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## **CONSERVATION LEADERS HONORED WITH 2013 REFUGE SYSTEM AWARDS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., FEBRUARY 13, 2013** – The National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation today announced the honorees for the prestigious annual National Wildlife Refuge System Awards. The awards honor the Refuge Manager, Refuge Employee, Refuge Volunteer and Friends Group of the Year.

“The Refuge System could not function, let alone be the bright star of conservation in the United States that it is, if it weren’t for dedicated individuals and groups like these,” said David Houghton, NWRA President.

The 2013 Refuge System Award winners are:

### **Andrew C. French: The Paul Kroegel Refuge Manager of the Year Award**

Mr. French has been selected as the recipient of the **Paul Kroegel Award for Refuge Manager of the Year** for his innovation, leadership, and critical involvement in the nomination and subsequent designation of the Connecticut River Watershed as the first National Blueway. As the Refuge Manager of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and the Stewart B. McKinney and John Hay National Wildlife Refuges, French has demonstrated that these three refuges, which extend from the Canadian border to Long Island Sound, are assets in their local communities as well as within the Connecticut River Watershed. During his 33-year career with the Service, French has demonstrated exemplary success in fostering landscape level conservation, environmental education efforts, and recreation partnerships in action.

### **Jackie Jacobson: The Employee of the Year Award**

Ms. Jacobson will receive the **Employee of the Year Award** for her outstanding work as the Visitor Center Manager at Audubon NWR in North Dakota. Jacobson’s influence does not end at her refuge, it extends well beyond as a result of the North Dakota Education Team, a statewide institution she established that has reached over 80,000 people through the development of numerous environmental education products. Through her passion for wildlife, dedication to conservation and excellent leadership, communication skills and efficient approach to projects, Jacobson has not only touched the lives of hundreds of young people but she has protected and conserved prairie and wetland habitats for future generations.



### **Bob Ebeling: The Volunteer of the Year Award**

Mr. Ebeling will receive the **Volunteer of the Year Award** in recognition of the more than 10,000 volunteer-hours he has donated at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah, ranging from using his professional engineering skills to restore habitat and infrastructure on the refuge, to providing visitor services in the Education Center, and countless other invaluable efforts over the past 23 years. Most notably, Ebeling played a key role in the restoration of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge after it was devastated by the flood of the Great Salt Lake in the mid 1980s. In just 6 months, Ebeling organized and led a group of 50 volunteers to complete the momentous task of restoring the impoundments while simultaneously repairing the 12-mile public auto tour route to allow the refuge to be opened to the public. The total cost of both projects was paid for in full by volunteer donations, including man-hours and financial support.

### **Friends of Maga Ta-Hophi Waterfowl Production Area: The Friends of the Year Award**

The Friends of Maga Ta-Hophi WPA will receive the **Friends of the Year Award** for their outstanding efforts to increase the name recognition and local and regional support for the Huron Wetland Management District in South Dakota. By offering a diverse array of free outdoor activities and taking special consideration for the needs and interests of the community, the Friends, in just five short years, have developed a year round environmental education program, and contributed to everything from wildlife surveys, maintenance projects and citizen science efforts. Additionally, the Friends strive to connect their local achievements with national efforts by regularly attending classes at the National Conservation Training Center and advocating for the National Wildlife Refuge System in Washington, DC with their South Dakota delegation.

For more information about the National Wildlife Refuge System awards please visit: [refugeassociation.org/people/awards/2013awards/](http://refugeassociation.org/people/awards/2013awards/)

For additional information about the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation please visit: [nfwf.org](http://nfwf.org)

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*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.*