

The Balance Wheel

Newsletter of the Association for Conservation Information

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March 28-31, International Boating and Water Safety Summit, Daytona Beach, Fla.
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April 25-27, Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, Natick, Mass.
July 19-23, ACI Annual Conference, Louisville, Ky.
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Contributors to this issue: Scott Ball, Vanessa Bullwinkle, Jamey Graham, Dottie Head, Micah Holmes, Penny Miller, Kim Nix, Liza Poinier, Nels Rodefeld, Paul Tarlowe, Steve "Wild Man" Wilson, Randy Zellers

Editor: Dottie Head (678) 352-0411 or dottiehead1@yahoo.com

Webmaster: Jeff Eschler (801) 538-4722 or jeffeschler@gmail.com



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Conference Content Committee Seeking Input

By Nels Rodefeld, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife

Like it or not change often happens slowly. You can attest to that in your line of work and we can witness the slow progress of changes at ACI too. But the pace isn't always a bad thing. A lumbering battleship never made a turn in the blink of an eye, but they are also stable and true to their course.

For the past 72 years ACI has withstood the winds of change and has remained a powerful voice for outdoor communicators. Sure we have made countless tweaks to our bylaws and articles, but in the end we have remained consistent in our mission to train and inform the staffs of member agencies and provide a forum to exchange ideas and to improve our skills and craftsmanship.

You'll see one more tweak this year, but like so many other changes at ACI it will be subtle. Many of us also think it will make us a stronger organization. Stephanie Hussey (RBFF) is leading a conference content committee that should take some of the burden off the host state and tap into all the members to provide the best and most innovative workshops and seminars possible.

I'm confident that this system will be better for several reasons. First, it will allow board members and officers to be more involved in the conference content. Second, it will allow more states to consider hosting future conferences if they know they don't have to handle both the logistics and the content of the conference. And last, it will allow people from all over the country to be involved in the annual conference.

If you have an idea for a seminar I encourage you to contact Stephanie or one of the other committee members and share your knowledge and concepts with all of us in Louisville.

After all our strength as an organization comes when we are all involved and pulling on the same oar – even if we do move slowly sometimes.

Nels Rodefeld,
President

ACI Conference Content Committee

Stephanie Hussey, Chair (703) 778-5152, shussey@rbff.org
Robin Thomas, (801) 538-4707, robinthomas@utah.gov
Rick Hargrave, (503) 947-6020, richard.j.hargrave@state.or.us
Lindsay Deering, (614) 265-6408, Lindsay.deering@dnr.state.oh.us
Marianne Burke, (225) 765-2917, mburke@wlf.la.gov
Judy L. Stokes, (603) 271-3211, judy.stokes@wildlife.nh.gov



NATIONAL NEWS

2009 Fishing License Sales Increase Despite Economy

By Dottie Head, Editor, The Balance Wheel

If there's a silver lining to the ongoing economic crisis, it may be that more people are getting out of the house, onto the water and purchasing a fishing license along the way. Fishing license sales in states that participate in the fishing license sales index increased by 4.7 percent in 2009, according to information released by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and the American Sportfishing Association (ASA).

"Not since the 1970s have we seen a single-year increase in fishing license sales like we've seen in 2009," said ASA President and CEO Mike Nussman. "Understanding how the needle moves in terms of sportfishing participation is important not just for the sport-fishing industry, but for the entire outdoor recreation community. This new license metric will provide everyone with important sales and participation information."

The 12 participating index states include Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas and Utah. They were selected for their ability to provide consistent license sales data and to illustrate both a national and regional perspective. Four of these 12 states - Florida, Minnesota, North Carolina and Texas - are among the top 10 states in terms of impacts anglers have on the nation's economy.

“Although the RBFF/ASA Fishing License Sales Index is a strong indicator of fishing license sales, it isn’t an exact measure of all fishing license sales nationally. However, should the 4.7 percent rise hold true nationwide, it would represent one of the largest percentage increases in fishing license sales in over 30 years,” said Nussman. Southwick Associates, the firm that analyzed the data, reported that fishing license sales increased at a faster rate in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the second quarter. Increases of 20 percent or more were common in the first quarter. However, a larger volume of sales occurred in the second quarter – the peak period for license sales nationally – and had the greatest effect on 2009 sales. In general, more fishing licenses are sold during the second quarter (April – June) than at any other time of the year. Although the growth rate for license sales eased slightly in the latter half of the year, sales were still up for a majority of states in the index.

Other states that are not part of the 12 counted in the index are also reporting upward trends. “Ohio has even better news,” said Jamey Graham. “We’re up 6.33 percent compared to this date last year. This is likely a result of cooperative weather and good Lake Erie fishing opportunities.”

“Reasons for the 2009 license sales increase range from a slow economy, which may allow more people time to engage in outdoor activities, to recreational fishing being a lower cost alternative to other forms of recreation,” said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. “Our research shows that fishing is the number one gateway activity for introducing children and their families to the outdoors. We feel confident that our national Take Me Fishing direct mail marketing program and other efforts designed to reach lapsed anglers contributed to the 2009 rise in fishing license sales.”

According to ASA, when the license sales index moves by just a tenth of a point, 40,000 anglers have entered or quit sportfishing. Even a small uptick in the index represents a big change in recreational fishing participation. That’s big business when you consider that they typical angler spends \$176 a year on just fishing tackle alone and contributes over \$40 annually to conservation via license dollars and excise taxes.

“While more people fishing is good news, what’s key to growing the sport is keeping them coming back every year and introducing newcomers at the same time. RBFF’s Take Me Fishing Web site (www.takemefishing.org), our education outreach and other integrated marketing efforts will continue to work to accomplish this goal,” said Peterson.



Project Learning Tree Releases Early Childhood Curriculum

By Vanessa Bullwinkle, Director of Communications, Project Learning Tree

Just as more attention is being focused on the need to connect students to nature at a younger age, Project Learning Tree® (PLT) has released a new curriculum guide and music CD to engage children ages 3 to 6 in outdoor exploration and play. Eleven field-tested, hands-on activities showcase over 130 “early childhood experiences” that integrate investigations of nature with art, literature, math, music, and movement.

“Exploring nature is a complete sensory experience, and early experiences with the natural world excite children’s imaginations and foster their inborn sense of wonder and curiosity—important motivators for lifelong learning,” said Kathy McGlaufflin, Director of Project Learning Tree and Senior Vice President of Education for the American Forest Foundation, the national sponsor of PLT.

“Increasing environmental literacy is a proven way to encourage scientific inquiry, and PLT’s *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* provides an introduction to environmental education at a key developmental period in children’s lives,” added McGlaufflin.

Since 1993, PLT has provided environmental education training and academic curricula for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten educators to assist in their educational programming with young people. In response to a huge demand for more activities that use developmentally-appropriate approaches for reaching young learners, PLT has created a new early childhood curriculum and produced an accompanying music CD to provide a valuable resource designed specifically for early childhood educators.

“PLT’s Early Childhood program encourages young children to learn about the natural world around them using their senses, the seasons, and neighborhood trees,” said Al Stenstrup, Director of Education Programs at the American Forest Foundation. “The experiences in PLT’s Early Childhood guide encourage children to explore, discover, and communicate in expressive ways. They emphasize outdoor adventure, support children having fun while learning, and utilize each child’s imagination and creativity to provide opportunities for learning in groups or as individuals,” he said.

The activities highlight the importance of kinetic learning and differentiated instruction, including opportunities to incorporate music and movement using the CD to encourage children to sing and dance. The music selections include instrumentals with different rhythms and cultural connections, nature sounds, classical music, and fun songs with educational lyrics from children’s music artist Billy B. Brennan.

PLT’s *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* guide includes background information on facilitating experiences for the early childhood learner, how to guide children in learning about nature both indoors and outdoors, and clear objectives and benchmarks to assess learning. It also includes suggestions for activities that families and friends can conduct to enhance their child’s learning experiences at home.

PLT’s *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* guide has been correlated to national standards for preschool education by three major early childhood accreditation programs. All activities meet the National Association for the Education of Young Children criteria for curriculum, the North American Association for Environmental Education’s Early Childhood Environmental Education Guidelines for Excellence, and Head Start’s Child Outcomes Framework.

Educators receive training and PLT’s *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* materials by attending a professional development workshop. PLT’s 50-state network trains 30,000 PreK-12 educators every year through 1,500 workshops held across the country. Contact information for each PLT state program can be found at www.plt.org, along with additional resources and correlations to academic standards and guidelines.

About Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree® is a program of the American Forest Foundation, a nonprofit conservation organization that works to ensure decision makers and educators, both today and tomorrow, understand and value the role that forests and the environment play in our lives. Through quality environmental education and outdoor learning for children and adults across the country, and in conjunction with our 50-state network of partners and volunteers, our programs are engaging youth and communities in conservation efforts, growing healthy forests, and conserving habitat. For more information, visit www.forestfoundation.org.

PLT provides environmental education training and PLT curriculum materials to 30,000 PreK-12 educators every year through 1,500 professional development workshops held in communities across the country. Recognized for 35 years as a leader in environmental education, PLT teaches students how to think, not what to think about complex environmental issues, and helps students learn the skills they need to make sound choices about the environment. PLT’s service-learning programs, GreenSchools! and GreenWorks!, engage students with their community to apply their learning in a real-life context. For more information, visit www.plt.org.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Conservation 2.0: Technology Adds Twist to Natural Resources Management

By Randy Zellers, Managing Editor, Arkansas Wildlife Magazine, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

It’s an electronic world. Some outdoors enthusiasts who travel miles to escape the buzz of television, radios and computers feel naked if a cellular phone isn’t strapped to a hip. GPS units have all but replaced maps and compasses as the woodsman’s primary navigation tools.

Change isn’t always evil, and those who embrace new technology often enjoy the benefit years before it becomes mainstream.

Getting Mobile

Through early December, more than 95 percent of hunters had checked their harvests using telephones and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) Web site. Others used the Commission’s new option. Smart phone and iPhone applications were released a few weeks into archery season, and the response has been tremendous.

“The iPhone applications we introduced are really neat, and are getting more popular every day,” said Matt Hodges, assistant chief of the Wildlife Management Division. “This is the first app that we know of that enables interaction between a government agency and the public. (The Utah Department of Natural Resources) has an app that is just a different way to read its Web site; ours has information coming from hunters, as well as information we send out.”

The applications don’t stop with harvest check-in. Smart phone users have a wealth of information at their fingertips.

“We offer game check, season dates and bag limits, fishing reports, fishing records with images, waterfowl reports and a news screen to keep users informed of the most up-to-date information,” Hodges said. “There’s also a trophy-room function that lets users upload personal harvests by species and include photos and information from each hunt.

Apps evolve, and the AGFC app is no different. Hodges said the current version of the iPhone app has been revised three times, with each offering a few new features.

“We included sunrise and sunset times that are specific to where the user is. Hunters will be able to see the exact time they should start and stop shooting. There’s also a ‘Near Me’ function that uses the phone’s GPS to locate the nearest WMA and lists the regulations for that WMA. We’re excited about how to improve the app even further.”

Nationwide Coverage

Nationwide Coverage

Hodges said more than 20 percent of cellular phone users in Arkansas have smart phones, and the number is growing. He anticipates many new users for the AGFC application as people continue the transition.

“So far, the app has been downloaded by more than 4,400 people with relatively little publicity being devoted to it,” Hodges said. “People all over the U.S. have plugged in, and it’s even been downloaded by people in 47 other countries. We’re in every continent except Antarctica.”

Social Studies

Technology offers another avenue for the AGFC to interact with the public – social media. The Internet offers blogs, forums and social networks for every topic from hair care to medicine. While standard Web sites offer good communication from the AGFC to the public, there was very little room for users of the site to give feedback about the topics they felt were important.

“Facebook recently passed 350 million users,” said Angela Sanchez, AGFC creative supervisor. “Social media is a growing trend with how the public interacts with companies, and we saw the value in being a part of that conversation.”

According to Sanchez, people were talking about the AGFC on blogs, forums and social networks such as Facebook, and it was important to establish the agency in the community instead of people outside the agency possibly spreading misinformation.

“If we didn’t speak up and give the public a place to communicate through this form of media, it may have looked like we weren’t interested in what the people had to say, and we’re ultimately responsible to the taxpayers of the state,” Sanchez said.

Involved Audience

Although the AGFC social media campaign did not begin until August 2009, it’s been a hit with users. More than 100 users post questions and comments on a weekly basis, and posts are answered by someone at the AGFC within a few hours.

“We receive comments from people on a daily basis about how nice it is to feel like they’re talking to a real person instead of a large government agency,” Sanchez said. “The number of fans on our Facebook page has grown rapidly, exceeding our expectations and outnumbering most other state conservation agencies’ fan numbers. Other agencies are even asking our advice about how to make their pages as much of a success as ours.”

Good Growing Pains

As with any new technology, the AGFC’s Facebook and Twitter pages have had minor roadblocks and hiccups, but Sanchez said the issues were beneficial.

"It's been a painful process, but it's well worth the extra trouble. If there's a problem, we want to fix it. The feedback we receive from Facebook has shown us areas where the public is confused on a regulation or has concerns about a program."

The only cost associated with social media is the time the staff must devote to the pages. There are no set-up, layout or production costs to create a page.

"Anyone can create a page and join the conversation," Sanchez said. "Once you've signed up as a fan of the AGFC on Facebook or to follow us on Twitter, you'll get information faster than any other media source can offer it."



ACI CONFERENCE UPDATE

ACI Heading to Louisville in July

By Dottie Head, Editor, The Balance Wheel

Fish and wildlife communicators from across the nation will head to Louisville, Ky. July 19-23 for the 2010 ACI Annual Conference at the lovely Seelbach Hilton, www.seelbachhilton.com. Conference Coordinator Michael Gray has assembled a 10-person conference committee that is hard at work on an agenda that will offer a lot of bang for your travel bucks.

"We're going to take the social media aspect of last year's conference to the next level," said Michael Gray, whose day job is Marketing Director for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "We're trying to let folks know that social media is an important way to connect with your customers, but it is only one way! This year's conference will feature a full day or more of marketing sessions designed to help take the fish and wildlife conservation message directly to customers."



There will also be a two-part series on Managing Diversity to Improve Effectiveness presented by Dr. Roger Cleveland, a professor at Eastern Kentucky University, who presents widely on this topic.

The conference will kick off on Monday evening with a riverboat cruise, and there are multiple other attractions within walking distance of the hotel, including Fourth Street Live, The Kentucky Derby Museum, Churchill Downs and the Louisville Slugger Museum. The Seelbach Hilton is offering ACI members a rate of \$103 per night single or double occupancy.

Do you have conference ideas to share or suggestions for speakers? Are there folks you want to hear from? If so, Michael Gray and Stephanie Hussey, ACI Conference Program Planning Committee Chair, want to hear from you! Please email Michael and Stephanie at Michael.Gray@ky.gov and shussey@rbff.org.

Look for more information to come on the conference, speakers, events, the auction and travel scholarships on the ACI list serv and in *The Balance Wheel*.

Wanted: Auction Items

By Micah Holmes, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

The ACI auction is always one of the highlights of the annual conference. Not only is it a fun evening, it is also a big fundraiser for the association. This year's auction will be held at the Kentucky Derby Museum on the grounds of Churchill Downs!

But we need your help! We need your cash (in the form of early bird raffle tickets) and we need your stuff (trips, hunting and fishing equipment, art prints, etc...) Basically if you can get it to Louisville, we can sell it to the highest bidder and make some money for ACI.

No ACI auction would be successful without YOUR help so don't come empty-handed. We need you to be gathering auction items for the raffle, silent auction and live auction. Trips to your state are one of the best items to bring. Put together a duck hunting excursion, saltwater fishing, a night at a state park or whatever else you can come up with.

Once again there will be a special early-bird raffle ticket opportunity where you can purchase \$100 worth of tickets for only \$20 if you purchase them before or at registration. The minnow races and the duck pluck were a big hit last year and we'll have those games and much more.

If you have any questions about the auction contact: Steve "Wild Man" Wilson at (501) 351-6596 or Micah Holmes at 405-521-3855.

ACI Award Submission Deadline April 12

The annual ACI Awards Program is the only nationwide competition exclusively for conservation education, information and public relations professionals at state and federal agencies and conservation organizations. The deadline for submitting entries for the next competition is Monday, April 12, 2010. Entries must be in the category chairs' possession by that date (postmarked does **not** count). All entries must have been produced during calendar year 2009. For more information or to download an application, visit the ACI Web site at www.aci-net.org.



SKILL BUILDING

It's About Time!

By Steve "Wild Man" Wilson, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

If you have attended many ACI meetings you have heard me talk about media outings and their success in Arkansas the past 10 years. The downturn in the economy has caused many media sources to cut back on staff. Time is at a premium, and it's time we must change.

With previous media outings, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission would invite television and radio stations and local newspapers to come along with our biologists while they discovered newborn cubs at a black bear den, shocked walleye to gather eggs for our hatcheries or rounded up nuisance Canada geese for relocation. We provided meals and lodging for all media in attendance. We received hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of air time and column space for our small investment of time, money and manpower conducting these media outings.

In the last year we have seen a drastic decline in media attendance at such outings. Media sources simply can't spare the manpower to let a reporter attend overnight outings as they had in the past. They are much more interested in getting the story, recording their footage and hurrying back to the office to air the footage or print the story in a single day.

This premium on time has forced us to become much more creative and flexible in planning and coordinating media events. We now host "mini-media outings," which usually take only an hour or two of the reporters' time. Most of our mini-media outings are conducted closer to metropolitan areas, reducing travel distance and time for the media. Outings are usually conducted for a few hours in the early afternoon, allowing time for the media to get their stories and prepare for same-day reporting. Our staff even shoots video and interviews at these outings and provides this along with a press packet to the media who did not attend.

These mini-media outings also save money, since we don't have to furnish food and lodging, but they offer challenges of making sure we get the message we want delivered to the media in a shorter time frame.

Working for a state agency, we can easily get away with always doing things like we have done them in the past, but we must change with the times if we want to continue reaching the public with our message. Remember, if you do what you've always done, you will get what you have always gotten. If your media outings aren't working, it's time to change your strategy to continue their success.



Web Site Evolution Results in Award-winning Site

By Kim Nix, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Web site has undergone many

changes in a few short years. What began as www.dcnr.state.al.us, a state government Web site with very little information, has evolved into www.outdooralabama.com--still a state government Web site, but one with a tremendous volume of information.

For design, ADCNR consulted with Luckie & Co., a Birmingham, Ala. public relations firm, approximately seven years ago. They suggested a color palette of earth tones, a new template and a hierarchy of topics, which we still use today. In addition to layout and design updates, the ADCNR Web site changed its URL at that time. It was felt that a simpler and easier to remember URL would be advantageous and make marketing the site easier. Because it encompassed what the Department is about, we adopted www.outdooralabama.com as the new URL. Outdoor Alabama is also the name of the agency's magazine, which was a good, recognizable tie-in as well.

The Web site is broken into major categories of information in a menu across the top and subcategories along the right side. What makes it unique is that it doesn't look like a traditional state government site.

In addition to hunting, fishing and boating, ADCNR also encompasses state parks. Alabama State Parks has its own identity at www.alapark.com, but it is incorporated into the ADCNR site as a link at the top of the page. We realize that many people access alapark.com through Internet searches and direct links, so while the Alabama State Parks Web site has a different look, it is similar in form and functionality to outdooralabama.com.

A computer programmer serves as the official Webmaster, but each division is responsible for updating its own information. This means ADCNR may have as many as 50 people updating pages on a weekly basis. The Webmaster maintains an online editor for people to use so they don't have to know HTML code to edit the site.

Here are a few features of the www.outdooralabama.com Web site:

- A main photograph anchors the home page. Different photos alternate so you might not see the same image every time you visit the page. A new set of photos is rotated seasonally.
- Main topics of Hunting, Fishing, Boating, Watchable Wildlife, State Parks and Licenses are listed across the top. These are the most requested pages on the site.
- A highlights section at the bottom right of the home page rotates information with links and photos. These highlights can be changed to run for just one day or for up to a year to reflect timeliness of events.
- Licenses, magazine subscriptions and Outdoor Alabama merchandise can be purchased with a credit card online. We also provide online registration for hunter education, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops, special hunts and Archery in the Schools tournaments.
- Visitors continue to give good feedback on photos and they like to see them on the Web site. We have a small photo gallery but are looking for a better way to present large numbers of photos.
- We have videos produced on many topics just for the Web site. In addition, a "virtual tour" program is shared with the state tourism board and on both of our Web sites.
- Links to ADCNR's Facebook and YouTube pages are featured on the home page.
- New this year are monthly e-newsletters for Outdoor Alabama and Alabama State Parks. Recent newsletters and sign-up information are on an e-newsletters page. The e-newsletters always contain numerous links back to outdooralabama.com and alapark.com.

Although www.outdooralabama.com won the ACI Award for best Web site in 2009, we still feel there are many improvements to be made. With so much information, we're constantly exploring how to organize it to make the user experience even better. For ADCNR, outdooralabama.com continues to be a work in progress.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

“Operation Wild” Delivers Florida Conservation Messages (and turns officers into TV stars)

By Scott Ball, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

With the current trend of TV shows that follow people around as they work at their jobs – and plenty of cable channels in search of fresh content – it was no big surprise when producers made a pitch to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The idea was to chronicle the daily work lives of a handful of our law enforcement officers. The program, to be named "Operation Wild," would air on Planet Green, an affiliate of the Discovery Channel. We were interested, so our citizen-support foundation, acting as our agent, negotiated a contract for \$1,500 per episode and a reasonable degree of editorial involvement. Our communications and law enforcement staff rounded up some "TV-genic" officers and worked out logistics with producers.

The FWC has long fantasized about having a television program, but funding, staffing, etc. was always a major roadblock. Well, here was a proverbial "win-win" situation.

The producers and network would get a quality program, with high production values. The FWC would have an opportunity to deliver our conservation messages to a large audience with minimal investment – and create a little revenue for our foundation.

Production of "Operation Wild" occurred during late summer/early fall 2009. The first season of 6 half-hour episodes debuted Dec. 20. New episodes aired on Friday nights and replayed frequently. We were very pleased with the final product. The show was well-produced, and it captured the unique, interesting and sometimes dangerous aspects of our officers' on-the-job lives. It also helped us deliver some important and timely messages with real-life examples: the dangers of feeding alligators, the problem of exotic species, and the challenge of balancing the needs of our fish and wildlife with those of people who enjoy them. "Operation Wild" even generated a fair amount of fan mail – and at least one marriage proposal for one of the officers.



Officer Clinton Bean on camera for Operation Wild. Photo Courtesy of Florida FWCC.

Nothing is confirmed yet, but we're optimistic producers will want to renew the deal for another season.

Online: <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/tv/operation-wild/>.



AFWA News

Updates from AFWA's Highlights Quarterly publication and Laura MacLean, Communications & Marketing Director, AFWA

Ron Regan Named AFWA Executive Director

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is pleased to announce that Ron Regan has been selected as its new Executive Director.

Regan, currently AFWA's Acting Executive Director and Resource Director, fills the position vacated in January when Matt Hogan became the Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Since joining the Association in April 2007, Regan has staffed the Association's Angler and Boater, Fisheries and Water Resources Policy, Wildlife Resource and Ocean Resource Policy committees. He has represented state fish and wildlife agencies to help ensure the Reauthorization of the Sportfish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and secure passage in support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Regan is coordinating state interests for the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation and he oversees the Management Assistance Team.

Previously, Regan served for more than 25 years working in wildlife management and conservation in Vermont. In 1999, he was appointed Commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department a position he held for four years, he also served as Director of Operations and Director of Wildlife for that department.

Teaming With Wildlife Steering Committee Honors Congress for Leadership at Fly-In

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Teaming With Wildlife steering committee honored Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), and John Thune (SD), and Reps. Mike Simpson (Idaho) and John Dingell (Mich.) for their outstanding leadership to advance wildlife conservation at a Congressional Reception "Celebrating America's Wildlife" held to culminate the annual Teaming With Wildlife Fly-In.

The Teaming With Wildlife Fly-In is the most important outreach event on Capitol Hill for the 6,200+ member Teaming With Wildlife Coalition to secure dedicated funding to support on-the-ground conservation action in every state and territory through State Wildlife Action Plans to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

"In the U.S., fish and wildlife are part of the public trust. This means that it is our collective responsibility to take care of them and the places where they live," said Ron Regan, Executive Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. "We appreciate these champions on Capitol Hill for their support of important legislation that invests in state fish and wildlife conservation to safeguard imperiled species and their habitats."

Congressional award recipients included:

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse -- for consistent support of increased funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program and for being a key champion in the Senate to secure funding for natural resource adaptation in comprehensive climate change legislation.

Sen. John Thune -- for consistent support of increased funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program and for being an original co-sponsor of the Teaming With Wildlife Act.

Rep. Mike Simpson – for his leadership in supporting funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program as the ranking member of the Interior Appropriations subcommittee.

Rep. John Dingell – for consistent support of funding through the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program and for being a key proponent of natural resource adaptation funding in climate change legislation.

"Working in Congress can be a thankless job, but the wildlife community is grateful for those members who demonstrate leadership in helping states and their partners safeguard wildlife by supporting the implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans," said Mark Humpert, Teaming With Wildlife Director. "Even in these difficult financial times, we need to ensure wildlife and vital habitats are conserved for future generations. This goal can go hand-in-hand with job creation and economic sustainability."

At the "Celebrating America's Wildlife" reception, the Association and the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition also presented awards to two partners and a state fish and wildlife agency for their significant efforts to protect critical fish and wildlife populations.

The **Teaming With Wildlife Coalition Member Achievement Award** was presented to the Washington Wildlife Federation for adding more than 50 organizations to its coalition and for forging a partnership with the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, a coalition organized around habitat acquisition and restoration.

The **State Wildlife Action Plan Partnership Award** was presented to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension for a growing list of shared projects including their collaboration to integrate data and develop maps to facilitate the use of the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan for regional and local conservation planning, outreach to the public, and for a habitat management guide for private landowners to conserve the New England cottontail.

This year, Teaming With Wildlife Fly-in participants urged their Members of Congress to sign on to a letter of support for \$100 million appropriations for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program; co-sponsor the Teaming With Wildlife Act to provide increased and dedicated funding for wildlife conservation; and support wildlife adaptation funding in climate change legislation.



News of the Weird

If you encounter bizarre headlines from your state that we can include in future issues of *The Balance Wheel*, please send the story or a link 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. Enjoy!

Angler Sinks Truck but Fishes Anyway

Submitted by Paul Tarlowe, Website Coordinator, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

From the NJ DFW Bureau of Law Enforcement September monthly report:

CO Ely responded to a complaint of a sunken truck at the Tuckahoe Boat Ramp, Cape May County. The vehicle was almost totally submerged and abandoned. Approximately 4 hours later the man returned to the vehicle from fishing. He admitted to accidentally sinking his truck but stated he did not want to waste the day so he decided to go fishing. Motor vehicle charges and charges of letting deleterious substances enter a stream are pending.

Dressed to Kill, Road Kill that is!

Submitted by Scott Ball, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Talk about a doing a double take! For most drivers, the sight of road kill is fairly common place, but when the dead animal is wearing a shirt and has an energy drink next to its head it raises eyebrows! A dead beaver on a Florida highway was subjected to this treatment recently. The animal was retrieved and disposed of properly, but Stan Kirkland, public information coordinator with the Florida FWC, deduces that alcohol and spring break likely played a role in the prank.

The New Hedgehog Diet

Submitted by Penny Miller, North Carolina

Don't be fooled into thinking that the United States has a corner on the weird market. Here are some excerpts from an article published in *The Telegraph*, a United Kingdom newspaper.

The Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) has put 10 hedgehogs in its care on strict calorie-controlled diets to help them shed fat they put on during the recent cold snap. The hedgehogs started piling on the pounds because they spent longer than usual in the care of the Wildlife Rescue Centre in Fife, Scotland.

They were kept in their warm enclosures during the severe weather conditions that hit the country in December and January, because the cold could have killed them.

Hedgehogs normally need their fat reserves to survive the winter when the insects they eat are scarce. But the animals were given a ready supply of food to keep them going through the winter and 10 of the 39 creatures started putting on weight around their middles.

Excess fat on their tummies can stop them rolling into a ball to protect themselves from predators – as well as causing similar health problems as obesity does in humans.

Colin Seddon, the centre's manager, admitted the hedgehogs were now "a bit on the chubby side".



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

- **March 22-27, 75th Annual Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference**, Milwaukee, Wis.
- **March 28-31, International Boating and Water Safety Summit**, Daytona Beach, Fla.
- **April 12, ACI Awards Submission Deadline**
- **April 25-27, Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference**, Natick, Mass.

- **July 19-23, ACI Annual Conference**, Louisville, Ky.
- **Sept. 26-29, 100th AFWA Annual Meeting**, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- **Sept. 29 - Oct. 2, 39th NAAEE Annual Conference**, Buffalo-Niagara, N.Y.



MEMBER NEWS

Liza Poinier and Family Welcome Baby Audrey

Liza Poinier, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, and family welcomed a new addition on Nov. 15. Liza reports, "I returned to work a couple weeks ago - so far, so good. Audrey is awesome - very smiley and full of personality. Elliot (age 2) takes big-brotherhood in stride - he's very sweet with his sister and only a little bit more demanding than usual with us. Our new life is exciting, exhausting, delicious - we are very lucky indeed!"
 Congratulations Liza!

Conservation Community Mourns Passing of USFWS Director Sam Hamilton

The conservation community is mourning the death of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam D. Hamilton who died suddenly while skiing in Colorado on Feb. 20. Hamilton, 54, was a career Fish and Wildlife Service employee.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar released the following statement on the passing of Hamilton:

"The Interior Department family has suffered a great loss with the passing of Sam Hamilton. Sam was a friend, a visionary, and a professional whose years of service and passionate dedication to his work have left an indelible mark on the lands and wildlife we cherish. His forward-thinking approach to conservation - including his view that we must think beyond boundaries at the landscape-scale- will continue to shape our nation's stewardship for years to come. My heart goes out to Sam's family, friends, and colleagues as we remember a remarkable leader and a compassionate, wise, and eternally optimistic man."

Hamilton had over 30 years of experience with the Service, beginning when he was 15 years old working as a Youth Conservation Corps member. Prior to his appointment as Director, he served as Regional Director of the agency's Southeast Region in Atlanta, Georgia. Throughout his career, Hamilton has exhibited outstanding leadership and fostered creative and innovative solutions to the challenges facing wildlife conservation. Hamilton provided key leadership and oversight to the Interior Department's restoration work in the Everglades, the nation's fabled "River of Grass", and the largest ecosystem restoration project in the country. He oversaw the extensive recovery and restoration efforts required following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which devastated coastal wetlands, wildlife refuges, and other wildlife habitat areas along the Gulf of Mexico.

Sam is survived by his wife, Becky, his sons, Sam Jr. and Clay, and a grandson, Davis, all of Atlanta.



North Carolina Recognized by MADD

Submitted by Penny Miller, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been recognized as an agency of the year by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The honor, for achievements in 2008, was presented during a biennium MADD Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Awards of Excellence banquet held Jan. 22 in Raleigh. The award goes to a law enforcement agency that has demonstrated excellence in implementing innovative and creative techniques in the detection and deterrence of impaired driving.

"In this case, that driving was on the water," said Lori Brown, development officer with the North Carolina office of MADD. "Law enforcement is the first line of defense, and the role of Wildlife Resources Commission officers in both enforcement and instruction is exemplary."

Sgt. Reggie Barker of Chatham County, Master Officer Allen Carlisle of Catawba County, Lt. Todd Radabaugh of Pender County, Sgt. Brad Stoop of Bertie County and Master Officer Ryan Taylor of Carteret County accepted the award. These wildlife officers make up the state's Boating Under the Influence Prevention Instructor Team, which conducts instruction in detecting and apprehending intoxicated boaters.

Wildlife officers plan to continue a "Boat Safe, Boat Sober" campaign in 2010, with efforts to inform the boating public about the dangers of intoxication on the water. Alcohol affects the skills necessary to operate a boat, peripheral vision and ability to focus; judgment and rational decision-making; balance and equilibrium; and coordination and reaction time.

Ohio Names 100th WILD School Site

Submitted by Jamey Graham, Ohio Department of Natural Resources

In October, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources dedicated Berea High School as an official *WILD School Site* by the ODNR Division of Wildlife. A small ceremony was held on the school grounds and a gathering at the City of Berea's Coe Lake followed. The school was named the 100th site dedicated in Ohio.

Berea High School has performed many projects to learn about and benefit wildlife and the environment while enhancing habitat for wildlife. Projects include: artificial and natural bird feeding and watering stations and native plantings such as Northern spicebush, maple-leaf viburnum, bee balm, and purple coneflower which benefit wildlife such as birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Nearby Coe Lake, owned by the City of Berea, has been enhanced as well to benefit members of Berea Middle and High schools as well as residents of Berea. Several projects completed with help from school staff and students, City of Berea personnel, and donations from private individuals and local businesses. Among the projects were the implementation of an osprey nesting platform, native prairie, and a walking trail lined with signs educating visitors on the environment.

Monica Linnenbrink Leaves South Carolina DNR

From ACI List serv

It is disappointing for me to have to let the members of ACI know that I will be leaving the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. My husband accepted a job with Duke University as a track coach. Some of you know that he coached at Notre Dame prior to us moving here for me to take the job with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. I'll be moving to Durham, N.C. to join him.

My husband and I were lucky enough to sell our house here in South Carolina in two weeks and I was very fortunate to find a job in these tough economic times. I will start my new job with the US Environmental Protection Agency on Jan. 4 at the National Center for Computational Toxicology. The Center does research on the long-term impacts of chemicals to humans and the environment and I'll be handling their communications and public affairs efforts.

I will miss the camaraderie and friendships of all the dedicated people who work for state fish and wildlife agencies across the country. I will also miss the passion that everyone has for the important work we do every day.

Please keep in touch. My personal email address is mrh61879@yahoo.com , my cell number is 919-360-5344 and my new mailing address is 623 William Hooper Circle, Hillsborough NC 27278.

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