



We're Making Progress at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

This is a progress report on the significant accomplishments that have been made in fulfilling the vision, in facing the challenges and in pursuing the opportunities that remain.

Paul Tritaik



Eugene Kriedler



Paul Tritaik



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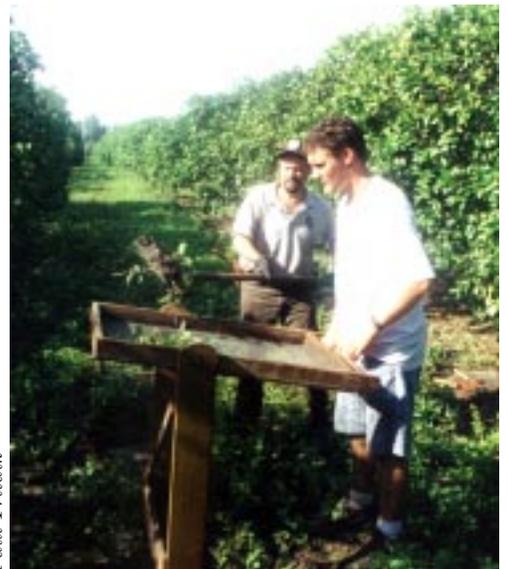
Marc Epstein



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Wendell Metzger

Land Acquisition

We are halfway to fulfilling our dream of acquiring buffer land on the barrier island that serves as a buffer to protect Pelican Island and provides a corridor to Archie Carr NWR. Currently, we have purchased 191 acres of the barrier island, including all of the Kennedy and Pryor tracts, and half of the Lier groves. We also manage an additional 311 acres on the barrier island through leases, easements, and agreements.

Left to be purchased are about 196 acres including the balance of the Lier groves, two other citrus groves, and one small pristine tract. We are working with The Conservation Fund, as well as utilizing partnerships with the State and County, to help complete the purchase of these lands.



Jane Tutton

We could not have accomplished these acquisitions without the support of the local community and their representatives, U.S. Congressman Dave Weldon, Senator Bob Graham, and Senator Connie Mack. In fiscal year 2001, \$6 million was appropriated to further acquisitions at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge and an additional \$2 million was appropriated for its closest neighbor, Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our Realty Division in Atlanta, which continues to work diligently to take care of the many details involved in these transactions.

From the local to the national level, consensus focuses on the need to preserve the heritage of Pelican Island and the National Wildlife Refuge System through the purchase of the homestead of Paul Kroegel. The German immigrant to Florida was a major force in the establishment of Pelican Island as a wildlife refuge and was appointed by



Paul Tritank

President Theodore Roosevelt as its first manager, or warden, as he was then known. Toward that end, the Service has prepared a proposal for the acquisition of the homestead and surrounding properties and has completed appraisals. The Trust for Public Land has agreed to try to secure the property until such time as the Service, the State of Florida, or Indian River County have the funds to purchase it. County Commissioner Ruth Stanbridge is leading this effort.

Island Stabilization

We have a three-phase plan to stem the tide of erosion at Pelican Island proper. World-renown shoreline restoration expert Robin Lewis of Lewis Environmental Services, as our consultant, has generously agreed to a Challenge Cost Share arrangement. Robin is contributing \$70 thousand and the Service matching with \$70 thousand to fund planning and design of the stabilization project, as well as the habitat restoration project on the barrier island.

Phase I

We were awarded a Save America's Treasures grant through the National Park Service to use for Pelican Island stabilization work. The grant for \$115,000 required a 50 percent match by non-federal partners which has been committed by Florida Inland Navigation District and St. Johns River Water Management District. Under Phase I, we installed 165 feet of an oyster shell wavebreak and planted 3,000 smooth cordgrass plants along the eroded northern shore of Pelican Island. Preliminary results show sediment accretion and healthy plant growth.

Phase II

With assistance from our Ecological Services Field Office in Vero Beach and the South Florida Ecosystem Team, we are planning to place nearly 1,000 feet of

Pelican Island Preservation Society and the Pelican Island Working Group
These are people who excel at turning dreams into reality. The talent, energy and resources that have been put into addressing the threats to Pelican Island are truly amazing. Within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we've seen commitment to the future of Pelican Island at every level of the organization, manifested in dollars and people. Here, we address the milestones achieved, the accomplishments under the priority actions identified in the vision document.



fossilized oyster shell, weighing about 475,000 pounds, along the shoreline to anchor stressed mangroves. We are working with our Regional Aviation Manager and our partners to develop a new technique to accomplish it with minimal disturbance to the nesting birds. February 2001 is the date for completion of Phase II, which should secure the island for the short term.



Phase III

For long term protection of Pelican Island, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is undertaking a study that will determine water flow and wave action. With this information, we can evaluate the need to raise the Indian

River Lagoon bottom in a targeted area offshore of Pelican Island. The total estimated cost for accomplishing Phase III, if appropriate, is about \$1.75 million. The Corps has agreed to bear 75 percent of the cost, with the remainder expected to come from County and State agencies.

Habitat Restoration

Our challenge in habitat restoration is to clear the exotic plants that dominate the landscape and replace them with native plants. The tracts we acquired had been converted to citrus groves, requiring a major replanting effort. With our partners, we have made recent accomplishments.

- The Service's South Florida Ecosystem Team has funded exotic plant removal with an annual contribution of \$75,000 and assisted in a project to remove exotic vegetation lining the old Jungle Trail, which intersects the refuge. Caterpillar Corporation donated a heavy duty loader for one week to complete the project. Entrance fee receipts in the amount of \$25,000 from Florida refuges funded the planting of native trees. Indian River County set aside nearly \$10 thousand of its federal revenue-sharing funds to purchase native plants for the next phase of replanting along Jungle Trail.

- The citrus contractor currently working the groves on the Kennedy tract has donated \$29,000 worth of native plants to be delivered in 2001. He has also controlled exotic vegetation on this and other tracts and agreed to remove one third of the citrus trees when the harvest is complete.
- The Service provided nearly \$45,000 for a second order of plants to be used in restoring uplands and wetlands.
- A \$40 thousand Service Coastal Wetlands Grant awarded to Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge was used to purchase a tractor, mower, and sprayer to manage restored lands.
- Mitigation funds in the amount of \$25,000, received from a developer through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were used to fund restoration, exotic plant control, biological surveys, boundary posting and mowing.
- The State of Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Department of Environmental Protection applied for funding from the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program (Federal Aid) for habitat restoration on the lands purchased by the State, County, and Federal governments within or adjacent to the Refuge boundary.



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Two projects worth \$1 million each have been approved by the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds will be used to create freshwater wetlands, restore tidal wetlands, and replant maritime hammock on the east and west sides of Jungle Trail.

- The Service dedicated more than \$230 thousand of this year's unexpended, end-of-year funds to Pelican Island Refuge,



Jim Angy ©

where it was used largely on exotic plant removal along Jungle Trail and along impoundment dikes; dike repair; herbicides for exotic plant spraying; replacement of the refuge's boat; and publication of a new refuge brochure.

Visitor Facilities

We are merging the Service's and the County's planning efforts for visitor facilities with the restoration of the citrus groves.

Indian River County has agreed to spend more than \$285 thousand in grant money for restrooms, kiosks, parking facilities, and access roads in the buffer zone. The Service has allocated \$50,000 in planning that was transferred to the County for visitor facilities for which the Service will have sole responsibility. Planning contractors for the County and the Service will complete visitor services plans by March 2001.

We envision construction of a viewing tower and a spotting scope that will allow visitors the best look at Pelican Island and its birds. We are also planning to build a boardwalk leading to the viewing tower, with planks bearing the name of each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

We have nearly completed an archeological survey that confirmed four Indian midden sites that will need protection; and a contaminants survey that identifies residues from agricultural pesticides, of which none were found likely to be harmful to wildlife.

Construction of a visitor center has also been proposed. One proposal has been to purchase the Kroegel homestead and to locate the visitor center on or near the homestead. Another proposal, though less likely, would be to site the visitor center on a 33-acre tract known as Duck Point, which is 1.5 miles from the homestead. Wherever it is sited, we anticipate a need for \$831,000 for planning of the interpretive visitor center and \$3.98 million for its construction.

We have sent letters to all refuge managers and their cooperating associations to seek their support in funding a series of flags that would sport the Refuge System's Blue Goose logo and denote each refuge in the System and its date of establishment. The flags could potentially fly along the banks of the Indian River lagoon, with Pelican Island in view. A traveling set of flags would be available for use all over the country at other refuge Centennial celebrations and special national events.

Operations

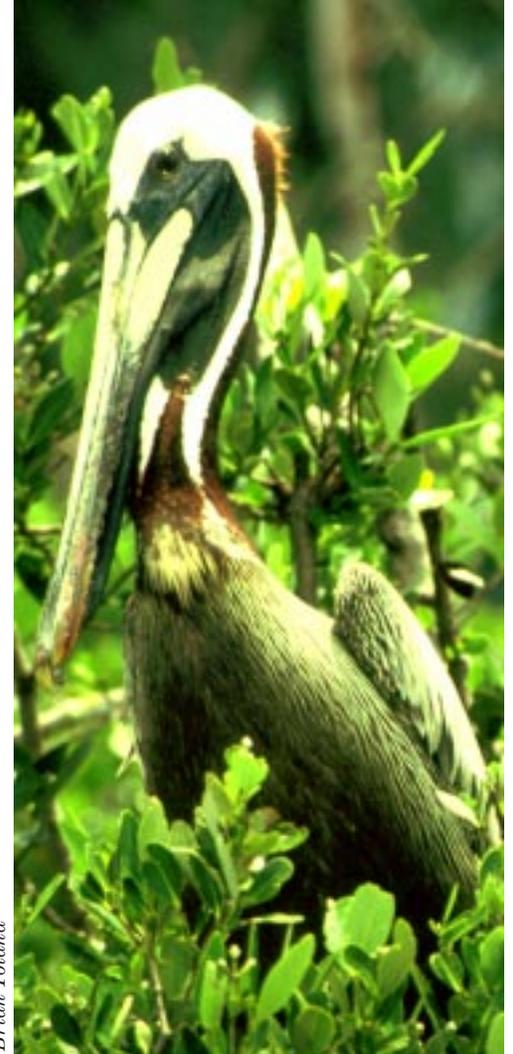
Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge will add three, full-time employees to its staff early next year, a real cause for celebration. The Service is funding a biologist, a biological technician, and a refuge ranger. With this action by the Service Director, funds were allocated at the national level to establish for the first time an operating budget at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.



Paul Tritaak

Still, we need an administrative assistant, a maintenance worker and a refuge law enforcement officer to support the work of the refuge. The estimated costs associated with these current hires would be approximately \$360,000 per year. Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge would also benefit from this expanded staff, as the two will be managed

together. The two refuges have been separated from the Merritt Island Complex and are now budgeted separately.



Brian Toland

In Summary

Much has been accomplished and many opportunities lie ahead as we move toward the Refuge System Centennial in 2003. We move forward with our many partners, confident that the vision for this, our first national wildlife refuge, will be achieved.

The greatest challenges we face concern acquiring the resources to turn our dreams into reality; but if recent history is any indication, we will succeed. The heritage of the little jewel and the System it spawned is all about what people with a heart and a head for wildlife conservation can do in the face of the most difficult of challenges. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge's future is looking bright.