

C. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

INTRODUCTION

The FWS manages a system of 544 national wildlife refuges comprising over 95 million acres and 70 national fish hatcheries, which cover approximately 21,850 acres. These areas are located in all 50 states and some island territories. They are managed principally to conserve fish and wildlife, but they also provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, if it is compatible with refuge purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Wildlife-dependent recreation includes such activities as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation, and environmental education.

The FWS collects basic fees and fees for participation in particular recreational activities. Entrance fees permit visitor entry into the refuge and often cover the use of all public areas and facilities within the refuge. Use fees include boat launches, guided tours, photo blinds, hunting blinds and meeting room use. The Service uses Fee Demo revenues to improve and enhance visitor services and facilities such as boat docks, launching ramps, wildlife observation towers, information kiosks, exhibits, signs, brochures, trail guides and maintenance backlog reduction, in addition to covering the costs of fee collection.

During FY 2003, the FWS collected a total of \$3.8 million at 109 Fee Demo sites. At the inception of the Fee Demo Program, the FWS allowed the individual regional offices to determine how much of the funding above the 80 percent level to keep at the collecting site. Region 1 (Pacific Northwest), Region 3 (Upper Midwest), Region 6 (Mountain States), and Region 7 (Alaska), all return 100 percent of the funding to the stations that collected the fees. Region 2 (Southwest), Region 4 (Southeast) and Region 5 (Northeast) retain 20 percent of the Fee Demo revenues collected for region-wide use. These monies are used to assist new sites with any start-up costs as they enter the Fee Demo Program, to enhance visitor services, and to help with maintenance projects.

VISITATION

Visitation at Fee Demo sites increased from 15.6 million in FY 2002 to 18.4 million in FY 2003 (18 percent). Much of the increase may be attributable to the many centennial celebration events at national wildlife refuges across the country. Many refuges hosted public events, open houses, and other special Centennial celebrations that drew increased numbers of visitors.

COST OF COLLECTION

Costs of collection decreased in FY 2003, from 19.3 percent of gross revenues in FY 2002 to 13.9 percent of gross revenues in FY 2003. FWS guidelines establish a goal of 20 percent for cost of collections. However, some sites still have costs of collection that are above the 20 percent goal. In some cases, this is due to revenues being deposited after the cut-off date for Treasury reporting. In other cases, the station counted partial salaries that are actually paid from another account. Lower than expected numbers of hunters result in lower revenues, which results in increased collection costs as a percent of gross revenue because fewer hunters do not translate directly into lower costs for hunt programs.

OBLIGATIONS

In FY 2003, obligations of fee revenue totaled \$3.7 million. Figure 9 shows the distribution of obligations by category. Deferred maintenance and visitor services accounted for 14 percent and 34 percent, respectively, of total obligations.

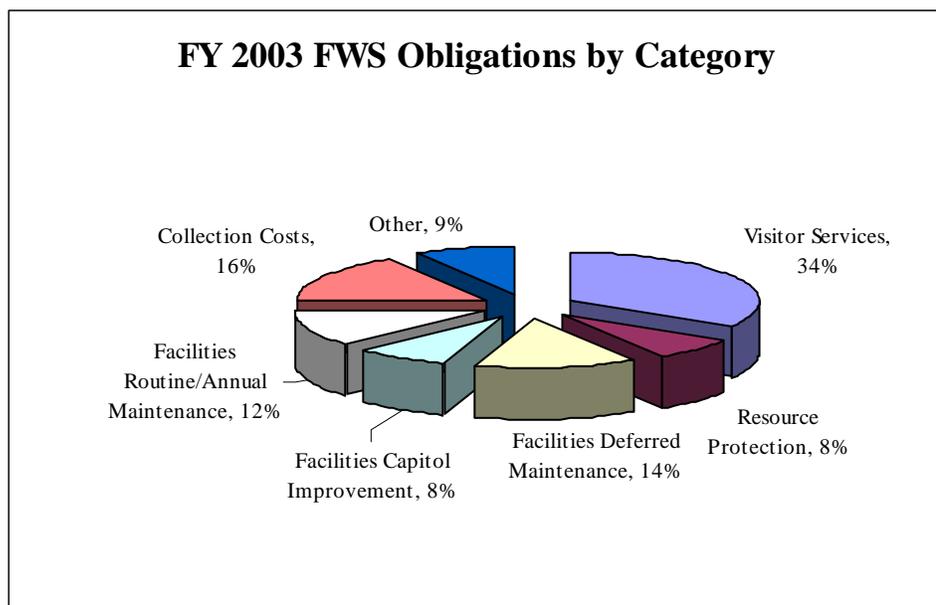


Figure 9

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The FWS has established Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals for its recreation program. GPRA Long-Term Goal 3.3 states that by 2005, 91 percent of National Wildlife Refuge visitors should be satisfied with the quality of their recreational/educational experience. Annual Performance Goal 3.3.1 requires that by September 30, 2003, the Service will have completed and analyzed a national visitor satisfaction survey on National Wildlife Refuges. At the close of FY 2003 the Service had achieved both of these goals.

In summer 2002, the Service conducted an extensive visitor satisfaction survey at 45 refuges located nationwide. The results showed 90 percent of those responding were satisfied or very satisfied with their educational/recreational experience. Many of the surveyed refuges were in the Fee Demo Program, so the survey included two fee questions. The overwhelmingly positive responses to the fee questions reinforce those from previous surveys. According to this survey, 94 percent of respondents who paid fees thought they were about right or even too low. Findings showed that the fee did not restrict visitation, and that nearly 90 percent of visitors felt strongly that the refuge provided them with an excellent value. The FWS is planning additional follow up with surveys during FY 2004.

FWS guidelines determine how Fee Demo revenues are to be spent. These guidelines require that revenues be spent on maintenance, enhancing visitor services, resource protection, and cost of collection. In FY 2003, the FWS used fee demo revenues to improve and enhance visitor services and facilities such as boat docks, launching ramps, wildlife observation towers, information kiosks, exhibits, signs, brochures, trail guides and maintenance backlog reduction, in addition to covering the costs of fee collection.

PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

Centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System

March 14, 2003 marked the centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Refuges used Fee Demo revenues to celebrating the centennial by refurbishing signage, purchasing special banners and other items, and by hosting a variety of special events. For example, Aransas NWR (TX) hosted noted animal behaviorist, Jane Goodall, at its public event. Many refuges filled and buried time capsules, some of which were paid for with fee monies. The first refuge, Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, featured flags from each refuge at its centennial celebration. The flags, the refuge's visitor kiosk, and spotting scopes were paid for largely with Fee Demo revenues.

Florida

In FY 2003, Cedar Key NWR received two grants from the 20 percent fee account that Region 4 maintains. The first grant paid for two refuge interpretive panels for the Cedar Key State Museum whom the refuge is linked to through a partnership with the Florida Division of State Parks. These panels focus on the history of Refuge-owned islands and the sensitive natural resources the refuge protects.

The second grant funded the construction of a kiosk with eight panels at the city boat ramp. The kiosk focuses on the combined efforts toward natural resource conservation in and around Cedar Key, Florida. This project is a collaborative effort between the refuge, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the State Department of Environmental Protection, the State Department of Agricultural Consumer Services, and the City of Cedar Key.

J. N. "Ding" Darling NWR expanded its partnership with Lee County Seagrass, Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) Marine Laboratory, Mote Marine Lab, South Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida in the support of the volunteer-operated, science supporting, fisheries enhancement project called "REDStart". Fee Demo revenues helped to enhance the "REDStart" fish hatchery on the refuge by providing tanks and filtration equipment to farm mosquito larvae-eating fish. The refuge uses these fish in wetland areas to help control mosquito populations.

The refuge worked with the Ding Darling Wildlife Society to develop new education and outreach projects, and enhance and expand existing ones. These initiatives reach thousands of students each year on the refuge. The Society operates the book store in the refuge Education Center, with the proceeds funding education and outreach programs on the refuge Fee Demo and Society revenues are the sole sources of funding to run these informational programs, which includes purchasing printed educational materials, educational props and supplies, interpretive craft supplies, signage, and others.

With revenue from the Fee Demo Program, Refuge biologists and environmental education specialists, working in cooperation with Sanibel School's 5th grade, the SCCF Marine Lab, and private business, participated in Disney's "Jiminy Cricket Environmental Challenge". The project included sampling and gathering data on fish species in the refuge waters of Tarpon Bay. The refuge used Fee Demo revenues to purchase collection, measuring, and data recording equipment and other supplies.

The refuge partnered with the SCCF to create a plant propagation program to restore native vegetation to cleared parcels of land on the island, as well as SCCF's Marine Lab to begin a program to monitor sea grasses and deep water communities in the refuge waters of Tarpon Bay. The refuge used Fee Demo revenues to purchase supplies and equipment in support of these programs which will help to restore and better understand Refuge resources.

Fee demonstration revenues contribute to the operation and maintenance of the refuge's exotic vegetation disposal site. This site, maintained in partnership with the City of Sanibel, business owners, and volunteers, receives exotic vegetation removed from private and public lands by arborists/contractors and then disposes of it. Providing this disposal area encourages the voluntary removal of exotic vegetation, reduces seed source to native and restored areas, demonstrates cooperative resource management for interpretation, and provides for enhanced visitor experience to the refuge through a comprehensive reduction of exotic vegetation on the refuge and the island.

Massachusetts

Fee monies paid for some of the materials and supplies needed for the Plover/Wildlife Festival jointly sponsored by the refuge and the private group Friends of Parker River. Due to this collaboration, the Festival was a popular and successful event which educated the public on the National Wildlife Refuge System and its mission. In addition, along with the Friends of Parker River, the Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association, and the Plum Island Surfcasters, the refuge hosted a "Fish Day" in September to introduce the public, particularly children, to surf fishing. This was very well received and is an excellent example of working together to improve visitor experiences.

Texas

Anahuac NWR used Fee Demo revenues to make improvements to its waterfowl check station which is used during the hunting season. The refuge cooperated with the Telephone Pioneers of America, a non-profit volunteer group, to build and install the accessible ramp leading to the check station. Fee monies paid for the construction of a new roof over the deck and for refinishing the interior floors of the check station.

Washington

Nisqually NWR partnered with Washington Services Agency to place a full-time Americorps member at the refuge as an Environmental Education Coordinator. This person coordinates the education program that serves over 6,000 students annually. They hold teacher workshops, and coordinate student field trips and Refuge Volunteers using the Environmental Education Center.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY STATE

Alaska

At Kenai NWR, Fee Demo revenues supported campground hosts at both Refuge campgrounds the entire summer. The hosts provided public users at the campgrounds valuable assistance and information about the refuge. They also informed visitors of recreational opportunities available on the refuge and on the Kenai Peninsula. Fee revenues provided bear-proof dumpsters at each campground.

Kodiak NWR used fee monies to replace the deteriorated Viekoda Bay Cabin. In addition Fee Demo revenues were used to complete a variety of improvements and maintenance projects on other public use cabins. These included: replacing three oil heaters; exterior and interior painting of cabins; replacing non-functioning stoves, broken stove pipes, leaky barrels, blocked filters, on cabins; replacing approximately 150 yards of boardwalk for South Frasier Cabin; replacing outhouses at Little River Cabin, Uganik Lake Cabin, and Uganik Island Cabin; replacing wheelchair ramps at Uganik Lake Cabin; and repairing broken doors at Uganik Island and North Frasier Cabins.

Arizona

FY 2003 Fee Demo revenues helped Buenos Aires NWR accomplish the following:

- Purchase five remote controls for opening and closing solar-powered gates at the entrance to Brown Canyon.
- Replace a water purification system at the captive breeding facility for the endangered masked bobwhite quail.
- Acquire a new refuge entrance sign and other signage. The replacement signs allowed the refuge to be presented in its most positive light during the Centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Fund annual maintenance at the Environmental Education Center, the Ray Harm House (a visitor contact station with live-in volunteers) and La Casita, a cottage used by educators and nature writers and photographers. Fee revenues were used to acquire the following: a new refrigerator for the Environmental Education Center; vinyl molding seals for the refrigerators and freezers in the Ray Harm House and La Casita; and a replacement part for a Brown Canyon refrigerator. Additionally, the three buildings were fumigated and mold and corrosion were removed from the plumbing. The refuge also bought a key storage box for organization and safe storage of various keys to refuge buildings, rooms, gates etc.
- The refuge also used Fee Demo revenues to print various informational fliers about the refuge.

California

Klamath Basin NWR Complex used FY 2003 Fee Demo revenues to:

- Purchase and install two 4-person blinds for hunting/photography.
- Perform maintenance on four pit blinds. Much of this work was done with the help of volunteers.

- Construct the Lower Klamath NWR hunter information station.
- Print hunting information leaflets and tour route brochures.
- Purchase equipment and supplies for the Complex’s hunt program (e.g., a brush hog for mowing, rental of portable toilets during the hunt season).

Florida

A.R.M. Loxahatchie NWR used fee monies to support a "cookie-cutter," or floating mechanical trail cutter, to maintain 5.5 miles of canoe trail. The cookie-cutter's two rotating blades cut the submerged and floating vegetation, clearing the trail for the thousands of paddlers who traverse these canoe trails annually. Fee revenues also purchased materials that maintenance volunteers used to build benches along 12 miles of refuge trails. The refuge hosted its annual Everglades Day festival, attended by over 3,000 visitors, and used fee monies for the rental of trolleys, buses, port-a-lets, and directional/informational festival signage. Fee revenues were also used to help purchase and upgrade software programs for the refuge's web site.



Fee revenues at A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR helped support a "cookie-cutter," or floating mechanical trail cutter, to maintain 5.5 miles of canoe trail. The cookie-cutter's two rotating blades cut the submerged and floating vegetation, clearing the trail for paddlers

J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge used fee monies to:

- Build a parking lot for Refuge volunteers and staff, freeing up limited parking spaces for visitors.
- Install a new fee collection booth to replace its honor collection system, reducing the need for staff fee compliance checks.
- Rebuild an observation tower to make it compliant with the ADA. The main level platform was expanded along with installation of an ADA compliant ramp and two dedicated parking stalls using an environmental friendly road mix.
- Rehabilitate the Indigo Trail. This included installing a board walk with recycled plastic lumber, and two rest benches. The trail is now ADA compliant.

- Build a ticket booth as part of the initiation of a tram service on the refuge’s wildlife drive. Trams reduce traffic on the drive and increase the number of visitors that can take advantage of ranger interpretation.
- Assist in funding an Education Lab in Education Center for schools, visitors and environmental groups to learn about the refuge system, estuaries and other environmental concerns.
- Purchase various small items such as traffic counters on wildlife drive, a cleaning contract, fee envelopes, brochures, and signage.

St. Marks NWR also made a series of improvements with its fee demonstration money. It:

- Refurbished public restrooms.
- Resodded portions of its popular Wildlife Drive with native grasses and plants. As part of this project, the refuge also removed invasive plant species along the wildlife drive.

Pelican Island NWR used Fee Demo revenues to pay for a visitor kiosk, spotting scopes, and flags.

FWS employee enjoys the overlook and spotting scopes which provide a view of historic Pelican Island NWR (visible over her left shoulder). The spotting scopes were purchased with Fee Demo revenues.



Uniformed FWS employees provide a fitting backdrop to the stage at Pelican Island’s Centennial Celebration event. Here, animal handlers walk across the stage with various animals including a snake and an American Bald Eagle.



Georgia

Okefenokee NWR used fee monies to repair the historic Floyds Island Cabin and the Chesser Island Homestead and outbuildings. Funds paid to repair steps, screened doors and fence; to repair and raise the syrup shed; and place new curtains in the interior. Fee demonstration monies helped with the refuge’s popular canoe trail and wilderness camping system. Fees

paid to rebuild two day-use shelters and two overnight wilderness canoe shelters; to maintain over 20 miles of overgrown wilderness canoe shelters manually; to purchase tools and other

equipment for canoe trail maintenance; to upgrade volunteer village to enhance volunteer recruitment and stay; and to purchase environmental education materials for programs.



Fee monies paid for repairs to overnight shelters and platforms along the watercraft trail system at Okefenokee NWR. Americorps workers help maintain canoe trails at Okefenokee NWR with safety equipment and tools purchased with Fee Demo revenues.

Hawaii

Kilauea Point NWR used fee monies to enhance and maintain the main grounds and historic structures of the refuge. It purchased eight new wildlife viewing scopes, including four accessible scopes for those in wheelchairs. The refuge replaced dirt walkways with eight foot wide concrete walkways, reshaped and re-sodded Kilauea Point lighthouse grounds after the walkway construction, and made emergency repairs to preserve the exterior metal catwalk on the lighthouse. Fee demonstration monies also funded the visitor services intern program for eight interns during the year, as well as a contract for janitorial services to maintain the public use facilities.

Idaho

Deer Flat NWR used Fee Demo revenues to renovate its popular Environmental Education Building. In addition Fee Demo revenues purchased two Visitor Center displays and supplies for the newest environmental education program (a preschool reading program).

Massachusetts

Parker River NWR used part of its fee collections to:

- Replace the chlorination system with a new UV system at the Lot 1 public restrooms.
- Purchase a weatherproof telescope for its observation deck.
- Purchase a new entrance sign, various Refuge brochures, and supplies for the annual Plover Festival.

- Hire gate attendants to collect fees, and to hire two seasonal law enforcement staff.

Montana

The National Bison Range was a Centennial focus refuge of the National Wildlife Refuge System in 2003. In FY 2003, Fee Demo revenues were used to:

- Replace the water system at the Visitor Center;
- Relocate the Lost Trail Office and Visitor Contact site to allow for accessibility and expansion.
- Fund various Centennial events.
- Replace picnic tables.
- Fund environmental education programs for over 3,000 students and teachers.
- Remake the Bison Range orientation video.
- Print various brochures.
- Pay for dust control on the scenic drive.
- Update signage.
- Landscaping around new toilet facilities and bunkhouse.
- Install new fencing.
- Assist in funding activities associated with visitor safety.

Nebraska

Fort Niobrara NWR used Fee Demo revenues to hire a seasonal employee to staff the the visitor center on weekends and help with informational programs. Absent Fee Demo revenues, the refuge would not have been able to operate the visitor center during weekend hours. The seasonal employee also assisted in gathering information which the refuge needed for its visitor recreational use management plan. Future plans are to improve visitor center exhibits, nature trails, picnic grounds, and to complete deferred maintenance of boat launch facilities.

New Jersey

E.B. Forsythe NWR is a destination birding area and receives over 200,000 visitors each year. The refuge used its Fee Demo revenues to construct a new universally-accessible observation platform, trail and parking area overlooking a pond. The refuge also improved visitor wildlife viewing opportunities along the 8-mile Wildlife Drive by controlling invasive species. In addition, the refuge used Fee Demo revenues to develop and purchase supplies for tabletop exhibits and educational materials. To assist the many school children visiting the refuge for guided tours, the refuge purchased binoculars and field guides for use on the wildlife drive and trails.

New Mexico

Bosque del Apache NWR used FY 2003 Fee Demo revenues to:

- Support the refuge Volunteer Program;
- Purchase a new furnace for the Visitor Center;
- Build new offices for the refuge fire program; and
- Fund small stipends for resident volunteers.



Volunteers at Bosque del Apache NWR staff the fee booth, provide information and greet visitors with a friendly smile.



Fee Demo revenues assist in purchasing materials to maintain refuge lands. Here, volunteers erect new fencing at the Desert Arboretum site on the Bosque del Apache NWR.

Sevilleta NWR joined the fee demonstration program in 2003. Fee Demo revenues helped the refuge fund maintenance of the facility, as well as pay for microscope and laboratory equipment repairs in its environmental education lab. The refuge hosts students as well as teacher workshops on site.

Oklahoma

Washita NWR supports its popular hunting programs with Fee Demo revenues. Fee revenues assisted in funding staff time and basic supplies that make the hunts possible. Photos from some recent Refuge hunts convey the benefits in a tangible way.

Hunters pose after a successful goose hunt at Washita NWR.



A young hunter's wide grin says it all as he stands next to his deer during Washita NWR's Deer Hunt. Fee Demo revenues have made hunts like this possible.

Oregon

The Mid-Columbia River NWR Complex used fee collections to maintain trails and to purchase and maintain directional signs to the hunting blinds. Fee monies also pay for restroom facilities, hunting tearsheets, brochures, two hunter check stations, and two seasonal park rangers to assist waterfowl hunters and other refuge visitors.

Texas

The Aransas NWR used Fee Demo revenues to assist in funding centennial events that included free boating tours and



Jane Goodall addresses a crowd of visitors at Aransas NWR's Refuge Centennial celebration.

van tours to the public to enjoy the endangered whooping crane and other wildlife. During the centennial celebration Jane Goodall spoke to a standing-room-only audience of more than 1,200 people. The centennial celebration events were made possible through the collaborative efforts with Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas General Land Office, the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island Refuges, the Conoco-Phillips Petroleum Corp.

Anahuac NWR conducts a waterfowl hunt on the East Unit of the refuge under the fee demonstration program. The refuge used Fee Demo revenues to maintain and improve its waterfowl check station and hire a temporary staff member for the waterfowl hunting season. This biological technician assisted hunters at the waterfowl check station, collected fees, coordinated a special youth-only waterfowl hunt, collected biological data on wintering waterfowl and lead shot ingestion of resident mottled ducks, and created and presented an educational program for youths on waterfowl identification for Anahuac's Youth Waterfowl Expo.

Aransas NWR used monies from the fee demonstration program to help fund several special events throughout the year. These included:

- The 3rd Annual Aransas NWR Celebration. This event was focused on the six key recreational activities on refuges: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation, and environmental education. It was free to the public and drew over 2,500 people. Events included a duck calling contest, an environmental education area, live animals, shot gun and BB gun ranges, Bass fish tank and many other exhibits and events.
- *The Creatures of the Night* event. The objective of this program was to educate the public about the different creatures that are active at night and what enables them to function in the dark.
- Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Fishing Derby. This event was a collaboration of WeatherFord Inc, Friends of Aransas/Matagorda Island Refuges, Redfish 4-H, the refuge, and many volunteers.

Trinity River NWR collected waterfowl hunting fees as part of the fee demonstration program. Fee revenues were used to purchase copies of the booklet, *Ducks at a Distance*. These booklets help educate waterfowl hunters, especially youth hunters, about duck identification. The refuge also used Fee Demo revenues to purchase new refuge informational signs.

South Dakota

At Gavin's Point NFH, Fee Demo revenues helped fund a variety of improvements including: new software for the Touch Screen Computer in the visitor center; landscaping; and improved aquarium lighting with the purchase of a new electrical panel and light bulbs.

Virginia

Chincoteague NWR used its Fee Demo revenues to:

- Fund seven public use interns and a temporary recreation assistant to improve its ability to provide services to visitors.
- Print Refuge brochures, trail maps, and hunt brochures.

- Fund a telemetry study on Atlantic Brant to track their migration patterns via satellite. The refuge placed the information gathered on its website.
- Fabricate and install interpretive exhibits in its new Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center and on three major trails as well as the exterior exhibits surrounding the Bateman Center.

Washington

Dungeness NWR used Fee Demo revenues to repair potholes on the main trail, remove downed trees, improve the parking lot by re-striping crosswalks and parking spaces, and repair a damaged overlook. Fee revenues also allowed the refuge to employ a seasonal staff member to provide more and higher quality services to visitors. This permitted the refuge to hold a number of very successful outreach events, including the refuge's Centennial Celebration, International Migratory Bird Day, and National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Turnbull NWR used Fee Demo revenues to pay for a temporary park ranger, volunteer stipends, and supplies to assist with environmental education facilitation for visiting school groups. Some Fee Demo revenues were used to assist in paying for the printing of general refuge brochures. In addition the refuge used Fee Demo revenues to purchase two traffic/trail counters to help assess how many visitors use the Columbia Plateau Trail and the auto tour route.

At Turnbull NWR, Fee Demo revenues paid for plantings and a plaque commemorating the establishment of the Centennial Legacy Riparian Grove, a grove of native trees and shrubs planted by volunteers along Pine Creek near the refuge headquarters. The re-establishment of riparian vegetation along the creek will benefit migratory song birds. This was a cooperative effort involving the Spokane Audubon Society.



This plaque marks Turnbull NWR's Centennial Riparian Grove, planted near Refuge headquarters