

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY 2008

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Blackwater NWR is pleased to report another very successful year supporting the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. In early FY 2008, the agreement between the Blackwater NWR and the Friends of Blackwater was renewed for another five years and outlines the formal working relationship. This relationship has been open and cordial and is expected to continue this way in the future. A number of projects have been completed or initiated over the past year that assist the refuge to provide recreational and educational opportunities for the public compatible with the refuge's conservation goals.

A cooperative education program with the Dorchester County Public Schools fourth and sixth grades was initiated with over 600 students coming to the Refuge as part of their science curricula. Science teachers led the activities with heavy support by volunteers. The students learned about the natural food chain activities, toured the Refuge and saw the extensive variety of habitats in nature, and how the biologists used GPS as part of their projects. Funds to support activities were provided by a grant from the NFWF to the Friends and matched by contributions from the Friends and from the National Aquarium in Baltimore. This very successful program is being continued during the coming year and is being expanded somewhat to include other school systems. For many of the students the experience at Blackwater was their first close up experience with the marshlands and their enthusiastic response made it a pleasant experience for all involved.

The pier that is part of the Marsh Edge hiking trail has been upgraded and replaced with funding provided by a grant from Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and matching funds from a generous donation from Terry Cycling. The descriptive sign will be completed in FY 2009 as part of this project.

The Eagle's Nest Bookstore, managed by Charlotte Hehn, continues to be a major source of funds for Refuge projects and programs. The store continues to remain very popular with visitors to the refuge, and is a center for the annual Friends Holiday Open House.

In March, the Natural History Library was formally dedicated. The late Dick Kleen, who is the major donor to it, was present for the ceremony along with representatives of Senator Cardin's office and other state and local officials

The rehabilitation of freshwater pool 1, managed by a cooperative arrangement between the Refuge and Ducks Unlimited, is being supported by a generous contribution to the Friends from the estate of former board member Gibby Roe. The project is expected to be completed in FW 2009.

The butterfly garden has had significant upgrading and has remained a popular visitor site. This has been accomplished by the cooperative effort of the Refuge, the Dorchester Garden Club, and the Friends. A donation from Wal-Mart has assisted in funding the required efforts.

Matching funds were provided by the Friends for the Challenge grants used to support the Refuge's popular Eagle Festival in March and the Youth Fishing Derby in June. The Friends also worked with the Refuge to successfully obtain a grant from

National Environmental Education and Training Foundation to support the Refuge's tree planting project that occurred on National Public Lands Day.

The refuge's hunt program, managed for the Friends by Allen Johnston, continues to be very popular with the public and is another significant source of funds for supporting Refuge programs.

Both the Refuge's and the Friends website continue to be maintained by Lisa Mayo. The eagle and osprey cam features continue to be highly popular both in the United States and overseas. Many schools report that they are using the site as part of classroom activities as the nests are built, the eggs hatched and the fledglings raised.

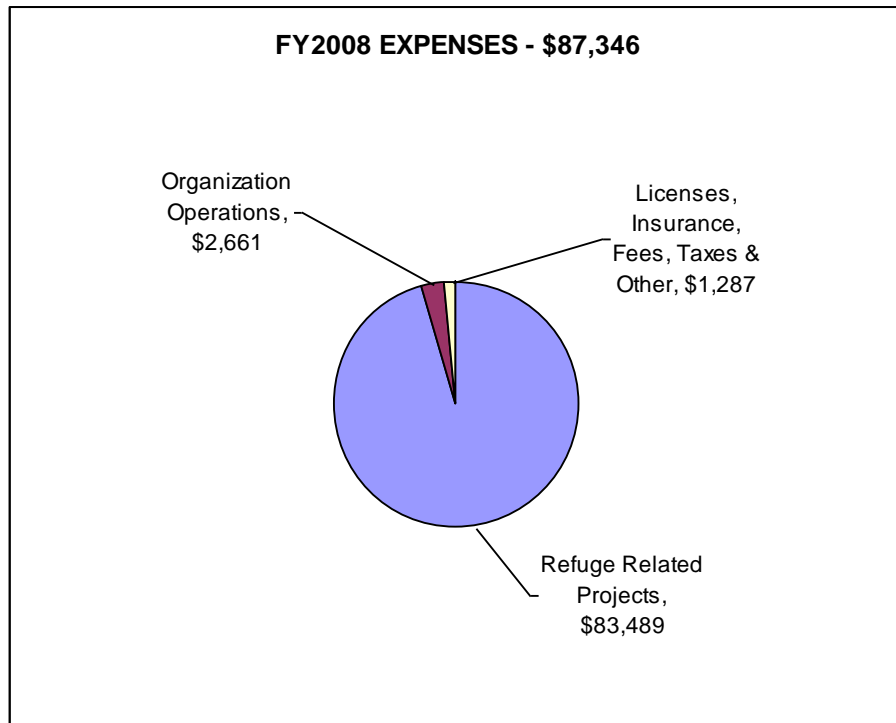
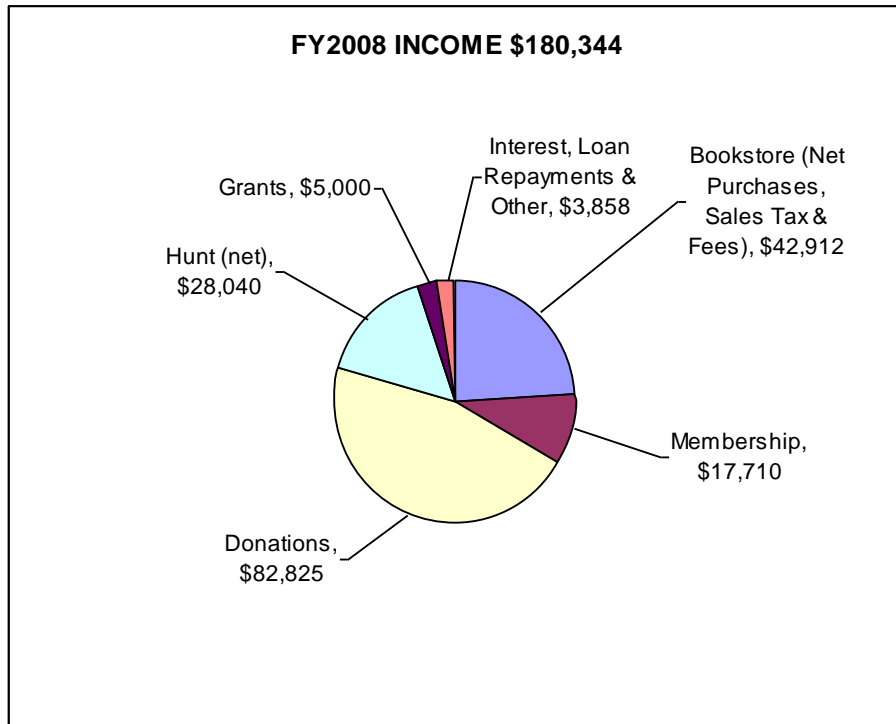
The Friends provided funds to replace the visitor center entry sign which was destroyed in an automotive accident. A soft drink and fresh water dispenser was installed and is being maintained by the Friends to support visitors. It is a modest source of funds. The Friends also funded improvements to the visitor center security system that was installed about two years ago.

An overall summary of the income and expenditures for FY 2008 is presented on the attached chart. All funds and activities provided by the Friends are used in cooperation and direct support of the Blackwater Refuge. Overall, the financial position of the Friends of Blackwater is quite strong.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin O'Connor
President, Friends of Blackwater

SUMMARY OF FY 2008 INCOME AND EXPENSES



Total financial resources	\$413,867.70
Future Funding Commitments & Building Fund	\$397,802.91
Available Reserves	\$16,064.79