

Report to the FOBWR Board

Neal McLain

August 24, 2011

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Announced purpose of the meeting

"While you are here, you will have an opportunity to learn about and discussed a renewed vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System, along with hundreds of on-line participants."

Background

In February 2011, USFWS released a draft "Vision Document" for public comment. The document set forth the "long-term priorities for wildlife conservation and the Refuge System." In the months that followed, "more than 10,000 comments were received . . . along with 9,000 votes on over 240 bold ideas and with more than 2,000 members joined the social network.

"The revised draft vision document that came out of that process — referred to [during the conference] as the 'Conference Draft' — was the result of a comprehensive review and analysis of all submitted comments and bold ideas and an internal review of the document within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The content of that draft version was further discussed in the first day of facilitated discussions at the Conserving the Future Conference in Madison, Wisconsin on July 12"

The Conference Draft consists of introductory materials and 24 specific recommendations. During the conference, attendees were invited to join "Facilitated Discussions" to assist the UWSFS "develop implementation strategies for individual implementations."

Once the final draft is complete, it will be implemented by the "Executive Implementation Council." The Council's charter was signed, with much pomp and ceremony (and two iPads), by USFWS Executive Director Dan Ashe during the Thursday morning General Session.

Conference Website

<http://americaswildlife.org/>

Conference Daily Schedule

<http://americaswildlife.org/attendees/schedule/>

Speaker bios

<http://americaswildlife.org/conference/speakers/>

Conference Draft

http://americaswildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Vision.Final_.Conference.draft_.pdf

Events

The Convention was organized around four types of event:

- **General Sessions** — Open to all participants. No other events were scheduled simultaneously.
- **Lecture Series** — Lectures and Q&A meetings with speakers who had spoken at a General Session, in a less formal atmosphere.
- **Workshops** — Meetings devoted to specific topics that had not been discussed in General Sessions.
- **Facilitated Discussions** — A series of discussions, each devoted to providing an understanding of, and to receiving feedback about, one of the 24 recommendations set forth in the Draft Vision Document.

Offered
concurrently.

Monona Terrace Convention Center

The Conference took place in the Monona Terrace Convention Center, a large facility located in downtown Madison, four blocks southeast of the Wisconsin State Capitol. The building was constructed during the 1990s based on a conceptual design suggested by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1938. <http://www.mononaterrace.com/>



Photo: Wikipedia

Monona Terrace Convention Center from Lake Monona.
The Wisconsin State Capitol dome, visible in the distance, is four blocks beyond Monona Terrace.

Ed Barrios and I attended all General Sessions, and an assortment of other events. On the following pages, I offer a summary of the events I attended.

SUNDAY JULY 10

Ed and I flew to Milwaukee and drove to Madison. Drove around Madison to see some of the sights. I got lost in downtown Madison (lots of new buildings since I was there last).

MONDAY JULY 11

Morning: Bus trip to The Aldo Leopold Foundation in Sauk County, about an hour's drive from Madison. Report at: <http://refugefriends.org/VisionConference/Leopold.pdf>

Afternoon: Registration. Talked briefly with Shane Kasson who was working in the G-K registration window. Shane was a member of the **Conference Planning Workgroup Green Team**, which apparently kept him busy during the entire conference. We never had a chance to catch him off duty.

Evening: Welcome event and reception on Rooftop Garden of the convention center. Lots of hype and weird entertainment. Wonderful food. Met Leta Kay from Caddo Lake NWR. Charming lady.



Shane at the Registration Counter.



Rooftop Garden at Monona Terrace Convention Center set for the Monday evening reception



Monday Evening Program. That's the Wisconsin State Capitol dome in the middle of the fountain (actually, it's 1500 feet behind the fountain).



Leta and Ed

TUESDAY JULY 12

**Theme of the day
Celebrating our Legacy, Envisioning our Future**

Morning: General Session

- **Opening ceremony.** USFWS honor guard was bit too pompous for my taste.
- **Paul Soglin** (Mayor, City of Madison). Nice little talk, combining the mandatory "welcome to Madison" spiel with Wisconsin's role in the environmental movement (Gaylord Nelson, John Muir, Aldo Leopold et al).
- **Greg Siekaniec** (Formerly, Chief, NWRS; recently promoted to Deputy Director for Policy of the USFWS) - "Vision from the Chief."
 - About 250 Friends Groups are represented at this conference.
 - Importance of Friends Groups.
 - Important to develop new leaders.
 - "Thinking ahead is critical."
 - "Tell stores with the heart of a poet and the facts of a scientist."
- **Buddy Huffaker** (Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation). "Leopold and the land ethic."
 - Self-renewal of the land.
 - Recent death of Nina Leopold Bradley (Aldo's daughter).
 - "Man needs to live in harmony with the land" (quoting Nina, who was quoting Aldo).
- **Dr. Sylvia Earle** (Oceanographer, former chief scientist of NOAA, NGS explorer in residence). "Beyond Land: Ocean Conservation and beyond."
 - "Diversity of life is staggering."
 - "Let there be no child left dry."
 - "Now we know that we have the power to alter the nature of land and sea."
- **Douglas Brinkley** (Professor of History, Rice University; fellow, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy; author and television talking head). "Celebrating the Legacy of the National Wildlife Refuge System." Started out as a canned speech about Teddy Roosevelt's legacy of support for hunting, fishing, and wildlife conservation. Ended with a summary of pending congressional actions affecting wildlife conservation. **Bleak outlook for conservation funding.** Implied but not stated: "Call your congressman!"



Brinkley

A personal note: I became a fan of Brinkley while watching the PBS television series "A Biography of America," where he was a regular host. Other hosts in the series included Pauline Maier and Stephen Ambrose.

TUESDAY JULY 12

Morning: General Session

- **Jim Stone** (Rancher and landowner, Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando, Montana). - "Conserving the Future: Protecting Wildlife and Habitat." A big fan of Conservation Easements. Discussed importance of conservation easements as a way to protect privately owned lands. Has created conservation easements for own properties. Has successfully encouraged neighboring landowners to do the same. Showed us two maps of the valley where his ranch is located. First map showed his ranch highlighted in red to indicate protection by conservation easement. Second map (same area, years later) showed many neighboring ranches also protected by conservation easements. Audience applause.

Jim Stone is the 2007 recipient of the Wetland Stewardship Award granted annually by the Montana Wetlands Council. The citation reads as follows:

Jim Stone, Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando Montana

Jim Stone and his family are recognized for their long history of extensive wetland and watershed restoration beginning in 1992 and continuing through today. Jim has restored over 375 acres of wetland, enhanced 135 acres, and restored more than two miles of streams on their ranch. The Rolling Stone Ranch has placed more than 2,400 acres into perpetual conservation easement, removed seven fish barriers, integrated weed management on 2,400 acres, and enhanced grazing systems on more than 2,200 acres of the ranch. The Rolling Stone Ranch is a model of private land stewardship.

Source: Wetland Stewardship Awards. Montana Department Environmental Quality.

<http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/wetlands/stewardshipawards.mcp>



Photo: Neal McLain

General Session, Tuesday, July 12,
Level 1 Exhibit Space, Monona Terrace Convention Center

TUESDAY JULY 12

Afternoon: Lectures, Workshops, Facilitated Discussions

- **Lecture, *Douglas Brinkley*.** After repeating some of the same stuff he had discussed during the morning general session, he discussed the importance of National Marine Protected Areas. Although NMPAs are not part of USFWS, they deserve equal protection. NMPAs are jointly managed by Commerce (NOAA) and Interior.
- **Workshop: "Friends—Advancing the Vision"** I selected this workshop because of the relevance of the topic (to FOBWR) and because it featured the four top guns:
 - Greg Siekaniec (Deputy Director for Policy of the USFWS)
 - Joanna Webb (NWRS Friends Coordinator)
 - Evan Hirsche President, NWRA
 - Joan Patterson (Director of Grassroots Outreach, NWRA).



Siekaniec Webb Patterson Hirsche

The announced purpose of this session was to "give participants the opportunity to identify the role of Friends in advancing the Refuges System's Vision and what's next for Friends groups."

Factoid: Friends groups now provide 20% of the labor force of the Refuge System.

Most of the session was devoted to compiling a list of things that Friends groups do, and how these things contribute to the mission of NWRS. It turned out to be a very long list, and I made no attempt to transcribe it. Joan or Joanna will post a copy after it's edited and published.

WEDNESDAY JULY 13

**Theme of the day
Implementation: Ratify Your Role**

Morning: General Session

- **John Kennedy** (title unknown). "Conserving the Future: A connected Conservation Constituency."
 - North American Wildlife Conservation Model.
 - This [conference] is the first meeting like this in ten years.
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the only federal environmental agency under which hunting and fishing are guaranteed equal access under enabling legislation. Refuges are to be managed to accommodate hunters and anglers. Wildlife Recreation is dependent on wildlife management.

(Kennedy was not the only speaker in this segment of the general session; there were others, but none particularly memorable.)

- **Juan Martinez** (Natural Leaders Network coordinator for the Children & Nature Network.) "A Changing America." Discussed his youth in south Los Angeles, early desire to join a gang (gang members have money to support their families), subsequent encounter with the law, interest in natural history, and eventual association with Children & Nature Network. <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>
- **Jim Kurth** (Assistant Chief NWRS) and **Rebekah Martin** (USFWS Vision Process & Conference Coordinator). "Conserving the Future: Leading Conservation into the Future." Leadership is important.



Martinez

WEDNESDAY JULY 13

Afternoon: Lectures, Workshops, Facilitated Discussions

- **Workshop:** (four speakers) "From Valdez to Deepwater Horizon—The Role of Natural Resource Damage Assessment."
 - Natural Resource Damage Assessment = NRDA
 - Response teams include USFWS (Interior), NOAA (Commerce), and DOD.
 - NOAA is lead agency for claims in deep water environment.
 - Fees go to United States Treasury, not mitigation fund.
 - NRDA includes restoration, investigation of damage caused by invasive species, and investigation of damage caused by debris.
 - NRDA includes assessment of damage caused by oil vis-à-vis previously-existing damage (avoid double counting -- two states cannot claim same damage).
 - NRDA determines best restoration procedure (may be best to do nothing).
 - NRDA has two goals: estimate cost of damage itself and estimate cost of response/cleanup.
 - Oil spills are not rare events; worldwide average is 1 to 2 per year. Most are too small to attract media attention.
 - "Debris" can include oil, PCBs, herbicides, dioxins, asbestos, mercury, ???.
 - **Under current law, wastewater from oil drilling is exempt for NRDA.**
 - NRDA's goal: "make whole."
- **Workshop: *Bob Byrne*** (President, Bob Byrne Consulting) "Opportunities for Wildlife Refuges to Connect People to Conservation through Hunting and Fishing."
 - Hunting and fishing are "a gift."
 - "Pass that gift to someone else."
 - When talking to kids: "What do you need to know?"
- **Lecture Series: *Juan Martinez*** (Natural Leaders Network coordinator for the Children & Nature Network.) "Children & Nature Network." An expanded version of his talk earlier in the day at the general session. Described his progress from first encounter with the law to his involvement if Children & Nature Network with emphasis on the natural leaders network.
<http://childrenandnature.org>
<http://www.childrenandnature.org/movement/naturalleaders/>
- **Lecture Series: *J Michael Scott*** (Professor and Research Scientist, Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife Resources, University of Idaho. Moscow, Idaho). Seems to have mixed feelings about the Endangered Species Act.

THURSDAY JULY 14

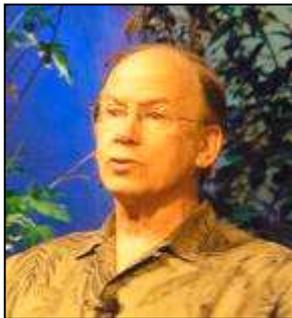
**Theme of the day
Call to Action**

Morning: General Session

This session included five speakers dealing with the same subject: "Inspiring Our Spirit and Vision."



Geoffrey Haskett



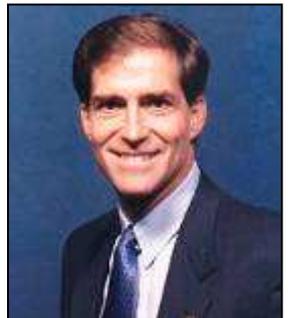
Dewitt Jones



Secretary Ken Salazar



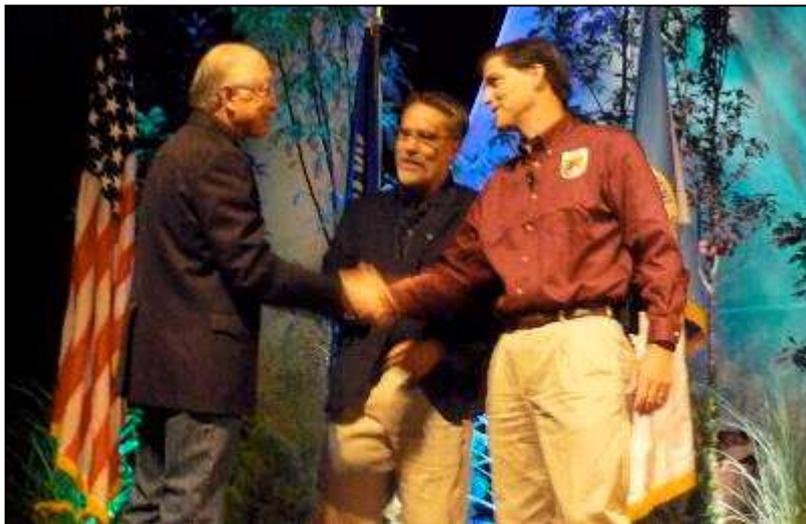
Adm. Thad Allen



Dan Ashe

- **Secretary Ken Salazar** (Secretary, Department of the Interior). Salazar's main message related to congressional funding and its possible effects on all Interior divisions including USFWS.
 - "Conservation will be set back 50 years."
 - Proposed GOP House Committee budget would cut NWRA by 800 employees.
 - All volunteer [support] funding will be cut.
 - Ranching "way of life" would no longer be protected [I'm not sure what he meant by that; possibly that funding for conservation easements would be eliminated].
 - Proposed budget ignores economic benefit (jobs) resulting from tourism.

Following his talk, he called on Dan Ashe and Greg Siekaniec to the stage to congratulate them on their recent promotions. Ashe was confirmed by the Senate as Director, USFWS, in June, 2011. Siekaniec was promoted to Deputy Director for Policy, USFWS, in July 2011.



Salazar

Siekaniec

Ashe

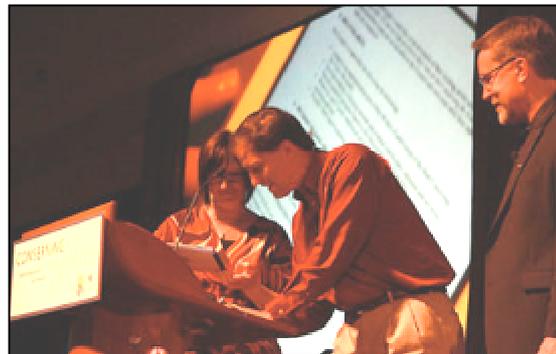
TURSDAY JULY 14

Morning: General Session

- **Dan Ashe** (Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service).
 - Final version of Vision Document is due by Refuge Week in October.
 - "Top to bottom inventory of land acquisition pollicies."
 - Need for Friends Groups is now more important than ever.
 - Hunters and anglers have been the backbone of the conservation movement.
 - USFWS maintains Public Relations office in the Washington office and at regional offices.
 - "Time to get to work implementing the Vision Document."

Following his speech, Ashe signed the Executive Implementation Council Charter.

In the accompanying photo, Dan Ashe signs the Executive Implementation Council Charter while Greg Siekaniec and an unidentified staffer watch. He signed a virtual copy of the document (displayed on an iPad) in virtual red ink, using a virtual pen (stylus). Meanwhile, the unidentified staffer held a second iPad, camera aimed at the first iPad, to display the signature to the audience. There was a brief pause before he signed because he had forgotten to dip the virtual pen into the virtual inkwell at the top of the screen.



Unidentified staffer, Dan Ashe, Greg Siekaniec

Downloads:

- Executive Implementation Council Charter . . . <http://bit.ly/qQi0Z0>
- Excerpts from Ashe's speech <http://1.usa.gov/pMocoa>
- **Thad Allen** (Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, retired). We all remember the Admiral as the talking head during television coverage of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Points:
 - The 24 recommendations in the Vision Document are "spot on."
 - "Rethinking about how government works."
 - Climate Change is real.
- **Dewitt Jones** (Photographer, National Geographic). Compelling speaker. Although his talk didn't have a published title, he described it as "Communications Through the Arts." He showed us some spectacular photos, and kept telling us that the future is in our hands. I think he overdid it.

THURSDAY JULY 14

Afternoon: Lectures, Workshops, Facilitated Discussions

- **Workshop:** "Using Free Technology to go Outdoors!"

This workshop featured five speakers:

- Mike Davidson, National New Media Specialist, USFWS.
- Toni Westland, Supervisory Refuge Ranger, J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR
- Lars Bredhal, New Media Specialist, USFWS
- Courtney White, Visitor Services Specialist, USFWS
- Birgie Vertesch, Director, "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society

This workshop included several specific suggestions. The following table lists several of these suggestions together with our activities to date.

SUGGESTION	WHAT WE DO
Website	We have two websites, one for FOBWR and one for MC. http://refugefriends.org/ http://migrationcelebration.org/
Facebook	We have two Facebook pages, one for FOBWR and one for MC. http://www.facebook.com/FOBWR http://www.facebook.com/MigrationCelebration
Twitter	As far as I know, no one on our board uses Twitter.
Flickr	We don't use Flickr, but we have a Photo Gallery linked from both websites: http://www.refugefriends.org/photos/ Unfortunately, the Photo Gallery has not been kept up-to-date due to the Wesselmans's absence. Furthermore, several of our best photographers have never contributed photos.
YouTube	We have only one YouTube video on our websites: http://migrationcelebration.org/Video/BOP.html
Ebird Tracker	An Ebird Tracker is a computer kiosk that provides an inventory of North American Birds, and lets users record sightings and review other birders' sightings. Every tracker is connected to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology database in Ithaca, New York, so that sightings are recorded nationally. Every Ebird tracker must be connected to the internet in order to communicate with the Cornell Lab. http://www.fws.gov/refuges/news/E-BirdTrackers_050710.html South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center has an Ebird tracker in its lobby. Here are links to photos: http://bit.ly/nD9Oek http://bit.ly/oNsvlr Unlike other "Free Technology" presented at this workshop, an Ebird Tracker is definitely not free. Typical costs are in the thousands of dollars. Perhaps something FOBWR could finance through the grant process. An Ebird Tracker also requires an internet connection and a stable source of electrical power.

THURSDAY JULY 14

<p>QR Codes</p>	<p>I have been pushing QR codes with marginal success for at least a year. You'll find one on the Migration Celebration home page:</p> <div> </div> <p>QR codes can be used to encode just about any kind of text information. The QR above encodes contact information for Migration Celebration (name, phone number, location, date, website URL).</p> <p>QRs can be read by smartphones equipped with QR reader app.</p> <p>One of my persistent suggestions has been the use of QRs on nature trails (called iNature trails). See next...</p>
<p>iNature Trail</p>	<p>An iNature Trail uses QRs on signs along the trail, eliminating the need for printed trail guides. J.N. Ding Darling NWR featured their iNature Trail at today's workshop.</p> <p>http://www.fws.gov/refuges/news/QRCodes_06302011.html</p> <div> </div> <p>I understand from Jennifer Sanchez that one of the trails at Dow Woods is/will be an iNature trail.</p>

THURSDAY JULY 14

<p>Waymarking</p>	<p>Waymarking is a bit like Geocaching except that no physical object is placed at, or removed from, the location (USFWS policy may prohibit leaving anything, or removing anything, from federal property). http://www.waymarking.com/</p> <p>Suggested application: on a Friends Group website, questions about a specific feature on a refuge are posted. A user must visit the feature and scan the QR to get the answer. A successful user gets recognition of some sort (gold star on the website, photo in newsletter, whatever).</p> <p>Reported to be a popular game for kids.</p>
<p>Travel Bug</p>	<p>Travel Bug is a Geocaching service operated by Groundspeak, Inc. Information at: http://www.geocaching.com/track/faq.aspx</p> <p>As used by Friends Groups, coded physical objects (plastic tokens, plastic birds, plastic alligators, or whatever), are given to volunteers (Itinerant birders, refuge junkies, bus tour riders). Each volunteer carries the object somewhere, then logs in to geocaching.com to report its location. Each location is then identified on a map to record the route of the token. The map is updated at each stop, and posted on the unique webpage for that particular token.</p> <p>The volunteer then either continues carrying the token to additional locations, or gives it to another volunteer to continue the journey.</p> <p>In an example cited during the workshop: a plastic bird wanted to visit every wildlife refuge in the country, then return to his native refuge in Mississippi where he was hatched. According to the map shown at the workshop, he didn't make it to every refuge, but he made it to quite a few. In the process, the "flew" several thousand miles. And he got back to Mississippi.</p> <p>Reported to be popular with kids of all ages.</p>
<p>Survey Monkey</p>	<p>A prepackaged survey service. A Friends Group can sign up for a free account, post survey questions, and mail the address to its members (or any desired group). As recipients respond to the survey, Survey Monkey compiles the results and reports back to the Friends Group.</p>

FRIDAY JULY 15

Return to Texas.