

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* Progress Report

January 2014



Brooks Range, Artic NWR/USFWS

### **IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Strategic Growth Policy in the Federal Register
- Tools for Understanding Urban Audiences
- Rec 18: Recreation on Refuges
- Engage in the Climate Change Conversation
- Urban Academy – a Huge Success
- Providence Partnership Moves Forward
- Recruit and Retain a Diverse Workforce



In the months immediately following the 2011 *Conserving the Future* vision conference, nine implementation teams were chartered to put the vision into practice.

Today three of those teams (Community Partnerships, Strategic Growth and Planning) have “formally graduated.” This means they have fulfilled everything in their work plan, had their products approved by Refuge System leadership and disbanded. Six of the original teams are operating, and, in response to internal and external suggestions, a new team is being formed to address Recommendation 18.

### **COMMENT ON THE NEW STRATEGIC GROWTH POLICY**

The comment period is now open through March 3, 2014. Information on the draft policy has been published in the Federal Register, and can be found at: <https://federalregister.gov/a/2014-01849>. To ensure consideration of comments, please follow the instructions on the Federal Register website. For more information, and to view the draft Strategic Growth Policy, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/planning/StrategicGrowth.html>





## Conserving the Future Progress Report

### STRATEGIC GROWTH POLICY:

In providing guidance for the growth of the Refuge System, the draft strategy focuses protection on priority conservation features so limited resources will bring the greatest contributions to conservation.

The draft policy identifies three conservation priorities:

- threatened and endangered species
- migratory birds of conservation concern
- waterfowl



*Mixed ducks in flight, San Luis NWR/USFWS*

The policy requires that the Refuge System use the best available science, biological planning and conservation design to identify priority conservation areas within existing refuge boundaries; to expand existing wildlife refuges; and to establish new refuges -- all while contributing toward measurable conservation targets. The draft policy also seeks to ensure implementation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's vision to fully engage partners in the growth of the Refuge System and to manage for sustainable landscapes.

**Recommendation 4:** *Ensure future land protection efforts are based on explicit priorities, rigorous biological planning and conservation design that support achieving quantifiable conservation and population objectives that are developed in cooperation with state fish and wildlife agencies.*

### BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND...

### TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING URBAN AUDIENCES:

**WEBINAR WILL BE HELD FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST AT 1:00 PM EST**

<http://nctc.adobeconnect.com/covswebseries>

- ⇒ This popular session at the Urban Academy is now presented as part of the Communication, Outreach, and Visitor Services Webinar Series. Click on the link at the designated time and sign in. No need to register or sign up early.
- ⇒ The webinar will be hands-on and interactive. Participate with your own computer to try out the tools for yourself and participate in the discussions.
- ⇒ The objectives of the webinar are to identify existing tools and data to better understand visitors, communities, and the socioeconomic landscape related to your refuge.



## A CLOSER LOOK AT RECREATION ON REFUGES:

A new implementation team was Chartered to address Recommendation 18: *Support and enhance appropriate recreation opportunities on national wildlife refuges by partnering with state fish and wildlife agencies, other governmental bodies, conservation organizations and businesses; and by updating relevant policies and infrastructure.* The goal is to examine recreation opportunities on national wildlife refuges, diversify relationships and broaden our conservation partnerships, in order to create a Refuge System recreation program that is relevant and accessible to all Americans. The Team will look at expanding opportunities on refuges in a systematic manner, building upon the model of the Refuge System Birding Initiative as well as increasing access and opportunities for wildlife watching and photography. The team will also incorporate findings from the urban audience analysis and comments received during the review period for the Recommendation 17 Strategy to Increase Quality Hunting and Fishing on NWRs.

**Recommendation 18:** *Support and enhance appropriate recreation opportunities on national wildlife refuges by partnering with state fish and wildlife agencies, other governmental bodies, conservation organizations and businesses; and by updating relevant policies and infrastructure.*

## ENGAGE IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION:

In accordance with Recommendation 2 of the *Conserving the Future* vision, a multidisciplinary team developed a Climate Change Communications and Engagement Strategy. The strategy calls on each regional chief to identify at least one Refuge System unit from his or her region that “has shown exemplary innovation and progress toward developing and implementing climate change communication and engagement strategies with multiple audiences.” The first goal of the new strategy is to share those eight refuges’ successful tricks of the trade with other refuges nationwide in the near future. A second goal of the new strategy is to “cultivate a front line of Refuge System staff, Friends organizations and long-term volunteers to serve as ‘Climate Ambassadors’ to effectively engage and inspire refuge visitors, local communities and school systems, and other Service staff to take personal and collective mitigation and adaptation actions.” A third goal is to link climate change communication and engagement activities to other *Conserving the Future* teams’ communications efforts. The complete engagement strategy will be available here:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/vision/scientificExcellence.html>





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### A HUGE SUCCESS:

The Urban Academy was held at the National Conservation Training Center September 23-25, 2013 with around 200 attendees including staff,



# urban academy

partners, and Friends. The goal of the training was to begin a dialogue that connects us to action and create a network for support and ideas to advance the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative. The training was live-streamed for virtual participation, and followed up with a webinar in December 2013 to discuss next steps of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative.

### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

**Standards of Excellence:** The seven draft Urban Standards of Excellence were trained on and discussed for further review. Based on participant feedback, the Urban Implementation Team is currently working on the final draft of the standards that will be available for review in Spring 2014.

**Urban Audience Analysis:** The Branch of Human Dimensions is working with U.S. Geological Survey, along with North Carolina State University, to conduct focus groups, literature review, and case studies to further the understanding of urban audiences and how to reach them on our urban refuges. Analysis is currently being conducted and will be available in 2014.

**8 Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships Recognized:** The 8 established Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships and partners were recognized at the Urban Academy, and shortly after two of the eight (Masonville Cove and New Haven) were dedicated. The other 6 will be dedicated in 2014, and a second round of partnerships will also be established.



## Conserving the Future Progress Report



### FEATURE STORY :

#### PROVIDENCE PARTNERSHIP

April Alix was hired through the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership for Providence, Rhode Island as their Conservation Program Coordinator. Since starting three months ago, Alix has been working with 7 parks in the city to improve their current programs as well as plan the implementation of new ones.

#### April Alix, Conservation Program Coordinator

“Each of our parks are very unique.” states April. “Many are looking for help with habitat restoration, trail maintenance and interpretive signage

as well as enhancing their environmental education programming within the parks.” Many of the Park Conservancy and Friends Groups that Alix is working with already have plans for their parks. She is working with them to plan their goals in an achievable timeline and incorporate a conservation message. Alix serves as a liaison between local conservation and these park Friends Groups in hopes to collaborate on events and hands-on program opportunities. This will bring a collective conservation message to the urban communities of Providence which is one of the most diverse cities in the country- with Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians comprising 60% of the population.

Currently, Alix has been working with Neutaconkanut Park and Blackstone Park, located at opposite ends of the city. Both have a strong focus on education and she is working with them on ways to offer more opportunities for urban residents in the area. The Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative in Providence is also able to help support a professional development opportunity at the nationally recognized Roger Williams Park Zoo. With their Teacher Institute, teachers spend a week in the field led by the RWPZ Conservation Programs Coordinator and are introduced to field biology, wildlife conservation, and Service work with the ultimate goals of bringing those lessons back to the classrooms. The program covers the conservation efforts being made with the American Burying Beetle and the New England Cottontail which can then be incorporated into the schools science and English curriculum.

Looking forward, Alix plans to meet with a variety of Providence Public School Department members as well as local science teachers to discuss the use of public greenspaces as a supplemental area of learning. All of the Conservancy and Friends Groups are very excited about the prospect of gaining partnerships with their local schools and are eager to help out in the process. “We want to make urban residents feel safe and welcome while visiting our local parks and nearby national wildlife refuges, and feel proud that they are a part of this great city with all it has to offer,” Alix says. The Service is lucky to have April Alix working on this initiative. We look forward to more stories of success from the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships across the country!



## Conserving the Future Progress Report

### RECRUIT AND RETAIN A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

The Recommendation 22 implementation team met in Washington D.C. in mid-January to define how the refuge system will make our workforce match the diversity in the civilian labor workforce, creating a workforce that reflects the ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds and language diversity of contemporary America, within 10 years. The team had a 3-day facilitated discussion on the topics of recruitment, retention, inclusion, and defining success. Participants came from all across the Service including programs such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management, External Affairs, the Refuge System, and the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights. The team plans to create two documents – one on recruitment and one on retention – for Service leadership in the summer of 2014. The team plans to identify specific barriers for recruitment and retention and offer suggested, tangible actions the Service can take in the short and long-term to be successful.

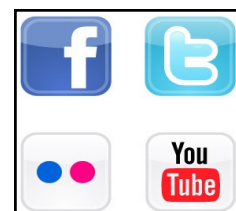
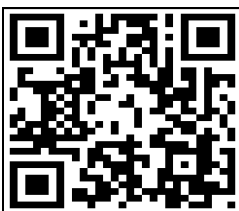


**Federal wildlife zone officer Bruce Butler assists visitors at Vieques National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico. Butler holds one of the National Wildlife Refuge System's 281 full-time officer positions. Photo by Raul Sanchez, USFWS**

### WEBPAGE AND EMAIL ALERTS:

Access *Conserving the Future* products from the [Refuge System homepage!](#) AmericasWildlife.org is still the number one source for the status of implementation, but now all final products will be housed on the Refuge System homepage. Visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/> and click on the ***Conserving the Future*** icon. You can search for final products by Recommendation, Implementation Team name, or year.

Sign up for periodic e-mail alerts sent straight to you whenever there is a new product, a deadline for comments, or a progress report. You can sign up for the alerts by joining the [social network](#) online or sending your e-mail address to [conservingthefuture@fws.gov](mailto:conservingthefuture@fws.gov). Implementation of *Conserving the Future* will change the way we do business, so we want to make sure you keep up with the latest events and provide us your input.



***"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."***