

The Balance Wheel

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Emerging Issues Make Spreading the Message More Challenging...and Critical!

By Marianne Burke, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Diversity. Outreach. Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD). These terms are used frequently as we examine our roles in the fish and game world. Twenty years ago when I joined the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, these terms were foreign to my work vocabulary. Diversity was something our Human Resource Division addressed and handled. Outreach was part of the wildlife education program used in schools. And NDD? What the heck is that? (I think you mean ADD, don't you?)

As the cliché goes, "that was then, this is now." Today they are more than just words. They are "issues" for our agencies and a regular part of our vocabulary. As our nation's culture changes by leaps and bounds, it is essential that we, as communicators, implement programs, sing out messages and conduct campaigns that will lessen the impact of these issues. It is not just a diversity issue or insufficient outreach efforts, or just a NDD issue. It is a combined, larger problem that grows with each new graduating elementary, high school and college class losing future users and protectors of natural resources, and new professionals in the fish and wildlife fields. But what can we do about it?

One simple solution is to spread our messages to wider audiences of all ages and cultures. It is true that we must focus a large portion of our attention to the younger audiences, especially the Y (ages 8-28) and X (ages 29-41) generations. But, we should not forget the baby boomers. They will give us the backup support we need to promote the outdoors. We are our states' best-kept secret and we need all the help we can get to let that secret out. I think of it like advertising a new movie. How do you know if you want to see the latest blockbuster if you haven't seen the trailers? Why step outside, go fishing, hunting, boating or hiking if you don't know what it's about? The more people we have to promote outdoor activities, the more attention we will receive.

A much more difficult solution is getting our audiences to listen and act. Persuading them to take the right steps in the right direction, grabbing their attention and keeping it will be an ongoing challenge. Several states have already taken action and made progressive steps, gaining momentum toward addressing the problems. Some states have created new programs and are beginning to see results. Other states are still formulating ideas and organizing programs. It really doesn't matter what stage your agency is at as long as it is moving forward with plans to increase outreach, address the "D" word and cure NDD. A slow start is better than standing still.

This issue of *The Balance Wheel* has several articles on diversity, outreach and NDD. I encourage you to read them and pass them along to your coworkers. In the coming year we will hear more about these issues and new state programs created to address them. The 2007 ACI Conference in Massachusetts will devote an entire conference day to diversity and outreach as well as NDD training workshops, guest speakers, show-and-tell sessions and more. As the agenda develops for this training day we will keep everyone informed. I encourage all members to attend the conference this year, even if only for the one training day. It will most definitely prove worthwhile in time and money.

Now, changing gears to a much happier topic, I want to wish ACI members and their families a very Merry Christmas and a joyous, prosperous and healthy New Year. I personally find the beginning of each year refreshing and promising, with hope for new and better things to come.

Happy holidays to everyone.

Marianne Burke
President



NATIONAL NEWS

The Landscape of Last Child in the Woods

By Nancy Herron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

This summer our keynote speaker at the Florida conference, Richard Louv, inspired us with his book “Last Child in the Woods” on the impact of denying our children direct, unstructured play in nature. (See www.aci-net.org/bw/06conference_proceedings.pdf for a synopsis of his speech.) If you felt inspired then, wait until you read what’s been growing around this effort throughout the country!

The National Conservation Training Center, Louv’s Children and Nature Network and The Conservation Fund jointly held a **National Dialogue on Children and Nature** in September 2005. The invitation-only event gathered 350 representatives from health care, education, developers, government, media, and businesses such as REI (a national clothing and outdoor gear retailer) and Disney in an effort to create stronger connections between children and the outdoors and to address the disturbing increase in children’s health issues, including obesity, diabetes and attention disorders. The dialogue focused on four arenas: health, education, media and culture, and the urban and built environment. Secretary of Interior Dick Kempthorne began, “We are here today to light a fire of passion that opens the doors to the great outdoors so children can see, hear, smell, taste and touch nature. Government can never do all that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles should do, but government can be a catalyst, an encourager, a motivator.” Each day included stimulating speeches and brainstorming sessions. For example, experts revealed the alarming rising health risks to children, the loss of recess and natural play, people’s innate attraction to nature (“biophilia”) and its implication in building design and productivity, and youth’s confusion of virtual with real, likening it to “being content with eating the menu instead of the meal.” Watch for the conference proceedings and ideas from the sessions to be posted in late January 2007 at www.cnaturenet.org.

[The Conservation Fund](http://www.conservationfund.org) is creating a **National Forum on Children and Nature**. A group of about 35 governors, mayors, CEOs and conservation leaders will gather in February 2007 to raise awareness and funds for 20 demonstration projects across the nation. The forum will create national work groups around the four themes of health, education, media and culture, and the urban and built environment. The Conservation Fund has pledged to raise \$1 million with the goal of the forum raising up to \$20 million for the effort. Watch for criteria and calls for proposals for demonstration projects sometime in 2007.

Pennsylvania’s Gov. Edward Rendell is holding his **Governor’s Outdoor Conference** in March 2007, saying, “Our future quality of life depends on our ability to understand, appreciate and enjoy Pennsylvania’s natural bounties. We simply cannot afford to lose our connection with the outdoors – a connection that is part of our rich tradition and provides the balance vital for a prosperous future.” See what’s on their agenda at: www.connectoutdoors.state.pa.us.

Connecticut developed a campaign called **No Child Left Inside** and launched the **Great Park Pursuit**, an eight-week contest for families to seek out adventures at less-visited state parks and win prizes. The response exceeded all expectations. Learn more at www.nochildleftinside.org.

The Washington state legislature passed legislation to study the effects of outdoor education on academic achievement, career development and personal responsibility.

The National Wildlife Federation is promoting **The Green Hour**, recommending that each day children spend an hour outdoors in unstructured play. Some of the ideas they suggest are to go on a nature walk, put up a birdfeeder, set up a tent and camp in your yard, go fishing, go on a bug hunt, and create a Backyard Wildlife Habitat site. Learn more and find an excellent blog of current articles at www.nwf.org/nationalwildlife/article.cfm?issueID=107&articleID=1338

Cincinnati created an awareness coalition. The **Leave No Child Inside of Greater Cincinnati** campaign educates the public about the mental, physical and emotional health benefits of playing in nature. “Several nature facilities are exploring ways to create areas where it’s okay -- and safe -- for kids to dig and climb,” says coordinator Becky Townsend. The coalition includes community parks, the zoo, museums, environmental educators, service organizations and community health initiatives.

Louv and regional efforts are regularly featured in national media. For example, USA Today highlighted Louv and the **Wonderful Outdoor World** urban camping program that introduces outdoor experiences to inner city kids (WOW was at the 2002 ACI conference). www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20061122/a_outdoorinside22.art.htm

The Outdoor Industry Foundation, Department of Interior and the President's Council on Physical Fitness joined forces for the **Get Fit with US** campaign. The campaign links public health with public lands and encourages use of trails and public lands for fitness. Learn more at www.outdoorindustry.org/found.out.events.html

Fellow professional organizations such as the **Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies** and **Aquatic Resource Educators Association** are making formal ties to the Children and Nature movement. The groups are especially drawn to the diversity of interests represented and the opportunity to link with the broadly based and widely appealing message of getting kids outside.

The **Children and Nature Network**, developed around author Richard Louv, seeks to provide a bridge among the efforts inspired by the book. ACI members have asked for ideas on how to get involved. I can report that the landscape for combating "nature deficit" is fertile and growing. They are already working with 22 initiatives around the nation, and are putting together a community action guide for new initiatives. Watch for more ideas and features on model efforts in the coming year at www.cnaturenet.org.



ACI CONFERENCE UPDATE

ACI Comes to the Beautiful Berkshires – July 2007

By Ellie Horwitz, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

We've all been to meetings held in great places but scheduled during the off-season in order to get a good rate. How about meeting in a target destination at **peak** season and **still** at off-season rates? ACI is doing just that.

Think about a week in Massachusetts' scenic Berkshires in July 2007! The Berkshires have long been a four season destination for vacationers – combining a beautiful natural environment – state forests, scenic rivers and lakes, miles of hiking trails, world-class cultural events, and an atmosphere that blends New England history with the energy and creativity of a dynamic community.

ACI 2007 will be July 8-12 in Lenox, Massachusetts at the Eastover Resort, located in the heart of the Berkshires. Nestled at the foot of October Mountain on the banks of the Housatonic River, the Eastover offers 600 acres of private land where you can find hiking, swimming, archery, tennis, horseback riding and much more. And Eastover abuts more than 16,000 acres of state forest. Check out their Website at www.eastover.com. There is something here for everyone from the Appalachian Trail and excellent fishing spots to the Tanglewood Music Festival (summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra), outstanding theater groups and the Berkshire Mall – for those who enjoy hunting with a credit card. It's a great place for a family vacation!

The focus of all of this is ACI's Annual Conference which will explore where we are and what lies ahead. The program will touch upon changes in climate (and what might this mean for us?), the changing face of our constituents, changes in funding and changes in the behavior and habits of wildlife you thought you knew. There will be sessions dealing with magazines, Websites and new communications technologies, forums and roundtables and time to share notes on projects that flew and projects that bombed. There will also be a day of field trips. Stay tuned for more information.

Registration cost (TBD) will be about \$150. Lodging options (meals included) per person are:

Single room	\$125/day
Double Room*	\$110/day
Triple or more*	\$ 95/day
Children < 3	free
Children 3–11	\$ 60/day

If there is a group of Junior ACLers – we may set up a special kids program at no extra cost..

* You do not have to have a roommate to take advantage of the multiple bedrooms you just have to be willing to share the room with another registrant.

Save the dates, plan your travel, and stay tuned for more information on the conference program and registration -- details coming soon.



SKILL BUILDING

Borrowing from the Best: How Montana Outdoors Maintains High Standards of Excellence

By Tom Dickson, Editor, Montana Outdoors

Montana Outdoors, the magazine of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, has been fortunate in recent years. Circulation has increased 20 percent since 2002, and during the past three years we have received two first-place ACI magazine awards (one a tie with *Texas Parks & Wildlife*) and a half-dozen first- or second-place article awards.

Why are we doing so well? One reason is that we emulate the best national conservation magazines, including *Audubon*, *Sierra* and *National Wildlife* (not to mention the other top-notch state conservation magazines, such as those produced by Texas, Minnesota, Wyoming, and North Carolina). Like those publications, we aim to maintain the highest standards for article content, photo selection, design and editing. Our agency supports these efforts because we've successfully made the case that the magazine needs to be excellent to reflect the excellence of the agency itself. And vice versa: A substandard magazine would indicate a substandard agency.

Design: We take design seriously. It is never window dressing done to "pretty-up" an article. Rather, each article layout supports the editorial content of the article. That means font selection, headline treatment and photo selection for an article must be appropriate for that article. It also requires the art director to work with the editor to understand each article's intent and tone. If an article profiles a state park, then the personality of the layout may be breezy and vibrant, like something you'd see in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Travel and Leisure* or other travel magazines. If an article covers a major conservation issue, such as the controversy over hunting bison leaving Yellowstone National Park, then the layout will convey the seriousness of the content with a *Newsweek* or *U.S. News and World Report* look. We spend a lot of time looking at successful commercial magazines and borrowing (okay, copying) styles and techniques we think will work for our publication.

Photography: For us, it makes more sense to pay professional photographers for top-notch images than to hire a staff photographer. We run photos from some of the top wildlife photographers in the country, yet our total photo budget is only \$15,000 for six issues—about one-third the cost for wages and benefits of a staff photographer. We buy stock photography in both film and digital format. We also occasionally hire photojournalists from the major dailies to do day shoots or accompany writers on assignment for articles that require a photojournalistic treatment.



Writers: We use freelance writers, agency information officers and occasionally resource program staff to write articles. The editor also writes one feature each issue. For freelance assignments, we pay \$500 to \$700 for a 2,000-word feature. Because we have established a good track record, we have been able to convince agency program coordinators that it often makes sense to hire professional writers to produce articles. Our argument: Fisheries and wildlife management should be left to professional fisheries and wildlife managers, while, with some exceptions, magazine writing should be left to professional magazine writers.

Editorial content: *Montana Outdoors* has a rather narrow focus. Rather than try to be everything to everyone--a kid's publication, an in-house newsletter announcing staff awards, a news magazine, a hunting and fishing instructional publication, we mainly focus on major conservation issues affecting the state's fish, wildlife, and, to a lesser degree, state parks. This is information readers can't get from any other publication, so we fill a distinct marketing niche, sort of like a state version of *National Wildlife*. Our reader surveys have told us that subscribers don't want to read about agency staff retirements and awards ("Dale Hansen Named State Small Game Biologist of the Year!"), so we avoid running those dull news items. We also have been able to dissuade the governor's office from using *Montana Outdoors* as a personal public relations tool, arguing that publishing such messages would threaten the publication's reputation for objectivity, balance and nonpartisanship.

Editorial standards: We aim high. In addition to maintaining high journalistic standards, we also work to write engaging headlines, trim flabby sentence construction, eliminate redundancies, avoid precious phrasing, maintain logical structure, and correct all typos, misspellings and grammatical errors. For each issue, we hire a freelance copyeditor who edits first page proofs and a freelance proofreader who helps proof final page proofs.

Montana Outdoors has become one of the top state conservation magazines primarily out of pride, pride in our agency, pride in our profession as conservation communicators and pride in our publication. We know we are fortunate to have jobs that allow us to work with such fascinating subject matter, to publish exceptional outdoors writing and photography, and to know our work is helping conserve the state's fish, wildlife and state parks. In gratitude for this extraordinary opportunity, and for the subscribers who continue to make *Montana Outdoors* possible, we believe we have an obligation to produce the best magazine we possibly can.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Reaching Out to Diverse Audiences

By Dottie Head, Editor, The Balance Wheel

Reaching out to diverse audiences has become a "hot button" issue for many fish and wildlife agencies in recent years. It's showing up more frequently on conference agendas and ACI plans to address this issue at length during the upcoming conference in Massachusetts. What works? What doesn't? And, what can be done to reach out to non-hunters and non-anglers, different ethnic groups, seniors, disabled individuals and a host of other non-traditional constituencies.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) is looking at this issue on a national level. AFWA's Education, Outreach and Diversity (EOD) Committee and the Conservation Education Strategies are both focusing on reaching diverse audiences. As a first step, an EOD subcommittee was formed to work on a Diversity Tool Kit that will include images and some templates so agencies and organizations can more easily represent a diverse population in their materials. The tool kit will eventually be available online. As the Conservation Education Strategies continue to develop, there will be additional work on how to reach a more diverse audience.

Through trial and error, many states around the nation are finding new ways to reach non-traditional audiences. Here's a sampling of some programs that seem to be working:

Minnesota's Southeast Asian Outreach Program

Minnesota DNR's Southeast Asian Outreach Program has two full-time Southeast Asian staff members and works in concert with a Southeast Asian park naturalist and three Southeast Asian conservation officers.

The target audience is primarily refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, including Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian people. The Hmong from Laos, in particular, have a strong cultural tradition of fishing and hunting.

Minnesota's Southeast Asian population is among the largest in the nation. Its Hmong population alone is approximately 80,000. It is estimated that Minnesota has approximately 10,000 Southeast Asian licensed hunters and 18,000 licensed anglers (not including youth, who don't need licenses). Communication with these immigrants about hunting, fishing, outdoors recreation and natural resources is challenging. The people from different areas of Southeast Asia have distinct languages, cultures and traditions. Some American outdoors traditions, such as catch-and-release fishing, make little sense to them.

Minnesota's program, started in 1995, has established a formal relationship with four Southeast Asian populations and their community organizations. The program has offered training workshops, community meetings, field trips to fishing and hunting areas, translations of educational and regulation materials, and presentations to local and national Southeast Asian groups.

The results of the educational and communication efforts are illustrated by more open communications between the DNR and Southeast Asian populations, by a decrease in hunting and fishing violations, and by an increase in license sales among Southeast Asian populations. This is an ongoing program; we are learning and improving the efforts as we go.

For more information on this program, contact Ryan Bronson, Minnesota DNR Fish & Wildlife Division recruitment and retention supervisor, (651)259-5191, ryan.Bronson@dnr.state.mn.us or Josee Cung, Southeast Asian Program manager, (651)259-5247, josee.cung@dnr.state.mn.us.

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has three programs that seem to be working exceptionally well. The state is in the process of transitioning from a "Diversity Initiative" to a "Diversity Program" and the DEC's executive staff has provided some money to fund the transition. The overall goal of their diversity program is to provide outdoor experiences for use by underserved communities, primarily in urban areas, that would not normally have these experiences with hope that some of these youth will pursue environmental careers down the road. New York is using three approaches to reach out to these populations: 1) Environmental Education Centers; 2) After-School Conservation Clubs; and 3) Summer Environmental Education Camps.

Environmental Education Centers

New York has four environmental education centers. Two are in the suburbs or Albany and Buffalo, one is in Poughkeepsie and a fourth in a rural area. There is no public transportation to any of these sites and there is no easy way to get there without a car. In an effort to reach out to underserved populations, including minorities, seniors and individuals with disabilities, NYDEC worked with bus companies to provide free or very low cost transportation to special events and festivals. They have also established partnerships with various organizations to provide equipment and demonstrations showing disabled individuals how to use their facilities.

Education center staff are reaching out to organizations and schools in Environmental Justice Communities with school programs and teacher training workshops, including Projects WILD and WET. At this point, success is being measured by attendance, but NYDEC is looking into surveys and other methods to more thoroughly evaluate this program.

After-School Conservation Clubs

NYDEC sponsors After-School Conservation Clubs targeting elementary school students who participate in after-school programs operated by two non-profit groups (United Neighborhood Houses and After School Corporation) in the New York City area. There are 10 total sites in five underserved communities that have involved more than 350 children per session. The 10-week program runs in the fall and spring for four hours per week. The children spend half the time learning about an environmental concept during a fun, environmental education activity and the other half is spent working on a stewardship project, such as developing an aquarium, creating recycling programs for schools, or cleaning up a park. NYDEC has received funding for this program through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the New York City Environmental Fund of the Hudson River Foundation.

In addition, NYDEC trains staff at 10 project sites and they have developed a binder for program leaders to use that includes Project Learning Tree, Project WILD and Project WET activities along with lesson plans and information on getting started with stewardship projects. NYDEC has two AmeriCorps members help teach environmental education activities.

This program is just wrapping up its second season and NYDEC has conducted extensive evaluations. In response to the evaluation, NYDEC has made significant revisions to the instructional binder and modified the activities that are taught in the program. Feedback from the teaching staff indicates that the changes have been well received and there is lots of excitement among the children who participate in the program.

Summer Environmental Education Camps

NYDEC's Summer Environmental Education Camps are celebrating their 59th year. There are four camps. Three serve 12- 14 year olds and one caters to 15–17 year olds. The kids arrive on a Sunday afternoon and stay through Saturday morning. While there, they are exposed to a series of field/ecology lessons, pond/stream studies, hiking, camping, optional hunter safety training, fly-tying, fishing and other recreational activities.

For many years, NYDEC has been offering "Camperships" or scholarships for low-income children. Not many people took advantage of them however because the camps were in remote areas, the target families had no way to get the kids to camp and most of the children had never had outdoor experiences and were intimidated.

In recent years, NYDEC has developed a camp diversity program where we work with organizations and their students and provide pre-camp experiences so they have an opportunity to test out kayaks, go hiking, or spend the night in a tent. In other words, they provide the youth with experiences so that when they get to camp, they are familiar with the experiences that a lot of the traditional camp attendees have had.

As a follow-up to the camps, NYDEC provides post-camp opportunities and career-focused opportunities, like trips to the College of Environmental Science and Forestry and visits to paper companies who hire conservation officers.

Older students who have been to camp mix in with recruits to share experiences and mentor them along. A collaborative program with the Hudson River group takes youth out on a sloop where they learn water sampling, seining and river history. At a recent three-day leadership program for youth, 15 of the 21 total participants were former NYDEC campers.

The Future

NYDEC has been extremely lucky in that the administration has provided the staff to operate the programs. There are two people in the Albany area and another was hired for the western part of the state. They also have a partner in the New York City area that they work with to develop educational experiences.

The goal is to have a seamless program that reaches diverse audiences where they reach children through the After-School Program who go on to become campers, counselors-in-training then counselors. Then they head off to college and come back to work for DEC or related organizations, become camp directors and perpetuate the cycle. "We're in it for the long run," says Ann Harrison, an environmental educator with NYDEC. "We are not just offering one week of camp, but we are looking to build interest in and skills to become future environmental leaders in New York.

Ann credits the partnerships with a variety of groups and non-profit organizations as one of the keys to the program's success. By developing good relationships with other groups who are not the usual hunters, trappers and hikers, they are tapping into urban league and other community groups and reaching out to new audiences.

For more information on the NYDEC Programs, contact Ann Harrison at (518) 402-8032 or e-mail ae_harris@gw.dec.state.ny.us .

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Texas does most things in a big way and their programs for reaching diverse populations are no different. Featured here is information on three of Texas' programs: 1) Take Me Fishing, Houston!; 2) Community Outdoor Outreach Program (COOP); and 3) Hispanic Outreach Strategy.

Take Me Fishing, Houston!

Take Me Fishing, Houston! is an introduction to fishing and aquatic stewardship program targeting families, especially Hispanic families, reached through community organizations and schools. During its first year of operation, about 1,800 youth and adults participated in the program. More than 50 percent of those reached were of Hispanic descent. The program is a cooperative effort involving the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF).

The three program goals are 1) to implement Best Practices internally (pretty successful so far); 2) to reach Hispanic families (more successful with schools than community organizations so far); and 3) to have community organizations adopt our programs (learning what factors influence adoption)

Texas is evaluating the program through surveys and meetings with community partners, staff and participants. We are learning factors that help and hinder the process of getting information, program design and best ways to reach and communicate. Next time, they plan to re-do their evaluation survey methods.

This program could easily be duplicated in other states. For more information on Take Me Fishing, Houston! contact Nancy Herron (education/Best Practices) at (512) 389-4362 or nancy.herron@tpwd.state.tx.us; Ernie Gammage (partnerships) at (512) 389-4472 or Ernie.Gammage@tpwd.state.tx.us; , or Darcy Bontempo (marketing) at (512) 389-4574 or Darcy.Bontempo@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP)

The CO-OP grant helps to introduce underserved populations to the services, programs and facilities of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Underserved populations include ethnic minorities, youth, rural and inner city communities, low-income and physically and mentally challenged, especially those participating in organized groups such as community and church groups. CO-OP is a reimbursement grant program for organizations wanting to participate in the outdoors. Annual grants of up to \$30,000 each are made to some 20 groups each year.

The CO-OP program is designed to remove barriers (equipment, transportation, skills, etc.) to outdoor recreation so that underserved populations can more easily participate in camping, fishing, hiking, environmental and conservation programs. The CO-OP program is also designed to introduce and encourage the use of TPWD programs, facilities and services.

During fiscal year 06, we reached a total of 21,084 participants. This number is significantly lower since our reduction in funding over the past two legislative sessions. The numbers break out as follows:

Females	10,158
Youth	15,921
Minorities	14,332
Low Income	12,467
P/M Challenged	1,659

The CO-OP program has been an important part of TPWD's outreach efforts and has introduced thousands of individuals to our mission, sites and programs. This program is on-going since 1996.

There is a rigorous evaluation component as part of the program, which includes quarterly reports and evaluations. TPWD hopes to continue integrating with other agency divisions to provide resources that underserved populations may lack, including skills training and networking with similar organizations. The CO-OP application is designed to award points to organizations who agree to target measures critical to the TPWD's mission. A contractual agreement ensures that those measures are met.

In future years, TPWD will continue to meet with community partners to assess their needs as they change over the years and integrate those changes with our agency's mission. Based on the needs of these community partners, we continue to develop programs to meet those needs. Currently, three other states are administering similar programs and the Sierra Club is modeling a nationwide program based on the CO-OP model.

For more information on this program, contact Darlene Lewis, State Parks Division at (512) 912-7145 or Darlene.lewis@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Hispanic Outreach Strategy

Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in Texas and will be the majority within the next several years. Our agency has much to learn about how Hispanics view us, our mission and the outdoors. There are multiple strategies we use to learn about how to be relevant to this important audience. Of course we survey them, but perhaps most importantly, we developed a Spanish-language glossary of terms related to our business that we use consistently in translated materials. While using Spanish is not essential to communication, it builds trust and makes a statement that we recognize Hispanic culture as unique.

We have perhaps a half-dozen efforts on-going at the same time, all of which produce learning that contributes to our understanding of our place in Hispanic communities.

One of our best measures is the number of Hispanics who attend our annual Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo. In its 15th year, Expo draws around 35,000 visitors during its two-day October weekend. Since we began using multiple strategies to reach Hispanics, Expo attendance has shifted from 15 percent Hispanic (1994) to 24 percent (2005). Strategies include partnering with a Spanish-language radio station, participating in Hispanic cultural events like Cinco de Mayo and Fiestas Patrias, producing a smaller version of Expo in the heart of the Hispanic community in Austin, using bilingual flyers to advertise the event, and even taking Spanish lessons on site during work to better communicate with our visitors.

For more information on this program, contact Ernie Gammage, Chief, Urban Outdoor Programs Branch, at Ernie.Gammage@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Missouri Department of Conservation

The Missouri Department of Conservation recently adopted a new strategic plan that includes reaching out to urban/minority/underserved populations. Recently, Missouri's director helped jump-start the plan by directing every member of the outreach staff to schedule at least one diversity-enhancing activity or event in the coming year that goes beyond his or her normal work activities. The Department of Conservation also has an ambitious effort underway to provide and publicize handicapped-accessible trails, interpretive facilities, fishing docks, boat ramps, waterfowl hunting blinds and other facilities, plus special activities such as handicapped hunts.

The state has formed an accessibility council consisting of several volunteers from outside the agency who offer advice on accessibility matters. These include people with various disabilities and other "temporarily abled" people who work in the accessibility field.

For more information contact Jim Low at 573-522-4115, ext. 3243 or email Jim.Low@mdc.mo.gov.

This is just a sampling of the many programs that are taking place around the nation. We will continue to focus on this topic in future issues of *The Balance Wheel*. If your state has a unique program that reaches out to non-traditional audiences, please send an email to Dottie Head, *The Balance Wheel* editor at dottiehead1@yahoo.com so that we may cover it in future articles.



TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE UPDATE

Teaming Coalition Becomes Largest in Conservation History

By Rebecca Brooke, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

In the past year, the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition has grown by almost 2,000 member organizations to a record high of over 4,600 members! We believe this is due in great part to the amazing communications efforts on behalf of the wildlife action plans – from the Texas Wildlife Action Plan Summary Report to a new “Be Wild!” Virginia Wildlife Action Plan video. Thank you for your work in helping the coalition grow and for educating our conservation partners and the general public about the state wildlife action plans!

The coming months hold new goals and challenges for the Teaming with Wildlife Campaign and we need your help! By January, it is likely that the last of the state wildlife action plans will be officially approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We hope to celebrate the event with the media and encourage members of Congress to use that momentum to provide new funding for wildlife conservation. Education of Congress will also take place during the Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In, February 27 to March 1, when coalition members meet with elected officials on Capitol Hill (see “News from the Capitol” to learn more about funding prospects). In March, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will be hosting reporters from around the country for a media tour of wildlife action plan project sites. The field trip is timed to coincide with the annual migration of sandhill cranes, a truly spectacular wildlife experience!

With so much going on, we hope that you will continue to be actively involved in Teaming with Wildlife. Please keep talking with reporters about the myriad of positive stories your wildlife action plans hold. Whether working to conserve a particular species or bringing partners together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered, your wildlife action plan is a tool not only to conserve wildlife, but to help your agency communicate to the public the great work you do.

Teaming with Wildlife Media Tour

Friday, March 16, 2007
Kearney, Nebraska

This March, Teaming with Wildlife is inviting reporters from around the nation to gather to see the incredible spectacle of 90 percent of the world's sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl on their migratory path. The media field trip will include:

- A news conference with VIPs on the state wildlife action plans and wildlife conservation funding.
- Tours of important habitat and conservation project sites with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission field biologists
- Exclusive sunset and sunrise visits to crane viewing blinds along the Platte River



NEBRASKAland Magazine/Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Please invite reporters from your state to join us for this spectacular event. A detailed agenda and online registration is available at www.teaming.com/newsroom.htm

Coalition goals for the coming year

Twenty states have already achieved the goal of over 100 new coalition members per state! To further strengthen the coalition and continue to educate the public about the state wildlife action plans, Teaming with Wildlife will pursue three key strategies over the next year:

- Reaching for 100 groups per state and 5,000 nationwide by the 2007 Fly-In Day, February 27 to March 1. South Dakota got media coverage of their coalition by issuing a press release on reaching their goal of 100 groups. This is a great way to introduce your coalition to the public!
- Targeting Four Key Constituencies: By casting a wide net, over the past year we've fostered a broad-based resurgence of the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, but a more focused effort is needed to secure active support from those constituencies that matter most to the success of the wildlife action plans and efforts to fund them. During the next year, sub-groups of the Teaming with Wildlife Steering Committee will develop comprehensive outreach strategies to the following four constituencies that will include presentations at conferences, articles in relevant publications and recruitment for the Fly-In Day. We'd appreciate your help in reaching these four audiences:
 1. Resource Users (agriculture, forestry, energy, etc)
 2. Sportsmen
 3. Tourism (visitors bureaus, birding trail sponsors, lodging, etc)
 4. Land trusts
- Wildlife summits in every state: Gathering partners together to celebrate a newly approved action plan and decide on next steps is a great way to galvanize support for plan implementation and gain the attention of media. The generic term "wildlife summit" can mean many things from a meeting of stakeholders to set priorities to a much broader event introducing a wildlife action plan to the public. Every state can benefit from such an event, and in the next year the Association will share ideas and examples to help spread wildlife summits across the nation. For more information on how to organize a wildlife summit, visit http://www.teaming.com/ctk/Wildlife_Summit_Guide.pdf

News from Capitol Hill

The November elections brought change to Capitol Hill, and January's incoming Congress will be filled with many new faces. How will these changes affect the Teaming with Wildlife Campaign? Much remains to be seen, but here's what we know now:

State Wildlife Grants Appropriations

The U.S. Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee voted to provide level funding at \$67.5 million for the State Wildlife Grants Program in FY07. This is an increase from the \$50 million suggested by the U.S. House of Representatives, but falls short of the \$74.7 million in the President's budget and the \$85 million supported by 226 members of Congress. Strong support for \$85 million came through in the Dear Colleague Letter, which gained more signatures than ever before and was strongly backed by the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus. In September we orchestrated a sign-on letter from nearly 150 conservation groups in favor of the Senate's higher number. This letter was delivered as part of a national day of action which generated phone calls to House offices through email alerts reaching nearly 100,000 individual wildlife supporters. The conference process to determine the final appropriation may take place in December, may be rolled over to the new Congress in January, or may be wrapped into an omnibus package.

Long-Term Funding

The national Teaming with Wildlife Steering Committee has worked to secure dedicated funding for the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program in three leading bills seeking to address global climate change. These bills would cap emissions of greenhouse gases and generate revenue through the sale of emissions credits. Due in part to our testimony, meetings and a sign-on letter from 375 organizations, several such proposals already dedicate some revenues to wildlife and there's optimism others will soon.

Save the Date for the 2007 Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Day!

By Rebecca Brooke, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

When: February 27 – March 1

Where: Washington, DC

Preparations for the 2007 Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Day are now underway! Mark your calendars and plan to join us in our nation's capital to support better funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program, the country's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered in every state.

Register online today at: www.teaming.com/flyin_2007.htm

2007 Fly-In Preview:

February 27, Tuesday: Briefing & Hill Strategy Session focused on supporting increased funding.

February 28, Wednesday: Action-packed day of hill visits anchored by a Senate breakfast and House reception.

March 1, Thursday: *New* Teaming with Wildlife Coalition Summit

For more information, contact the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at (202) 624-7890 or e-mail teaming@fishwildlife.org.



News of the Weird

On a lighter note, The Balance Wheel subcommittee has decided to run an occasional column on bizarre happenings in fish and wildlife.....the stories you'd never believe happened unless you have worked in fish and wildlife for a few years. If you'd like to forward us bizarre stories from your state for inclusion in future issues, please email them to Dottie Head, TBW editor, at dottiehead1@yahoo.com. A few caveats: 1) they must involve agency personnel and 2) they should be humorous, but not tragic....in other words, nobody was seriously injured or killed. Cheers and enjoy!

Florida Man Leaps Off Bridge After \$20

Submitted by Scott Ball, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officers recently rescued a homeless man who had jumped off the U.S. 41 bridge over the Manatee River near Palmetto, Florida to retrieve a \$20 bill that blew out of his hand. The 47-year old Mark Giorgio said he couldn't afford to let the bill go.

The bridge is about 50 feet high at the point where Giorgio jumped. He swam about 100 yards to the bill and then headed for shore.

"I got my money back, hell yeah," a soaking wet Giorgio told paramedics after being rescued. "Twenty bucks is a lot of money when you're broke."

Giorgio, who said he is homeless, lost the bill while counting his money as he walked across the bridge.

Giorgio, who said he is recovering from a recent broken collarbone, suffered a couple of cuts and refused medical treatment after his jump. He was not arrested. Nautical charts show the clearance of the bridge at 41 feet, but it's a few feet higher to the surface of the bridge.

Couple Inflicts Self-punishment

Submitted by Scott Pengelly, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

A Minnesota conservation officer encountered a couple that had driven past a "No Vehicles Allowed" sign at the entrance to Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area. As the officer approached the parked vehicle, the couple scrambled over the folded-down rear seat and into the trunk and then snapped the seat into the locked upright position. With the windows up, the keys in the ignition, the doors locked, and the internal trunk release not functioning, it was quite some time before the two people were released. Punishment enough, said the officer.

Stop Those Hunters

Submitted by Scott Pengelly, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

A Minnesota conservation officer spoke with an upset lakeshore owner who had recently moved to the Midwest from California. The individual complained that watching geese "being blasted out of the air" was traumatizing his 4-year-old child. When the officer suggested blocking out the window view while hunting was taking place, he was treated to a litany of comments about lake ownership rights, child trauma and the responsibility of the conservation officer to stop "those people with guns." When the officer pointed out that hunting is a long-standing Minnesota tradition, the new resident threw out this insult: "I can see you are 'one of them' – a gun owner and a hunter."



SPECIAL SECTION

Outdoor Reference Manual Takes Up Where AP and Webster's Leave Off

by Jim Low, Missouri Department of Conservation, OWAA President

Have you ever walked down the hall to ask a coworker whether there is a period in ".30-06"? Would you have to call a biologist to learn the differences among anadromous, amphidromous and adfluvial fish? Do you know the difference between a daredevil and a Dardevle? Do you know for whom Dall's sheep is named? Do you know what a Class VI river is? Answers to these questions and many others are found in the 2006 *Outdoor Reference Manual*.

You won't find facts like these in *Webster's Dictionary* or the *Associated Press Stylebook*. That is why the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) compiled this comprehensive, 128-page guide to everything from "abaft" (toward the stern) to "zooplankton" (floating, often microscopic, aquatic animals that feed on algae).

I bought my copy fresh off the press at OWAA's annual conference last June. Its contributors included some of the nation's most famous and knowledgeable outdoor communicators, people who spent lifetimes acquiring encyclopedic knowledge of outdoor terminology. Fresh- and saltwater fishing, hunting, trapping, paddle sports, sailing, limnology, botany, zoology...it's all in there. It seemed like a good book to have on my desk.

When I found myself referring to it almost daily, it occurred to me that others at the Missouri Department of Conservation might find it useful, too. I sent a note to our information and education staffers letting them know it was available. Since the agency's clerical staff prepares volumes of jargon-filled reports monthly, I included division office supervisors in the note.

Within two weeks, I had orders for more than 100 copies. One nature center manager told me, "This is great! I have been looking all over for this."

Next was the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. They snapped up another 20 copies. Then I thought of ACI, whose member agencies employ hundreds of people for whom the *OWAA Outdoor Reference Manual* is an indispensable resource.

I am not selling the *OWAA Outdoor Reference Manual*. It does that by itself. OWAA members can buy single copies for \$12. Nonmembers pay \$15. However, there are discounts of 10 percent on purchases of five to nine copies and 25 percent for 10 or more. You can order from OWAA, 121 Hickory St., Ste. 1, Missoula, MT 59801, fax (406) 728-7445 or online at <https://shop.owaa.org/splashPage.hq>.

By the way, do you know what freshwater fish's common names include "eelpout" and "lawyer"?



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

Bird Education Conference, February 6–10, 2007, Austin, Texas

National Wild Turkey Federation 2007 National Convention and Sports Show, February 2 –25, Nashville, Tennessee.

Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Day, February 27-March 1, 2007, Washington, D.C.

International Boating and Water Safety Summit, March 4-7, 2007, San Antonio, Texas

72nd Annual North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference, March 20-24, Portland, Oregon.

2007 ACI Conference, July 8-13, Eastover Resort, Massachusetts



MEMBER NEWS

News from the Schneider Family

As many of you already know, ACI lost a good friend and long-time member on July 13 when Geoffrey Guy Schneider, 54, of Las Vegas, lost a four-year battle with kidney cancer. Following is a copy of the letter ACI President Marianne Burke sent to his family and the response sent by Geoff's wife Jody:

July 27, 2006

To the Geoffrey Schneider Family:

On behalf of the Association for Conservation Information, I want to express our deepest sympathy for your loss. Geoff is a dear friend to ACI and his absence was deeply felt at the recent 2006 conference. Geoff was an active ACI member who took his job and membership seriously. He constantly expressed his desire to see ACI grow and offered assistance many times to help the association accomplish that goal. In 2002, Geoff was awarded the ACI "Spirit Award" for his dedication and service to the association. He was truly a devoted ACI member and friend.

In Geoff's honor, we have renamed the ACI Travel Fund to the "Geoffrey Schneider Travel Scholarship." This travel fund is made possible by two of our sponsor organizations for the specific purpose of providing financial aid to members who otherwise could not attend the annual conference. Geoff was a big advocate of helping our membership grow and getting members to the conference. It is only natural, and our honor, to give this scholarship fund his name.

Geoff will be greatly missed at ACI. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you in the months to come as you adjust to his passing.

With sincerest sympathy,

Marianne Burke
ACI President

Dear Marianne,

My son and I are deeply touched by the honor ACI has bestowed. Renaming the ACI Travel Scholarship is a great tribute to Geoff. He valued his membership in ACI and his many friends in the organization.

It is still hard to believe that Geoff has gone to his rest. My son, Scott, and I are taking one day at a time.

Your kindness honoring Geoff is greatly appreciated.

Fondly,
Jody
Jody St. Hilaire-Schneider
5505 Desert Spring Road
Las Vegas, NV 89149

New ACI Awards "Czar" Announced!

Chuck Schlueter, of South Dakota Department of Fish, Game and Parks, has left some big shoes to fill as chair of the ACI Awards Committee, but Thomas Gresham of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has stepped up to the plate to take over! In a recent ACI conference call, Schlueter said he had enjoyed chairing the Awards Committee but that he was looking forward to handing it off to Gresham. Everyone at ACI offers their hearty thanks to Chuck for a job well done. During his tenure, the number of entries has risen and the committee has tweaked the awards categories to make them relevant to today's I&E efforts. Look for more information about the 2006 ACI Awards Competition in a future issue of *The Balance Wheel*.

-END WINTER 2007 TBW ISSUE-