

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY 2010

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 Friends of Blackwater are proud to have Zeeger de Wilde as a member of our board. In March, Zeeger was presented with the 2010 award as Volunteer of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association in a ceremony in the House Office building in Washington D. C. hosted by NWRA.

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 Nature of Learning grant was received from NFWF and provided for transportation of the students. Another follow-on grant for student transportation has been submitted by the Friends for the FY 2011 transportation.

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 for the pier has been completed and installed. The pier provides a beautiful view of the rivers and marshland and the waterfowl and raptors that use them.

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 was a center for the annual 2009 Friends Holiday Open House.

In 2008 and early 2009, the rehabilitation of Pool 1 was completed by the Refuge in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited. It was supported by a generous contribution to the Friends from the estate of former board member Gibby Roe. The dedication was held as part of the 2010 Eagle Festival with representatives of the Roe family, the Blackwater NWR, Ducks Unlimited, the Easton Waterfowl Festival and the Friends.

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. Needed funding for the various projects was provided by the Friends.

The Friends provided needed funding 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. Many of the hunters participating have joined the Friends of Blackwater.

Both the Refuge's and the Friends websites continue to be maintained by Lisa Mayo. The Friends website will be upgraded in the near future by Lisa. The website has also become accessible on Twitter and Facebook. The eagle and osprey cam features, maintained by Lisa and Tom Hook 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 articles about wildlife. Ron is beginning to convert the newsletter to an on-line version with the goal of having it functional early in 2011.

The Friends have provided funding for the Refuge's Habitat Management Program being formulated by retired biologist Roger Stone.

Last year, the Friends elected to become formally associated with the National Wildlife Refuge Association and has supported efforts advocating improved government funding and support for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Also, the Friends are sponsoring a donation program to support the NWRRA effort to aid refuges impacted by the Gulf oil spill earlier this year.

In May, Tom Hook, along with Zeeger de Wilde, gave oral testimony to the Congressional House Committee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife in support of the National Wildlife Volunteer Improvement Act of 2010. Additionally, several written testimonies to both the Senate and House were submitted by the Friends in support of budget bills items promoting stronger budgets for the Fish and Wildlife Service and 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 640 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 2010 is presented on the attached chart. All funds and activities provided by the Friends are used in cooperation with and direct support of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Overall, the financial position of the Friends of Blackwater is quite strong.

Respectfully submitted,



Martin O'Connor
President, Friends of Blackwater

SUMMARY OF FY 2010 INCOME AND EXPENSES

