

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007

The Board of Directors is pleased to report another very successful year supporting the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. A number of projects have been completed or initiated that assist the refuge to provide recreational and educational opportunities for the public compatible with the refuge's conservation goals.

In March, the observation floor in the visitor center, funded by a large grant from Pathways to Nature and by the Friends, was formally opened during the Eagle Festival with a ceremony attended by Senator Cardin and several local public officials. The floor with its panoramic view of the refuge and wildlife displays has been a big hit with visitors. Also completed as part of the project was the library and a large donation of books about wildlife has been received from Dick Kleen. They are currently being cataloged as part of an interactive system and the formal opening is planned in the near future. As part of the donation requirements, a security camera system was installed in the visitor center funded by the Friends.

The education building, funded by a grant from the Maryland Heritage Area Authority and by the Friends, was completed in early summer and has been equipped. It has had its inaugural use recently with over 300 fourth graders from the various Dorchester County Public Schools over a week and a half period. The program, based on a plan by Maggie Briggs, was held at the Blackwater marshlands, where the students learned about the food chain activity in nature, and is an integral part of DCPS's formal science curriculum. Many volunteers assisted the teachers in showing the kids the wonders of the marshlands and the wildlife. For many of the students, it was their first close up experience on the marshlands and the "wows" and smiles made it worthwhile for all involved.

The website, managed by Lisa Mayo, continues to be very popular. In particular the live camera views of the eagle and osprey nests have drawn many, many thousands of hits as the eagles raised their young. The osprey nest presented a harsher side of nature as two sets of eggs were lost, but this still fascinated many viewers. Lisa also modernized the refuge's website, making it more attractive and appealing to the public.

The refuge's hunt program, managed by the Friends for the refuge by Allen Johnston, continues to be another significant source of funds for supporting programs. Also, the membership program, managed by Jeannine Hook, has attracted approximately 700 members and remains another strong source of funds.

The Eagle's Nest bookstore, located in the visitor center and now managed for the Friends by Charlotte Hehn, continues to be a significant source of funds for refuge projects and programs. A tourist kiosk, a part of the Dorchester County Travel Destination website, has been installed in the eagle tree in the center and its yearly maintenance fees are covered by a grant obtained by the Friends from the NFWF Preserve America Program.

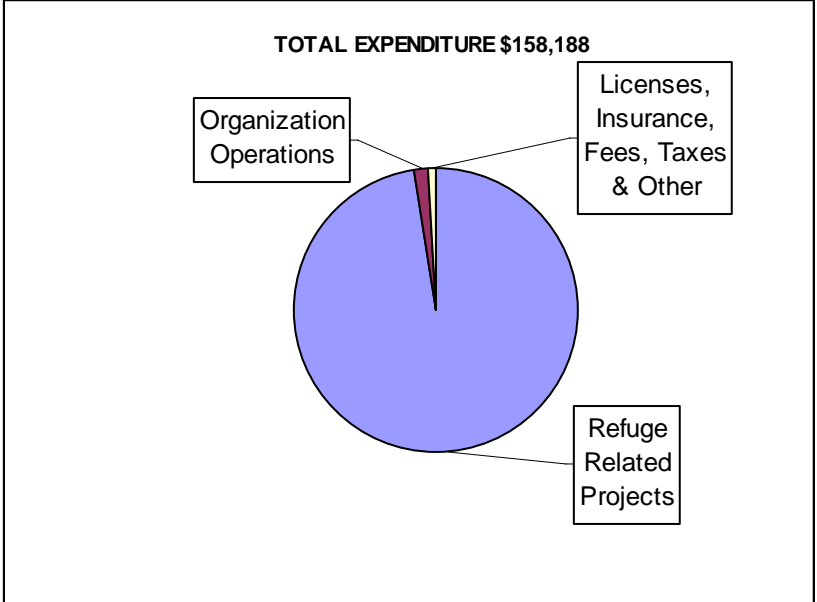
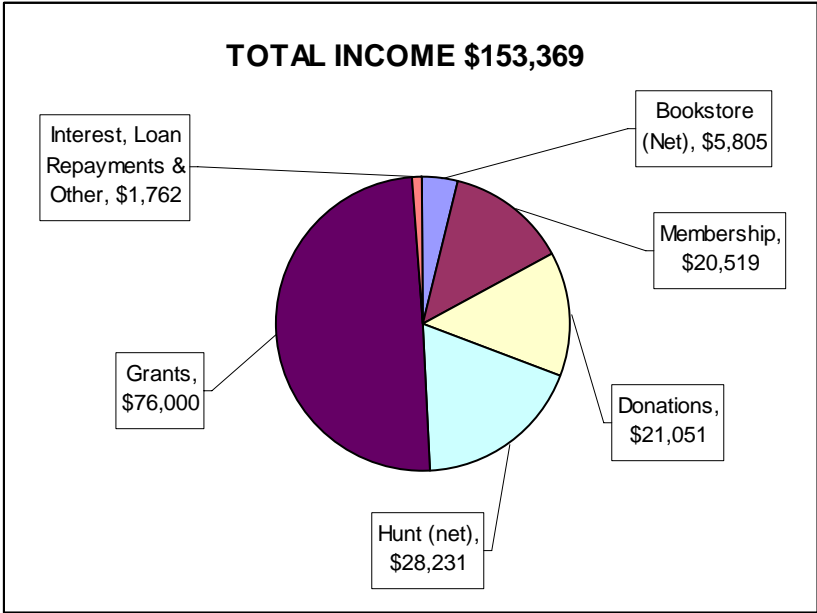
Two new copiers, located in the refuge's administration building and in the office area at the visitor center, were funded by the Friends, replacing ones that had passed their useful lives.

Working with the Blackwater NWR staff and volunteers has been very rewarding for the Friends. Much was accomplished, but much more can be done. With the restricted budgets the refuge is facing for the near future, Friends support will remain a significant recourse.

A summary of income and expenditures for FY 2007 is on the attached chart. Overall, the financial position of the Friends is very strong.

Martin O'Connor
President, Friends of Blackwater

SUMMARY OF FY 2006 INCOME AND EXPENSES



FUTURE FUNDING COMMITMENTS FOR REFUGE RELATED PROJECTS \$129,119