

# The Balance Wheel

Newsletter of the Association for Conservation Information

Spring 2006

## Inside This Issue:

### **President's Message:**

*Has Your State's Wildlife Action Plan Been Approved?*

### **National News:**

*Increasing Hunting and Fishing License Sales: It can be done!*

*Discover Louisiana Hunting*

*After the Storm: An Agency at Work*

### **Conference Preview:**

*Association for Conservation Information (ACI) Returns to Sunshine State*

*Testimonial: Travel Stipend Puts ACI Conference Within Reach*

### **Skill Building:**

*Podcasting for Boat and Water Safety!*

### **Special Section:**

*What ACI Can Mean to You!*

### **Upcoming Events and Deadlines:**

*71<sup>st</sup> North American Wildlife Conference*

*Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Conference*

*International Boat and Water Safety Summit 2006*

*Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) Annual Conference*

*2006 ACI Conference*

*International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) Annual Meeting*

### **Member News:**

*Dave Chanda Appointed Acting Director in New Jersey*

*ACIer's Son on U.S. Olympic Team*

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER:**

### **Has Your State's Wildlife Action Plan Been Approved?**

*By Dave Chanda, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife*

In the winter issue of *The Balance Wheel* Rebecca Brooke with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies gave a fabulous Teaming with Wildlife update. The coalition is growing by leaps and bounds, and the State Wildlife Action Plan Message Kits are now in the hands of hundreds of communications professionals throughout the country.

As you know (or should know) last October the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received State Wildlife Action Plans from all 50 states and six territories. The plans were created in a collaborative effort that included biologists,

conservationists, landowners, sportsmen and the general public. These proactive plans will help conserve wildlife and vital natural areas before they become too rare and costly to protect. As our communities grow, the wildlife action plans will give us the ability to fulfill our responsibility to conserve wildlife and the lands and waters where they live for future generations.

Each state and territory was required to submit a comprehensive wildlife action plan providing a blueprint for future conservation efforts to be eligible for future State Wildlife Grants. For the past couple of months these plans have been under review by the FWS. As you read this many states have received final approval and are currently gearing up to implement their Wildlife Action Plan.

Now is the time to be actively engaged in promoting this effort. The completion of these plans provides a powerful new tool for wildlife conservation. Hopefully you are using your message kit to the fullest extent possible to celebrate the approval of your State Wildlife Action Plan which is designed to proactively manage wildlife before it is too late.

You are engaged, aren't you?

Hope to see you all in Orlando this summer.  
Dave



## NATIONAL NEWS:



### **Increasing Hunting and Fishing License Sales: It Can be Done!**

*By Monica Linnenbrink, D.J. Case & Associates*

State fish and wildlife agencies **can** increase fishing and hunting license sales.

Many factors that affect license sales are difficult or impossible to change – weather, social trends, competing recreational opportunities, public access, etc.

But there are proven techniques that can spike license sales. D.J. Case & Associates worked with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to help Iowa Department of Natural Resources grow fishing license sales eight percent in the target area when compared to a control area without the license sales campaign.

“We did promotions before, but it took an integrated approach with multiple marketing and education efforts to see the fishing license sales increases we wanted,” said Marion Conover, fisheries chief, Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Bottom-line – With the help of an Iowa lottery radio campaign promoting fishing, Iowa DNR sold 22,000 additional resident fishing licenses statewide bringing \$400,000 in additional license revenue alone in the first year. The target area sold an additional 4,400 resident fishing licenses yielding an additional \$75,000.

So what works to increase license sales? Is it direct mail postcards? Coupons? Movie theater ads? PSAs? Industry partnerships? More/better events?

The simple answer is *all of it*. What **works** is a customized campaign developed to increase license sales according to short and long-term goals. State agencies and their partners must develop and integrate multiple marketing techniques to increase license sales. These techniques should be combined with education and other grassroots efforts such as events, access, mentor programs and equipment loaner programs to maintain the increased license sales achieved through marketing. These grassroots efforts work to reach long-term retention goals. All efforts need to be evaluated to determine which elements contribute to success and which should be changed/eliminated.

An efficient and effective effort requires research and a blend of both targeted marketing and education tactics designed to recruit and retain hunters and anglers.

### Resources

Many agencies lament the fact that they have no marketing expertise on staff to create integrated campaigns. But the good news is that much of that work has already been done. The National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation have conducted national research about increasing hunting and fishing participation. Based on this research, both organizations have developed ready-to-use materials and tools that state fish and wildlife agencies can incorporate into any license sales campaign.

NSSF has developed many tools for recruitment and retention efforts. Two of the “flagship” tools are the *Hunting Heritage Partnership* grants and *STEP OUTSIDE*®. Both programs can and should play key roles in any license sales campaign.

The *Hunting Heritage Partnership (HHP)* Grant program provides funding to state fish and wildlife agencies to create more hunting opportunities and put more hunters in the field. It is based on the premise that state agencies know best what they need to do to increase participation. It is a great funding resource for agencies to use to begin a license sales promotion campaign. The request for grant proposals will be posted in March 2006 on the NSSF Web site ([www.nssf.org](http://www.nssf.org)).

“Research and evaluation was a vital part of the on-line, interactive hunting access application, called *Find Game* ([www.findgame.org](http://www.findgame.org)), developed using an HHP grant,” said David Morton, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Geographic Information Systems (GIS) coordinator. “We conducted focus groups to see what hunters wanted and then once the system was developed, surveyed our users to see if *Find Game* helped them go hunting more or in new places. Our results are very positive, proving that *Find Game* assisted 35 percent of our users in finding a new place to hunt. NSSF wants each grant project to include evaluation. This is great because evaluation allows us to know what works, what doesn’t and why.”

*STEP OUTSIDE* is a research-based concept that encourages hunters and shooters to mentor new participants. It can be the foundation for any recruitment and retention marketing effort. *STEP OUTSIDE* offers branded materials and other tools that states can customize and use for marketing licenses. To learn more visit [www.STEPOUTSIDE.org](http://www.STEPOUTSIDE.org).

“Thanks to the hard work of our partners, *STEP OUTSIDE* is expecting to reach its 500,000<sup>th</sup> participant this year. A *STEP OUTSIDE* strategic planning effort is placing more emphasis on working with states and other partners to make sure these participants remain involved,” said Melissa Schilling, *STEP OUTSIDE* coordinator, NSSF.

In addition to HHP and *STEP OUTSIDE*, NSSF has other tools such as databases, event-finders and education resources that states can incorporate into hunter and angler recruitment and retention campaigns.

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) has an outstanding, systematic process and a suite of tools designed to recruit and retain anglers. Using the RBFF *Take Me Fishing*™ campaign ([www.rbff.org](http://www.rbff.org)) and an integrated approach as a basis, state agencies can increase license sales the first year and build sales for years to come.



To pilot the approach and tools, RBFF partnered with a few state fish and wildlife agencies to develop an integrated campaign to increase license sales. Campaign development was guided by the step-by-step process for developing and improving existing programs outlined in the *Best Practices for Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship* workbook.

RBFF’s national media buy and public relations campaign that culminates with National Fishing and Boating Week provides states a unique opportunity to piggy-back on national media exposure to increase license sales in their state.

“Best Practices, the *Take Me Fishing* advertising campaign, and the other research-based tools enable state agencies to develop a customized, integrated license sales campaign,” said Stephanie Hussey, RBFF state outreach manager. “By utilizing a team approach to implement multiple strategies and evaluate the results, states can achieve their license sales goals.”

## The “Six Stage” process for increasing license sales

- First – Situation analysis, research**  
Targets information needed to build on existing efforts; identifies strengths and weaknesses; and provides in-depth demographic analysis to help with targeting and future evaluation purposes.
- Second – Team development**  
Select cross-divisional teams and identify key partners to be a part of the planning.
- Third – Action plan development**  
Time-efficient, action-oriented team meetings work to develop a practical campaign within budget constraints. Collaborative teamwork solidifies discussions, ideas and decisions.
- Fourth – Finalize action plan**  
Lands an in-depth targeted marketing plan with specific actionable goals, measurable objectives, target audiences, strategies, budget, timeline and evaluation components.
- Fifth – Implementation**  
Guided by the collaboratively-built marketing strategy, state agencies can use targeted marketing tools and “creatives” to reel in license buys.
- Sixth – Evaluation**  
At the end of the trip, check the bag to see what you’ve got (there’s no bag limit!). Evaluate implementation, assess effectiveness and calculate the return on investment.

## Secrets to Success

Most state agencies and their partners today recognize the need for increased hunting and fishing license sales. Many have developed and are implementing campaigns and programs with this in mind. What does it take to make it work?

To see results, states need to:

- Make recruitment and retention a **priority**.  
For most state agency staff, recruitment and retention is not their only job. Agency staff need executive level support for recruitment and retention efforts to remain a priority. It is important to identify a coordinator to help plan development and implementation, and to keep the plan on the front burner. Agency staff need to participate in regular conference calls, e-mails, and in-person meetings. Many of the actions necessary are not terribly time-consuming, but there is ample evidence to show that without a coordinator, this work is not likely to get done.
- Embrace marketing, public relations and communications **expertise**.  
A successful license sales campaign is proactive and requires strategic planning. States need strategic expertise in marketing, public relations and communications throughout plan development and implementation. This expertise might be found in the agency or it could come from a partner or a contractor. The key point is to seek out guidance and information about research, evaluation and past experiences to help staff make decisions.
- Assess current outreach **budgets** and identify priorities.  
State agency staff need to identify a realistic budget for implementing the campaign by identifying priorities and utilizing existing programs. Agency staff must evaluate existing budgets and make realistic decisions based on return on investment.
- Break down communication **silos** between departments.  
The coordinator needs to actively facilitate communications, information sharing and implementation work between agency departments and partners. Recruitment and retention initiatives are most successful when the best ideas and expertise are assembled from throughout the agency.

## Next Steps

Be sure to check out the National Shooting Sports Foundation’s and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation’s materials and tools at [www.nssf.org](http://www.nssf.org) and [www.rbff.org](http://www.rbff.org), and contact either organization for more information.

For more information on the six-stage process described above, contact DJ Case at:

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State fish and wildlife agencies **can** increase fishing and hunting license sales. NSSF, RBFF and DJ Case can help.

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## Discover Louisiana Hunting

*By: Bo Boehringer, Press Secretary, La. Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries*



It began as a conversation between Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Secretary Dwight Landreneau and the president of the National Whitetail Association, Brent Bergeron. Could DWF offer a no-cost hunting weekend to non-hunters as an enticement to try the sport and stimulate interest?

The idea took shape following discussions within LDWF's Wildlife Division during the fall of 2004 and was approved by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission as part of the seasonal hunting dates for three consecutive years. The new hunter recruitment promotion, unlike any program offered elsewhere, became **Discover Louisiana Hunting (DLH)**.

The Friday/Saturday/Sunday Thanksgiving weekend was selected to allow participants to take advantage of holiday time and opportunities to hunt with family and friends. That time frame also allowed participants to hunt deer, as well as squirrel, rabbit and quail in a traditionally cool but not bitterly cold weather window in Louisiana.

Unlicensed individuals (age 16 and over) were the target group and safety was made priority one. Although the normal hunting license fees were waived for the weekend, anyone wishing to obtain a DLH permit was required to obtain hunter safety certification and hunt with a licensed Louisiana hunter as a designated host. And the offer was designated as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for each user, trackable in the DLH Web site database from year one.

The departmental committee organizing the event drew ideas and experience from the Wildlife Division, the Hunter Education Section, the Licensing Section, the Enforcement Division, the Computer Section, Public Information and the Secretary's Office.

The committee's objectives for year one were to create and have in position all program components for public access in September to allow time for hunter safety class enrollment and class completion. Supporting this effort would be an information campaign to alert the public on details of the new promotion.

Public information sources for the DLH event details were created with the intent of reaching non-hunters through hunting enthusiasts. The Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Foundation funded the printing of 200,000 DLH fliers to be distributed at LDWF's administrative and regional offices, sponsor/partner outlets and through supporting wildlife organizations. Retail flier distribution points included Academy Sports' outlets around the state, the Bass Pro/Bossier City store and Bowie Outfitters in Baton Rouge.

A DLH website was customized with design features unlike any section on the existing LDWF web site. The site provided a one-stop information source for the event and the permit access point for the public under the signature Web address: <http://www.discoverlouisianahunting.com>.

The decision was made to use an on-line permit mechanism tied to the DLH Web site and eliminate any possibility that a software integration problem might occur and thus compromise the existing point-of-sale vendor license mechanism. To accommodate those without personal computers, the LDWF administrative office library and Hunter Education regional offices around the state were offered as public access points for individuals without web access.

Through the print media and sponsor/partner reciprocal web display agreements, the September press announcements and a combination of radio and television talk show appearances by departmental staff, opportunities were outlined for public access to Hunter Safety training --including classroom sessions, field day sessions, online course options and CD-ROM course options.

The support of a core group of sponsors and partners increased the reach of normal LDWF promotional funding. Sponsors/partners assisting with DLH 2005 included:

SPONSORS – Donated funds and/or services for promotional plan, and reciprocal Web site link

- Academy Sports & Outdoors – distributed 120,000 fliers; provided Hunter Ed class space
- Bass Pro Shops / Bossier City – distributed 50,000 fliers; offered Hunter Ed class space
- Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Foundation – funding provided for flier printing
- Safari Club International (SCI) – funding provided for B. R. Advocate fall outdoors special section



PARTNERS – Provided flier distribution and/or newsletter publicity and/or reciprocal Web site link

- Bayou State Bowhunters Association
- Bowie Outfitters
- Ducks Unlimited
- Hunter's Run Gun Club
- Louisiana Wildlife Federation
- National Whitetail Association
- National Wild Turkey Federation

Additionally, display ads designed by LDWF's Public Information Section were placed in the department's *2005-2008 Hunting Regulations Booklet*, the *Sept/Oct 2005 Louisiana Conservationist* and *Outdoor Louisiana 2005*, a Baton Rouge ADVOCATE Special Section printed in September.

Although the press announcements for the event were delayed until Sept. 15 by the recovery efforts underway following Hurricane Katrina, public interest in the promotion appeared substantial based on website use. For the three-month period of September - November, the DLH Web site received 22,774 home page views.

In the end, a total of 94 permits were issued for the November 25 to 27 DLH weekend. Tracked through the Web site database, the user group included:

- 24% La. residents
- 76% out-of-state visitors
- Average age of permit holder: 36
- Youngest participant: 16
- Oldest participant: 68
- States represented (by the numbers): Ala. – 5, Ark. – 10, Calif. – 2, Fla. – 3, Ga. – 2, La. – 24, Md. – 1, Mo. – 4, Miss. – 6, Okla. – 5, SC – 1, Tenn. – 2, Texas – 29, and Ontario, Canada – 1.

A post-event Web questionnaire sent to participants reflected positive comments from those who participated. Sample comments:

**“This is a fabulous program to get more people involved in hunting in La. The one suggestion I would make is to have the rules regarding DLH more readily accessible, easily understandable. I was unsure how close I had to be to my host hunter.”**

**“This is a really great program, especially to give people that have never had the opportunity to hunt Louisiana. Thanks for the opportunity.”**

**“I enjoyed my hunt very much. I am considering buying a nonresident big game hunting license next year, if I can get a lease in La.”**

**“Too bad this was just a once in a lifetime deal. It would be nice if there was some kind of Thanksgiving Weekend Hunting Permit for out-of-state people like me so I wouldn’t have to buy a 5-day pass and only end up using 2 days. Even though I did not see a deer, I had a great time hunting with my brother in law. Louisiana hunting is great. “**

**“I really enjoyed my hunting trip this year. Our family celebrated thanksgiving in the woods for the first time in many years. Thanks for giving us this opportunity.”**

**“Enjoyed the trip, plan on buying permit next year to hunt the Thanksgiving weekend again.”**

In summary, launching the 2005 Discover Louisiana Hunting Weekend promotion proved to be a challenge. Two major hurricanes back to back in August (Katrina) and September (Rita) kept most of south Louisiana involved in the priority tasks of pre-storm preparation, post-storm recovery and then long-term recovery planning.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, the original promotional effort -- set to launch on Sept. 1 -- was delayed until Sept. 15. The hurricanes interrupted or cancelled Hunter Education classes in parishes impacted by the storms, affecting the numbers of Hunter Ed students completing the process. Habitat damage additionally delayed deer and rabbit seasonal openings in parishes most severely affected by the storms.

The Department was able to make important progress, however, in creating the foundation for the program in the years ahead. The DLH Web site was established as the primary information source for the event, a strong group of sponsors and partners signed on for promotional support and dozens of participants successfully used the online permitting mechanism. With a focus on adding to the sponsor/partner base, the 2006 DLH planning committee can work to increase awareness and participation in future DLH weekends.

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### **After the Storm: An Agency at Work**

*By Brad Temple, Mississippi Outdoors Magazine, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks*

*“There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.” Walter Reuther*

On August 29, 2005, the worst natural disaster in United States history struck the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida in the form of a Category 4 hurricane named Katrina. Mississippians watched the weather from home and at work, tracking the monster storm until that Monday morning when it slammed into the coast.

The damage in Mississippi was immense, stretching from Pearlinton to Pascagoula. The estimated number of casualties is horrifying. When the storm passed, part of the responsibility for search and rescue was taken on by employees of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP).



*The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps came to the aid of the MDWFP by helping move equipment and supplies, utilizing an impressive marine hovercraft. Photo by Rusty Bush of Mississippi Outdoors Television Show*

During the first two weeks after the hurricane, the Department was sending groups of 50 officers, biologists and technicians to the coast every five days.

“We staged at Lefleur’s Bluff State Park to get the convoy together so we could all go down as one,” Maj. Kenny Neely said. “We had everybody inoculated to make sure they were covered for any diseases they may come in contact with while down there. Then we all gathered in groups of 50, headed south, and kept together until we got either to the coast or to our camp.”

The base camp for operations was made at the agency's Lyman Fish Hatchery north of Gulfport. Called Camp Katrina, it was a tent city complete with a kitchen and mess tent, makeshift showers, and cots for the men and women making up this vital first response team.

The camp was manned with at least five or six people at all times to take charge of the cooking and cleaning, and to keep track of supplies. Mst. Sgt. Freddie Overby oversaw the kitchen detail, preparing two big meals a day (breakfast and dinner) for everyone.

When MDWFP workers first arrived, they were charged with the mission of search and rescue. "We knew there were people that were hurt and we needed to get them out," Neely said.

The search and rescue efforts were widespread. Fisheries biologists John Skains and Don Henke, and Sgt. Bobby Wilder were part of the search efforts in the marsh areas. They used airboats to negotiate the grassy marsh areas.

"I've cried a lot of tears down here," said Skains, who also went to homes during the first days hoping to find survivors, but many times finding only bodies. As days went by, search and rescue efforts turned to search and recovery, trying to salvage anything in hopes of relieving the devastation the people of the Gulf Coast.

Search teams even combed the barrier islands, looking for survivors and making any recovery possible. They surveyed the impact of the storm on the native wildlife and the various structures on the islands.

The canals were littered with shrimp boats whose crews had piloted them there to escape storm conditions. Once power was lost in the area, bridges could not operate to let them back out.

High wind and water still managed to push far inland, grounding many vessels and capsizing others. Rescue and recovery teams patrolled these waters as well, searching for survivors and documenting derelict vessels by GPS.

The MDWFP worked with the Biloxi Police Department to secure U.S. 90. This was mainly to help keep looters away and protect whatever personal property remained. The scope of responsibility taken on by the Department was enormous, so much so that other agencies were obliged to offer assistance in a variety of ways.

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps came to the aid of the Department by helping move equipment and supplies, utilizing an impressive marine hovercraft. "They (Navy and Marine Corps) were a real asset to this mission," Neely said.

Another tremendous asset to the entire operation was the contribution made by the Yazoo Mississippi Delta Levee Board. The Board supplied the MDWFP with modified dump trucks carrying fuel tanks. "We owe them a lot for being there for us, because there's no way we could have done this operation without them," Neely said.

Other agencies helping with the efforts on the coast included the U.S. Coast Guard, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and law enforcement agencies from California, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Kentucky and Virginia.

"It was really a heartwarming experience for us to be able to go in there and know you're helping those people," Neely said. "And that's what I've seen ever since this started. Our people have really reached out and helped those in need, and that's what has kept them going.

"Words can't explain how hard they worked and how they were trying to push themselves to make sure that they could help somebody, especially during the first stage, when all they could say was that there are people out there that need help and we need to get in there and help them. That was their sentiment all the way through this, and I think we've got the best group of employees in the world."

Many MDWFP employees and their family members suffered extensive property damage and personal losses during the storm and in the trying days afterward as well. State parks in southern Mississippi suffered widespread damages, some to the point where they will remain closed until extensive repairs can be made. Many Parks employees living in those affected sites have also been displaced.

In an effort to help defray the losses experienced by the MDWFP, its employees, their families, and others affected by Hurricane Katrina, the **Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Foundation** is accepting donations of all types to be distributed to those in need.

Donations can be earmarked for MDWFP use, for employees and their family, or for general use in the relief efforts. All donations are tax deductible. Those desiring receipts for tax purposes are asked to establish monetary values of all items upon donation.

For information concerning donations for the Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief Fund, call Sharon Miller at 601-432-2014, or e-mail the Foundation at [foundation@mdwfp.state.ms.us](mailto:foundation@mdwfp.state.ms.us).



## CONFERENCE PREVIEW

### **ACI Returns to the Sunshine State**

*By Henry Cabbage and Karen Parker, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is gearing up to host a “knock-your-socks-off” ACI conference July 16-20, with the theme “The Legacy and the Challenge.”

Orlando’s Sheraton Safari Resort, Lake Buena Vista, will be the setting for five electrifying days of sessions, roundtables, professional (not to mention social) interaction and field trips to such places as the Kennedy Space Center, the world’s finest bass fishing, other natural treasures and theme parks.

We expect keynote speaker Richard Louv to be riveting. He’s a futurist and journalist who focuses on family, nature and community. Louv is author of seven books, including “Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.” He’s also a columnist for the San Diego Union-Tribune and has written for the New York Times, Washington Post and Christian Science Monitor. In addition, he’s all over national broadcast media lately.

Clarence Jones, an ACI favorite, will join us for a full day of sessions to help sharpen our skills at dealing with reporters with rolling cameras, bright lights and difficult questions. Jones is a former investigative reporter for print and television, and he knows all the tricks and how to prepare for them.

There’ll be a team-building exercise – a fun activity that helps sort out the people who do things, the people who overdo things and the people who need to get out of the way. This will be such a great activity, we plan to run it twice so we can accommodate as many people as possible.

Last year’s International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies’ session was a big hit. Naomi Edelson and Rachel Brittin will be back for a half-day follow-up workshop about State Wildlife Action Plans and related communication plans.

Other sessions tentatively include such topics as outreach partnerships, trails and interpretation, the World Wide Web, publications, marketing, alternative funding and some we’re still scheming up.

Our own Joan Guilfoyle will help us all find inner peace through her before- and after-hours yoga lessons. And a **fabulous** hospitality suite will be open each evening for elbow-bending and networking.

Of course, no ACI conference would be complete – or even possible – without the Auction. And now is the time to start rounding up items for bid. Besides the usual assortment of framed art prints, jewelry, knives, fishing tackle, hunting equipment, bird feeders, videos, camping supplies, clothing, books, sporting goods, games, etc., we really need trips. Whether it’s a guided trip down a scenic river, a hunt on a private ranch, a few days at one of your state parks, or just a great night out on the town, please start thinking about what you can donate now. In fact, a committee of ACI’s finest will be reaching out to each member state and organization soon in search of big-ticket items.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Parker at FWC. Her number is (386) 758-0525, and her email is [karen.parker@myfwc.com](mailto:karen.parker@myfwc.com).

Also in the works are plans to provide travel stipends for those who otherwise might not be able to attend.

Florida hasn't hosted the ACI in nearly 20 years, so the staff feels driven to host a conference that makes up for lost time. You're going to love it in Orlando. We'll see to it. Watch your e-mail, the ACI Web site and your mailbox for more information soon.

For ACIers who will be coming to Orlando for the first time, the FWC has created this list of the:

### **Top10 Guidelines for Enjoying the 2006 ACI Conference in Orlando**

10. If you run into Tammy Faye Bakker in Orlando, don't ask her if she needs kerosene to remove her makeup at night. She hates that.
9. If you see Snow White at Disney World, don't offer her an apple. She won't think that is one bit funny.
8. If you plan to drive around town, bring a shoebox full of change. Orlando is riddled with toll roads.
7. If somebody offers you discount tickets to swim with the sharks at Sea World, ignore him.
6. If you get pulled over by a state trooper, don't ask him if you can shoot his gun.
5. Don't bring up that 2000 presidential election business when you talk to the locals. The problem was in West Palm Beach, not Orlando, and we are all trying to live it down.
4. If you encounter a 12-foot alligator on one of the field trips, don't try to pet it. Alligators don't like people.
3. Don't say "Let me tell you how we do it up north." Floridians get tired of hearing that.
2. Bring plenty of sunscreen. The red-looking people you will encounter around the hotel will be the ones who didn't think they'd need any.
1. Don't play golf in an electrical storm. Florida has lots of golf courses, which is one of the reasons we lead the country in the number of people struck by lightning every year.

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### **Testimonial: Travel Stipend Puts ACI Conference Within Reach**

*By Marc Sommer, Aquatic Education Coordinator, Ohio Division of Wildlife*

What better place can there be to start an article about travel stipends than sitting in an airport about to fly across the country to an education meeting? As I sit here, I pre-plan all of the conversations that will occur, progress that will be made, and ultimately the changes that will be made to better the field of aquatic education. All of which would, most likely, not take place if it weren't for the hosting agency paying for the trip.

As state budgets become increasingly small, so too do the number of approved out-of-state conferences. It isn't that meetings and conferences are less important than they were 10 - 15 years ago, they are just harder to justify in the eyes of our constituents. It is these factors that have made me so thankful that The Outdoor Channel began offering travel stipends to panhandlers looking for a means to an end, or free money to leave home and attend the annual ACI conference.

For the 2005 ACI conference, I found myself scrimping for funds to get to there. It was the last year of my term as a board member, and the state had turned down my request to travel. The past 10 years had taught me that the ACI Conference is the best renewal of creative communications juices and the most professional pool of communicators I have ever encountered, and there was nothing that was going to prevent me from making it to the conference.

The travel stipend that I was awarded was just the ticket, quite literally an airline ticket, to get me from Ohio to Ogden Utah. I am extremely thankful that The Outdoor Channel was generous enough to cover some of my expenses and make it possible to fulfill my goals of duty and the pursuit of being a better communicator.

Utah was the greatest ACI conference that I have ever attended. The sessions, as expected, renewed my creative juices and gave me a better understanding of how to better serve our constituents. The field experiences renewed my faith in how awesome this world is that we live in. The company of really close friends renewed my faith in friendship and lifelong partnerships, and the conversations reminded me that good communication is an art form that is...well...often mis-communicated.

So, the question you might be asking is, What would he have done without the extra money? Would he have made it? Well, hell yeah, I just would have had tired feet and a worn out hitchhiker's thumb when I got there.

My thanks go out to The Outdoor Channel. My sympathies go out to all of you for putting up with me. And my encouragement goes out to all of the financially strapped that are looking to go to ACI. Apply for the money and ever pursue your need to elevate yourself as a communicator.

For more information on applying for a travel stipend, please contact Jim Sciascia, Chief of Information and Education NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife P.O. Box 400 Trenton, NJ 08625-0400. Phone: (609) 984-6295. Fax: (609) 984-1414.



## **SKILL BUILDING**

### **Podcasting for Boat and Water Safety!**

By *Tim Smalley, Minnesota DNR – Boat & Water Safety Unit*  
*Tim.smalley@dnr.state.mn.us*

I have been vaguely aware of podcasts for about a year or so. There's been a lot of buzz in the techno-press about them and I had even tried my hand at downloading a couple to my "Brand X" media player successfully. But still, the whole iPod concept, to me at least, seemed to inhabit the hazy realm of tattooed body piercers dancing with their shadows in those Apple TV spots. The other image I had was of people who like to hear themselves talk, but weren't interesting enough to have their own "real" radio show.

I hadn't really thought much more about them until the November 2005 TV sweeps, when one of the local stations did a story on podcasting. They talked about what a podcast was and how easy they were to do. They interviewed a number of people who were doing them out of their living rooms, basements and backyards. One "Einstein" was even recording his show from his car. (And they say talking on the cell phone is a distraction for drivers!)

A podcast, to put in as non-technogeek-ish terms as possible, is a radio show posted on the Internet. You can listen to it on your computer, or if you have an iPod-like device, its software will automatically go out and look where you tell it to find the podcasts to which you have subscribed.

To back up a little, the word "podcast" comes from the now borderline-ubiquitous (semi-biquitous?) iPod from Apple. There are a number of other brands out there, but their sales pale in comparison with Steve Jobs new little money factory. It's a small device about the size of a pack of cigarettes and about half as thick. There are new ones, the Apple Nano and Shuffle, that are about the size of two Zippo lighters (keeping with the tobacco motif) one atop the other.

You can also go to podcasting search engines ([www.podcasting.net](http://www.podcasting.net)) and enter a term that describes what you are interested in and the search engine will go out and find podcasts that match those criteria. For example, "parks." Click on whichever one interests you, and you will be taken to their site.

The latest generation of iPods not only plays MP3 audio files, but videos too. According to USA Today, 32 million iPods were sold in 2005 with 14 million of them flying off the shelves during the holiday shopping season alone. (No, I didn't get one either!)

After seeing the TV news story, I had a "eureka!" moment. It's easy, it's cheap, and most importantly - it's an efficient way to get our message to the public. I bought a couple of books on Podcasting and within a couple of weeks, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources had its first podcast posted on our Web site.

I am in the boat and water safety unit of our department and am always trying to figure out new ways to get people to pay attention to our water safety message, whether it is in the summer or winter. Of course, when you mention the word "safety," people run screaming for the hills.

Instead, I asked a local pro-angler, Terry Tuma, to come in to talk about ice fishing (a sport where we in the snowbelt stare at a hole cut in the ice for hours, don't catch much, but are still happy as flash-frozen clams.)

We are fortunate to have Steve Carroll on staff. He has worked in TV news and sports, has "The Voice", and terrific interview skills. I asked him to interview Terry and me in our little recording booth. Terry talked about ice fishing, and at appropriate times, I would jump in with my safety schtick. Dale Newton, our AV guy, recorded us and converted the file to a 30-minute-long MP3 file. I then brought the CD to our Web guru and he had it up on our Web site a short time later.

Was it worth it? We checked with our Web person as to how many people actually downloaded it. The podcast / audio file was downloaded 3,114 times in December. I suspect most of those downloads were listened to on home

computers rather than portable devices but the actual pod link was hit 807 times - those are actual times the file was scanned by people's "podcatcher" software.

Our Web folks tell us that these are very good numbers, especially for a first try with something with such a low cost for the department (several hours of staff time and the cup of coffee I bought for our fishing pro) to produce and post on the Web. If you have a quiet place to record that isn't too echo prone, a decent microphone, and a computer with recording software (we use the free "Audacity" program [www.audacity.sourceforge.net](http://www.audacity.sourceforge.net)) and a book on Podcasting you can do this. I found "Podcasting the Do-it-yourself Guide" and "Podcasting for Dummies" (very appropriate in my case!) to be very helpful.

As we get closer to spring we will record more "how to catch more fish" shows, "how to get more ducks" shows and other topics interesting to outdoors enthusiasts where I just might put in my two bits about boating safety!

Your Web person will be able to help you get your MP3 on your agency's Web site and you will learn in the books how to submit your podcast to search engines to help people find you. We also did a couple of press releases and since it was a slow news cycle we got some very good positive coverage which I am sure helped boost our "ratings." That and the fact that 13 million people got an iPod for Christmas!

If you are interested in trying to set up your own FREE podcast as an experiment I found an online "screencast" (URL is listed below) from a Drexel University professor that walks you through the steps visually. You can start or stop the tutorial by clicking on the controls at the bottom of the viewer screen as you follow along and create your own podcast.

You can listen to the two ice fishing podcasts we have posted on an MP3 player or any just about home computer connected to the internet at [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us) and click on DNR Podcasts.

#### Helpful Resources:

Podcasting For Dummies by Tee Morris and Evo Terra

Podcasting, the do it yourself guide by Todd Cochrane

Step-by-step tutorial "screencast" on podcasting at <http://showme.physics.drexel.edu/bradley/DrexelCoAS042-WS001.html>

Audacity (free recording software) <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

"Lame Encoder" (need to add into Audacity to be able to produce MP3 audio files) - <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~raa110/audacity/lame.html>

Instructions how to add Lame Encoder to Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&i=lame-mp3>

Blogger (used in the Drexel tutorial screencast – above) [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

Feedburner (used in the Drexel tutorial screencast – above) [www.feedburner.com](http://www.feedburner.com)



### **SPECIAL SECTION**

#### **What ACI Can Mean to YOU!**

*By Judy Stokes, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department*

Well, since you are reading this article, I know you're on the right track in your natural resources communication career. The Association for Conservation Information (ACI) is one of the organizations that helped shape my career and it can do the same for you. Not only have I made lifetime friends who are sources of ongoing encouragement and

inspiration, I have honed my skills, learned how people in other states have dealt successfully with the same issues and built knowledge about wildlife and habitats that enhance my value day-to-day at my job.

But enough about that! The real excitement in an organization takes place in committee work and the boardroom. ACI offers a variety of experiences that give us a chance to try out our leadership skills in helping to run an organization, an awards program, a national outreach campaign and conferences. Pretty important skills to develop -- applicable anywhere you may aspire to work.

ACI committees work on key conservation issues and needs. We have had some major impacts in the past such as an amendment that went through Congress authorizing lower second-class, nonprofit postal rates for conservation agency publications and worked toward making 10 percent of the Wallop-Breaux Federal Aid Fund available for information and education purposes. These national efforts continue today with the ACI committee that coordinates and supports national outreach efforts directed at the Wildlife Actions Plans, Teaming with Wildlife Coalition and the Conservation Education Summit. ACI is represented at the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and participates in a variety of committees.

Like most organizations we have standing committees and hoc committees that are formed as needed. Here are some good opportunities --

[Awards](#) Chuck Schleuter, chair. There are 23 categories that need committee chairs each year. As a category chair, you are responsible to find three of the best judges you can for your category and coordinate their review and judging of entries. Vital to ACI, and one of the most valuable benefits of membership in terms of craft improvement and demonstrating the quality of your work back at home, talk to Chuck in Orlando to see how your help may be needed!

[Federal Aid chair](#): David Warren, Oklahoma, chair. This committee builds on the important partnership between states and their federal counterparts. Have an idea for a new project to move conservation forward? Give Dave a call!

[Ways and Means](#): Nels Redefeld, chair. If you've always wanted to learn more about the finances of an organization, Nels is a great teacher. He reviews new financial proposals and works with ACI Treasurer Bob Wines and President Dave Chanda to develop the ACI budget.

[Liaison with Outdoor Writers Association](#): Kay Ellerhoff, chair. Through the efforts of this committee, ACI members have been afforded the opportunity to purchase an agency membership to OWAA and participate in the excellent programs and conferences offered by this organization.

[The Balance Wheel](#): Dottie Head, chair. This is a great place to get your feet wet with ACI. As a member of this committee, you will participate in quarterly conference calls to plan upcoming issues of the ACI publication, *The Balance Wheel*. Committee members bring ideas and contacts for future topics to the meetings, and, on occasion, may be asked to prepare articles for the online publication.

Other committees provide useful liaison with such organizations as the Wildlife Management Institute (North American Wildlife Conference), the National Wildlife Federation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the regional fish and wildlife associations. As a result of our good work on various IAFWA committees, many directors have requested we change our annual conference to coincide with the International's fall meeting to further enhance our contribution to conservation on a national basis.

And, the board is a great place to get your feet wet in the organization. ACI is only as effective as we make it. Here's a place you can make a difference. If you really love participating on the board, you can start up the ladder to the presidency. Try it, you'll enjoy taking your leadership skills to a new level!



## UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

**71<sup>st</sup> North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference**, March 22–26, Columbus, Ohio.

**Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference**, April 23–26, Burlington, Vt..  
Theme: "Conservation Education: No Child Left Inside." For more information: [www.neafwa.org](http://www.neafwa.org).

**International Boat and Water Safety Summit**, April 30-May 3, Palm Harbor, Fla.

**Outdoor Writer's Association of American (OWAA) Annual Conference**, June 17–20, Lake Charles, La.

**2006 ACI Conference**, July 16–20, Sheraton Safari Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

**International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) Annual Meeting**, Sept. 17–22, Snowmass, Colo.



## MEMBER NEWS

### **Dave Chanda Appointed Acting Director in New Jersey**

Dave Chanda was recently appointed acting director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (Division.) "Dave is well known to the Division's staff and constituencies from his dedicated service to wildlife programs over the course of his 25-year career with the Department," said Bradley Campbell, former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Most recently, Dave has served the Division as assistant director. I consistently have been impressed with Dave's insight and commitment, and I look forward to his energetic leadership of the Division."

Dave, a certified wildlife biologist with a Masters in Public Administration, is probably best known to our membership as president of ACI. As the assistant director for the Division he oversaw the operations of the Division's bureaus of Wildlife Management, Law Enforcement, Land Management, Freshwater Fisheries Management and Marine Fisheries Administration, with more than 180 employees in these bureaus. He supervised the management of 118 Wildlife Management Areas comprising more than 300,000 acres of public land. In addition, he directed activities at two state fish hatcheries, one state game farm and 14 artificial reef sites strategically located along the coast.

### **ACIer's Son on U.S. Olympic Team**

*By Scott Ball, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

If you relied solely on NBC's coverage, you'd think the only member of the U.S. men's short-track speedskating team was Apolo Anton Ohno. In fact, there were five men on that team, and one of them has an ACI connection.

Anthony Lobello is the 21-year-old son of Sharon Lobello, director of the Community Relations Office of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Anthony started as an inline skater in 1991, winning several championships before making the switch to ice skating. He has been training at the University of Northern Michigan

on an Olympic scholarship since 2002. The Torino games marked his Olympic debut. Sharon and many other family members were there to watch and support Anthony.

Anthony's specialty was the 500-meter sprint. Unfortunately, he hit a bad patch of ice and fell during his heat. He was in second place at the time and on a pace to advance to the next round. Much to his credit, Anthony got up and finished the race anyway. Still, he's among an elite handful of people who can call themselves Olympic athletes. How cool is that?!

**-END SPRING 2006 TBW ISSUE-**