

Bitter Lake News

January 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS AT BITTER LAKE

Saturday, Jan. 31, 12:00 noon – General Membership Meeting. All are invited! Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. The Board is bringing PIZZA as the main dish! Our speaker will be Kin Han, the supervisory geneticist at the Dexter Fish Hatchery. If you are able to show up between 10:30 and 11:00 to help set up tables, it would be greatly appreciated. This is the perfect time to renew your membership dues, bring friends out to enjoy the Refuge, shop for unique and special gifts in the Nature Store, and make a decision to volunteer in 2026. Plus, we need a quorum in order to conduct business.

Wednesday, Feb. 4, 6:00 – Board Meeting at Roadrunner Mobile Home Clubhouse. Anyone is welcome to attend.

Dragonfly Festival Committee Meeting – Will be at 5:15 immediately before the Board Meeting at the same location.

Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

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Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

The Nature Store

We'd like to encourage everyone to visit the amazing Nature Store in our Visitor Center.

Barbara Scheer began working on merchandise and stocking the store when the Visitor Center first opened in 2009. Later, Jana Burch took over the





Steve Alvarez

So Long, Farewell, Good-bye

Steve Alvarez arrived at Bitter Lake in 2000. The Friends of Bitter Lake was just being organized when he arrived, and Steve immediately became a part of the group. At that time, Bitter Lake was a fairly unknown part of the Wildlife Refuge System, and the Regional Office rarely took the time to visit our refuge. With the first Dragonfly Festival in 2001, which Steve was an integral part of organizing, national publications began to visit the refuge and reporting on the dragonflies. The office in Washington D.C. sat up and took notice of the unique nature of Bitter Lake. At the time, Joe Skeen, a local sheep rancher, also served as a congressman in the House of Representatives. The Friends group organized Joe Skeen Day, and Skeen fell in love with the refuge. He worked tirelessly to obtain funding for the amazing Visitor Center that bears his name. Steve was present during the construction and used his experience from different refuges across the country to implement many ideas that were incorporated into the final design. The Center changed the entire atmosphere of the refuge. Since that time, the refuge has grown in popularity and is much better known around

the country. National Geographic has visited and created a film which can be viewed at the Visitor Center. Steve had a huge part in all the growth that has been experienced since his arrival here. We congratulate Steve on his 40 years of service with the Wildlife Refuge System, and he is going to be greatly missed at Bitter Lake. We are happy for him and Jan and excited for their future plans traveling and enjoying their retired life. Thank you, Steve, for the difference you have made at Bitter Lake!

*Sue Briney's letter to the
friends
following the death
of her
husband,
Bill Briney*

*To all you wonderful
Friends,

Your kind words
and thoughtfulness
were, and are, so
appreciated. Bill's time
at Bitter Lake, working
with you beautiful
people, were his best
times, and that brings
great comfort to me.

Love to you all,
Sue Briney*

Refuge Miscellany

- We welcome Whitney Kroschel, PhD, who serves as Refuge Manager of San Andres National Wildlife Refuge near Las Cruces and is appointed as Acting Refuge Manager of Bitter Lake NWR. Hopefully, a new permanent manager will be in place soon since the hiring freeze has been lifted.
- Melissa Frye, who works for Fish & Wildlife Service and collaborates with BLM, will serve as temporary acting biologist. We wish Carl Jacobsen, who served as Bitter Lake NWR's Biologist, all the best in his new position with a refuge in California. Biologist Marianne Kelso will continue her work on the Refuge. Matt is working as a biology intern.
- The Oxbow Trail repairs are still not complete, but the trail is usable.
- On Oct. 15, the peak number of cranes were counted on the refuge. We had 14,500 visiting cranes in 2025.
- Donations are still being collected for the Bill Briney Memorial Fund.

The mission of the Friends of Bitter Lake NWR is to uphold the refuge's creation and stewardship of quality wildlife habitat: the refuge's environmental, educational and scientific projects: projects and programs to increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of the refuge: and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge system.