

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY 2009

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Blackwater NWR is pleased to report another very successful year supporting the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. The relationship between the Blackwater NWR staff, the volunteers and the Friends of Blackwater has remained very close and has resulted in many significant contributions in support of the Refuge's needs. All funds raised by the Friends and all activities provided are in direct support of the Blackwater Refuge's needs.

The cooperative education program with the Dorchester County Public Schools fourth and sixth grades has continued with over 600 students coming to the Refuge as part of their science curricula. Science teachers led the activities with heavy support by volunteers. The students learned about the natural food chain activities, toured the Refuge and saw the extensive variety of habitats in nature, and how the biologists used GPS as part of their projects. This very successful program is being continued during the coming year. For many of the students the experience at Blackwater was their first close up experience with the marshlands and their enthusiastic response made it a pleasant experience for all involved. A follow-on grant applied for by the Friends has been received from NFWF and will provide for transportation of the students for the next year.

The pier that is part of the Marsh Edge hiking trail has been upgraded and replaced with funding provided by a grant from Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and matching funds from a generous donation from Terry Cycling. The descriptive sign will be completed in the near future as part of this project.

The Eagle's Nest Bookstore, managed by Charlotte Hehn, continues to be a major source of funds for Refuge projects and programs. The store continues to remain very popular with visitors to the refuge, and is a center for the annual Friends Holiday Open House.

A Challenge Cost Share Grant was obtained by the Refuge to repair aging kiosk roofs and the required matching funds were provided by the Friends.

The rehabilitation of freshwater pool, managed by a cooperative arrangement between the Refuge and Ducks Unlimited, was supported by a generous contribution to the Friends from the estate of former board member Gibby Roe. The pool restoration is complete and the kiosk and signs are in progress and should be installed shortly. The formal dedication with representatives from the Roe family, Ducks Unlimited, the Easton Waterfowl Festival, the Blackwater NWR and the Friends will be held in early 2010.

The butterfly garden has had significant upgrading and has remains a popular visitor site. This has been accomplished by the cooperative effort of the Refuge, the Dorchester Garden Club, and the Friends.

Matching funds were provided by the Friends for the Challenge grants used to support the Refuge's popular Eagle Festival in March and the Youth Fishing Derby in June.

The refuge's hunt program, managed for the Friends by Allen Johnston, continues to be very popular with the public and is another significant source of funds for supporting Refuge programs.

Both the Refuge's and the Friends website continue to be maintained by Lisa Mayo. The eagle and osprey cam features continue to be highly popular both in the United States and overseas. Many schools report that they are using the site as part of classroom activities as the nests are built, the eggs hatched and the fledglings raised.

The "Tidelines" newsletter, edited by Ron Tillier, is published quarterly and has articles reviewing activities at the refuge as well as informative article about wildlife.

The Natural History Library has had all its books cataloged and access to this will be available on internet shortly using links from the Refuge and Friends websites.

The Friends elected to become formally associated with the National Wildlife Refuge Association this past year and continues to advocate for improved government funding and support for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

We want to continue this successful relationship between the Refuge and the Friends in the coming years. At present, there are approximately 650 memberships in the Friends of Blackwater. We want to thank all who have worked with us over the years for their contribution of skills, time and donations enabling the completion of many projects.

An overall summary of the income and expenditures for FY 2009 is presented on the attached chart. All funds and activities provided by the Friends are used in cooperation and direct support of the Blackwater Refuge. Overall, the financial position of the Friends of Blackwater is quite strong.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin O'Connor", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Martin O'Connor
President, Friends of Blackwater

SUMMARY OF FY 2009 INCOME AND EXPENSES

