U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Conservation Training Center

Youth in the Great Outdoors

2011 Annual Report

Alaska Maritime NWR/USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Youth in the Great Outdoors

2011 Annual Report

Contributors

Region 1
Bob Peyton, Dana Perez

Region 2
Kenneth Garrahan, Gary Hutchison

Region 3
Ann Marie Chapman, Maggie O'Connell

Region 4
Sharon Fuller

Region 5
Jennifer Lapis, Mao Lin, Sandy Perchetti, Lamar Gore

Region 6
Tina Dobrinsky, Diane (Dee) Emmons

Region 7
Kristen Gilbert

Region 8
Dara Rodriguez, Carol Damberg, Carolyn Kolstad

Region 9
National Wildlife Refuge System
Nathan Caldwell, Kevin Kilcullen, Phil LePelch

Fisheries and Habitat Conservation
Richard Christian, Denise Wagner

Migratory Bird Program
Alicia King

National Conservation Training Center
Janet Ady, Steve Archibald, Maria Arnold, Werner Barz, Drew Burnett, Steve Chase, Chelsea Corcoran/Quadt, Mary Danno, Keenan DeLawder, Susan DeStephanis, Ora Dixon, Michelle Donlan, Blaine Eckberg, Sarah Gannon/Nagle, Matt Gay, Juanita Gustines, Jeanne Harold, Nate Hawley, Allison Hornbeck (Volunteer) Georgia Jeppesen, Dawn Lagrotteria, Mark Madison, Tracy McCleaf, William McWilliams, Scott Owen, Kerrick Reisbig, Susie Robinson, Kathy Sholl, Jim Siegel, Kristin Simanek, Jay Slack, Sandy Spakoff, Gail Testa, Jessica Wahl

Salazar - Creston National Fish Hatchery/USFWS

"The future of America's treasured landscapes depends upon the next generation's understanding of and connection to the Great Outdoors, so getting younger children outside in nature and providing educational programs for them is just as important as providing jobs for older youth."
– Secretary Salazar, The Corps Network Forum 2011, Washington, D.C.

Executive Summary

The Youth in the Great Outdoors (YGO) initiative is one of the cornerstones that fulfill the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) mission. Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 saw a series of strong actions to meet the goals of the Department of the Interior's (DOI) YGO initiative: Engage, Educate, and Employ. The purpose of this report is to detail the work that has been done across the FWS, at the field, regional and national office levels. Youth represent our future and they are critical for the continued stewardship of the natural resources the FWS conserves and protects. These accomplishments represent a roadmap that will lead to a next generation of conservation leaders prepared to continue the FWS's important work.

Introduction – Youth in the Great Outdoors

The vision of YGO is to empower our employees and partners to develop the next generation of conservation and community leaders. The goals are to:

1) Engage youth from all backgrounds and all walks of life in the outdoors;
2) Educate millions of youth about our lands, waters, wildlife, culture, and heritage; and
3) Employ thousands of youth to protect and restore our environment and revitalize our communities. More information on the YGO initiative can be found at http://www.doi.gov/whatwedo/youth/index.cfm.

The DOI's YGO initiative complements multiple FWS priorities. The Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) priority, for example, sets the foundation for the YGO initiative by developing career awareness tools and coordinating programs that engage and educate K–8th grade students. FWS offices and field sites have offered programs for years, both directly and through partnerships, which engage, educate, and employ millions of youth and their families in conservation-related activities. The YGO initiative also supports national-scale programs such as the President's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative and First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative, which promotes healthier lifestyles for kids. The YGO initiative is directly supported by many FWS programs such as the Refuge Improvement Act and the six priority public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System; the Migratory Bird Program's Junior Duck Stamp; the Schoolyard Habitat/Outdoor School, Shorebird Sister Schools, and Scouting programs; the FWS's *Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan* FY2011-FY2015; the Fisheries Conservation Education Program; and many others.

This report is meant to highlight the key activities underway in the FWS in support of the YGO initiative. While the National Conservation Training Center's (NCTC) Division of Education Outreach (DEO) and the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) have the overall lead for YGO within the FWS, this report will show that it is deeply integrated not only throughout national program areas, but all the regional and field units as well. The FWS reaches millions of youth, educators, and families with our programs each year. YGO presents us with an excellent opportunity to showcase our best efforts, which are critical to the future of the agency and the resources we conserve and protect. The report highlights key activities in the following sections: Lead, Communicate, & Coordinate; Employ; Educate; and Engage.

One of the top priorities of the YGO initiative is to increase the diversity of the youth that we engage, educate, and employ. Watch for highlights of diversity programs and activities in blue and green text boxes.

www.youthgo.gov

EMPLOY

During FY2011 the FWS hired 2,389 youth (ages 15 – 25) either directly or through partnerships with non-profit organizations.

72 non-profit partnership organizations hired 1,103 youth who contributed nearly 330,000 work hours toward the mission of the FWS.

191 young people were hired in permanent and temporary positions in all Regions of the FWS.

42 students attending college or vocational schools filled Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) positions with the FWS.

676 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps at the FWS's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, National Conservation Training Center, regional offices, and at headquarters in Arlington, VA.

EDUCATE

Hundreds of thousands of youth and their families participated in FWS environmental education programs focused on the importance of the great outdoors, increasing environmental literacy, and providing opportunities to practice natural and cultural resource stewardship on public lands.

30,000 youth participated in the Jr. Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school.

500 schools established Schoolyard Habitats to teach students and educators about the importance of ecological restoration and using outdoor classrooms to improve student learning.

ENGAGE

The FWS Let's Move Outside initiative engaged millions of families and children in outdoor activities such as service projects, trails events, and other learning opportunities.

The Urban Bird Treaty Program reached 20,000 youth with migratory bird education and outreach programs in 19 urban areas.

45 million people hunted, fished, observed or photographed wildlife at the FWS's national wildlife refuges.

Lead, Communicate, & Coordinate

Secretary Salazar established the YGO Office to provide DOI-wide leadership, coordination, and direction for the initiative. The YGO Office Director reports to the Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget. The NCTC directly supports the YGO Office with three staff members. The Secretary also established the YGO Coordinating Council, which consists of executive level bureau representatives, to advise the YGO Office Director. The Chief of the NWRS represents the FWS on the Coordinating Council, which meets quarterly, and the NCTC Director serves as the agency's alternate. The YGO Task Force was also formed with staff-level bureau and office representatives to support the work of the YGO Office and the Coordinating Council. Representatives from the NWRS, Budget Planning and Human Capital (BPHC), and NCTC regularly attend the bi-weekly YGO Task Force meetings, either in person or by conference call.

The following activities highlight how FWS leads, communicates, and coordinates the YGO Initiative, both internally and with our federal and non-profit partners.

YouthGo.gov

Under the NCTC's leadership, DOI bureaus collectively outlined the vision and design of the YouthGo Web Portal, which provides a variety of resources, content, and services available from the DOI and its partners. The YouthGo Portal provides a professional networking platform for young people seeking employment to share information on their career interests, educational background, and work experiences. As a result, the Portal is now increasingly being viewed by managers as a feeder resource for new recruits. In 2011, the DOI partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to expand the portal and is currently developing a tool that will allow agencies to record, monitor, track, and certify hours worked to fulfill the non-competitive eligibility requirements outlined in the Public Land Service Corps Hiring Authority. Since its launch, the site has received nearly 26,000 visits and more than 130,000 page views, with visitors spending an average of nearly 10 minutes on the site.
www.youthgo.gov

Regional Funding Initiative

The National CPWN Working Group, with representatives from the FWS's Regions and national program offices, created funding guidelines for the development of activities and programs to engage pre-high school aged youth. The NCTC supported thirty-seven projects, many in partnership with other organizations, in all eight Regions in FY2011. Highlights of the Regional Funding Initiative include:

- *Outdoor Nature Explore Area.* Inspired by the children's outdoor space at the Arbor Day Foundation, which was designed specifically to connect children to nature through exploration, staff at the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey built a similar type of outdoor space on the Refuge. Forsythe NWR worked with three Boy Scouts, who built the play area within an existing picnic grove that is universally accessible from the new visitor center by a short nature trail. The Refuge is currently working with Noyes Museum of Art to design a nest building area and discovery tunnel.

- *Signs of the Seasons: A Maine Phenology Project.* The FWS's Gulf of Maine Coastal Program used the funding to connect people with nature through phenology, the study of nature's calendar (e.g. when birds migrate, flowers bloom, and/or leaves turn color). Phenology is well-suited for youth because phenological changes are easy for volunteers of any age to observe and record. The project works with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Sea Grant, and Maine Audubon Society to train teachers and 4-H leaders in how to conduct phenology, and provides a toolkit to get them started. More than 175 educators and 4-H leaders have participated in training to date, resulting in nearly 4,500 individual observations recorded in Nature's Notebook, the online database of the U.S. National Phenology Network.

- *Region 7 Data Collection Kits* Region 7 is developing and distributing data collection kits that enable field offices and refuges in Alaska to facilitate field and classroom sessions with school groups and at public events. The kits feature GPS-capable smart phones loaded with Nature Tracker software for the collection of geo-referenced photos. Curriculum modules provide instructions on how to upload and retrieve the students' data from an online server, display the data on Google Earth, and use motion-sensor-activated trail monitoring cameras, which researchers are currently using in Alaska to document nocturnal or otherwise secretive species.

Nature Art Area at Forsythe NWR/USFWS

Digging Area at Forsythe/USFWS

- *Let's Go Outside Backpacks.* Region 6 created and distributed 172 *Let's Go Outside (LGO) Backpacks* to all staffed field stations in the Region - national wildlife refuges, wetland management districts, fisheries, and ecological services offices. Each backpack, which can be loaned to the public, includes a set of large plastic cards that describe a number of nature activities that staff or educators and parents can do to explore nature with children. Children who complete at least three activities receive prizes when they return their backpacks to the field station staff to encourage them to engage in environmental stewardship activities.

YGO Initiative Strategic Plan and Evaluation

The NCTC's Division of Education Outreach updated the YGO Initiative Strategic Plan. The NCTC, in partnership with West Virginia University, developed an evaluation framework and identified the key questions and target audiences the evaluation will address. The team is currently developing surveys for the collection of baseline data to enable the FWS to accurately determine impact of investments in YGO over the long term.

Intra – Inter- agency Coordination and Communication

Working Groups

The FWS aligned its two intra-agency national workgroups: 1) the Youth Coordination Team (YCT), focused on youth employment; and 2) the Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) national working group, on engaging and educating the K-8 age group. Both groups manage share point sites, meet monthly via conference calls, and hold meetings periodically to review guidance, set priorities, and share successes and strategies for addressing challenges.

More than seven other intra-agency teams consistently share information on YGO. The NCTC newsletter *VOICES* now includes a section focused on YGO that highlights key accomplishments and resources. It is sent bi-monthly to 380 FWS employees in all programs and regions. Additionally, the Office of External Affairs manages a service-wide outreach listserv. These internal communication networks allow for quick dissemination of information to the field regarding policy issues such as employment guidance and opportunities including the AmeriCorps Cooperative Agreement. These networks also allow the agency to more effectively coordinate national efforts such as National Public Lands Day and National Trails Day in support of AGO and Let's Move Outside (LMO).

Communications Strategy

The FWS is currently finalizing an internal communication plan to coordinate messaging and develop specific materials for various internal audiences. Briefing materials for all of the DOI Initiatives (YGO, AGO, LMO, and Let's Move in Indian Country [LMIC]) were integrated into required new employee orientation and all employee diversity training workshops. Research and information collection is underway to assess how to proceed with an agency-wide reporting system that tracks accomplishments in youth engagement, education, and employment to help more efficiently coordinate program implementation and evaluation.

The FWS's national programs are also important conduits for communications, and the Fisheries Program dedicated the spring 2011 edition of *Eddies: Reflections on Fisheries Conservation* to youth and nature. The 32-page magazine, with a circulation of 20,000 nationwide, carried stories about conservation education and included essays from the young conservationists themselves. Paintings made by participants in Wildlife Forever's youth State-Fish Art program adorned the cover and graced the pages inside. www.fws.gov/eddies

Interagency Coordination

The FWS consistently shares and coordinates YGO efforts with other Federal interagency working groups, including the Youth Task Force, Youth Coordination Council, Interagency Workgroup on Ocean Education, Partners for Resource Education, the Mid-Atlantic Elementary and Secondary Environmental Literacy Strategy, AGO Education Workgroup, and Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Workgroups.

Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation

The FWS's NCTC, the NWRS, and the Division of Human Capital partnered with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to present the Panel Session *Hiring the Next Generation* at the NWRS's *Conserving the Future Conference*. The conference was the culmination of eighteen months of study and public conversation about conservation and the strategy for the Refuge System over the next decade. The standing room only crowd engaged in an excellent dialogue on the challenges of engaging and employing future FWS professionals. The NCTC also staffed an exhibit that presented a range of the FWS's youth activities and served to foster collaboration with Conference participants on a range of youth programs and activities. www.americaswildlife.org/vision

Employ

In 2010 the Secretary set a goal to increase youth hires within the DOI by sixty percent by the end of FY2011 (over baseline FY2009 employment data). Individual bureau goals were also established using FY2009 baseline employment data, and the FWS goal was to increase youth employment by seventy percent by the end of FY2011. The FWS is proud to report that by FY2011 we increased our youth employment by 2,389, with 1,103 of them through external partnerships with the SCA, AmeriCorps, and others. Please see *Appendix A- Experiences of a Lifetime – Youth Employment Report* to learn more about the tremendous variety of internships and experiences the FWS offered in FY2011.

The following activities highlight key employment efforts.

Career Discovery Internship Program (CDIP)

CDIP provides opportunities for freshman and sophomore college students from ethnically, racially, and economically diverse backgrounds to learn about conservation science, management, and careers through "real world" experiences on national wildlife refuges or other field units. This year, the NCTC worked with Regions 3, 4 and 5, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the SCA to host 61 FWS student interns and their agency supervisors and/or mentors at the NCTC for an orientation workshop focused on leadership, career development, and mentoring at the beginning of their summer internship term. The FWS anticipates expanding the program to additional regions in the coming year.

Tribal College Intern Program

The FWS launched a tribal college intern program with the SCA in Fiscal Year 2011, employing 25 students on national wildlife refuges in the Midwest, the Rocky Mountain area, and Alaska.

Student Ambassadors – Partnership for Public Service – Peer to Peer Recruitment

This innovative partnership program selects the most engaged CDIP summer interns to serve as student ambassadors at their respective educational institutions. The goal is to share the students' work experience and encourage fellow students to pursue courses of study in natural resource-related disciplines, as well as careers in Federal service. The FWS chose four students this year to work with the NCTC, Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM), and Regional Recruiters to field test the Career Awareness Toolkit (CAT) and actively engage students and professors on how to pursue careers with FWS.

Career Discovery Internship Program Orientation
May 30 - June 4, 2011

Tribal YCC Program Expansion

The Tribal YCC Program provides meaningful employment for both tribal and African American youth. The Fisheries Program tribal youth-related projects expanded from three to seven hatcheries this year. Two YCC members in Region 4 designed, planned, and implemented programs at the Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery in South Carolina and the Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery in Georgia. In Region 7 the Arctic and Tetlin National Wildlife Refuges enlisted thirteen youth in the remote Alaska Native communities of Arctic Village and Northway to aid in refuge projects. These jobs and other partner internships provide valuable employment experience to local youth and give refuges the opportunity to improve their working relationships with village residents. Region 2 expanded the program from two to six Tribes in FY2011. Several hatcheries anticipate using YCC crews in the future and are also investigating the Student Ambassador Program to amplify students' experiences after they return to college. In July, this model program was celebrated by a visit from DOI Secretary Salazar and FWS Director Dan Ashe to Creston National Fish Hatchery, where they met with the YCC students and hatchery staff.

Ashe - Creston National Fish Hatchery/USFWS

Southeast Region 3 Youth Ambassador Program

Ten field offices around the Region were selected to participate in this innovative program, which provides opportunities for high school and college-aged youth to connect with nature, the work of the FWS, and each other. Youth Ambassadors are required to use social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and blogs to promote key activities at field stations. Participants become heavily involved in the daily operations of their assigned station, including taking photos and video of community events, participating on the Friends Group board, and working with public affairs officials to broaden their office's communication capacity. Students develop a broader understanding of the agency, and some consider degrees in natural resources and/or Federal student employment programs. The region anticipates expanding the program by supporting eight additional field stations in the next year.

Career Awareness Toolkit

The Career Awareness Toolkit consists of exhibits, lesson plans, and other outreach materials designed for use by FWS employees, high school students, and young professionals to get young people excited about conservation careers in the FWS and other conservation organizations. A 45-minute webcast introduces components of the toolkit and demonstrates potential uses. This toolkit can be modified and adapted by other bureaus for use in their respective youth recruitment efforts.

Educator Career Awareness Institute
The objective of this program is to expose high school educators to the various jobs available within the DOI. The educators incorporate the information into existing curricula, engage their students, and offer teacher-in-service programs. This program was conducted in partnership with the Alice Ferguson Foundation and the regional/field offices of five DOI Bureaus at the NCTC and the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery in South Dakota, as both sites have multiple DOI bureau field locations in close proximity.

Klamath Basin Tribal Youth Employment and Education Initiative

The FWS's Region 8 established a multi-Federal-agency initiative to provide environmental science and natural resource management education and employment opportunities to the youth of the various federally recognized tribes located in the Klamath Basin. During the summer of 2011, 41 tribal youth in the Klamath Basin were hired through the Klamath Basin Youth Employment and Education Initiative. Federal partners include the DOI bureaus, USDA Forest Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The initiative was expanded this year and now includes youth from the Yurok, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath Basin Tribes of Oregon, as well as the Quartz Valley, Resighini Rancheria, and Karok Reservations in California.

Creston NFH YCC Crew planting wetlands/USFWS

Mentoring Training
The NCTC has expanded mentoring training to include youth mentors. Two pilot distance learning trainings were offered to the Career Discovery Internship Program mentors prior to the CDIP orientation. The NCTC is also partnering with the Association of Retired Fish and Wildlife Service Employees who are mentoring youth in their local communities about conservation careers in the FWS and DOI. The NCTC entered into a cooperative agreement with the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to offer 10 internships to college students and recent graduates, and each intern was assigned a mentor.

Partnerships for Youth Fellowships and Internships

- *Student Conservation Association (SCA)*
  The FWS is renewing its five-year national cooperative agreement with the SCA, eliminating the need for regional and field units to develop separate agreements. This allows for the more efficient expansion of the Career Discovery Internship Program (CDIP), one of the primary strategies the FWS uses for increasing the diversity of the applicant pools for summer intern positions. The new cooperative agreement includes opportunities for teams of interns to work on a variety of program areas, such as the tribal intern program, trails, and climate change.

- *SCA Trails Inventory Interns*
  In partnership with the SCA, the Federal Highway Administration and AmeriCorps, the FWS hired a crew of ten interns to conduct a nation-wide inventory and condition assessment of the public use trails on 234 national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries. They used GIS and other digital tools to inventory over 1,500 miles of trails, collect over 142,000 feature points, and take over 5,000 photos to provide an assessment that managers will use to improve trails and accessibility. In addition to improving their marketability for careers in public service by acquiring relevant skill sets, the interns collectively logged over 15,400 AmeriCorps Service hours and earned over $48,000 in educational awards.

- *TogetherGreen Fellowship Program*
  The NCTC supported the TogetherGreen Youth, a national competitive fellowship program, through a cooperative agreement with the National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Forty college students received hands-on professional development and real-world opportunities to learn about environmental issues such as reviving public gardens and edible landscapes in New Orleans Lower Ninth Ward, introducing coalfield communities to biofuels, increasing access for low-income communities to energy efficiency programs, and transforming abandoned lots into

vibrant ecosystems. Fellows develop leadership skills, and become mentors to youth interested in conservation careers through service learning or citizen science projects. Fellows worked in partnership with national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries. www.togethergreen.org

- *Planet Connect Internships*
  Through a Cooperative Agreement with the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), the NCTC supported ten grants to educators for professional development in environmental education and ten grants to high school students for summer internships and the development of wildlife conservation projects in their communities. Funds were also used to enhance NEEF's Planet Connect Program, which provides registered students with social peer networking; access to student conservation and career success stories; teen-oriented environmental news, videos, and wildlife resources; and information on environmental internships, green careers, and colleges. www.planetconnect.org

- *The Wildlife Society (TWS)*
  The FWS continues to work closely with TWS and other professional societies to develop strategies that better align student competencies with agency hiring standards, increase the diversity of new hires, and educate current college students about the possibilities and advantages of a career in natural resources management. In September of 2011, for example, the NCTC supported ten Native American students to attend the TWS Annual Conference to engage with wildlife professionals and learn about employment opportunities. Representatives from the NCTC and Civil Rights and Diversity also participated in the Natural Resource Education and Employment Conference sponsored by the Coalition of Natural Resource Societies. The meeting included representatives from agencies, universities, and professional societies, who were charged with (1) identifying major trends in natural resource education and in the natural resource profession; (2) exploring the reasons for these trends; (3) discussing solutions to reverse or adapt to the trends; and, most importantly, (4) making specific recommendations for action. A full report of the meeting is expected in the first half of FY2012.

- *Environment for the Americas*
  NCTC provides funding for an Environment for the Americas (EFTA) program, Celebra las Playeras, which supports two internships in 2012 to introduce high school and college-aged Latino youth to research and monitoring experiences via explorations of emerging threats to shorebirds and wetlands. This project builds on the NCTC Shorebird Sister Schools Program with EFTA's knowledge of and expertise in working with Latino communities across the United States. EFTA's proposal is in alignment with the YGO initiative's need for programs to engage, educate, and employ underrepresented youth in natural resource careers.

Regional Diversity and Civil Rights Recruiters

The ODIWM supported the hiring of Regional Diversity and Civil Rights recruiters. These recruiters are responsible for increasing the diversity of the applicant pools for the FWS's Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), and full-time positions. The new staff is included in the Youth Coordination and CPWN teams.

Educate

The FWS has been involved in building environmental literacy through education for many decades. Our regional and field staff throughout the country educate and engage millions of young people, educators, and families through outdoor experiences based on local needs and realities. While no two environmental education programs are exactly alike, many can be grouped into programs that have similar characteristics in the methodologies used and audiences targeted. The following highlights provide a snapshot of our most current and/or effective programs for building environmental literacy and engaging our nation's young people.

Schoolyard Habitat/Outdoor Classroom Program (SHP)
The Schoolyard Habitat/Outdoor Classroom Program is a coordinated effort between schools, FWS offices, and other conservation and community organizations to establish ecologically sound restoration projects on school sites that function as sustainable outdoor learning areas. With approximately 500 Schoolyard Habitat sites throughout the country, the program strongly supports the CPWN priority and the YGO initiative. With Region 8 providing the staffing support for national program coordination, the NCTC has trained nearly ninety employees and/or partners in the SHP methodology, assisted with the revision of the *Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide*, and facilitated a webinar to train staff and partners in its use. www.fws.gov/cno/conservation/schoolyard.cfm

Jr. Duck Stamp
The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program (JDS) is a dynamic arts curriculum that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school. The program incorporates scientific and wildlife management principles into a visual arts curriculum, with participants completing a JDS design as their visual "term papers." Sales of Jr. Duck Stamps generated more than $172,000 for the program, which reached more than 30,000 youth in all fifty states and Washington, DC in FY2011. www.fws.gov/juniorduck/

Wildlife Society Diversity Scholarship/Internship Program
The ODIWM recently signed a multi-year agreement with TWS. This agreement exponentially expands the FWS's ability to reach a diverse and talented pool of individuals by providing ninety student scholarships (ten students per region) for up to four years for the study of natural resource management and strategic habitat conservation. Additionally, the agreement provides ninety SCEP internship opportunities (ten students per region). The program tracks the impact this experience has on careers.

San Diego NWRC - YCC Crew/USFWS

Holla Bend NWR - STEP employee/USFWS

Fisheries Conservation Education Program
The Fisheries Program established the National Fisheries Education Team in January of this year to better coordinate programs at the nation's fish hatcheries and other facilities that connect youth to nature through science-based, hands-on learning activities. Working in cooperation with volunteers, partners, and Friends Groups, the Fisheries Program reached over one million youth with thousands of educational and outreach events both on and off fisheries properties.

National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Program
Nearly 450 NWRs offered environmental education programs either at the refuge or in the surrounding community, reaching 700,000 youth, educators, and families. These programs are critically important tools for educating our nation's communities about the importance of the great outdoors, increasing environmental literacy, and providing opportunities to practice natural and cultural resource stewardship on public lands.

Shorebird Sister Schools Program
(SSSP) Shorebird Sister Schools is a FWS international bird curriculum designed to educate K–12 students about the conservation of migratory shorebirds and their habitats. It includes teacher guidance materials, student workbooks, posters, and a growing website (available in both English and Spanish). In 2010–2011, the NCTC funded the development of a Gulf oil spill curriculum highlighting a variety of FWS careers with the EFTA. This curriculum is being prepared for online access on the SSSP website. In addition, in 2011 the NCTC also funded the update of the EFTA's Bird Education Resource Directory, a one-stop on-line shop for all bird educational curricula for youth, including SSSP.
www.fws.gov/sssp

Biologists in Training Program (BiT)
The BiT program is an experiential environmental education program that uses the FWS's national fish hatcheries as unique outdoor classrooms for upper elementary and middle school students. The program centers on fostering direct interactions with fish and aquatic environments, and upon completion of the program, students gain not only an enlightened, first-hand understanding of aquatic resources, but also a FWS mentor to help them take action to conserve aquatic resources. The program is in operation at various FWS field stations across the U.S., especially within the Fisheries Program. Facilitator workshops are led from Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, and BiT activity guides are now available for order through the national publications ordering house in Denver, Colorado.

Sc3

Student Climate & Conservation Congress
June 26 - July 1, 2011

Student Conferences - Student Forums and SC3

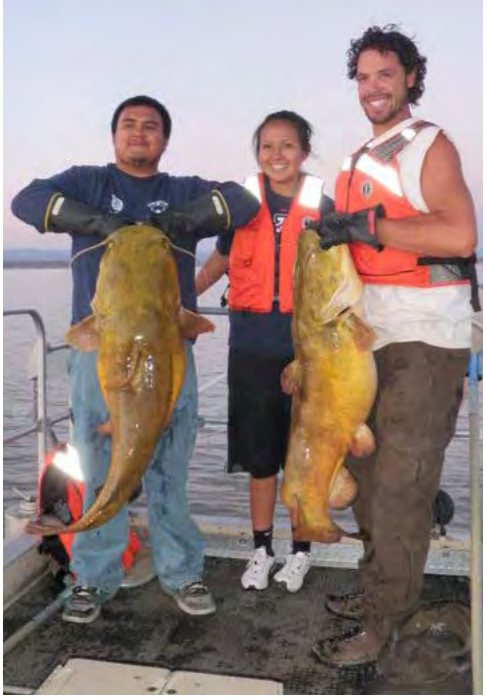
The NCTC hosted and facilitated a career seminar for talented college students in partnership with the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, the Science and Engineering Alliance, and the ODIWM. The Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3), developed in partnership with the Green Schools Alliance, saw more than one hundred talented high school students interact with DOI and global environmental leaders to build skills to become more effective environmental leaders. During both of these events, young people gain the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to address natural resource challenges and better serve their schools and communities, as well as to pursue careers in natural resource management.

Refuge Junior Naturalist (RJN) Program at Texas Mid-coast NWRC

Fifteen students in fifth through eighth grade are participating in the RJN Program at Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Sessions include hands-on activities such as banding birds with Texas Parks and Wildlife staff, excavating Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests, observing bird behavior with Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and prescribed burning with the Mid-coast Fire District. Students keep a naturalist journal throughout their 7 month commitment which includes completing two final projects such as an interpretive video on the new I-trail at Dow Woods, a Junior Duck Stamp entry, setting up a nature webpage, or giving a presentation to classmates about the refuge, wildlife, or RJN Program. "Certified" Refuge Junior Naturalists continue to be involved as youth mentors and refuge volunteers. Throughout the program, feedback and evaluations have been extremely positive, the students are learning, and the program is shaping their future (at least one student has changed her major from zoology to wildlife management). Results have convinced refuge management to continue the program in FY2012.

Partnerships for Environmental Education

The FWS has a variety of partnerships that support EE activities in many different settings. The following partnerships highlight the depth and reach of these activities.



Alaska Maritime NWR/USFWS

Natural Resource Career Symposium:
The Next Generation of Conservation Leaders
April 16, 2011

- *Hands on the Land/Partners in Resource Education*
  Hands on the Land (HOL) is a partnership effort among five federal land management agencies and the NEEF that provides a network of field classrooms stretching across America from Alaska to Florida. Currently, five national wildlife refuges participate in the program and the NCTC is studying how to expand to additional sites within the FWS.
  www.handsontheland.org

- *The Nature of Learning*
  The "Nature of Learning" is a community-based NWRS/National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) conservation education partnership program that uses national wildlife refuges as outdoor classrooms and seeks to promote a greater understanding of conservation issues while enhancing student academic achievement. In FY2011 the FWS provided funding through NFWF for nineteen new projects and three second-year projects allowing students in sixteen states to pursue field experiences and lead stewardship projects that connect classroom lessons to real world issues.
  www.fws.gov/refuges/education/NatureOfLearning/

- *Archery in the Schools Program*
  In partnership with the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the FWS delivered this outdoor education program to over 200 students in ten tribal schools in Arizona. This train-the-trainer model forms relationships between tribal schools and public lands to provide an inclusive recreational opportunity and a gateway sport to the outdoors and conservation.
  www.nasparchery.com/activea.asp

- *Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation Education (RBFF) Grant Program*
  The FWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) provided over $600,000 in funding to RBFF's National Youth Fishing & Boating initiative, which established or enhanced partnerships that reached thousands of youth with conservation education and fishing and boating activities in all fifty states and Washington, DC, including many urban areas. The NCTC and FWS External Affairs participate in the annual review of grant applications and provide technical assistance in the grant solicitation process.
  www.rbff.org/page.cfm?pageID=376

EnvironMentors (EM)

The NCTC began a new partnership in FY2011 to expand the National Council for Science and the Environment's (NCSE) highly successful EM program. EM is a national college access initiative that prepares high school students from underrepresented backgrounds for college degree programs in environmental and related science fields. Chapters exist in nine states, in partnership with eleven universities. Expansion is based on the flagship Washington, DC Chapter, which has reached over 2,500 high school students. Ninety-six percent of those students graduated from high school, and ninety-two percent were accepted into college. FWS support is being used to develop an online version of the EnvironMentors Coordinator-Teacher Program Manual, the primary training resource for establishing new Chapters.
www.ncseonline.org/program/environmentors

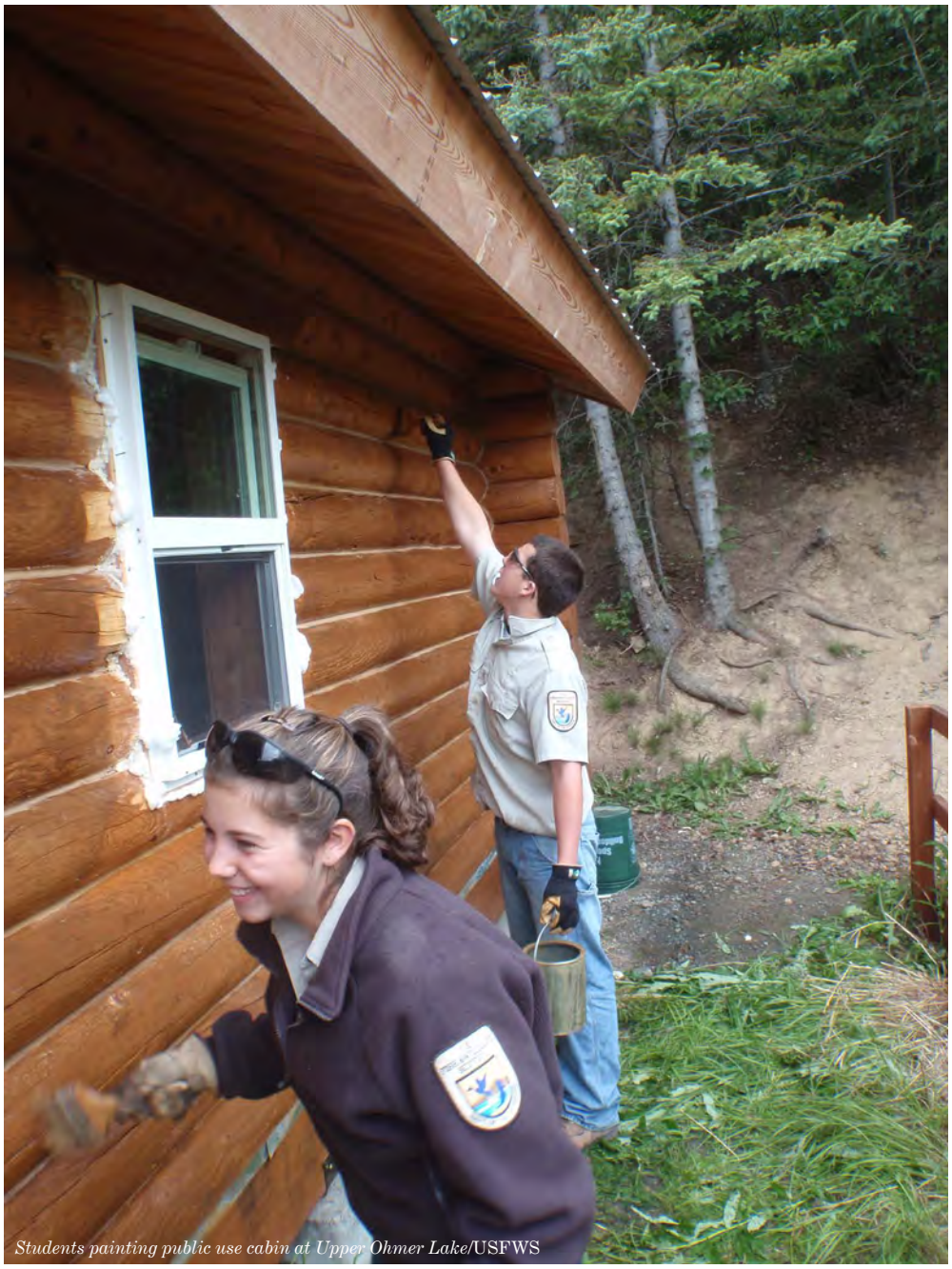
- *Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Conservation Education (CE) Program*
  The NCTC is an active member of AFWA's CE Strategy team. This provides coordination of FWS education programs with state wildlife agency conservation education programs, and is the primary strategy for expanding the reach of the YGO and CPWN efforts to broader audiences.
  www.fishwildlife.org/

- *Student Ocean Summit*
  The NCTC supported the Coastal America Foundation for the 3rd Student Ocean Summit Conference, which brought ninety-two high school students to Washington, DC from each of twenty-three Coastal Learning Centers, where they worked with educators to develop an action plan for a particular ocean/climate change issue in their region and present their action plan to leaders in the environmental science and policy communities. Students returned to their communities and are actively pursuing their action plans, and many are also pursuing academic studies and/or careers in environmental science and management.
  www.coastalamerica.gov

Living Classrooms of the National Capital Area

In May of this year, the Fisheries Program and the Living Classrooms of the National Capital Region (LCNCR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to advance common objectives to engage youth in hands-on outdoor learning experiences. The MOU builds on the relationship with LCNCR that was established in co-sponsoring the annual Nation's River Bass Tournament. The tournament introduces over 300 underrepresented urban youth annually in DC, Maryland and Virginia to the vast and historic aquatic resources of the Potomac River. Participants are provided the opportunity to fish with professional bass fishermen and FWS volunteers.
www.livingclassroomsdc.org/

Boys with swallow box/USFWS



Students painting public use cabin at Upper Ohmer Lake/USFWS

Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute – NHEC

The NCTC, the Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, the ODIWM, and Region 2 provided financial, technical, and logistical support to the National Hispanic Environmental Council for the Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute. The Council provides opportunities for thirty-four minority high school students to learn about (1) natural resource and environmental management issues; (2) the wide range of careers in the natural resource and environmental arena; and (3) how to obtain jobs and internships with the DOI. FWS Deputy Director Rowan Gould and Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle joined the staff at the Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge to host the students during their visit there.
www.nheec.org/

Okefenokee NWR YCC Crew /USFWS

Camp at Alaska Maritime NWR/USFWS

Let's Move Outside (LMO)
On National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day, the FWS assisted in the organization of ninety-four LMO events on national wildlife refuges across the country, and more than three hundred national wildlife refuges held outdoor events and classrooms as part of the 2010 National Wildlife Refuge Week. These events engaged millions of families and children to be active in the outdoors with a variety of service projects, trails events, and other learning opportunities.

Nature Quest Kids Camp
The Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Region 2 hosted the "Nature Quest Camp" for 60 fifth and sixth graders for the third year in FY2011. Students come from communities surrounding the refuge and as far away as central Oklahoma. The program targets Title 1 schools where students have little opportunity to get outdoors for physical activity and go camping. Students participate in a variety of recreational activities throughout the year such as archery, fishing, aquatic studies, hiking, bird watching, and wildlife photography. The program finale is the three day, two-night campout on the refuge in two person pup tents. The Refuge partnered with the Friends of the Wichitas, Southwest Oklahoma Fit Kids Coalition, Treasure Lake Job Corps, Oklahoma State University County Extension Office, Comanche County Health Department and Comanche County Memorial Hospital. This event supports the AGO initiative and the First Lady's fitness and health programs.

Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) National Strategy
CPWN became a high priority for the FWS in 2007, after author Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* clearly documented that children often have little or no direct connection with the natural world, leading to fear, apathy, disregard for, and discomfort with nature. With nearly every region and program area at the Washington Office actively participating, CPWN's focus is to coordinate activities that engage families, educators, students, and youth groups, and to develop career awareness programs that target students, educators, and caregivers from kindergarten to 8th grade. The CPWN National Strategy serves as the FWS's foundation for the YGO initiative. Two key activities in FY2011 included:

- *Let's Go Outside Website Update*
  In FY2007, Let's Go Outside became the primary FWS website for children and their families to make a connection with nature and the agency. The website was recently updated to provide a dynamic resource for children, parents, educators, and youth group leaders that encourages each target audience to learn about their natural environment, go outside to connect with nature, and develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the work of the FWS, including volunteer opportunities and careers.
  www.fws.gov/letsgooutside
- *Neighborhood Explorers (NX) Website Update*
  A virtual Club House on the NX Website offers children ages 8–11 the opportunity to learn about endangered and invasive species and engage in many other learning activities and action projects. The site was recently modified to introduce new characters and activities that focus on conservation careers in national wildlife refuges.
  www.fws.gov/neighborhoodexplorers/

Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds
The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds program (Urban Bird Treaty) is designed to increase citizen awareness of the importance of migratory bird conservation through partnerships between the FWS and municipal governments. In addition to funding education and outreach projects, Urban Bird Treaties also help finance the creation and restoration of city parks and greenways. In FY2011, the program reached over 20,000 youth with education and outreach programs in 19 urban areas. www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/Partnerships/UrbanTreaty/UrbanTreaty.html

Forrest L. Woods Outdoors Foundation (FLW Outdoors) MOU
In August of 2011, the Fisheries Program and FLW Outdoors signed an MOU focused on enhancing efforts in connecting youth to the outdoors through public outreach and educational opportunities targeted toward various audiences.

Children and Nature Network Leadership Team
The FWS participates on the Grassroots Leadership Team for the Children and Nature Network, founded by author Richard Louv in 2007. The Team serves as a coordination and support point for community and regional networks connecting children with nature. The Natural Leaders, supported by the NCTC, engage youth as leaders in the network and provide mentoring and leadership training. The annual Grassroots Leadership Gathering convenes local leaders from across the country to network and maintain momentum for engaging, educating, and employing young people outdoors. www.childrenandnature.org

International Migratory Bird Day
The partnership between FWS and Environment for the Americas works to promote International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) throughout the country. Created to help increase the awareness of migratory birds, IMBD reaches diverse audiences in urban and rural areas. Over 500 events took place in FY2011 reaching over 250,000 youth and their families including over 100 events held at national wildlife refuges. www.fws.gov/birds/imbd

National Wildlife Refuge Recreation Programs
Forty-five million people participated in recreational programs on the nation's national wildlife refuges in FY2011. Interpretation, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation and photography are the primary recreational activities offered, and recreation is the most important way that we engage the American public in outdoor activities.

Nature Champions – NEEF
Twenty-eight health care professionals (HCPs) from across the nation became "Nature Champions" at a train-the-trainer workshop led by the NCTC's Division of Education Outreach staff in partnership with the NEEF. They encouraged kids to get outside by writing "prescriptions" in English and Spanish for outdoor activity at local nature sites. Additionally, the HCPs provided training sessions to their area colleagues; to date over three hundred professionals from the medical community have attended training and are continuing the positive momentum throughout the country. This program received national media coverage in USA Today.

Aldo Leopold Foundation – Youth Land Ethic Leaders
Through a grant to the Aldo Leopold Foundation, ten youth ages 16–20 participated in the Land Ethic Leaders Program, which aims to help communities explore the underlying values of individual and collective behaviors that impact our natural environment. The program provides participants with the tools to help them talk and think about complex and changing environmental issues and to lead reflective community discussions using literature, film, and artwork while sharing their values and relationships to the land in a deeper, more meaningful way.
www.aldoleopold.org/Programs/lel.shtml

SCA with children - Kodiak NWR /USFWS

Conclusion

This report demonstrates how deeply integrated youth programs are throughout the FWS, from field stations, fish hatcheries, and national wildlife refuges, to regional and national program offices. As the service contemplates the ever increasing wave of employee retirements within the context of decreasing interest in the outdoor environment among our nation's young people, the importance of building the next generation of conservation leaders to join our ranks and tackle complex conservation challenges becomes all the more important. The FWS is proud of the comprehensive nature of our programs that reach millions of young people, their educators, and their families every year. We engage kids when they're young, we educate them as they grow, and we offer exciting job opportunities when they are ready to enter the working world as adults. We look forward to improving our programs and sharing our experiences more broadly always with the hope of involving more young people in the important work we do: working with people to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Nature Play Corps /USFWS

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

http://www.fws.gov

Federal Relay
1 800/877 8339 Voice and TTY

January 2012

Kodiak NWR/USFWS