Re: Friends of St. Vincent NWR Annual Membership Meeting Letter

Dear Friends,

As the Friends of St. Vincent NWR enter our 18th year, we hope this letter finds you well. We had an amazing annual meeting with featured speaker Dr. Dean Grubbs

We continue to coordinate walking tours and are planning to have our tour wagon back in action and will schedule several riding tours this Spring! While this year has been relatively quiet from a Friends activity perspective, the refuge itself has been extraordinarily busy.

St Vincent NWR now has only one full time employee dedicated to monitor wildlife, habitat, and provide personal visitor interaction. Island maintenance is covered part time by staff shared by St. Marks NWR our sister refuge. We are sad to say farewell to Refuge Manager, Terry Peacock, who retired at the end of 2024 after many years of service. To say we and the island will miss her is an understatement. Dan Frisk, Regional Area Manager, will cover her position until a replacement is hired. Please continue to make your voice heard with elected officials and support our pleas to increase budgets and staff for these critical wildlife sanctuaries! Despite staffing challenges there is still lots of activity on our precious refuge. The first two of our three annual big game hunts: archery and the sambar hunt went very well. Sixty archers harvested eight white-tailed deer and 120 sambar hunters harvested 12 sambar (the record is 14). The annual public muzzleloader hunt is scheduled for January 16-18 2025. Marine turtle nesting season was fair with 73 loggerhead nests along 10 miles of Refuge nesting beach; however, productivity was low due to mammalian depredation and storm impacts. The Refuge American red wolf island propagation program has begun its 35th year. Our wolf pair did not produce for the last several years; so the male was captured and transferred to the Chehaw Park and Zoo in Albany, Georgia and the island received a new male red wolf in November from the Western North Carolina Nature Center. He will remain in the acclimation pen until the end of the muzzleloader hunt and will then be released to join the free-ranging female. He will be tracked daily for 7-10 days and provided supplemental feeding for 7-9 weeks. This new male is a proven breeder, and staff is very hopeful for red wolf pups in the spring. A ton of debris was removed from the island beaches during the International Coastal Cleanup in September. The Friends group Yamaha Viking UTV, purchased a few years ago with our contribution of a new battery was beneficial in providing back up support during the volunteer operation. The Refuge wading bird rookery on Lake 5 did well and had good productivity, especially the state listed Tricolored Herons. Unfortunately, beach nesting shorebirds and seabirds did not do as well according to state waterbird researchers. Staff worked with scientists with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory who conducted gopher tortoise monitoring and with botanical researchers studying the taxonomy of a state listed Gulf coast lupine. Two annual Christmas Bird Counts were completed over the holidays and despite the fog Refuge staff and eight volunteers documented 86 bird species on our 11 Mile and St. Vincent and Pig Islands units. Piping Plovers banded in the endangered Great Lakes breeding population were documented

which is critical information for the species. The staff is also currently working with state waterbird researchers conducting monthly nonbreeding shorebird and seabird surveys.

During the Summer of 2024 with your continuing financial support the Friends group was able to support the staff by hiring a summer intern who was able to assist our biologist with everything from identifying and protecting turtle nests and surveys to monitoring Red Wolves and a whole host of other activities. An intern position continues to provide crucial support for the refuge's biologist's wildlife and habitat conservation. It is one of the many ways we can help the refuge, and we hope to continue our funding support for interns in the future.

Shared below is a full slate of Board nominees for your review. With this diverse, skilled, and eager team we look forward to continued growth in our ability to support the refuge and her inhabitants through advocacy and financial assistance and we are actively looking to grow more leaders/volunteers on our Board this year!

Every voice, every dollar is appreciated!

Proposed Board of Directors

Nancy Stuart, President
Jim Floyd, Treasurer
Landy Luther, Secretary
Directors:
Sandy Casper
Jeff Chanton
Patrick Foy
Lisa Pratt
Marie Steele

Friends of St. Vincent NWR is interested in meeting others who may have an interest in joining the Board. Please feel free to contact me at 480-227-5827 if you have any questions!

FRIENDS OF ST. VINCENT NWR

Financial Report

2023 Source of Funds

Tour Donations	$ 100
Membership	$ 2,450
Sea Turtle Adoptions/Grant	$ 1,885
General	$ 2,835
Wolf Program Donations	$ 25
Merchandise Sales	$ 0
Total	$ 7,295

2023 Use of Funds

Tour Expenses	$ 0
Fundraising	$ 277
Summer Intern	$ 2,750
Other Refuge Projects	$ 1,044
Administrative	$ 4,072
Total	$ 8,143

2023	Ending Bank Balance	$12,765.80
2024	Ending Bank Balance	$11,917.57

Friends of St Vincent NWR remain committed with the continued support of our impassioned advocates, diligent efforts of our volunteers, and the generosity of our members and donors to protect our natural environment including the birds, sea turtles, and animal inhabitants who call St Vincent Island their home. We look forward to hearing from you and receiving your member renewal form ballot.

Thank you for your continued support!