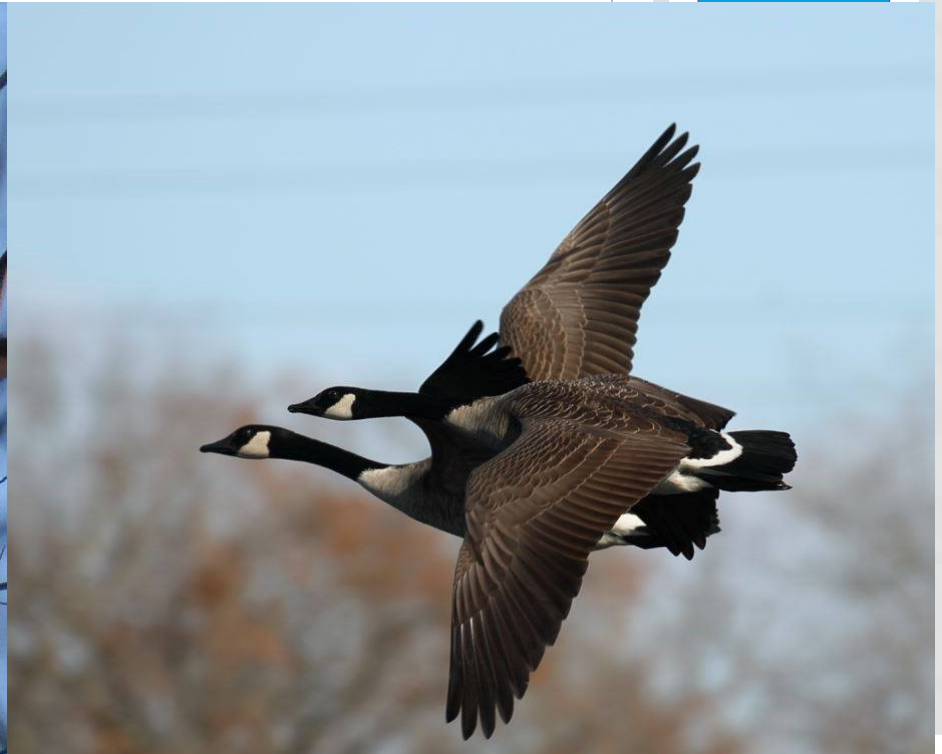
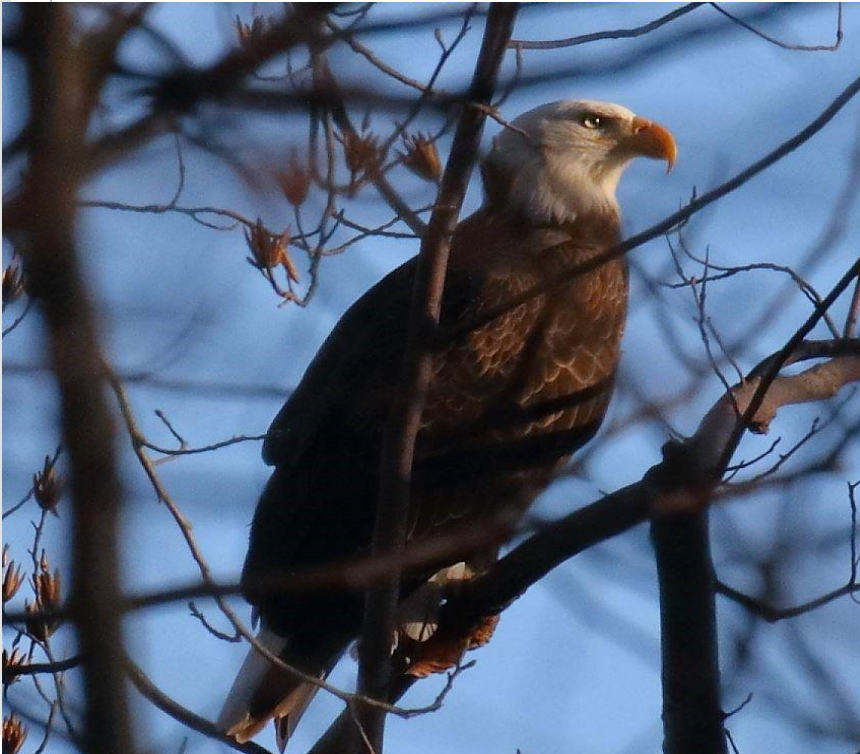


THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

ONE MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE

MAY 11, 2019



- Protect the wildlife.
- Encourage visitation.
- Take the refuge to the people



OUR BEGINNINGS

- “I am happy to say that I have been able to set aside in various parts of the country small, well-chosen tracts of ground to serve as sanctuaries and nurseries for wild creatures.”

(Theodore Roosevelt, Annual Message to Congress, 1908)



PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1901



“IT IS AN INCALCULABLE ADDED PLEASURE TO ANY ONE’S SUM OF HAPPINESS IF HE OR SHE GROWS TO KNOW, EVEN SLIGHTLY AND IMPERFECTLY, HOW TO READ AND ENJOY THE WONDER-BOOK OF NATURE.” (THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1905).

SANCTUARIES FROM PUBLIC INTRUSION

- 1903 - Pelican Island established by President Roosevelt as “a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.”
- By 1909, 52 additional reservations were established. TR acted at the urging of the Audubon Society, American Ornithologists Union and concerned citizens.



1903-1933

- Approximately 100 refuges created primarily to keep wildlife undisturbed.



THE REFUGE SYSTEM EMERGES

- 1933 – FDR establishes the CCC, put millions of Americans to work conserving natural resources; projects on over 100 NWRs.
- 1934 – The Committee on Wildlife Restoration (Thomas Beck, “Ding” Darling and Aldo Leopold) recommended an ambitious new course for acquiring refuges and improving habitat.



GROWING VISITATION AND USE OF REFUGES: 1947 - 1962

- 1947 — First in a series of “Conservation in Action” articles published by FWS; purpose was to generate interest in refuges among the American public.



GROWING VISITATION AND USE OF REFUGES

- 1957 - The Refuge Manual is updated, adding new guidance on managing public use.



VISITATION TRENDS

- 1951 – 3.5 million visitors
- 1961 – 11 million visitors
- 1970 – 18 million visitors
- 1976 – 27 million visitors
- 2012 – 45 million visitors
- 2018 – 55 million visitors



THE REFUGE RECREATION ACT

- 1962 - Refuge Recreation Act — Congress approves use of refuges for outdoor recreation provided that the primary purpose of each refuge is not compromised and cost of recreational activities are funded.



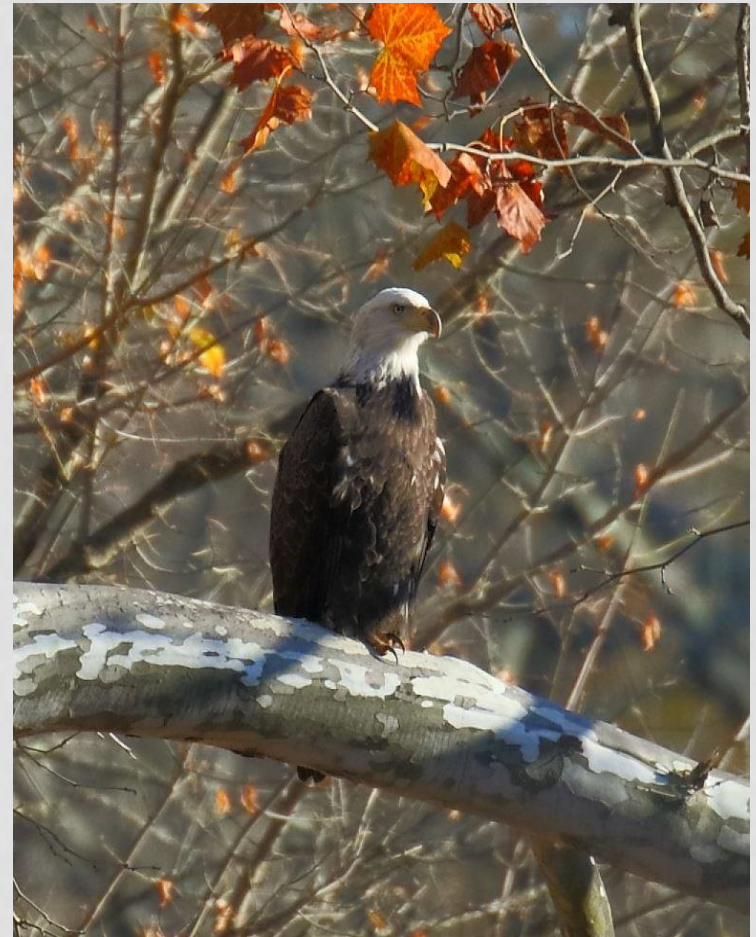
ESTABLISHING A SYSTEM

- 1966 - National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act — first time that National Wildlife Refuge System is officially used. The law creates the compatibility standard.



ENHANCING THE SYSTEM

- 1972 - FWS issued new comprehensive public use policy.
- This policy focused on encouraging public use activities consistent with refuge purposes and clarified compatibility standards.



ENHANCING THE SYSTEM

- 1980 – the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act established several new refuges, directed preservation of wilderness values and related recreational opportunities, and allowed rural residents to continue having subsistence opportunities on refuges in Alaska.
- Doubled the size of NWRS – over 92 million acres.



ENHANCING THE SYSTEM

- 1992 – National Audubon Society and other organizations sue the Secretary of Interior and FWS over incompatible uses occurring on refuges.
- 1993 – Compatibility lawsuit is settled. DOI agrees to review all existing uses on refuges using the compatibility standard.



PLANNING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

- 1997 – Amendment to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966:
 - Six priority public uses on refuges
 - Clarify the compatibility process
 - Completion of CCPs for all refuges within 15 years.
 - Biological Integrity Mandate



PLANNING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

- NWRS Volunteer and Community Partnership Act of 1998
 - Authorizes working with volunteers, NGOs, academic institutions, and local/state governments to assist refuge operations and deliver environmental education, outreach, etc.



PLANNING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

- 2000 – NWRS Outreach Initiative and Centennial Campaign.
- 2003 – Refuge System Centennial.
- 2005 – New FWS policies and standards to address the six priority public uses.



CONSERVING THE FUTURE



- 2011 – All NWRS meeting in Madison, WI with partners, states, etc.
- Charted course for NWRS over the next 10-15 years.
- Stressed the need for strong volunteer and Friends programs, partnerships to deliver recreation and demonstrate relevancy.
- Created the Urban Wildlife Refuge Program.

CONSERVING THE FUTURE

- 95 million acres of “traditional” lands
- 740 million acres of marine monuments.



CONSERVING THE FUTURE

So – how did NWRS GROW
from 6 acres to 835M acres?



SOURCES OF FUNDING

Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1964

Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp) of 1934

North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989

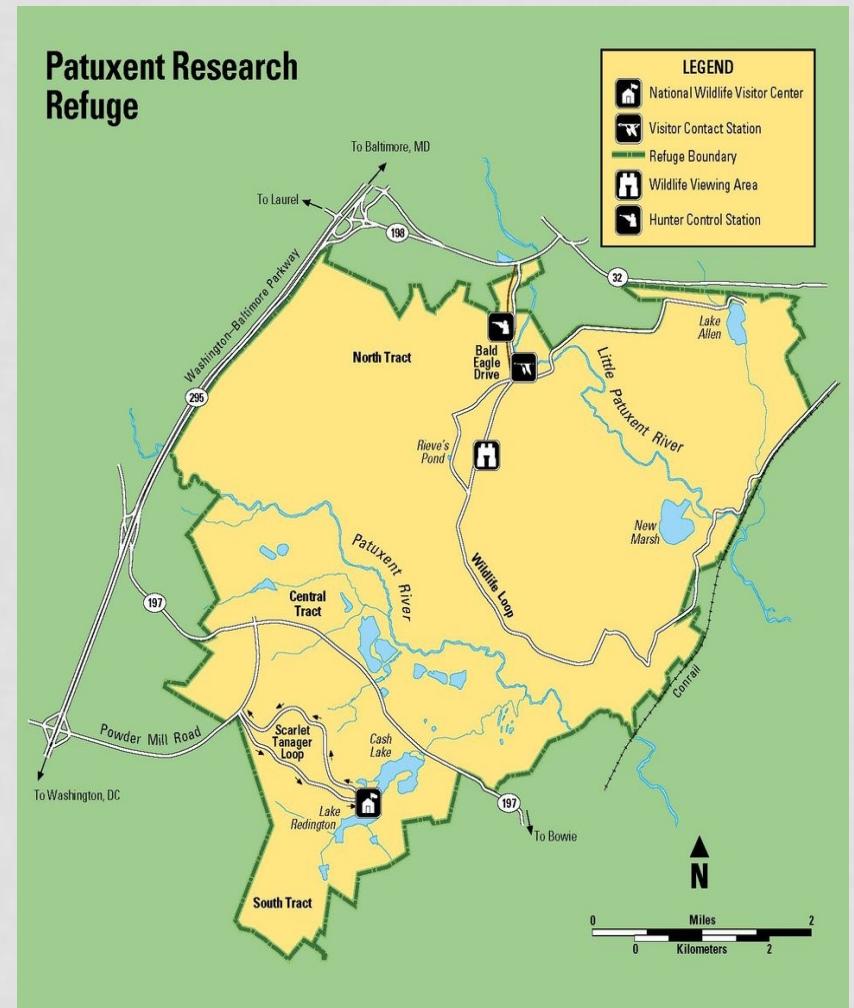
Natural Resources Damage Assessment Funds

Donations, legal settlements, etc.

Future – carbon sequestration; cap and trade???

CHANGES I HAVE SEEN

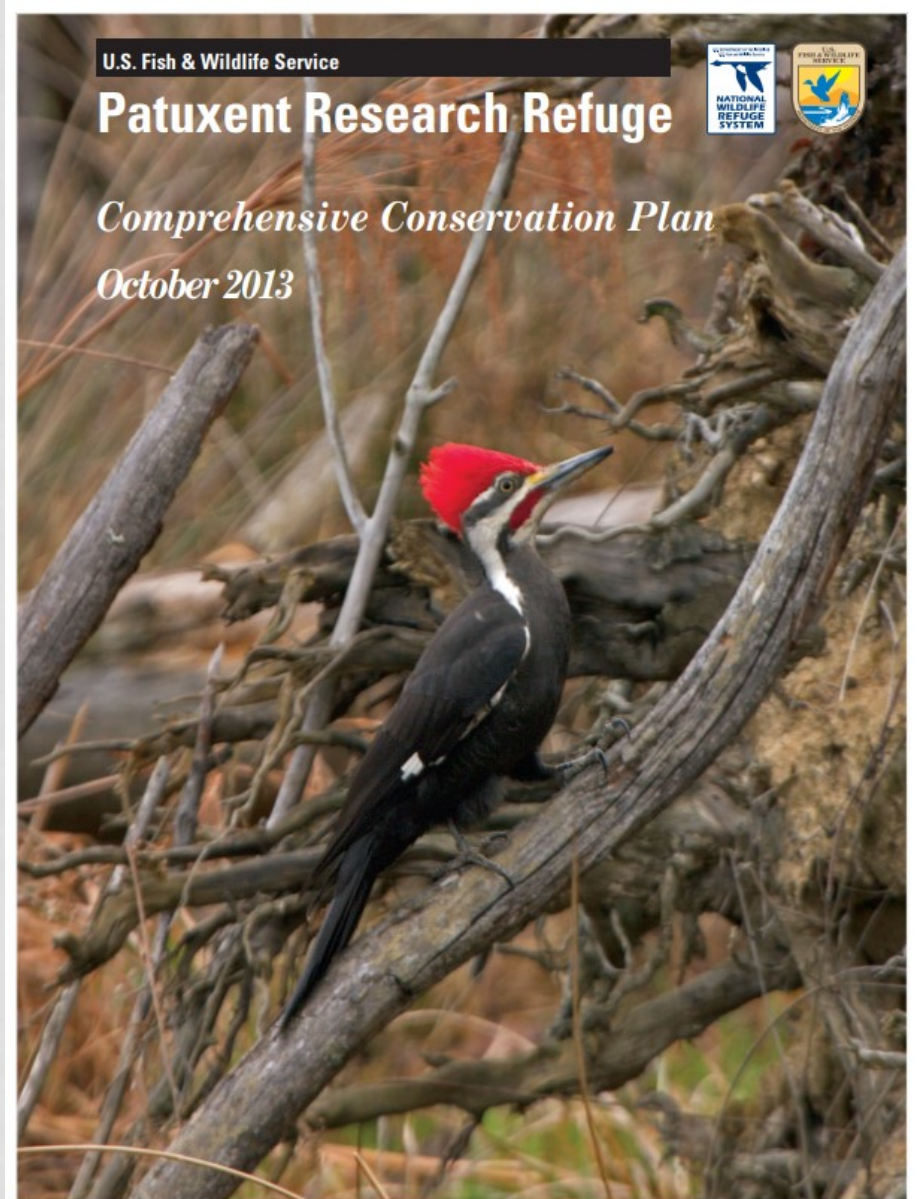
- Ability to look beyond the refuge boundary for impacts.
- Less field, more office!
 - Refuge managers - shift from fire boss and doing law enforcement to community liaisons and partnerships.
- More public accountability/access to staff/social media.



- Manage as a National Wildlife Refuge *System*.
 - Policies
 - Databases
 - Consistent Inventory and Monitoring procedures
- Being responsive to critters in crisis.
- BIDEH
- More diverse work force.



- Science driven decisions.
- More complex issues (?)/more training.



- Protect the wildlife.
- Encourage visitation.
- Take the refuge to the people





QUESTIONS?

