

*J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge*

*Upham, North Dakota*

*Annual Narrative Report*

*Calendar Year 2003*

*U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Wildlife Refuge System*

# *REVIEW AND APPROVALS*

*J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge*

*Upham, North Dakota*

*Annual Narrative Report*

*Calendar Year 2003*

*Robert J. Howard*  
Refuge Manager

*5/28/04*  
Date

*Bob Barnes*  
Refuge Supervisor Review

*6/9/04*  
Date

*Richard A. Coleman*  
Regional Office Approval

*9/13/04*  
Date

## INTRODUCTION

The J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge is located along the Souris River in Bottineau and McHenry Counties of north-central North Dakota. The refuge was established by Executive Order Number 7170 on September 4, 1935, as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds. The 58,700-acre refuge extends from Canada southward for approximately 45 miles. The nearest town is Upham, North Dakota, located about three miles from refuge headquarters.

Included within the refuge are 36,000 acres of upland habitat composed of native and introduced grasslands, thick woodlands, shrub thickets and croplands. The northern portion is basically confined to the river valley with a narrow band of adjacent upland habitat. The southern portion of the refuge contains about 16,000 acres of native prairie interspersed with aspen and brush covered sandhills and 4,200 acres of wooded river bottom.

Wetland habitats include high value managed deep and shallow marshes within the Souris River flood plain. Five dikes with water control structures have restored 23,000 acres of open water, marsh and wet meadow habitat for waterfowl production and migration use.

While the primary objective of the refuge is waterfowl production, the area has a very diverse population of other bird species. More than 250 species have been noted, including sharp-tailed grouse on their dancing grounds in spring; Swainson's hawks in great numbers in fall; a wide variety of waterbirds, including five species of nesting grebes; and relatively rare small birds such as Sprague's pipits and Baird's and LeConte's sparrows.

More than 125 species nest on the refuge, some in great numbers. Up to 17,000 Franklin's gulls and colonies of hundreds of double-crested cormorants, great blue herons and black-crowned night herons are found. In an average year, about 18,000 ducklings are produced, including pintail, mallard, gadwall, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal, American wigeon, northern shoveler, black duck, wood duck, redhead, ring-necked duck, canvasback, lesser scaup, and hooded merganser. White pelicans are present on the refuge all summer, while thousands of sandhill cranes, tundra swans, and snow geese use the refuge as a feeding and resting area during migration.

The entire refuge lies within an area which was once Glacial Lake Souris. The surrounding area is old lake bottom with extremely flat topography and a high density of temporary wetlands. These are important for waterfowl production and natural flood storage which improves water quality in the Souris River. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of the original wetlands have been drained.

## INTRODUCTION

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## A. HIGHLIGHTS

The CCP Vision and Goals meeting was held in Minot (D.1).

CCP public scoping meetings had poor attendance (D.3).

Audits took much of our time (E.8).

We have a couple of areas where we can declare victory over leafy spurge (F.10).

Drawing down Pool 320 produced good conditions for shorebirds (G.5).

Several Refuge System Centennial activities took place ( G. 16, H.1, H.11).

An officer was supplied for DOI Watch Office duty (H.17).

Acceptance of one residence project was delayed and another was canceled for FY 2003 (I.2).

Placement of additional oil wells on the refuge was not allowed (J..2).

Rehabilitation of historic Dam I was completed (I.2).

## B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Wild temperature swings occurred throughout January with highs in the 40s and lows - 30° or colder. Typical January. Spring could not decide whether to arrive or not as March temperatures ranged from the -30s to +50s.

We hit a dry period with essentially no rain for July. Grass, crops, and wetlands showed the stress. August was also very hot and dry, and warm, dry conditions continued for most of September. Temperatures early in the month were well above average, but we did get some rain which added some green to the landscape.

A snowstorm on October 29 dumped 9" of snow. Temperatures dipped below zero on Halloween, just a preview of coming attractions.

## C. LAND ACQUISITION

### 1. Fee Title.

Fee title acquisition is reported in the J. Clark Salyer WMD narrative.

## 2. Easement

Easement acquisition is reported in the J. Clark Salyer WMD narrative.

## D. PLANNING

### 1. Master Plan

Two days of meetings to create our Vision and Goals for the Souris River Loop refuges CCP were held on January 14 and 15. We got a good start as long as the refuges can retain control of the plan.

Howard attended the February meeting in Minot on Wetland Management District CCP's.

Staff reviewed the CCP public notice in January.

We responded in April to an RO Planning concern over low attendance at public scoping meetings and recommended additional meeting not be held. Documentation of pre-meeting publicity was supplied.

CCP visitor surveys were distributed whenever we got the chance. We got 5 for July, only slightly below the goal of 10 per day. We continued to hand out public use surveys through the summer and fall, but the number of visitors was very low. Surveys were sent to everyone with a refuge deer hunting permit and to participants of the October trail ride.

Comments were submitted on Planning Update #2.

Station staff participated in a 3-day wetland workshop on Upper Souris, Des Lacs and J. Clark Salyer NWR's to evaluate wetland management and wetland data needs for the CCP process.

Coordination on the easement refuge CCP began in November. Howard and Albright participated in the first easement refuge CCP planning session/meeting in Jamestown on the December 12.

### 3. Public Participation

Two CCP public scoping meetings were held in Bottineau and Towner on the March 26 and 27, respectively. Only one person showed for the Bottineau meeting, and he was the guy that had volunteered, on behalf of the hosting organization (Bottineau County Wildlife Club), to set up the meeting. The crowd in Towner dwarfed Bottineau by drawing 7 which included the wife and daughter of one of our employees. Even a snack purchased from Grannie's Donuts could not generate more attendance. Howard

represented the refuge at the Minot meeting. Attendance there was also very disappointing given the population of the area and amount of pre-meeting publicity.

#### 4. Compliance with Environmental and Cultural Mandates

We coordinated with the COE on the 404 permit application for the Dam I project.

#### 5. Research and investigation

Nest searches on the Grassland Trail got into full swing in June, but predation was very high. A fox den was located in the study area in spite of at least 2 coyote dens in the same area. Nest searches were wrapped up in July and vegetation surveys were started. Nest success was very low.

Staff met to discuss RLGIS and associated temporary staffing needs for upcoming field seasons.

### E. ADMINISTRATION

#### 1. Personnel



Back Row: Gary Eslinger, Todd Grant, Sarah Starbird, Bob April, Wanda Opdahl, Marlene Goodman, Chase Marshall and Robert Howard  
Front Row: Joe Guariglia, Dan Duchscherer, Lee Albright, Gary Erickson and Andrew Randall (North Dakota Interagency Dispatch Center)

Employees:

1. Robert L. Howard, Refuge Manager, GS-14, PFT
2. Gary Erickson, Assistant Refuge Manager, GS-13, PFT
3. Lee Albright, Wetlands Manager, PFT
4. Todd Grant, Wildlife Biologist, PFT
5. Gary Eslinger, Biological Technician, PFT
6. Wanda Opdahl, Administrative Officer, PFT
7. Robert April, Automotive Mechanic, -10, PFT
8. Marlene Goodman, Engineering Equipment Operator, WG-8, PFT
9. Jim Bohl, Equipment Equipment Operator. PFT
11. Daniel Duchscherer, Extension Biological Technician
12. Chase Marshall, Fire Management Officer, PFT
13. Andrew Randall, Center Coordinator for North Dakota Dispatch Center
14. Joseph Guariglia, Prescribed Fire Specialist, PFT,
15. Jerald Bahn, Range Technician, PCS
16. Colette Lunde, Range Technician
17. Dominick Mardsen, Range Technician, PCS
18. Damian Marsden, Range Technician
19. Ryan Wager, Range Technician
20. Gordon, Berkey, Biological Technician
21. Sarah Starbird, Biological Technician
22. Kasha Christopherson-Baus, Biological Technician
23. Robert April, II, Biological Technician
24. Christ Baus, Range Technician
25. Ben Cofell, Biological Technician
26. Kasha, Hansen, Biological Technician
27. Marvin Friel, Biological Technician
28. Amy Hammond, Biological Technician
29. Neil Kadrmas, Graduate Student
30. Deb Fowler-Caron, Biological Technician
31. Kari Berg, Biological Technician
32. Jerry 'Mike' McManus, Biological Technician
33. Eric Lang, Range Technician
34. Jeremy Thury, Biological Technician
35. Alicia Falkenbury, YCC Enrollee
36. Scott Robertson, YCC Enrollee
37. Jonas Tonneson, YCC Enrollee

Albright completed writing the PD, crediting plan, and job analysis for the 3-year term Biological Science Technician easement mapping position. Colette Lunde was selected for the position and started work on June 2. In addition to easement mapping, she had already prepared 140 easement maps for ground checks by the end of the month and completed a myriad of administrative tasks for the wetland district, some that have been backlogged since January of 2000.



Kasha and Christ Baus EOD in April as Bio and Range Techs, respectively.

Dispatcher Kasha Hansen ended her tour at J. Clark on May 27. Her spouse accepted a job with the park service at Stanton, ND. Ryan Wagner returned from college and started work on the 19<sup>th</sup>

Brian Harden, interagency fire dispatcher, resigned.

Vickie Bartow, SCEP from Audubon, visited the refuge.

Christ and Kasha Baus left on the September 24.

## 2. Youth Programs

Scott Robertson of Bottineau and Alicia Falkenberry and Jonas Tonnesson of Newburg started their YCC term on June 2.

YCC worked on building and grounds maintenance, fence removal, and vegetation surveys. Robertson, Tonnesson, and McManus helped band pelicans at Chase Lake NWR.

YCCs finished their tour of duty on the August 8.

## 4. Volunteers

Lots of volunteers showed up to help band ducks. At least 198 students and 41 adults helped with the banding efforts. They were from 9 schools including Midkota, Northwood, Hatton, TGU-Towner, TGU-Granville, Drake, Sawyer, MAFB-Memorial, and Minot State University - Bottineau along with folks from Arkansas and a few area residents.

Nancy Smette and her son completed our bluebird box survey and maintenance in October.

## 5. Funding

At almost 2/3 the way through the year, we were still getting mixed signals on whether or not our RONS project would receive full salary funding and any of the one-time support funding. It makes timely spending a bit difficult.

Table 1. Five-year funding summary, J. Clark Salyer NWR and WMD, 1999-2003

Funding	FY-99	FY-00	FY-01	FY-02	FY-03
1261	583,275	613,500	581,240	695,900	797,200
1262	27,000	85,000	89,900	95,500	159,000
1262-MMS			179,024	719,990	244,028
6860	7,800	7,000	7,800	8,000	8,000
O&M	618,075	705,500	857,964	1,591,390	1,208,228
1121	49,000	50,500	60,000	55,500	41,500
1231	24,000	26,500	24,900	24,700	6,500
1234				5,000	
1971	13,927		54,091	140,298	70,059
2111			32,200		
8610	15,500	11,000	8,000	14,662	10,281
9251	288,300	282,511	157,600	200,627	172,459
9263	22,200	60,000	186,900	196,932	242,217
TOTAL	1,031,002	1,136,011	1,381,655	2,229,109	1,751,244

#### 6. Safety

The Tier II report for stored potentially hazardous materials (gas, diesel, and propane) was completed and sent to the State Division of Emergency Management, County Emergency Coordinator, and the local fire department.

April completed Load Securement Instructor training in March. Bohl attended Commercial Pesticide Applicator training.

Bohl attended S-130/190 Basic Firefighter Training. We purchased a new, environmentally friendly parts washer. The sludge remaining after cleaning is contained in an easily removable container which is picked up by the company and disposed of. Staff completed annual fire training in April.

A station safety audit was completed in May with only one correction to be made (need to clean up the used oil tank). A mosquito trap was installed as part of a ND Health Department program to monitor for West Nile virus. Daily tailgate safety sessions were held at the Fire Cache. Wagner completed annual fire refresher training. We finally received the water sampling material we were to get following the safety audit two years ago. Samples were sent for analysis on June 24.



Howard played Mouse Man and cleaned up the winter accumulation of mouse droppings in the Barn kitchen.

Two large dumpsters of assorted trash, (most of which was once considered "stuff that might come in handy someday") were filled. Routine water samples from headquarters, Thompson Well and the Sandhills site were submitted through the year.

Neil Kadrmas cut his finger on the aluminum flashing drift fence and needed some stitches.

Fire extinguishers were inspected by Dakota Fire Extinguishers. The Sandhills Tower well was abandoned after testing positive for E. coli despite efforts to decontaminate the well.

Marshall helped instruct the Regional Federal Safety Workshop which stressed work to rest guidelines and contractor issues. He assisted with instructing at Devils Lake NWR, Dec Lacs NWR and at the Forest Service in Bismarck.

The Emergency Action Plan test for Dam 357 was completed in September. An EAP report and operation logs for Dam 357 were submitted to EN as requested in October.

Portable eyewash bottles for the spray trucks and an eyewash station were purchased.

April and Bohl had their hearing tested in December. Three smoke and CO detectors were installed in the office. The annual Tier II report was sent to the State, County Emergency Mgt. coordinator, and the local VFD.

#### 8. Other

The final report for the Mouse River II North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) project was completed and submitted in January.

Howard attended Board of Directors and Project Leaders meetings in Aberdeen.

The customer service survey was completed. Significant time was spent on the RPI update and certification.

Information was submitted as requested for RPI assets over \$100K, and we began gathering required information for assets under \$100K. We were also notified that we were one of the lucky stations to receive a site visit by KPMG auditors. The review was done on the June 4. We had to verify existence of good portion of our real property and a sample of our personal property chosen by the auditor. RPI tasks and documentation continued to take significant time through June. In July, Howard, Opdahl, and Erickson scurried around the old files/narratives searching for documentation for yet more Real

Property items as part of the audit that is never finished. The time wasted on this should be audited!

The station was informed by Sara Mott on July 28 that the MRP IV agreement was being sent to the Regional Chief for review and signature. \$2,400 and 160 acres of old match associated with an extension agreement with Gerald Henry and \$1,156 and 14 acres of old match associated with a ND Natural Resources Trust CRP wetland restoration incentive payment were removed from the grant.

Rick Coleman, Bob Barrett, and Lloyd Jones visited the refuge on the August 18. It was an enjoyable experience.

The performance period for completing the MRP III North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grant was extended until April 3, 2004. The \$360,000 MRP IV NAWCA Grant was signed on August 11. Ninety percent of the funds are targeted to grass easements.

Various staff completed the ABC survey, and non-staff cost information was supplied on selected items.

Howard attended a BOD meeting in Jamestown in December. He will continue to work on the fire staffing committee and a second committee with Fred Giese and Bob Barrett on trainee positions. Information on trainee guidelines, J. Clark minimum staffing and trainee history at J. Clark Salyer were sent to Barrett. Information on trainee PD's was sent to Upper Souris.

## F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

### 2. Wetlands

Dry conditions though the fall of 2002 and the 2002 - 2003 winter period produced only moderate spring runoff. Total inflow at Bantry was 61,532 acre-feet for the calendar year or 38 percent of the historic annual discharge, which has averaged 163,923 acre-feet for the 65 year period from 1938 through 2002. Measured inflows at Willow Creek and Deep River were 4,425 and 3,952 acre-feet, respectively. Total measured inflow to the refuge was 69,909 acre-feet.

Flow at Bantry peaked at 617 cubic feet per second on May 15 with the release of water from the Eaton Irrigation District. Willow Creek flow peaked at about 160 cubic feet per second on March 29, and Deep River peaked at 68 cubic feet per second on April 23. Flow at Bantry was below 10 cubic feet per second during late August and early September. No flow was recorded in Willow Creek after June 18 and Deep River after July 18.

About 9 cubic feet per second were being passed to Manitoba at the beginning of the year. Outflow was kept low through winter to conserve water. Movement of gates to draw down Pool 320, refill Pool 326, and bring other pools to target levels began on March 26. The most significant movement of control gates began on May 15 to manage the releases from Eaton Irrigation District and Lake Darling. Total pool volume peaked at 43,920 acre-feet on May 15, 1,711 acre-feet above the June 1 target.

Gates were operated through the summer to pass inflow, draw down Pool 320 for management purposes, and meet minimum flow requirements to Manitoba. A six day delay in notification by Eaton Irrigation District that they were releasing water and a malfunctioning gage at Bantry caused a jump in Pool 320 that in turn placed us behind schedule in dewatering the unit as planned. Flow volumes in the Souris River through mid-June hindered the process, and success of the revegetation effort in lower portions of the pool was limited. Pool 320 remained in draw down status at the end of the year and will be held in draw down through the 2004 growing season. A project to rehabilitate Dam I in the Souris River channel upstream from Pool 320 was underway from late August through October, and releases from Lake Darling to supplement the water supply were deferred to facilitate the work. Water to meet the minimum flow requirement was supplied from refuge marshes, and this resulted in lower than desired levels going into the winter. The total storage at the end of the year was 4,707 acre- feet less than the January 1 storage.

Total outflow measured at Westhope for 2003 was 52,288 acre-feet. Total outflow was 17,621 acre-feet less than total measured inflow. Outflow at Westhope peaked at 482 cubic feet per second on May 26. Flow was reduced on June 6, but remained near 200 cubic feet per second until June 30.

Outflow during the June 1 to October 31 period was 21,830 acre-feet, 15,761 acre-feet above the 6,069 acre-feet required minimum. The low flow structure was used from July 16 to the end of the period. Beaver caused some problems in the last half of the period by using the low flow inlet structure as a cache for willow branches. Strong south winds also pushed drifting vegetation into the low flow trash racks several times during September and October and resulted in daily mean flow of 20 cubic feet per second on October 25 and 28. Nine trips to Westhope to clean the trash rack were required, and we temporarily dropped below minimum on two occasions during the last week of operation when strong south winds caused rapid problem development. Gates were closed on November 1 to conserve water. Gates frozen in place before the 2 cubic feet per second planned winter release could be set, and very little water was released during November and December.

### 3. Forests

There are about 8,000 acres of mixed woodland on the southern end of the Refuge. Aspen and some oak are found in the Sandhills and meadows. There are stands of green ash, bur

oak, and American elm along the river. Scattered tree plantings are found in old farmsteads and in the headquarters area.

Aspen expansion in the grasslands of the Sandhills has occurred since bison and wildfires were eliminated from the area. It has greatly increased since the refuge was established. Areas that were once part of sharp-tailed grouse census blocks are now part of ruffed grouse drumming routes. Plans are being developed to reverse the trend and restore the native grasslands by using prescribed fire, grazing, and mechanical removal. This will take many years to accomplish but the present condition did not occur overnight. It is only reasonable to expect recovery to take time also.

##### 5. Grasslands

Thirty acres of native grass were seeded in G-60 in April. Staff conducted checks of 4-square mile plots to monitor haying of CRP for HAPET.

Seedbed prep operations were done in May on about 600 acres scheduled for grass seeding over the next 2-3 years. Goodman completed seeding 130 acres of native grass on the LaFromboise WPA in Rolette County by the end of May.

Seedings from 2002 look great by June, some with stipas nearly 5 feet tall.

Seedbed prep on planned seedings continued in July with Round-up application and some tillage. Lack of rain stressed refuge grasslands and essentially dried much private pasture.

Albright, Eslinger and Lunde participated in a vegetative monitoring refresher field session on the refuge led by Todd Grant on July 14.

Goodman seeded about 80 acres on a McHenry County FmHA easement before the October snow. Rocks were picked from two refuge fields scheduled for seeding and used on the Willow Creek road crossing.

Management, biological, and private lands staff met to discuss strategies for protecting native prairie in McHenry County. Results of the meeting were forwarded to the North Dakota Refuge Coordinator.

Despite the snow cover, Goodman seeded about 83 acres of DNC in A-37 and interseeded 14 acres of DNC in D-10 in November. The D-10 seeding is another effort to improve a poor DNC seeding from a couple years ago. The heavy no-till Truax drill worked well even with the snow cover.

## 7. Grazing

Details on stocking rates and timing for summer grazing were completed for several grazing units in March.

## 8. Haying

Haying is used to control woody invasion in the river meadows and, to a lesser extent, improve tame grass nesting cover. Willow invasion can happen quickly if the meadows are not hayed or if the cooperators do a poor job.

## 9. Fire Management

A RO decision was finally made in January about our suggestion to transfer the vacant Fire Program Tech position to Audubon NWR. The position has been upgraded and made PFT which will make employee retention much easier. Moving the position should also improve the Fire Management District's efficiency.

Marsden, Bahn, and Guariglia attended RX-340 (Fire Effects) training in Missoula, MT in January. Guariglia went to Lake Ilo NWR to gather information for burn plans and to check plans. Marshall went to Upper Souris NWR to check plans. Guariglia completed 5 burn plans for Audubon NWR. The new complexity analysis has slowed the process considerably. Nine new plans and 13 rewrites were needed in the Fire Management District before spring.

Marsden attended the Prescribed Fire Training Center located in Florida. While there he participated in several burns and completed tasks as Ignition Specialist and Burn Boss. He burned with 5 different agencies throughout central and southern Florida.

Marshall, Guariglia and Hansen attended the FMO meeting in Rapid City in February. Marsden and Guariglia assisted with final selections of the seasonal range techs.

Bahn and Hansen attended the Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation class in Nebraska.

Marshall, Guariglia and Hansen received NFPORS training at the FMO meeting. The National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System is going to be the budgeting and tracking system for all agency fire programs. The new system requires a lot of patience and time due to the amount and frequency of information needed to complete the requests and reports. Hansen attended I-100/200 in Bismark at the state fire school.

Fire plans developed in February included 6 for J. Clark Salyer NWR, 2 for Lake Ilo, and 1 for Upper Souris. Marshall reviewed 5 burn plans for Audubon, 5 for J. Clark Salyer, and 2 for Lake Ilo. A new go/no-go check list and cover page was added to the burn plan format.

Several burns were completed during April including: G-1, 400 acres; Savannah/G-51-280 acres; and D-45 natives 170 acres.

Seven burns were completed during May including: North State 80, 40 acres; A-30, 105 acres; CCC North, 320 acres; A-33, 95 acres; G-1, 80 acres; Benson Unit B (north), 245 acres; and Zeretsky (D-33), 20 acres. Four prescribed burns (235 acres) were completed for Upper Souris and 9 (612 acres) for Audubon. A prescribed burn was also completed on a portion of the Beatty WPA near Maxbass to facilitate a flea beetle insectary.

One 4-acre wildfire was found at the Juntunen WPA.

Guariglia completed two plans for the refuge in May. A seemingly steady flow of reports and spreadsheets were fed to the RO, most on very short notice. Marshall spent a lot of time updating NIFPORS for Salyer and assisting with NIFPORS and FMIS inputs at Audubon.

The station and Fire Management District (FMD) reviews were completed in June. We looked good which is a credit to FMO Marshall and the rest of the fire crew.

The ND Dispatch Center was working overtime in July and August arranging crews and equipment for fire assignments. Our crew was gone for most of the time. While on assignment, the crew worked on completing their task books when they weren't working a fire.

Two contractors looked at the firebreak project. Brushwackers Inc. of Mahnomon, MN was awarded the bid. Work on the firebreak project and some additional work on trees along part of the Scenic Trail was completed in August.

Albright, Marshall, Starbird, and Christopherson-Baus responded to a small fire ignited by lightning several miles east of the headquarters on July 13. Moderate rainfall and the Upham fire department had nearly extinguished the blaze by the time the Salyer crew arrived.

In August, Guariglia, Wagner and Damian Marsden spent two weeks on severity detail with the Helena Forest Service office, assisting on 5 fire suppressions. Guariglia, Dom Marsden and Baus spent 7 days with the Lewistown BLM and had no fires. Bahn, Lang and Wagner spent two weeks with the Black Hat hand crew in Rapid City, assisting with two fire suppressions. Bahn, Dom Marsden, Guariglia, Baus and Damian Marsden assisted the Medora Park Service with suppression of a 200-acre fire. All interagency vehicles were off the District. No prescribed burning was done.

Howard reviewed the Fire Program evaluation document and provided comments to the RO as requested.

Prescribed burning was on hold for most of September because of agency imposed



restrictions and moisture conditions. Preparedness level 5 ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> and two small burns (120 acres) on Upper Souris NWR were completed. Guariglia completed 2 plans and Marsden completed 1 for the refuge. Five burn units were prepped for fall burning. Chase Marshall and Eric Lange spent 10 days at CMR Jordan Station in September. There were no fires, but a lot of interface with elk hunters stressing burning restrictions.

Prescribed burning for October included G-39c, 180 acres; 332 Public Hunting Area, 120 acres; and G-50 West, 80 acres. The G-50 burn was hot, burning off live aspen trees in an area that had also been grazed this summer. One 160-acre burn was done on Upper Souris NWR and assistance was provided for 3 burns covering 418 acres on Audubon NWR.

Field inspections were completed for numerous burn areas for the planning process. Guariglia gathered information for writing plans for J. Clark, Marsden for Upper Souris, and Bahn wrote plans for J. Clark and Audubon. Three units were prepped for fall burning. Marshall started the updates to the Fire Management Plan.

A wildfire was found on the Carlyle Lake WPA in October. The fire was 244 acres in size with 76 acres burned on the WPA. The fire was suppressed by local VFD's.

FMO Marshall attended the Regional FMO meeting held in Gehring, NE in November. IDP's for all permanent fire personnel were updated. Firebase equipment requests were entered into the system for all stations in the fire management district. Guariglia completed 7 burn plans for J. Clark Salyer NWR.

A commitment was made to host the Interagency Fire Council meeting here again on January 7.

Guariglia and Wimer (Audubon NWR) were nominated for S-330(strike team leader) training. Marshall, Bahn and Marsden were nominated for I-300 (Intermediate ICS) training. Marsden went to Upper Souris NWR to get information for writing their burn plans. Bahn helped Audubon NWR write some burn plans. One plan was finished for J. Clark NWR and one for the WMD.

#### 10. Pest Control

Several spurge beetles releases were showing promise in May as stands of dead spurge were evident. Spurge spraying began in June. Spurge beetle emergence was slow, but we finally have established insectaries in 3 locations: The Grassland Trail; Stone Creek; and the Westhope Golf Course.

Spurge spraying was completed in July. Two spray trucks were repaired after losing confrontations with rocks. Spurge beetles were thick on the Grassland Trail and to a lesser extent, Stone Creek and the Westhope Golf Course. We moved an estimated 1,480,000 bugs to 17 Bottineau and 7 McHenry County sites. We finally have a couple areas where we can declare victory over spurge!

Thanks the newly productive insectiary located on the Grassland Trail, leafy spurge flea beetles were released on the following WPA's: Weinrebe - 40,000; Foster - 20,000; Wolford - 80,000; Armstrong - 180,000; and Boreson - 400,000.

## G. WILDLIFE

### 1. Wildlife Diversity

The refuge is located in an area where the ranges of eastern and western species overlap, increasing the wildlife diversity found here. Deer, pheasant, partridge, rabbit, grouse, many species of passerine birds, rodents and waterfowl are found on and around the refuge.

A black bear spent several days in the area, harassing a pair of shoes hanging on a clothes line at a neighbors place. People were driving around the countryside in hopes of catching a glimpse of Yogi or Booboo.

Five Ruddy Shelducks were using Pool 320 in July. These are an Afro-Eurasian species popular in zoos and private collections, so who knows where these came from.

### 2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

Erickson and Albright recovered a wounded immature Bald Eagle North of Maxbass on April 4. Albright made arrangements with Northwest Airlines and the Raptor Rehab Center in Minneapolis and transported the bird to Minot on April 6.

A request for eagle parts by a member of the Turtle Mountain Tribe for Sun Dance Ceremony use was referred to SA Grosz.

### 3. Waterfowl

Over 100,000 snow geese were here on the October 28. The snowfall the next day moved them on and by month's end essentially everything was gone. A few Canada geese and mallards stuck it out for a short time. Nothing stayed long with frozen wetlands and deep snow in stubble fields.

Information on 4 square mile survey pond replacement was reviewed in December.



#### 4. Marsh and Water Birds

Eared grebes are the most abundant marsh and waterbird on the refuge. The breeding population is an estimated 20,000 birds. Black-crowned night herons, cattle egrets, and white-faced ibis, pied-billed grebes, and American coots also raise their young on the refuge. White pelicans are common in the summer months, feeding at the refuge. A nesting colony of pelicans is found on Willow Lake Easement Refuge located 30 miles northeast.

Cattle egrets, black crowned night herons, and Franklin's gulls nested in Pool 332 this year.

#### 5. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns and Allied Species

Many species of shorebirds use the refuge for feeding and nesting. Franklins gulls, ring-billed gulls, common, black and Forster's terns are present on the refuge. Willets, yellow-legs, sandpipers, godwits, and avocets among other shorebird species are also seen throughout the year.

Drawing down 320 produced large areas of shallow water and mudflats which shorebirds and waterfowl were using. Berkey and Ron Martin spent a couple hours surveying and identified 14,920 shorebirds of 20 species. They also estimated there were at least as many birds too far out in the pool to identify.

#### 7. Other Migratory Birds

The Vo-Ag class at TGU-Towner School made 48 bluebird boxes for us. They used them for State Fair projects first, then we picked them up.

The Christmas bird count was completed by refuge staff and volunteers. A record 34 species and 1,247 individual birds were tallied. A couple of goshawks are working the headquarters area, keeping the pheasants nervous.

#### 10. Other Resident Wildlife

There are many species of resident birds in and around the refuge. The main game bird species are sharp-tailed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, grey partridge, wild turkey and ruffed grouse. Censuses are done each year to determine grouse and pheasant populations. Informal counts done during routine work are done on wild turkey and grey partridge.

Wild turkeys have been on the refuge since introduced in 1979. The turkey population is doing very well in the wooded river bottoms and the sandhill areas. We seem to see a

general expansion of the turkeys to private land near the refuge. These areas have more cropland and hayland interspersed, perhaps offering more reliable food sources for the turkeys.

Porcupine, coyote, red fox, squirrels, cottontail rabbit, white-tailed jackrabbit, snowshoe hare, Franklin's ground squirrels, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, weasel, and many other small mammals are common to the refuge. Moose are becoming more common, and we believe a breeding population now exists on the refuge.

There is no official census of grey partridge on the refuge. Populations have always been low since there is not much preferred habitat on the refuge.

Sharptail grouse numbers were up 36 percent from last year.

Life may start to get difficult for pheasants as winter progresses. There is a good snowpack on most stubble, and some wetlands are full of snow making feeding and finding cover tough.

#### 11. Fishery Resources

Northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, and bullheads are the primary fish on the refuge. The refuge has fourteen public fishing areas.

#### 16. Marking and Banding

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department contacted us about banding doves this summer, and we agreed. Three mourning dove banding sites were prepared and baited in June. Stan Kohn, NDG&F, was here on the June 25 to go over banding methods. The sites were checked daily, but only 6 birds were banded. One of the birds was captured again and killed in the trap by an unknown predator.

Pre-season duck banding ended with 5,428 ducks banded on 11 mornings. We titled one of our Centennial events "Celebrate Waterfowl" and attempted to get the public more involved in the banding activity. A special Saturday shoot was conducted to involve persons who could not make it on weekdays in the Centennial event. At least 198 students from 9 schools and 41 adults were involved including some from as far away as Arkansas. The Zeretske site produced 2 big shoots, 929 and 880 ducks, along with a couple mornings when the ducks did not cooperate. Species breakdown: Wigeon-239; Wood duck-8; Gadwall-2; Pintail-1,321; Black duck-4; and Mallard-3,854. Thanks to folks from Upper Souris, Des Lacs and Lake Ilo for the help.

## 17. Disease Prevention and Control

Only a few birds have been picked up in 332 in July. Water quality was good, and we avoided a botulism outbreak this year.

A great horned owl picked up west of Newburg tested positive for West Nile Virus.

## H. PUBLIC USE

### 1. General

Many people use the refuge for outdoor education. The prairie, grassland management, water management, waterfowl, law enforcement, hunter safety, and hunting prospects are some topics covered during the year. Picnicking and birdwatching are also significant uses.

Staff celebrated the National Wildlife Refuge System birthday with a potluck lunch, birthday cake and display of items for the time capsule. News releases and personal invitations resulted in only three non-staff participants. One former CCC worker (1941-1942) enjoyed reviewing photos in narrative reports from that period.

One hundred bird lists and lesser quantities of several other Service and Refuge brochures were sent to the Dakota Birding Club in Drake.

Howard was interviewed for a Game and Fish centennial video series on ND refuges.

The Smithsonian centennial exhibit was back on in a slightly reduced format. Howard reviewed a script for the J. Clark Salyer portion. We continued to coordinate through September with Smithsonian personnel on images for the America's Wildest Places display.

The article titled, "Pass the Steak, Hold the Potatoes", authored by Dan Duchscherer was published in the Fall 2003 edition of Birdscapes.

Howard gave a short presentation on North Dakota Refuges and the Refuge Centennial and a second presentation on the Souris Loop Refuges to the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Council at Upper Souris.

Our airboat was loaned to DesLacs NWR for use in their Centennial Celebration. A news release advertising a Saturday duck banding day was sent to area news outlets. Erickson did a radio interview on duck banding for Tony Dean Outdoors.

Staff reviewed and commented on a draft update of our general brochure. Cindy Souders visited the refuge to work on brochure updates and to gain some perspective on refuge resources.

Web pages for the refuge and WMD were re-written and submitted per the RO request.

## 2. Outdoor Classrooms – Student

Albright, Duchscherer, and Erickson taught a Hunter Education class, graduating seven students. That seems to be another sign of the population decline in ND as our class sizes have declined steadily over the past 5 years.

Albright and Howard presented 5 programs each on Wetlands, Wildlife & Banding/Refuge Pool Management to 120 7<sup>th</sup> graders during the Bottineau County Conservation Tour on September 9. The Refuge hosted this year's event to promote the 2003 Refuge Centennial.

Albright presented 6 programs on Wetlands & Wildlife to 300 kids during the Rolette County 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Conservation Tour at the International Peace Garden.

## 4. Interpretive Foot Trails

The refuge has two foot trails for public use. A short 0.1-mile trail leads from headquarters through a switchgrass seeding to a platform overlooking the Pool 326 marsh. The Sandhills Walk area is an access point to the sandhills, giving visitors the chance to explore some 8,000 acres of mixed bur oak, aspen and grassland community on the south end of the refuge.

## 5. Interpretive Tour Routes

The refuge has two auto tour routes. A 5-mile Grassland Trail that parallels a portion of Pool 341 offers visitors an opportunity to see grassland and wetland wildlife and scenery. This trail has 7 stops and an interpretive pamphlet which explain the history, features and management of the area. Many birdwatchers go to this area to see Baird's sparrow and chestnut collared longspur.

The second auto tour route starts at headquarters and goes for 22 miles through the marshlands and wooded river bottoms near Pools 326, 320, and the sandhills on the southern end of the refuge. This route gives refuge visitors a chance to see the diversity of habitat found on the refuge and provides information at 18 interpretive sites along the trail.

#### 6. Interpretive Displays/Exhibits

Carol and Bob Howard staffed the FWS booth at the Minot Sports Show on the March 8.

Albright and Erickson each spent a day at the State Fair handing out trash bags.

Howard participated in the Activity Fair at Minot State University - Bottineau.

#### 7. Other Interpretive Programs

Starbird and Duchscherer were judges at science fairs in Westhope and Willow City, respectively.

Erickson spoke on upland habitat management to the Range Science and Environmental Science classes at Minot State University - Bottineau.

Howard assisted the Bottineau County Wildlife Club with hunter safety for about 60 students.

Howard participated in a Regional Career Fair in Bottineau involving about 26 schools. He was presented with a plaque for participation in 19 such events over the years.

Howard delivered wildlife trunks and conducted teacher workshops for area 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in Rugby and Bottineau.

#### 8. Hunting

Most waterfowl hunting is done off the refuge on private land. Decoying the large flocks of snow geese that come off the refuge attracts hunters from all over the country. There are nine public hunting areas on the refuge that are open for waterfowl hunting. Most hunters using these areas prefer pass shooting geese as they leave the refuge.

Upland game hunting for grouse, partridge, and pheasants is allowed on the Public Hunting Areas. Grouse, partridge, and turkey hunting is also allowed south of the Upham-Willow City Road.

A few goose hunters stopped or called in March, all in search of the elusive snow goose. Few can understand spring migration behavior of these birds.

Two juvenile archery deer hunters got lost on the south end of the refuge on the September 17. They did not have a compass but did have a cell phone which gave them enough intermittent signal to call for help and describe where they were. The description was off by about 3 miles, but they were found by 11:15 PM in spite of that. They got lucky, because they were not equipped for the cool and rainy conditions.

Staff responded to many phone calls and questions from walk-in hunters. The North Dakota deer season ended with the normal amount of nausea caused by watching the ethics and tactics employed by a lot of hunters. We issued 4 access permits to hunters with disabilities and one additional refuge permit for a soldier on leave from Iraq so he could hunt with family.

A few hunters chased pheasants through late November and December, but the heavy stands of cattails plus snow cover made for tough hunting. The birds also got spooky quickly, often flushing way ahead of dogs and hunters.

#### 9. Fishing

Northerns were biting regularly in March at Freeman Bridge and 326, and several local residents took advantage of that during most of the month.

A few folks tried their luck at Freeman Bridge, 326, and Dam 1 in December. The luck was mostly bad.

#### 11. Wildlife Observation

Many visitors enjoy non-consumptive use of the refuge each year. Most of the visits are to see the fall and spring bird migrations. Numbers of visits are not recorded. Many visits are on the weekends and many visitors do not stop at refuge headquarters.

Metigoshe Ministries hosted their annual retreat which included a trip to the refuge on Migratory Bird Day. Thirty folks spent part of a cold day looking for birds and avoiding rain showers.

Erickson attended the McHenry County Commission meeting at their request to discuss birding/wildlife observation opportunities in the county. Folks are slowly seeing the potential economic benefits of "eco-tourism" and want to get on the bandwagon.

The new publication, "Birding North Dakota" describes the refuge as "This incredible refuge is the single best birding spot in North Dakota, and, in fact, is one of the best birding spots in the entire country." Pretty much says it all.

Goodman coordinated with sponsors to organize a trail ride on October 5, and 38 riders showed up for a ride through part of the Sandhills to celebrate the Refuge System Centennial/National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Albright responded to an inquiry from Aimee Erdman, a student at Minot State University - Bottineau. Aimee and a group from the school are planning a day of birding next May that would center around Lords Lake easement refuge. Information was

provided along with a recommendation that the group consider focusing the birding activities on J. Clark Salyer Refuge.

#### 14. Picnicking

Picnickers use the Thompson Well site, the Sandhills Tower picnic area, the Headquarters Tower picnic area and some of the public fishing areas. No effort is made to record the number of visits.

#### 17. Law Enforcement

Although he no longer has LE authority, Howard was the subject of another background investigation. We have been involved in a number of interviews over the years for station staff and staff from other refuges. This was by far the most thorough and the most intrusive – a sign of the times? Howard's wife was really impressed when the investigator walked in the public school teacher's lounge at lunch time, flashed a badge, and inform her that he needed to talk to her about her husband. She also questioned the propriety of some of the questions asked.

LE staff returned from Marana fully inGLOCKulated. Erickson assisted SA Grosz on a case in McHenry County.

Albright completed a 3 week tour of duty at the DOI Watch Office from February 19 to March 14. He was designated as a Watch Technician and assigned the 5:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. shift, (10 hour shifts 7 days per week counting the paid ½ hour walk each way from the office to the hotel). Just the travel and per diem costs to DOI for the detail were \$5,752.

DOI is regularly rotating 5 employees in and out of the Watch Office every 3 weeks. This equates to an annual expense of \$497,000 in travel and per diem. Throw in another \$330,000 for just the overtime salary and the annual expense becomes \$827,000. The primary duties were actually administrative in nature: Writing incident reports; answering the phone; surfing the Internet; filing; and watching 3 TV's simultaneously. Replacing these 5 detailed slots with 7 permanent GS-7's would cost about \$294,000 for salary and benefits.

Howard responded to questions on border security. Photos of the boundary area were scanned and sent to the WO.

LE staffing needs were provided for the statewide deployment plan.

Our old handguns and associated leather gear were boxed and sent according to instructions.



Howard participated in the IACP information gathering meeting in Bismarck.

Two trees stands which were being left on the refuge were seized, and an NOV issued when the owner stopped by to claim them. He was also baiting the sites.

Albright worked duck hunters within several large wetlands on October 4 and 5. A warning was issued to a group of 3 from Minnesota concerning the need to maintain individual bag limits. Albright later received a thrashing from a local landowner for allowing hunters to hunt within the boundary of Smokey Lake located between McHenry and Pierce County. The landowner considers it unacceptable to allow waterfowl hunting over water.

Another landowner near Rugby called Albright on October 7. He was distraught because waterfowl hunters from Minnesota had been hunting over water on the Meyer WPA. The individual owns land adjacent to the WPA. In 2000, following a complaint from a hunter, Albright and Klett had visited this landowner regarding "no boating \$100 fine" signs he had placed around the co-owned wetland. The individual now stated the hunting in the area had been ruined because all the birds had been chased off the water, since they had no place to roost. He provided Albright with an ultimatum. The Service either has to buy the portion of the wetland he owns for \$1000/acre or prohibit waterfowl hunting on the WPA. If these demands are not met, several of the landowners in the area are going to orchestrate an uprising against the FWS. The landowner called looking for Albright again on October 24, following the drowning of a waterfowl hunter on a wetland in the Devils Lake District near Knox.

On October 3, Albright issued citations to two hunters near Karlsruhe for a daily over bag of ducks.

On October 22 and 24, Albright followed up on a separate tips pertaining to vehicle trespass on the Ox Creek WPA in Rolette County and the Wolford WPA in Pierce County.

Officers spent time patrolling the refuge and part of the WMD during deer season. No violations were found.

Albright worked 38 hours of LE over 10 days of the 16½ day deer gun season. Fourteen WPA signs were replaced and or added to the Beatty WPA near Maxbass prior to the season in preparation for anticipated vehicle trespass on this unit. Albright conducted surveillance on the tract and observed many hunters. At one time, 9 vehicles were situated around the perimeter of the unit. However, significant snow accumulation made it virtually impossible for a vehicle to ingress onto the WPA.

There was significant vehicle hunting activity along Highway 14 adjacent to the closed area of the refuge around the headquarters. Several large bucks were seen in this part of



the refuge. Unfortunately, they ultimately met their demise when they followed does off the refuge into an adjacent stubble field. A suspected bait pile was located in a tree row that attracted does off the refuge into the private field every evening.

Howard checked out a complaint of a snowmobile running deer near Upham. Nothing was found.

Albright responded to a request from SA Grosz on the 5<sup>th</sup> to evaluate a residence in Kramer to determine the extent of recent occupancy or activity. Apparently, the recipient of a citation issued by SA Grosz for a violation occurring this fall has fled Kramer, ND to Mexico.

Howard provided some additional information for a border security meeting in December.

## I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

### 2. Rehabilitation

A final inspection of the new duplex found numerous items needing correction. A second walk-through at the end of the month resulted in several remaining problems. A second inspection of the duplex project on the February 7 found many of the punch list items uncorrected. All punch list items were finally completed in June. The cost of the project was over \$329,000, which does not include items the station supplied including stove, refrigerator, washer, and dryer for both units, furnace and propane tank, and landscaping/driveway construction. The cost of over \$180/square foot is about 3 times the going rate in the area.

Martin and Sons Construction started and finished riprapping Wilmer, Mary, V, Henry, and Gravel Islands in Pool 326 and Cormorant Island in Pool 320 in January. Rocks were left, but CGS told us the contractor was only obligated to repair the 6 priority islands listed on the contract, not the additional 3 also listed. We had proposed the project be advertised and bid as hauling and placing a quantity of rock which would allow us to repair as many islands as the quantity of rock would allow. But, somehow in the negotiations for this special set-aside contract our proposal was eliminated. We inherited some rock, adding to what we were planning to haul over the winter.

April, Goodman, and Boh finished riprapping Scaup and Willow Clump Islands in Pool 326 and Tern Island in 320 in February. Willow Clump may eventually need some more rock, but we used all we had on hand. We finished riprapping Near Island in 320 in March. Only a small pile of rock remains from the MMS project.

Plans are underway for construction of the new residence to replace quarters 40. Albright has been designated as the on-site inspector. The MMS package originally submitted requested \$223,000 (minus EN costs) for a 1,500 square foot house. Engineering was

expecting a low bid in the \$240,000 range. We are supplying the furnace, hot water heater, and appliances for the new residence with quarters funds to reduce costs. Albright also decided to forego a new garage in order to get a full unfinished basement if funding was short. We found in April this project was designated as another set aside, our fourth in a row, and Contracting was negotiating with the same contractor that we were still haggling with to get the overpriced duplex project completed. As of July 31, an agreement with the 8A contractor to build the new quarters project had still not been reached. Engineering, Contracting, and the contractor continue to negotiate over the various costs for the house. The project was canceled for FY 2003 in August.

Albright assisted David Hightower from Engineering finalize a complete list of potential contractors for a second try at the quarters project in FY2004. There were 68 contractors on the list. David has been a very positive and practical person to work with on this project.

Howard took some digital photos and scanned some historic photos of Dam I to assist in historical evaluation and design of a rehab project for the structure. Preliminary designs for the project were reviewed in May. Howard participated in the preconstruction conference for the project in August, and the contractor was at work at the end of the month. A test section was immediately completed, and the contractor's overall plan for reconstruction was approved by the RO. The right downstream wingwall, right abutment, and much of the right portion of the main dam structure were completed by the end of September, and the project was finished in late October. Howard conducted the final inspection and sent a completion report to the RO. The appearance of the completed project closely matches that of the structure in 1936 photos.

Several TEA-21 projects entered in the MMS database by the RO have unrealistically high costs which were based on DOT information. Improvement of roads such as the Scenic Trail or Grassland Trail to the standards used in the DOT report is unnecessary and would detract from the environmental setting of the refuge. Concerns on these projects were sent to the RO in May.

Howard negotiated with North Central Electric Cooperative to have a settling transformer pad at the 326 structure reset.

CGS, Engineering, and the contractor for the observation tower built last fall argued over the lack of a handrail that is "up to code" on the tower. Basically, Engineering relied on a statement in the specs that covers them for any oversight in the specs.

Coordination with EN began in September on the potential FY2004 storage building replacement project. Coordination also began on heating system, headquarters kiosk and radio system replacement (deferred maintenance) projects in October.

Work was started in September on installing a Texas Crossing in a stretch of the Scenic Trail between the Willow Creek bridge and Thompson Well. The project was essentially completed in October. This was part of a project to control flood overflow areas that could not be completed under an earlier contract due to weather and quantity calculation problems.

A MMS dam security project entered by the RO based at the request of Dam Safety calls for measures that have been in place since 1992 (security fence, locking gate, locks, locking controls), but who are we to question the recommendations of contracted consultants? It sure did not do any good for us to provide comments on the Dam 357 Hazzard Classification Report in March of 2002 – they still have not been answered. We learned in December some of these measures were still being planned by the Dam Safety Office. Howard provided additional comments.

### 3. Major maintenance

The roof-top propane furnace units required repair again early in the year. In December, we were already experiencing more problems. Also, a damper on the solar system apparently stuck, and the hot water heating coils froze and burst again. The MMS heating system replacement project tentatively scheduled for this year was dropped out of the MMS list, so we have to keep struggling with the system for awhile longer.

Howard spent some time exploring the new Web based version to Maximo (SAMMS) software. It seems to solve the connectivity problems of the 4.1 version. He participated in a conference call/Web Share training session in March on Mobile Maximo in preparation for a field test of PDA's for use with SAMMS. The test was canceled after the first test at Back Bay NWR concluded the units would be of little practical use for field implementation of SAMMS. Howard and Erickson spent a week at NCTC in June for yet another SAMMS training session. The new software version is a big improvement and there are some shortcuts that were not previously available, but the system will still make huge demands on time at individual stations. Some segments of the training were modified or scrapped based on pilot team input. There were also some major changes in the system based on earlier pilot team comments and requests. We finally got access to the SAMMS training database at the end of the July.

Howard coordinated with Steve Odegaard, COE, on depressions that are forming in riprap along the faces of Dams 326 and 357. Pictures of areas of settling were printed out in July for COE personnel who were on site to look at the problem. Howard also participated in a conference call with COE staff on potential modifications of the electrical systems on the water control gates. Howard completed a condition assessment of refuge dams and water control structures with Steve in October.

Five loads of gravel were spread on the 326 access road in March.

The accessible observation ramp was repainted, and the asphalt walking trail sealed and connected to the new observation tower.

A roofing project started in July when shingles were removed from the 6-stall garage prior to installing steel. By the end of September, steel roofing was installed on the 6-stall, shop, service building, and old office.

The 5-mile Grassland Trail was graveled in August. The first 1.8-mile segment of the 320 patrol road was reshaped and prepped for gravel.

The like new 106,000 BTU fuel oil furnace was moved out of the old duplex and installed in Quarters 40.

The fire bunk house was winterized by Walsh's Refrigeration, and the duplex and barn were handled by refuge staff.

Two electrical switches were replaced on the oil furnace in quarters 40 after Albright awoke to a brisk 55 degrees on December 4.

#### 4. Equipment replacement

A Ford F-150 4x4 arrived in February to replace a 1985 oil burning, rusted Suburban with over 130,000 miles.. Good Trade!

The second truck requisitioned at the same time was never ordered, and we were never notified of that oversight. The order has now been placed.

Two F-150 pickups arrived in March. Four vehicles were declared excess.

Two tractors that we did not need , a JD 2040 and JD 2640, were transferred to Ft.Niobrara NWR in April.

Two military dump trucks, a Case 14H payloador, a military surplus MF tractor, small tandem disc, 9' sickle bar mower, a Woods rotary mower, JD harrow, and a digitizing table were sold through GSA.

The Ford 9030/drum chopper was hauled to Bottineau for service and fuel pump repair.

Staff coordinated on the radio replacement project and filled out the project questionnaire and frequency table as much as possible with our limited knowledge of the proposed new equipment.

A listing of all complex vehicles with a replacement plan was developed and submitted.

We are looking into options to replacing our aging scales and postage meter. It looks like replacing the scales and going to locally purchased stamps or a stamps on-line system will save money over postage meter rental.

One of the newer fire support vehicles was taken in for warranty service after we found an oil and transmission leak.

The military excess 1972 MF tractor with slope mower was finally sold for \$2,050 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt.

#### 6. Computer Systems

Three desktop computers, a laptop, CD drive, 3 zip drives, and a fax were donated to the TGU-Towner school in March.

FileMaker Pro 6.0 was installed on several computers.

Everyone completed IT training as required.

Staff were trained on new GPS equipment and software in August.

Problems accessing SAMMS were traced to some changes made in Washington that required changes in Windows and Internet Explorer settings.

Four more computers were donated to TGU Schools in November.

### J. OTHER ITEMS

#### 2. Other Economic Uses

Howard met on-site with BLM and Ward Williston Oil Company to discuss proposed location of new wells on an existing lease site to access a new lease area which has a no surface occupancy provision. Our EA and compatibility determination were based on no surface occupancy for the proposed new lease and no additional development on existing refuge lease tracts. A copy of the draft EA had been supplied to BLM, and the company had been told two years ago approval of new on-refuge wells was highly unlikely. The proposed sites are just 30 and 65 yards inside the refuge boundary, and oil from the new lease area is presently being recovered by on-refuge wells, just not as fast as they would like. The company finally seemed to get the message and is presently negotiating for placement of the new wells on adjacent private land where they already have wells and other production facilities.

After requesting information for two audits over the last couple of years, a site visit by GAO auditors in which all of our active oil wells were visited and photographed, and

several follow-up calls to confirm data, the GAO report is not correct for our oil well data. They have us listed for inactive wells only.

### 3. Items of Interest

Albright, Duchscherer, and Erickson went to the Mouse River DU Chapter dinner/auction in Towner. All came home with less money and more treasures.

Erickson met in July with a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa to arrange for aspen and willow cutting in preparation for a Sundance Ceremony. This ceremony is sacred to the Chippewa, Assiniboine, and Cree people and has not been held since the 1850s.