

Friends of Great Swamp



FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Issue One

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The board of directors meets with Congressman Frelinghuysen.
(Left to right: Judy Schmidt, Refuge Manager William Koch, Congressman Frelinghuysen, Wes De Cou, Litty Hado, Kathy Woodward)

WELCOME, FRIEND!

I am excited and gratified to be able to welcome you to this first edition of the Friends of Great Swamp NWR newsletter. The newsletter will serve as our main communication vehicle for the near term. As you will see in this edition, the group is already very active on many fronts.

We're a small but growing group of individuals committed to the preservation and enhancement of our 7,500 acre piece of paradise, mainly through on-refuge activities. Projects we will be supporting (with your help, we hope!) include such things as the annual Refuge clean-up, boardwalk and trail enhancement, the establishment of a reference resource (Bookstore), and myriad other activities contributing to the health and usefulness of the Refuge.

I see our Friends group as a vehicle through which we can focus the efforts of our existing base of volunteers, as well as a means to publicize the Refuge Mission, and all of the recreational and educational opportunities it has to offer.

In future editions of the newsletter we will give you a calendar of events, ideas for participation in projects on the Refuge, historical tidbits, and articles on specific Refuge activities written by Refuge staff members.

In the mean time, if you would like to discover **The Mystery of the Wood Duck Box**, call me at 908.221.1666.

Wes De Cou, President - Friends of the Great Swamp NWR

MEMBERSHIP

You are part of a new and growing organization. As of 10/25/99, we are 116 strong. Additional applications are available at Headquarters or we can mail them to you if you contact us. The refuge is working with us to find a permanent home, but until then we will continue to use the refuge headquarters mailing address.

LOGO

Every new group needs a logo. Fortunately, our assistant secretary, Litty Hado is an talented artist and created the design which appears in the letterhead. Our logo features the wood duck and cattails, while including the blue goose, symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Many thanks to Litty for sharing her talents. Before long, our logo will be available on tee shirts and other wares.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Mark Wednesday, January 12, 2000 on your calendar and join us that evening at 7:30 p.m. at the Meyersville Grange, 500 Meyersville Road, Meyersville. Tom McFadden, Outdoor Recreation Planner at GSNWR and Staff Liaison to our Friends Group, will entertain and inform us with a multimedia slide show about the Refuge. We will also have a chance to socialize, discuss volunteer opportunities and share information and concerns.

DEER HUNT

November 30, December 1, 2, and 3, 1999 are the dates of the deer hunt. The Refuge will be closed those days except for persons with special permits. In response to a suggestion from our first membership meeting, members of the Friends will be providing beverages and snacks for hunters and staff on Tuesday 11/30 and Wednesday 12/1. Proceeds from donations will be added to our treasury.

CONFERENCE HOST

Our Friends group acted as local hosts for a regional conference sponsored by National Wildlife Refuge Association and National Audubon Society on Saturday, September 25, 1999. Forty-five (45) participants and presenters discussed advocacy and Fighting on the Home Front; Combating Local Threats. The workshops gave our officers an opportunity to meet supporters from other refuges and staff members from Washington. Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chief of the Division of Wildlife Refuges Jim Kurth, and Great Swamp NWR Manager Bill Koch, shared their joys and concerns about the Refuge System. Great Swamp NWR Deputy Manager Jim Reynolds provided a van tour and Audubon Volunteer Tom Halliwell, led a bird walk for participants on Sunday morning.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK

Great Swamp NWR joined the other 517 Refuges in celebrating, National Wildlife Refuge Week during October 10-16. On Wednesday, Outdoor Recreation Planner Tom McFadden, lead a group of enthusiastic folks on a sunset walk. On Thursday, October 15, a media event focused on the environmental cleanup of the former Dietzman tract which was part of an asbestos Superfund site inherited by the Refuge. There was also a formal ribbon cutting reopening of the hiking trails into this portion of the Refuge Wilderness Area. Details about the trail and copies of the poster celebrating Refuge Week were available at Headquarters. Guided noon walks were conducted all week and an excellent video on the National Wildlife Refuge System was repeatedly shown.

"DUCK STAMPS"

On July 1, 1934, the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp was created and authorized for annual sale. Originally known as the "Duck Stamp", Congress changed the name to Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, in 1976. The funds from the sale of stamps are used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Between 1937 and 1976 sales totaled more than \$176 million. These monies purchased about 763,000 acres of refuge land for migratory birds of which 2,874 of those acres were purchased for Great Swamp Refuge! Besides Duck Stamps being a collectors item, all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older, are required to carry a valid Duck Stamp while afield. A valid stamp good for 1 year is also considered as an entrance pass at those National Wildlife Refuges charging admission.

BOOK NOOK

Whether you've read it a dozen times, or never found the time until now, I recommend Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac", first published 50 years ago. This book, which split the final century of the millennium in so many ways, is still a gem. While many changes have occurred in the field of ecology in the last half century, most of what Leopold wrote anticipated the themes and practices used in our Refuge system today. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Leopold's writing is also beautiful. I still remember reading his description of the woodcock flight. It wasn't until I moved to New Jersey and saw my first flight, that I understood, but I already knew. Now I am fortunate enough to see the flight each year, thanks to the Great Swamp NWR and each spring I reread the chapter in "A Sand County Almanac". Kathy Woodward
(If you have a book to recommend, please let us know for inclusion in future Newsletters.)

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE...

After almost four months of drought, the refuge finally received almost 14" rain in September. Almost all of this rain came as hurricane Floyd on September 16. Between 10 and 14 inches of rain fell in the surrounding area in a twenty-four hour period. The gauges on the refuge recorded a total of 10 inches of rain. While in some areas the water rose more than two feet, the water never reached the height of the 1996 storm. Fortunately, the hurricane only caused minor flooding damage around the refuge. A total of \$10,000 dollars of damage was done to the refuge, mostly due to lost gravel and time lost to clean up tree falls and other small repairs. The loss of power caused the greatest concern in and around the local community as sump pumps were needed to keep basements dry. Veteran residents of the Swamp knew enough to have their generators at the ready. The biggest problem faced during the storm, was that the refuge was once again isolated from the surrounding communities due to the high water and downed power lines. However, not all of the effects of the storm were bad, after four months of little rain the refuge desperately needed water in many of the smaller ponds and impoundments. Floyd provided us with enough rain for the fall migrants to have places to feed and rest, and to restore the refuge to normal water levels. We just wanted the rain in smaller quantities and not all at once.

John Arnold - Biological Technician

GIFT IDEAS

With the holiday season around the corner, consider giving memberships to our newly created Friends group. We will include in the notification, a holiday greeting and brochures about our group and the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Also, available from National Wildlife Refuge Association, "Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges", a guidebook to 514 refuges in the system. Call Toll Free 1-888-282-NWRA (6972) to order. @ \$16.95 plus shipping.

NOTES FROM THE MANAGER'S DESK

On behalf of the Great Swamp NWR, its entire staff and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, I whole heartedly welcome you to "Friends of Great Swamp NWR." Some of you are old friends and some are new, but both new and continued interest and support are most welcome and very much appreciated.

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge wouldn't be a refuge today if it wasn't for concerned citizens who got involved and made a difference. The best and only compilation of the grassroots battle to save the Great Swamp from becoming what Newark Airport is today, is Cam Cavanaugh's "Saving The Great Swamp". While no longer in print most local libraries should have this book. (If you can't find it, see me and I'll loan you mine).

We will be forever grateful to those who saved the Great Swamp. However, saving it was only the beginning. This National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960 and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been tasked with it's protection and management. While I proudly say the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is an outstanding agency made up of extremely dedicated people, it is a relatively small agency delegated with overwhelming responsibilities. Staffing and budgets may never be what they should so the support from our Volunteers, Friends and various partners is extremely important. The refuge is continuously threatened by the impacts from development and certain land use changes throughout the watershed. While there is a much more environmentally enlightened public today and a greater spirit of cooperation (as demonstrated by the efforts of the "Ten Towns, Great Swamp Watershed Management Committee"), there is still much that needs to be done. We are ever thankful to those who continue to help protect this national treasure.

Outstanding examples of great accomplishments and support are represented by the efforts of such groups as the Ten Towns Great Swamp Watershed Management, the Great Swamp Watershed Association, and the New Jersey Audubon Society. These organizations and their dedicated staff and volunteer workers help to preserve and protect the refuge and the natural resources of the watershed. We are very fortunate to have groups such as these, as well private individuals, as our partners and friends.

However, I don't believe you can have too many friends, especially with the ever increasing challenges facing natural resource managers today and in the foreseeable future. The recent formation of the "Friends of the Great Swamp NWR" is a most welcome occurrence. I see the enthusiasm and energy of this group as a sign of only good things to come. With a tremendous backlog of refuge maintenance and operating needs, "Friends" have made this their focus.

Great Swamp NWR is one of 517 Refuges nationwide in a network known as the National Wildlife Refuge System, (NWRS). This is the only diverse national network of public lands set aside for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants and is the world's most outstanding and diverse collection of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife. It consists of more than 93 million acres! The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is "to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans".

Great Swamp is unique in many ways, yet essential as an integral component to this system. Great Swamp NWR with your help, contributes to this honorable mission. Diversity and numbers add strength and with you we will be stronger! I am very proud of the NWRS, and especially proud of Great Swamp NWR friends. I look forward to all of us working together doing what's right in the next millennium!

William Koch - Refuge Manager