

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Brandon Mansell, Lisa Hutchins, Sara Hallas, and Lauren Hearn

Additional ‘Ding’ summer help arrives

Thanks to a federal program and a grant from a generous donor, four new summer staffers have arrived to J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge to fill in employment gaps left by government budget cuts and hiring freezes. The federal Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program provides funds for full-time summer high school student employment, while the grant-funded Summer Teachers Assisting Refuges (STAR) initiative hires a local teacher for two months to help with summer education programming both onsite and for outreach.

This year’s STAR, Sara Hallas , is an environmental science teacher for the Lee County School District, a position she took in fall 2016. Prior to that she taught second grade at River Hall Elementary in Alva, Fla.

This year’s three YCC students include Dunbar High School students Lisa Hutchins, who will assist with education and visitor services, and Brandon Mansell in maintenance; plus Fort Myers High Student Lauren Hearn, who will also assist with education and visitor services.

“Our YCC students are so valuable to us - not only in providing needed manpower, but also because they bring such youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the refuge team,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “At the same time, it gives them opportunity to learn about the environment and refuge operations.”

ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566, 239-472-1100 ext. 4, or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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