

[EXTERNAL] 1018-Friends

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To: Info_Coll, FWHQ <info_coll@fws.gov>

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Hello. My name is Ellen Andersen and I am currently the President of the Board for the Friends of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC). In support of the FWS, I'd like to make a few comments on the OIG report that came out recently. It's clear to me that the OIG doesn't fully understand the role of the Friends groups. Granted, they are varied and each group is tailored to the refugee (or in our case, the NCTC which is not a refugee) to which they are attached. All of the Friends groups work in compliance to maintaining our 501c3 status as non-profit groups. Our accounting books are audited yearly by an accountant that is not a part of our group. Records are kept of income and expenditures, etc. We comply with all the guidelines in the Partnership Agreement. This can be quite a task for some Friends group Boards that are small....there are some with only one or two Board members! What I think the OIG does not understand is variation in Friends Boards. Some are large with on Board accountants, legal types, etc. Most, however, are quite small. The sheer amount of paperwork that the OIG is expecting all Friends groups (Boards) to produce in filing annual reports and data submission is onerous for most of us smaller groups. The process needs to be streamlined and tailored to small groups with limited resources. Thank you for your time in reading this.

Sincerely,
Ellen Andersen
President, Friends of the National Conservation Training Center.