

**Re: Spirit of Wild recipients. Our Refuge was founded in 1965 not quite 60 years ago, to provide a safe place for migrating birds, and other wildlife. The word Refuge gives it away. The secret and unsung strength of this refuge, is not just federal staff, or even a board dedicated to supporting this land area, (all that is good of course) it is the volunteers, hands-on - boots on the ground. That is the real spine of the body...unpaid, with no sick leave support, and many times working with whatever resources that can be eked out of slim budgets. Yet they show up, with no enticement other than the passion within their own hearts.**

**It is a humbling honor to name the following volunteers.**

**Curt Mohler  
Dave Phelps  
Mel Sanchez**

**All three are well known as being equally reliable as well as friendly and supportive. They always show up with a smile, and encouragement and are always willing to jump in where needed. They care as much about connecting communities to nature as they do making sure that we have healthy wildlife and habitat.**

**They focus on habitat maintenance mainly - but do everything from blackberry and fence removal to driving heavy equipment. All three work on all four Refuges in our complex, and are usually willing to help with anything asked. Mel is also known for showing up for cultural and public events and leading walks or engaging with people.**

**If we didn't have volunteers, we would be half an ocean below shoreline. In other words, the refuge would be so much less...three times less than the whole. If you remember, last years recipient was and continues to be a volunteer. Susan Setterberg.**

**We cannot thank you enough for what you do for this community, this city, this region in supporting the wildness of the birdlife, animal life and land life of this amazing and magnificent refuge. From the bottom of our hearts, we can only say you lift up the human spirit, as well as the spirit of the wild.**

**-Tanna Engdahl, Cowlitz Indian Tribe**

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