

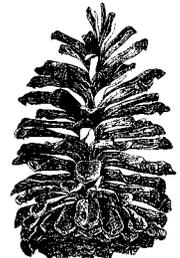
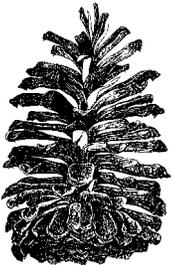


Safe Harbor News

National Effort Has Origin Here

Reprinted from *The Pilot*. Written by Matthew Moriarty

A plan hatched by a local attorney and a botanist more than decade ago has grown into a \$10 million national environmental conservation center. Environmental Defense announced Tuesday the creation of the Center for Conservation Incentives with a \$5 million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and a matching \$5 million grant from an anonymous donor. Brian Van Eerden, a botanist, was staying with Southern Pines attorney Marsh Smith, who is a member of the environmental group Moore-Force, while Van Eerden completed a survey of the local pine forests for the government. When the two men came home from work, they would sit on Smith's front porch, have a few beers and talk about ways to stop the destruction of the habitat of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker: old longleaf pines. Their idea was to give private landowners an incentive to protect the habitat of endangered species through an economically viable conservation plan and to provide landowners an ironclad assurance in writing that they would not face additional restrictions on the use of their land if they attracted more birds. The idea came to fruition in 1995 with the help of Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT), Environmental Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and countless others. Smith coined the phrase "safe harbor." It was called the North Carolina Sandhills Habitat Conservation Plan. The safe-harbor program helped many landowners to stop viewing the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker as the enemy. The safe-harbor program began in the Sandhills region, which had the second-largest red-cockaded woodpecker population in the southeastern United States. The program quickly caught on nationally. There are now hundreds of similar safe-harbor plans for other endangered species around the country. The new Center for Conservation Incentives, which will operate mostly out of Washington, D.C., will coordinate existing safe-harbor programs and encourage new ones. "We're looking to develop more of those type programs in more places,"



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National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial

On March 14, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of a unique American treasure: The National Wildlife Refuge System.

One hundred years ago, with little fanfare, then-President Theodore Roosevelt established tiny Pelican Island, off the east coast of Florida, as the nation's first federal bird reserve.

At the time, herons, egrets, spoonbills and pelicans were being slaughtered indiscriminately because their feathers were in high demand as fashion accessories. An otherwise obscure thicket of mangroves, the 5-acre Pelican Island became a sanctuary and a national symbol for conservationists.



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said Robert Bonnie, a spokesman for Environmental Defense. Bonnie said the safe-harbor program caught on so quickly because "it worked."

Under the Sandhills safe-harbor program, any landowner that participates in the program and takes steps to conserve the bird's habitat will not be penalized if more birds are attracted to nest or forage on their property. The landowners are only responsible for the birds that are on their property at the time the agreement is signed. If more birds are attracted, landowners must give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the chance to relocate the birds if a tree with a new nest is harvested or removed. Red-cockaded woodpeckers nest in longleaf pines that are more than 80 years old and are a safe distance from oak trees. That's because the woodpecker's major predator, the black snake, can climb oak trees and reach the bird's nest home. The snakes cannot climb pine trees because of the sap. Many landowners would either encourage oak growth (or not discourage oak growth) or cut down longleaf pine trees before the trees reached maturity. "A decade ago, a lot of people believed that private landowners would never be willing to protect endangered species," Bonnie said.



Susan Miller, a safe-harbor biologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, remembered Ben Cone of Pender County. Cone protected his longleaf pines and made his land a good habitat for quail and woodpeckers. He shortly attracted a red-cockaded woodpecker. When he wanted to thin and cut some areas, he was told he couldn't. "He became the poster child for private land rights," Miller said. "Throughout the Southeast, people began hearing that if you get one of these birds your hands are going to be tied and you can't do anything with the land." Cone testified before Congress about his dilemma. "He had a point," Bonnie said. Smith and Van Eerden talked their idea over with the Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT) and with Dr. Jay Carter, a local woodpecker expert, and then took their proposal to Raleigh and presented it to Michael Bean in the North Carolina Environmental Defense office. Bean, who is also an attorney, knew how to write the proposal up so that it fit with the Endangered Species Act and did not cause any more regulations. It became known as the Sandhills model. The safe-harbor program is voluntary. Many of the first landowners to sign up were golf courses, including the Pinehurst Country Club, which provided an ideal habitat for woodpeckers, because the underbrush is often removed. Van Eerden wrote much of a handbook called "The Working Forest Handbook" that showed landowners how to manage forests in ways that are both environmentally and economically sound. To date, 67 Sandhills area landowners have enrolled 37,474 acres in the program. Miller said that the Sandhills is a unique habitat, because about 30 percent of the red-cockaded woodpecker population lives on private land. Most of the other habitats throughout the Southeast are on government-owned land. (There is a large population of the woodpeckers at Fort Bragg.) That fact made the Sandhills a good place to begin this program.



One species of falcon native to Texas has already made a great recovery thanks to the safe-harbor program based on the Sandhills model. The northern aplomado falcon was down to four breeding pairs when the program began. Today there are 30. "They didn't realize that by helping the woodpeckers they were helping a lot of other endangered species," Bonnie said. Smith said the idea for the safe-harbor program was pretty simple. "It worked," he said. "It was a win-win situation. Don't punish landowners for doing things right."

Safe Harbor Agreements
70 Landowners
37,610 acres

New Multimillion Dollar Forest Service Program Gives NIPF Owners Boost

The 2002 Farm Bill has authorized the Forest Service to launch a multimillion-dollar forestry program to assist non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners in what will be known as the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). Authorized for \$100 million for program years 2002-2007, the program has scheduled \$20 million in its inaugural year (FY2003) to be distributed through State forestry agencies.

Through FLEP, State forestry agencies can provide a wide array of educational, technical and financial services that are intended to ensure that the nation's NIPFs and related resources continue to provide sustainable forest products and safeguard the health of our water, air, and wildlife.

FLEP is a voluntary program in each State and participation by landowners is voluntary. In each State participating in the program, the State Forester and State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee will jointly develop a State priority plan that is intended to promote forest management objectives and describe FLEP in their State. The State priority plan will identify educational activities and their outcome, describe the technical assistance to be provided and its outcomes, and describe the cost-share components that will be available to NIPF landowners and the public values of these practices.

The FLEP program replaces two previous conservation incentives programs: the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP). State forestry agencies can use FLEP funds to provide assistance to NIPF owners to achieve a broad array of natural resource objectives. The Forest Service and State forestry agencies are guided by the following principles:

- Establish, manage, maintain, protect, enhance, and restore NIPF lands.
- Enhance the productivity of timber, habitat for flora and fauna, soil, water, air quality, wetlands, and riparian buffers of these lands.
- Assist owners and managers to more actively manage NIPF lands to enhance and sustain the long-term productivity of timber and non-timber forest resources.
- Reduce the risk and help restore, recover and mitigate the damage to forests caused by fire, insects, invasive species, disease, and damaging weather.
- Increase and enhance carbon sequestration opportunities.
- Enhance implementation of agroforestry practices.
- Encourage and leverage State, Federal, and local resource management expertise, financial assistance and educational programs that support FLEP.

NIPF owners who wish to participate in the cost-share component of FLEP must complete one or more of the sustainable forestry practices available in their State as described in a forest management plan.

In each state, the State forester or their representative will evaluate the management plans submitted by NIPF owners and approve them for participation in FLEP. Eligibility criteria for FLEP are slightly broader than for SIP and FIP to encourage broader participation.

FLEP allows treatment of up to 1,000 acres per year and variances of up to 5,000 acres if significant public benefits will accrue. The maximum FLEP cost-share payment for any practice may be up to 75 percent. The aggregate payment to any one landowner through 2007 may not exceed \$100,000.

States will be responsible for their program accomplishments reporting using the Internet and web sites. Reports will cover educational assistance, technical assistance, and cost-share practices implemented.

Program implementation will commence 30 days after the publication of an interim rule in the Federal Register (anticipated towards the end of December 2002). A formal 60-day comment period will follow. A final rule is anticipated for December 2003.

Residual funds remaining in SIP and FIP from the FY 2002 appropriations are in the process of being obligated by the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information, contact your county ranger:

Cumberland county	Joe Johnson : (910) 483-1535
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Hoke county	Larry Moser: (910) 875-2808
Moore county	Richard Frye: (910) 235-0216
Richmond county	Alan Clark: (910) 582-7029
Scotland county	Mac McDougald: (910) 276-0455



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Refuge Centennial continued...

Theodore Roosevelt went on to establish 51 more federal bird reserves and four national game preserves, and they became the forerunner of our modern National Wildlife Refuge System. Today, that system is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The system is the only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation. It includes 540 National Wildlife Refuges on 95 million acres. Many of the refuges are strategically located along the nation's four major migratory flyways – to provide convenient stopping points for birds that travel hundreds or even thousands of miles in search of food and breeding grounds.

Besides providing shelter to millions of migratory birds, refuges serve as home to many resident birds. Refuges also team with plants, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and other animals. More than 50 National Wildlife Refuges were established specifically to protect endangered or threatened species. Today, more than 250 endangered plants and animals live on National Wildlife Refuges – including the gentle manatee in Florida, the American Bald Eagle, and various colorful, exotic birds on the Hawaiian islands.

National Wildlife Refuges provide unparalleled outdoor activities – including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation and photography – making them special, peaceful places for all Americans to connect with nature. Many refuges also offer opportunities for nature hikes, bird tours, wildlife drives and other activities. More than 35 million people visit National Wildlife Refuges annually, and there is at least one refuge within an hour's drive of most major cities!

The National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial Celebration kicks off next month at Pelican Island, but that's just the beginning. All year long, refuges across the nation are inviting the American public to join their celebration and discover America's best kept secret ... our refuges.