSF Grant: \$10,625

Theme: Safety Training of Junior Licensed Hunters

Summary: 85 licensed junior hunters with 119 adult mentors participated in seven “Junior Pheasant Hunting Day” hunts expected to reach over 1,000 young hunters

State: Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$59,750

Theme: Pilot Program for Hunter Education Graduates

Summary: Partners new hunters with mentors who can introduce them to hunting opportunities through STEP OUTSIDE programs.

State: Iowa Department of Natural Resources

NSSF Grant: \$7,000

Theme: Provide Handicapped Access

Summary: Introduces physically challenged individuals to hunting. These funds helped purchase one “Hunt Master” machine which allows wheelchair-bound hunters access to hunting areas with difficult terrain.

State: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$19,000

Theme: Hunting study to Attract New Hunters and Evaluate Potential Parental Concerns

Summary: Conducting and evaluating a study of young hunter education graduates and their parents to identify what makes hunting attractive to young people and how to address any concerns raised by parents about the sport. A Youth Hunt Program Guideline is being developed.

State: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

NSSF Grant: \$15,000

Theme: Keeping Hunting in the Mainstream

Summary: Radio ads produced and distributed by Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources to every station in the state and aired for two weeks prior to opening of the fire arms deer season. License sales during these two weeks were 53% higher than the previous year and resulted in a 2% increase overall.

State: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

NSSF Grant: \$30,000

Theme: Educate Hunters/General Public on the Importance of Protecting Hunting, Fishing & Trapping

Summary: Published and distributed brochures. Also created educational and promotional materials for youth hunters including a how-to book entitled “Mentored Outdoor Skills Guidelines Handbook.”

State: Nevada Department of Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$25,000

Theme: The Family Hunt Opportunity

Summary: Officials identified reasons why inactive hunters no longer hunt, and researched the motivations necessary for hunters to continue in the sport. A leading motivator is the opportunity to hunt with a family member, and the department is developing strategies to promote convenient, quality hunting locations focused on family participation in hunting.

State: Ohio Department of Natural Resources

NSSF Grant: \$30,000

Theme: Identifying Impediments to Access for Hunting in Ohio

Summary: Several focus groups and telephone surveys have been conducted to determine obstacles to hunting access and develop methods of overcoming those obstacles. A final report is due in July 2004.

State: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$20,000

Theme: Hunting Retention and Recruitment Campaign

Summary: The department reviewed its current literature and is working on a direct mail campaign concept to promote opportunities to households likely to have children old enough to hunt. An evaluation is also being done of those hunters who are likely to drop out of the sport.

State: Pennsylvania Game Commission

NSSF Grant: \$74,800

Theme: Survey and Map Public Access Opportunities

Summary: Developing and promoting state-wide county maps of all available hunting property in an effort to advertise hunting opportunities to increase participation.

State: Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

NSSF Grant: \$40,500

Theme: Walk-In Access Program for Small Game Hunting on Private Land

Summary: To increase hunting access on private land, a landowner education program is underway to enroll landowners in a "Walk-In Access Program." It is hoped that more opportunities will boost small game and quail hunters during the next several years.

State: Texas Parks and Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$38,000

Theme: Youth Hunting Program

Summary: To date, 149 youth hunts have been conducted that introduced 186 youth and 350 adults to the hunting experience. Another 20 hunts scheduled for spring 2004 will introduce our sport to another 375 individuals. Training workshops are scheduled that will allow 150 volunteers to participate in youth dove hunts.

State: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

NSSF Grant: \$48,867

Theme: Recruit and Retain Hunters through Improved Private Lands Hunting Opportunities

Summary: To raise the number of upland game hunters through a heightened awareness of, and increased access to, quality hunting lands, the department has developed criteria to rank eligible landowner leases and is developing means to identify properties for hunters.

State: West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

NSSF Grant: \$14,000

Theme: To Recruit and Retain Physically Challenged Individuals to the Hunting Sports

Summary: The "Challenged Hunter Program" reached out to those who have an interest in hunting and offers special needs classes that prepare them for the hunt. Individuals recruited with the help of rehabilitation centers and civic organizations are taken on guided hunts with trained volunteers. Due to the program's success, it is now an ongoing program and is spreading across the state with 30 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service area managers trained on how to offer these specialized hunts.

For more information on the NSSF Hunting Heritage Partnership Grants, please access their Web site:

<http://www.nssf.org/news/HHP/index.cfm?nav=generic&new=generic&rel=generic>



STRATEGIC PLANNING

In the Fall 2003 issue of The Balance Wheel, Jim Sciascia, Information and Education chief of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife wrote an article about this public opinion survey being planned and conducted. This article is a follow-up including results of this comprehensive poll.

PUBLIC OPINION ON FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN THE NORTHEAST UNITED STATES

By: Responsive Management

For more information contact Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director, Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801 or by email: mark@responsivemanagement.com

Responsive Management has just completed a major study on public opinion on fish and wildlife management issues and the reputation and credibility of fish and wildlife agencies in the Northeast United States for the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Northeast Conservation Information Education Association (NCIEA). Funding was provided through a Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Multi-state Grant

The study entailed a major telephone survey of residents' attitudes toward and opinions on fish and wildlife management issues and the state's fish and wildlife agency in all 13 member states of the NCIEA: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia. Separate reports, as well as a regional report have been produced. The survey was conducted in the summer and fall of 2003. Responsive Management obtained a total of 5,251 completed interviews. For the entire sample, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 1.35 percentage points. The entire report can be accessed at Responsive Management's new web site: www.responsivemanagement.com. On the home page, click on "Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Research" in the left hand tool bar. A pop up of 23 different natural resource and outdoor recreation topics will appear. Click on "Organizational Reviews and Planning" at the bottom of the menu. When you get to this subpage, click on "List of Reports." The regional report as well as each individual state report can be downloaded there.

PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The most popular outdoor activities among Northeast residents in the past year were various forms of wildlife viewing, visiting State or National Parks, and hiking. Approximately a quarter had freshwater fished. Hunting and trapping had lower participation rates than the activities mentioned above, although substantial percentages considered themselves to be anglers/fishermen or hunters.

54% had viewed wildlife within 1 mile of home, 45% had taken a trip of at least 1 mile to view wildlife, and 41% had birdwatched. Additionally, 60% reported that they or a member of their household had gone out to observe wildlife in their state in the past year.

53% had visited a State or National Park.

40% had hiked.

28% considered himself/herself to be an angler, and 26% had freshwater fished, while 14% had saltwater fished.

Additionally, 56% of respondents said that they or someone from their household had gone fishing.

15% considered himself or herself to be a hunter, and 13% had hunted.

AGENCY PERCEIVED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING FISH AND WILDLIFE, AND AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF EACH STATE'S AGENCY

Most Northeast residents did not know which government agency is most responsible for managing and protecting fish and wildlife in their state—only 16% named the correct state agency that is responsible for managing fish and wildlife in their state.

RATINGS OF/SATISFACTION WITH/OPINIONS ON EACH STATE'S AGENCY

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with six statements about their state's fish/wildlife agency. The results show that most people had positive perceptions of their state's fish/wildlife agency. Indeed, nearly two-thirds (64%) agreed that the staff at their state fish/wildlife agency really cares about fish and wildlife, and a majority (52%) agreed that their state fish/wildlife agency effectively balances the interests of anglers, hunters, conservation groups, and the general public. Nearly a majority agreed that scientific methods serve as the primary guide for the work their state fish/wildlife agency does (44%) and that their state fish/wildlife agency is doing enough to protect the state's fish and wildlife populations (42%). The lowest statements in the ranking were that the work of

the state fish/wildlife agency is primarily influenced by environmental and/or conservation groups (41%) and that the state fish/wildlife agency primarily serves the interests of hunters and anglers (36%).

The programs/efforts for which the greatest percentage of respondents thought their state fish/wildlife agency is doing an excellent job relate to providing outdoor recreation opportunities and enforcing fish and game laws. Those types of programs/efforts were ranked higher than programs related to managing, protecting, and restoring fish and wildlife populations and habitats.

CONTACT WITH EACH STATE'S AGENCY

A substantial percentage of respondents (20%) had contacted their state's fish/wildlife agency for information or assistance, and the overwhelming majority of those who had contacted their state's fish/wildlife agency did so by telephone (71%). The next most popular ways to contact the agency were in-person (21%) and through e-mail/Internet (12%). Most commonly, those who contacted their state's fish/wildlife agency did so for information about fishing (22%), information about hunting (19%), nuisance wildlife information and/or removal (18%), or information about wildlife in general (13%). A large majority (86%) were satisfied with their contact, saying that they received the information they needed and the agency employees were helpful and friendly.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON FISH, WILDLIFE, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND CREDIBILITY OF SOURCES

Residents of the 13 member states of the NCIEA look for information on fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation on the Internet other than the agency Web site (38%), in newspapers (22%), in magazines (16%), and on TV (9%); 5% look on the agency Web sites, and 4% look in agency offices.

The sources of information considered to be most credible are those associated with state or federal agencies or the state university; the sources considered the least credible are spokespersons for advocacy organizations, such as environmental or sportsmen's organizations.

A majority said that the following sources were very credible: biologists with their state fish/wildlife agency (68%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (64%), or the state's department of environmental protection (57%), their state's fish/wildlife enforcement officer (61%), and professors of environmental science or biology with their state university (55%).

Less than a majority said that the following sources were very credible: spokespersons with the National Wildlife Federation (45%), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (29%), local environmental organizations (28%), and local sportsmen's organizations (19%).

FISH AND WILDLIFE ISSUES FACING THE MEMBER STATES OF THE NCIEA, FISH AND WILDLIFE VALUES, AND OPINIONS ON LAND USE AND FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Polluted water/water quality, habitat loss/habitat fragmentation, deer overpopulation and associated deer management issues, urban sprawl/urban development, and low fish populations are perceived to be the most important fish and wildlife issues facing the Northeast U. S.

When asked to rate eight fish and wildlife values, respondents' top choices related to wildlife values over human and recreational values. That people have the opportunity to fish and hunt were ranked lower.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with six statements regarding fish and wildlife and their habitats. A majority strongly agreed that the use and development of land should be restricted to protect fish and wildlife (56%), and just under a majority strongly agreed that hunting and fishing are part of scientific management of healthy fish and wildlife populations (49%). Just under a third (30%) strongly agreed that they can make a significant difference in protecting fish and wildlife habitat. Additionally, respondents showed deference for fish and wildlife habitat over human use of land: more respondents strongly or moderately agreed that the use and development of land should be restricted to protect fish and wildlife (83% agreed) than strongly or moderately agreed either that landowners should be allowed to develop their land regardless of its impact on wildlife (19% agreed) or that development for new home sites should take precedence over preserving wildlife habitat (13% agreed). These last two statements had much larger percentages moderately or strongly disagreeing with them than did the other statements (74% and 77%, respectively, while no other statement had more than 27% in moderate or strong disagreement).

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Knowledge and awareness of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is fairly low in the northeastern U.S.: most respondents (51%) had heard nothing about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the past year, and an additional 30% had heard only a little; just 15% had heard a great deal or moderate amount. Furthermore, when asked whether CWD is a threat to their state's deer populations (and moose and elk populations, where applicable) or their state's

residents, most respondents answered, "Don't know." Otherwise, more people thought that CWD is a major or minor threat to wildlife and humans than thought that it is not a threat (30% of respondents thought CWD is a major or minor threat to their state's deer/moose/elk populations, while 3% thought it is not a threat; and 23% thought it was a major or minor threat to their state's residents, while 7% thought it is not a threat).

RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAMS AND EFFORTS OF EACH STATE'S AGENCY

In the ratings of importance of programs/efforts, the top two programs/efforts related to wildlife/habitat values. Providing recreational opportunities were lower on the list.

FUNDING FOR EACH STATE'S AGENCY

Most respondents attribute funding for their state fish/wildlife agency to include tax revenues: in an open-ended question wherein respondents could name any funding source for their state's fish/wildlife agency, respondents most commonly thought that unspecified taxes (35%) were a funding source, along with general state revenue (20%) and general federal revenue (11%). Fewer respondents named hunting and fishing licenses (23%) than named unspecified taxes (anglers and hunters were more likely to name license fees than were respondents overall). A very low percentage knew of the important sources of Federal Aid: 2% of respondents named excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, and 1% of respondents named taxes on motorboat fuel as a source of funding for their state's fish/wildlife agency (anglers and hunters were slightly more likely to name these Federal Aid sources than were respondents overall).

A much greater percentage of respondents agreed (67%) than disagreed (20%) that the costs for managing fish and wildlife should be paid through specific user fees, such as hunting and fishing licenses. A much greater percentage of respondents supported (73%) than opposed (16%) using general state tax revenues to provide information on fish and wildlife.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF HUNTING, FISHING, AND TRAPPING

Approval of fishing (92%) was higher than approval of hunting (76%) and trapping (51%), with trapping being the most disapproved activity of the three (35% disapproved of trapping). Nonetheless, all three activities had a majority in approval, with fishing and hunting having a majority who strongly approved.

FOR A GOOD TIME, CALL 1-800...

Lessons learned from Abandoned Agency Phone Numbers

By: Scott Ball, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

In 1999, all or parts of three different agencies merged to become the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Prior to that, one of the agencies had a special toll-free hotline for reporting sick or injured manatees. The final digits matched the agency's initials. After the merger, we replaced the number reflecting the new agency's initials. We changed the number everywhere it showed up on our publications and Web pages and issued press releases to boot.

Meanwhile, we kept the old number operational for three years and automatically forwarded callers to the new one. When we finally gave it up, the company referred callers to the new one for six months more as a courtesy. All seemed well until we read in the news clips that callers to the old number were connected to operators who graciously offered to talk dirty to them in exchange for their credit card numbers. This particular company routinely trolls for abandoned toll-free numbers to attract "accidental pleasure-seekers," and they won't sell it back.

Naturally, the search was on to determine two things: How did this happen?, and (more importantly) whom can we blame?

We first checked within the agency. Our dispatchers revealed that they'd been receiving a number of complaints about this lately (thanks for sharing!). We were able to find only one Web page that had slipped through the cracks, but all our publications had long-since replaced the old number. All the local phone books we checked were up to date. We did, however, discover numerous waterway signs with the old number. Some were ours, others were posted by local agencies. We did a Web search and got over 500 hits – mainly from pages belonging to local governments, chambers of commerce and conservation groups, with a smattering of "Miss Landers' 3rd Grade Web page" types.

It's mainly been a source of amusement for the media, but we've received a few guilt-sliding letters along the lines of "If you idiots had corrected the signs, I could've reached you sooner and that injured manatee might have lived." As a remedy, we notified the agencies, chambers and groups and issued a news release. We're applying decals to the

out-of-date signs. The media attention was also useful in reminding stragglers to update their information. And we've logged this one as a "teachable moment."

Morals of the story:

1. If your agency ever changes a high-profile number (or Web address for that matter), not only should you make sure you hang on to it for a considerable length of time and replace all your own materials referring to it, but also go **way** out of your way to make sure that anybody else who publicizes your number does likewise.
2. For a good time, call 1-800-...oh, never mind.



SKILL BUILDING

STATE WILDLIFE MAGAZINES As Diverse as Each State

By: Michelle A. Griffin, *The Balance Wheel Editor*

What a fantastic response we received from our listserv questionnaire regarding state wildlife magazines! Seventeen states provided exactly what we asked and in some cases gave some great additional background information. I have offered some overall observations and then compiled a table highlighting information from each state.

To jog your memory, these were the questions posed to our list serv members:

1. Do you presently pay for articles and/or photography to be written/taken, or rely on volunteer submissions?
 - a. Has this evolved over time?
 - b. What results in better quality articles?
2. Did you have a magazine that is now out of print due to budget cuts?
 - a. How long was it in print?
 - b. Will it be brought back?
 - c. Have you tried to create an alternative for your readers?

Overall, we found the majority of state-published wildlife magazines use a combination of in-house talent and outside freelancers. Most appreciate the talent and timeliness of freelancers, but also enjoy the professional knowledge in internal staff. One state truly makes the most of internal talent by making contributions to the magazine part of the work plan for regional supervisors. With that kind of administrative support, it's most logical and effective to use your internal talent. Other states feel their biologists are already stretched thin and rely solely on freelancers to provide interesting and appropriate articles. All agreed that the very best articles – whether from internal or external talent – come when the writer is well-instructed as to what the publication desires and has access to all resources necessary to execute the given task. One state is actually making a conscious effort to move away from freelancers believing the internal knowledge and budget constraints far outweigh any timesaving benefits of using outside help.

A surprising fact consistently repeated was the longevity of many state wildlife magazines. Of the responding magazines, there were more that had been in print for 50+ years than anything else. Only two magazines have been forced out of print due to political pressure or budget cuts, and one print version was replaced by an online-only option (hmmm, sounds familiar©) Of those printed some are renowned for the expert photography and others are more focused on content. Those magazines with paid subscribers had circulations ranging from 8,000 to 50,000. And still other publications were offered as free giveaways distributed statewide.

Once again, our membership represents variety in purpose as well as product. If you would like to consult any of the States on their process, please use the ACI on-line directory.

State Agency	Pay for articles/photos?	Other Information
"Outdoor Alabama"	Uses in-house talent for articles, and pays for outside photos.	Evolved from relying solely on in-house photo talent to using freelancers due to loss of in-house photographer.
"Colorado Outdoors"	Mostly pays for freelance-written articles, some internal written and	Would like to have more articles written by staff, but is not considered cost-effective use of time.

	contributions from other states. Pay one time rights for freelance photos.	Is funded through subscriptions and sale of products.
"Florida Wildlife Magazine"	After a 56-year run, the magazine was not funded in the 03-04 budget.	Citizen-supported organization, the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, had created an electronic newsletter in it's place in hopes of resuming a printed publication soon.
"Idaho Wildlife"	Mostly staff written, but some freelance articles are bought. Buys photos when needed. Best articles are written in-house.	Web magazine only after print version was discontinued when told by legislature to become "self-sufficient" through sale of ads. Could not sell enough ads. Tabloid version may be started later in 2004.
"Outdoor Indiana"	Mostly articles are paid freelance pieces. Some are magazine staff, DNR staff, and expert volunteers. This evolved over time, 10 years ago, most articles were written by in-house staff. Photos have always been provided by in-house staff. Best writers tend to be naturalists and interpreters.	Subscriber –supported and receives no license money or fish-wildlife/parks support.
"Louisiana Conservationist Magazine"	Uses both freelance and in-house talent. Freelance articles are paid for, outside articles are not. Quality is comparable.	Magazine has been in publication since 1923.
"Massachusetts Wildlife"	Does not pay for articles or photographs. Some come from internal staff, some are contributed by outsiders, but all are excellent!	In existence since 1952. Free publication until 1986 when readers urged state to charge in order to save magazine. Today has 23,000 paid subscribers.
"Missouri Conservationist"	Uses both freelance and in-house talent. Relying mostly on in-house talent, and paying for all material including in-house and freelance.	Offers both online and print version. Would prefer to use all in-house talent to maintain credentials as an agency of experts, but find it hard to get staff to volunteer articles. Articles that are submitted often need work. Magazine is in its 65 th year of publication.
"New Mexico Wildlife Magazine"	Uses both freelance and in-house talent, but rely mostly on in-house talent. Freelance articles and photographs are paid for when written by people not affiliated with the department.	Four-color slick magazine was killed 6.5 years ago, replaced with four-color tabloid inserted into 31 newspapers statewide. Estimate circulation to be roughly 330,000. Hits 67 percent of license buyers and also enjoyed by non-license buyers.
"New York Conservationist"	Uses both freelance and in-house talent. Pay for material submitted by people who are not Department employees. Suggests professional writers do a better job of writing than scientists.	Been in publication since 1946, same format except went to four-color in the 1950's.
"New Jersey Outdoors"	Used both freelance and in-house talent when it was in print.	Discontinued in 2003 after a 50 year run. 60,000 subscribers at its zenith, plummeting to 7,000 over time and after switching fish & wildlife only to department-wide natural resources magazine. Does not look like it will be brought back.
"Wildlife North Carolina"	Uses both freelance and in-house talent. Pays for freelance material both articles and photos. Freelancers seem to produce better written work than scientists as they are professional writers and biologists are not.	Magazine been available for over 40 years.
South Dakota "Conservation Digest"	Relies almost exclusively on volunteer submissions of both articles and photos. Will pay for some photos.	Budget restricts use of freelancers and partnership with South Dakota Tourism Department helps with photos.
"South Carolina Wildlife"	Mostly uses paid freelance articles, but rarely purchases photos. Finds that working closely with writer,	Magazine in print over 20 years.

	whether staff or freelancer, results in high quality articles.	
"Utah Wildlife Review"	<p>Uses all in-house talent helped by strong administrative support.</p> <p>Incredible internal team work among divisions.</p>	<p>Regional communication managers each must, as part of their work plan, submit 200 photos and write 2-4 stories annually. They also work with the people in their areas to make sure other assigned articles are on track and up to par. Issues are planned a year in advance and approved by administration. Then writers are identified and notified of their task. Staff never has turned down assignment unless to suggest a better writer for the job.</p> <p>Did market research and found the magazine was best way to reach target audience. Consistently looks for ways to increase printing budget using monies in and out of the agency parameters.</p> <p>Uses synergy with other printing responsibilities to maximize printing efficiency and target market reach.</p> <p>Magazine gives great exposure to other programs, so they approach manager of magazine with ideas on how they can work together.</p> <p>Volunteers are used for distribution of up to 100,000 copies.</p>
"Virginia Wildlife Magazine"	<p>Uses mostly (75%) paid freelance articles and photos due to small staff. Other 25% comes from Department staff (wardens and biologists). An active outdoor writers group in Virginia provides much of the freelance material. Buying articles and photos allows editors to be choosy and get high quality material.</p>	<p>Monthly, four-color 36 page publication with a paid subscription base of 45,000.</p> <p>Magazine is over 65 years old.</p>
"West Virginia Wildlife"	<p>All articles are written with in-house talent. All photos also taken by staff. Cover photo is often bought.</p>	<p>Quarterly publication in its 4th year of print.</p> <p>Goal of publication is to educate the public about the state's natural resources, not to have an award-winning publication.</p> <p>Publication delivered free to 25,000 homes. Also limiting the budget for freelance.</p>

****THE FOLLOWING THREE ARTICLES CONTINUE OUR SERIES ON "WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN ACI AWARDS WINNER?" THIS ISSUE'S AWARD FOCUS IS "BIG IDEAS, SMALL BUDGETS"*****

YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT BY WHEN? THE BIRTH OF A NATURE TRAIL

State Symbols Nature Trail at the New York State Fair

By: Ann Harrison

Division of Public Affairs and Education

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Question: What's a saltwater beach doing in the middle of Syracuse, New York, 275 miles from the Atlantic Ocean?

Answer: Providing millions of visitors to the New York State Fair with a glimpse of one of the many varied habitats found around the state.

With a big vision, lots of sweat, a short time frame and great partners, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) created a new nature trail in 2002, at the New York State Fair. Featured are the state's official nature symbols and several of New York's natural environments.

In a space less than a quarter acre, you can visit an Adirondack lean-to, marvel at an 80 foot fire tower, and wander along a handicapped accessible path to view:

- a one-ton garnet, our state gem;
- a waterfall, representing the cold, clear streams that support brook trout, our state fish;
- a beaver lodge along a "wetlands," home to the state mammal, the beaver;
- a small "forest," with our state tree, the sugar maple;
- a cluster of wild roses, our state flower;
- a perennial garden for our state insect, the ladybug;
- an open meadow, complete with blue bird boxes for our state bird;
- a saltwater beach, loaded with bay scallops, our state shell; and
- a real horseshoe crab, the distant relative of our state fossil, the eurypterid.

Also along the way are four-foot by three-foot interpretive signs on fire towers, saltwater beaches, Adirondack lean-tos and the Forest Preserve in the Catskill and Adirondack mountains. The trail ends in a picnic area, where a tent and tables provide a nice spot for fairgoers to rest and take a breather from all the fair's activities.

But just six weeks before the 2002 State Fair opened, this area was a "backyard" for the DEC log cabin, one of the two buildings on the fairgrounds housing department displays and activities. Two, large co-generation "plants" stuck out from the huge adjacent building that creates the boundaries on two sides. No longer in use, these structures used to provide heat to that building. There was also a walking path that was used mostly as a shortcut by fair staff. In 2000, DEC staff erected an Adirondack lean-to between the two co-generation plants.

Whatever made us think to create a State Symbols Nature Trail out of this area? For the past several years, DEC's Division of Public Affairs and Education has initiated an "opportunity interpretation" program, reaching much larger numbers of new and different segments of our population with the conservation message. Instead of waiting for people to come to our facilities, we go to where the people are. We have created a kids fishing pool at the annual New York City Boat Show, developed an interpretive trail for skiers at Belleayre Mountain, and worked with the state's Department of Transportation to design their visitor information rooms at two Adirondack rest stops. In the winter of 2002, increased interpretive efforts at the New York State Fair seemed a natural next step.

Planning for the trail began in early March, just in time for the agency's one landscape architect to develop a quick sketch before he retired. Work at the site couldn't start until July because a new roof was being put on a building adjacent to ours, and our "backyard" was the staging area for all the materials and supplies. The challenge was to convert the space into a safe, interesting nature trail by the opening of the State Fair on August 22, 2002. This also included researching, writing, and producing nine state symbol interpretive signs each measuring 24 inches by 18 inches, four interpretive signs each measuring 48 inches by 36 inches, and two welcome signs. And, of course, all state fiscal purchase requirements had to be followed.

The State Symbols Nature Trail happened because a vision was shared and embraced by a variety of collaborators. DEC's administration was willing to allocate human and fiscal resources needed for success. Several organizations were approached to help provide labor or materials, and they readily jumped on the wagon. We estimate that the actual cost of the project was \$18,380 with an additional \$73,000 coming from the in-kind contributions of our partners.

Division of Public Affairs and Education staff served as project managers for both trail construction and writing, design and production of all the interpretive signs. Working under the supervision of DEC operations staff, crews from Camp Georgetown Correctional Facility supplied much of the physical labor, including moving the one and a half ton lean-to more than 20 feet. Day-to-day, on-site layout, design and management of the project were the responsibility of the Cayuga County Soil and Water District's AmeriCorps program, a national service program similar to a domestic Peace Corps.

More than willing to help at every turn, the State Fair administration and maintenance staff provided equipment when needed, such as forklifts to move pallets of rocks and rollers to pack the stone dust along the trail. They also put in eight spotlights so the trail would be safe at night, placed electrical outlets every 20 feet along the walls of the adjacent building, and installed the wires for a future speaker system that can play bird and animal calls along the trail. Fair staff also donated sod for the picnic area that was torn up after all the construction. There are about a million annual visitors to the fair, and the fairgrounds are used throughout the year for a variety of events.

A chance meeting with the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service led to getting all the meadow plants for free. We negotiated a very reasonable rental from a local aquarium supply company for use of water plants during the twelve days of the fair. One of the largest garnet mines in the world, located in New York's Adirondack Mountains, donated a one-ton garnet boulder. To make the trail look more realistic, natural objects were collected from woods, such as moss-covered rocks, fallen birch logs, and rotting tree stumps. During a trip to Long Island, buckets of shells, plus dried seaweed and horseshoe crabs for the saltwater beach display were picked up.

Three days before the fair opened, we still had yards and yards of stone dust to put on the trail, stockade fence to erect and sign frames to put in the ground. The Camp Georgetown crew doesn't work when fair exhibitors are setting up, so AmeriCorps members and DEC staff pitched in and got the work done. By 11 a.m. opening day, the trail was laid, safe, and looking good—we even remembered to bring the ribbon and gold scissors for the grand opening ceremony!

For those of us who worked on the project, we have a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. It was harried at times, but it was a fun project and it invigorated our spirits. We were able to be creative in our design and partnerships, and the resulting effort was something that will benefit hundreds of thousands of fairgoers for years to come. At a time when the state is experiencing a severe fiscal situation, our project team was able to come up with a million dollar project for a fraction of the cost!

If you think you'd like to embark on a similar venture, here are a few tips:

1. Verbalize a vision and get a champion: Find someone, preferably in a position of high authority, who is excited about the idea and can convey that vision to those who hold the purse strings.
2. Ask for help: Lots of groups, individuals and agencies are willing to provide materials, labor or support if you just ask. Develop partnerships with not only those who have similar missions to yours, but look for creative ways to draw in new audiences and collaborators to your programs. AmeriCorps and conservation and service corps programs around the country are excellent sources for educators, trail builders and service providers. Visit www.nascc.org to find a program near you.
3. Be flexible: Be willing to make on-site changes and alterations. Listen to those closest to the project to find out what's reasonable within the amount of time you have to complete it. Trust your staff and co-workers.
4. Have a deadline: The New York State Fair always opens on a Thursday, and in 2002, they weren't going to wait if we didn't have the trail done. Nothing like thousands of people streaming through the gates to make the completion date a real deadline!
5. Create things for multiple uses: Copies of the state symbols interpretive signs are now at DEC's five environmental education centers and four residential summer youth camps. The fire tower sign is used on other towers around the state, and the saltwater beaches sign resides on Long Island.
6. Celebrate and thank your partners: Put your partners' names on a prominent sign. Have a ribbon-cutting ceremony or similar event and praise everyone who participated. Write newsletter articles and send thank you notes. Bring donuts to the work site.
7. Keep your sense of humor: Enough said!

LESSONS FROM THE CREATION OF “YOUR WINDOW ON WILDLIFE”

Big Idea, Small Budget

By: Liza Poinier, New Hampshire State Fish & Game Department

The Concord, New Hampshire headquarters of the state Fish and Game Department is a typical modern office building, with cubicles and conference rooms and coffee machines. But just a few steps down you'll find another world -- surprisingly, the outdoor world, indoors -- in the Discovery Room.

A couple of years ago, with a modest exhibit budget and a lot of hard work, N.H. Fish and Game staff transformed an older 1,200-square foot basement exhibit space into “Your Window On Wildlife.” The room's floor-to-ceiling painted murals, wildlife mounts, tanks of native fish, and fabricated landscape features like rocks and trees represent aquatic, wetland, upland, and backyard habitats, and the exhibit itself is filled with hidden games and subtle educational messages that inspire people to go back upstairs and out the door, into the wild.

The exhibit's development was coordinated by wildlife educators Judy Silverberg and Marilyn Wyzga, who used their creativity to incorporate learning into every facet of the exhibit -- and to get it done inexpensively, squeezing blood from the proverbial rock of a state agency budget.

How did we implement such a big idea with such small dollar resources? How can *you*?

Marilyn: "Coordinate and control the project yourself." Be as hands-on as possible. Though the added workload was hard to deal with, "you just have to accept that if you don't have the dollars to spend, you will be spending your time."

Judy: "Look for local resources in untraditional places instead of hiring a firm." The exhibit cost \$106,000 in the end, less than \$100 per square foot; firms that specialize in this type of work typically charge upward of \$400 per square foot. It's also about getting what you want: "When you hire a firm, you can't guarantee that someone knows your content. Because we were directly involved, we could say, "no, THIS is what a white pine tree looks like."

Marilyn: "Find local vendors who can produce various pieces for you." For example, we went to the N.H. Arts Council to identify a suitable mural artist, with whom we contracted directly to get the job done, from vision to final painting. Using local vendors also reduces shipping and transportation costs.

Judy: "Use your staff." One of our wildlife biologists took the artist on site visits, so he could get a feel for the habitats and take pictures. We used our access construction team for the carpentry. Many staff turned out to have hidden talents in planning, design, and getting materials on the cheap!

Marilyn: "It's all about teamwork." We involved a broad spectrum of staff members in the project's concept, planning and implementation, which made for positive energy and a feeling of ownership. "Then, when it comes time to unload a truck full of rocks, the team shows up to help out, because they're the ones who said, 'this is what we want it to look like.'"

Judy: "Shop around." This goes for purchased products and in-kind donations. We watched the sales and bought our sound equipment on closeout. We asked around for a beaver mount, and found someone who was willing to contribute a family mount to the project. We even refurbished and re-used parts of other exhibits, such as the fish tanks.

Marilyn: "Some of it happened by total fluke." Luck and goodwill played their parts.

So there you have it. Think global, work and shop local; brace yourself for a larger-than-normal workload; and tap staff talents and the team energy that comes from doing a fun project together.

NEW JERSEY'S CHILDREN'S FISHING DERBY PROGRAM BIG IDEA ON A SMALL BUDGET

By: Miriam Dunne, Principal Wildlife Biologist and Craig Lemon, Hackettstown Hatchery Superintendent

The DEP Division of Fish & Wildlife has had a Children's Fishing Derby program since the early 1970s when about 12 derbies were stocked. The program started out as an urban fishing program. In the early days, fish were stocked during the week prior to the event. In the early 1990s, staff began to attend the derbies and present information about fish and fishing. The program has grown steadily over the past 10 years, and now more than 85 events are stocked annually.

The purpose is to provide a source of fish for children in urban and suburban areas introducing them to fishing, and encouraging family use of the outdoors. The derbies provide an opportunity for children to get acquainted with fishing, to experience quality family time, and to appreciate their watershed and its role in protecting water quality. The derbies also provide ample opportunities for visibility in the press, and positive interactions between uniformed division staff and the public.

Fish are raised at the Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery especially for this purpose. Pumpkinseed sunfish, bluegill sunfish, brown bullhead, largemouth bass, channel catfish and black crappies are the species of fish typically stocked for derbies. Each derby receives a delivery of about 200 fish.

The program is advertised primarily through word-of-mouth and repeat sponsorship of derbies by the towns and agencies that host the events. It is successful because it is a true partnership between the derby organizers, the DFW, and other sponsors. From the division's standpoint, it is successful because of intra-agency cooperation. It is

not viewed as a "fisheries program" or an "I&E program" -- we have endeavored to cut through the programmatic boundaries that sometimes prevent staff from working together most effectively.

All legitimate requests for fish are fulfilled. Organizers are informed that the event must be free-of-charge and open to all citizens. No private waters are stocked. Organizers are also requested to provide publicity for the event, and to recognize the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife as an event sponsor.

The derby season begins in mid April and runs through the end of September. Wherever possible, fish are delivered on the day of the event, and children and adults are given a short presentation about the fish stocked, how to safely handle them, and a brief introduction to laws and ethics. Conservation officers, Hackettstown Hatchery personnel and Information & Education section staff deliver the fish and participate in the derby in some manner. Information about fishing laws, places to fish, and how to get started in fishing is taken to each event by the staff. Of 85 events in 2003, staff were present at 79.

Nearly 9,300 kids and 7,550 adults were estimated in attendance last year. The Division of Fish & Wildlife receives exposure at these events through the presence of staff, agency signage and *Water Works Wonders* images on the stocking trucks, and through media coverage. This positive exposure helps combat a problem confronting all Northeastern states: the public does not know who we are or what we do. **(SEE RELATED STORY IN "STRATEGIC PLANNING" SECTION OF THE BALANCE WHEEL)** Individuals are made aware that the DFW is the agency responsible for stocking fish and managing wildlife in New Jersey. Newspaper coverage further amplifies the division's message.

The DFW spent \$46,990 on fish production and distribution, salaries, and materials specifically for the derby program. Some of the innovations made include giveaways: we print and distribute refrigerator magnets that have the DFW name, web address and the statement "Take Me Fishing". We also print and distribute bobbers with the division logo and web address. These are handed to each kid and family. Imagery from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's *Water Works Wonders* campaign is displayed prominently on our stocking trucks. These were printed and affixed in-house using state-of-the-art vinyl lettering technology. The value of these mobile billboards alone is worth the price of the program. Many derbies also receive a banner that is printed in-house with the agency and sponsor name.

Undoubtedly, the most cost-effective contribution to the program comes from staff: the goodwill generated by caring, knowledgeable and professional staff in all the participating bureaus cannot be measured in dollars but is certainly a keystone of the program. A semi-retired, avid angler who works seasonally for the program keeps everything organized, and contributes far more than the part-time salary compensates. The long-term impact of derby participation on fishing behavior in children is not known, but staff will begin to collect information on derby participants to determine any trends in avid angling. Several derbies are held as part of a Hooked on Fishing – Not on Drugs program, and offer opportunities to those kids for sustained participation in fishing. Whether or not derbies are part of the solution to reverse the steady decline in angling among youth, they most certainly represent opportunities for positive interaction among staff and constituents, and high visibility for the agency for a small budget.



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

2004 ACI Conference TIME IS TICKING AWAY! MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW FOR THE 2004 ACI CONFERENCE

New Orleans is world-renowned for its good food, good music and overall good times. When you come to visit for the 2004 ACI Conference, we'll help you enjoy the Big Easy as much as possible

Prepare to have a hard time deciding which sessions to attend! From brushing up your crisis communication skills to learning about high tech hunter education, this conference promises to deliver a huge choice of skill building, strategic planning and national issue-related sessions. Check the ACI Web page for more details!

What would a conference in New Orleans be without great social events? We start on Sunday evening with a ride on the authentic New Orleans John James Audubon riverboat as you renew old acquaintances and make new ones. Listen to the tunes of a strolling saxophone player, or find out what the future holds for you with a live tarot card reader. This will certainly be an excellent kick-off to a great conference!

The famous ACI Auction will take place in the wonderful surroundings of the Aquarium of the Americas. Enjoy a delightful view of the Mississippi River while feasting on a Louisiana seafood buffet. Until the gavel falls, experience "Frogs," an interactive exhibit featuring 25 species of frogs from around the world. From framed wildlife art to hunting and fishing supplies, this year's auction items promise to entice.

We will get out of the city on Tuesday to enjoy "Sportsman's Paradise." Field trips will be full-day affairs, most from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. All necessary supplies, including boxed lunches, beverages and bug spray, will be provided. Bring your binoculars and cameras as each trip offers great photo ops and wildlife sightings. On the schedule are:

- Swamp Tour of Bayou Sauvage NWR
- Jean Lafitte National Historical Park's Barataria Preserve
- New Orleans City Tour
- NIGHT TRIP: Alligator Trek at Salvador Wildlife Management Area
- NIGHT TRIP: New Orleans Haunted History Tour

Get more trip information on the ACI Web site.

We will finish the Conference by toasting this year's awards winners at an elegant banquet hosted at the DoubleTree New Orleans Hotel.

Accommodations Information

This year's conference will be held at the luxurious DoubleTree New Orleans Hotel. Conveniently located near the New Orleans Riverwalk, it is within walking distance of all major attractions, including the French Quarter, Aquarium of the Americas and world famous Canal Street trolley cars.

For information and reservations, visit the [DoubleTree New Orleans Hotel](#).

Don't wait another minute – make you reservations today for the 2004 ACI Conference! More Information Available at the ACI Homepage: www.aci-net.org
