

Blue Goose Alliance
Minutes of the 2008 Annual Meeting
Pacific Grove, California
March 4 & 5, 2008

WELCOME: President Don Redfearn welcomed the group at 8:40 a.m. He announced that Assistant Secretary of Interior, Lyle Laverty, who was previously scheduled to speak to the group, would not be able to attend the BGA meeting, due to an emergency calling him back to Washington. Therefore, the agenda would be revised to accommodate the change, and the new agenda did not closely adhere to the original.

The 2008 Annual meeting of the Blue Goose Alliance meeting was called to order by President Don Redfearn at 8:45 am.

In attendance were the following members:

Les Beaty*	Phil Morgan*	Christine Reffalt
John Doebl	Evelyn Redfearn	Glenn Elison*
Florence LaRiviere*	Ed Crozier*	Don Redfearn*
Eileen McLaughlin	Bill Reffalt*	

A quorum was present.

*Board Members

One guest was also present

The agenda was reviewed and the meeting logistics regarding meeting place refreshments, food breaks, etc. were reviewed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Treasurers Report:

President Redfearn announced that Gail Fishman has resigned as Treasurer but wishes to retain her position on the Board. Les Beaty has volunteered to fill the Treasures position. Les reported that he didn't have the financial information yet so there wasn't anything to report at this meeting. Subsequently he did receive some information and reported to the acting secretary that the total assets of the BGA, as of January 31, 2008, were \$14,663.92. This amount is broken down as follows:

General Fund - \$ 8,388.92

Danny Redfearn Fund - \$2,675.00

Legal Defense Fund - \$3,600.00

GENERAL DISCUSSION: All attendees introduced themselves.

Redfearn spoke of the Alliance's activities over the past year. He made special mention of the contributions of Eileen McLaughlin.

Affiliate Survey:

Les Beaty gave an analysis of the survey he conducted for the BGA. The report is attached to, and considered a part of, these minutes. Beaty highlighted some of the findings in the survey.

- ◆ Early joiners tended to work/contribute. The later joiners just supported the mission.
- ◆ There were questions about the BGA's mission.
- ◆ Those who responded to the follow-up inquiry were more negative.

Beaty said that he didn't get a good handle of where members were coming from and concluded his report by raising the question of how we communicate with Affiliates.

Redfearn asked the question of the group "What should we be doing in response to the survey? Or retrospectively – What do we expect the Affiliates to do?"

A general discussion continued about Affiliates with two primary questions – How do we get the existing Affiliates to respond? And how do we recruit new ones?

Other questions were who and what we want the Affiliates to be, whether Affiliates be given specific assignments and generally how to get them to become more involved and the nature of communication with the Affiliates. There was further discussion on these questions, but nothing formally decided on them.

DVD

There was a discussion of what is needed first – to establishing credibility. Someone mentioned using a DVD as a tool. Elison re-emphasized that we need to get the message out to other organizations – 600,000 instead of the 60 Affiliates. There was discussion of the cost of producing a DVD - and how it should be approached. Beaty commented that we are a resource group and we need the expertise to deliver the message.

Break: 10:40 a.m.- Resumed: 10:55 a.m.

[LaRiviere pointed out the San Francisco materials that were available to the meeting participants.]

Beaty asked if the "Case for a National Wildlife Refuge Service was a valid basis for starting to develop a graphic presentation such as a DVD. The general response was yes. Elison moved "that a Task Force be appointed to prepare graphic material (audio/visual) to make the case for a NWR Service" Morgan seconded the motion. Vote called. **The motion passed.** Eileen McLaughlin and Ed Crozier volunteered to put together a DVD with the likelihood that an Affiliate would join this task force. The task force will develop a first cut that will be further polished into a first class product by a professional. Beaty brought the question of how we can distribute the product and discussion followed. Different ways to deliver the product – DVD, Internet, etc.

The DVD Task Force was asked for a timetable but was unable to be specific.

Just before noon break Redfearn brought up the proposal of a major re-arrangement of the federal government land management agencies.

Break: 12:00p.m. - Resumed 1:15 p.m.

Contributed time:

President Redfearn reopened the meeting at 1:15 PM by reading the results of Bill Grabill's report on time contributed by BGA members. Eleven (11) affiliates responded and reported 2,430 hours contributed.

NGO & Congressional Contacts

President Redfearn then reported on contacts he made in May when he spent 4 days in the D. C. area. He contacted: Wilderness Society, the Audubon Society, the NRDC, the Sierra Club and NWRA. As a result of those contacts Redfearn now keeps these NGOs apprised of various BGA projects and concerns. During these visits he learned that the NGOs approach any Native American issues (such as the NBR) with caution.

Redfearn had asked Evan Hirsche of the NWRA about the BGA joining CARE and was discouraged from pursuing that possibility stating several reasons like needing someone locally to attend the regular meetings in DC and the membership fee, etc.

LaRiviere had set up a meeting with her congresswoman, Representative Anna Eshoo. Redfearn also contacted Representative Dicks' Appropriation staff.

McLaughlin, Reffalt, and Redfearn plan to make another round of contacts in D. C. with the NGOs and some congressional offices, and key committee offices in April.

There was discussion about BGA's relationship with PEER. Mr. Ruch of PEER will work with BGA on FWS employee issues.

Grants & Blogs

Marie Springer, a new affiliate, is a career (certified) grant writer. McLaughlin will contact Springer, explain our needs for a grant application for the proposed DVD, and see if she can be enlisted.

Redfearn described the "Refuge Watch Blog". That is an independent effort and very comprehensive. There followed some discussions about blogs in general.

Refuge Issues

Reffalt discussed his seven-page report on the BGA's involvement with refuge issues. The report is attached to and considered a part of these minutes. Reffalt complimented the BGA team that has been working on the National Bison Range issue. He thinks the BGA team effort has made a significant difference on the NBR issue, and holds the potential to turn thing around over the next year or so. He highlighted "Global Climate Change" and how pervasive the subject is in Washington D.C. and how it is being related to many things, at all levels there. At least 135 refuges are located on the nation's coasts that will be affected by global climate change. The problem is that it is as prevalent in the short-term efforts like the 15-year CCP process and the annual appropriations process as it is in the long term. Reffalt also talked about the hardening of refuge facilities, etc. on the border refuges and showed photos of security fences being put around refuge residences and bars on the windows. He talked about the need for law enforcement personnel accompanying all other refuge personnel on certain of their field duties. There are six or seven surveillance towers being constructed on Cabeza Prieta NWR. Recent reports continue to state that failures plague this "virtual fence" approach in spite of very large expenditures trying to correct problems. The big issue is the diversion of refuge resources to the illegal immigration and drug smuggling issues.

The meeting recessed at 2:30 p.m. for the tour of Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge. Leading the tour were Refuge Manager, Diane Kodama; Biologist/Wildlife Specialist, Rachel Hurt; and San Francisco Bay NWR Complex Manager, Mendel Stewart.

Wednesday March 5, 2008

8:30 a.m. Meeting was called to order.

President Redfearn opened the meeting by thanking Eileen McLaughlin for making the arrangements with the staff of Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge for the tour.

NEW BUSINESS

Affiliates

The subject of affiliates was revisited and produced additional comments and questions, consisting mostly of ground covered previously. Some of the thoughts placed before the meeting:

- ◆ We need to encourage Affiliates to attend the Annual meetings.
- ◆ There is a need to let the Affiliates know what is going on but conversely, we must recognize the need to keep some information confidential and to hold some uncommitted plans in reserve.
- ◆ A suggestion that we do away with the designation of Affiliates and Members.
- ◆ Reffalt's working on refuge issues instead of the main mission was discussed with the comment that his activities provided the indirect benefits of credibility and increased contacts. Doebel commented that most of BGA's communications the past year were mostly about the side issues. Redfearn said working on side issues have both positive and negative effects.

Doebel proposed going back to the discussion on the need for an "umbrella strategy" and cited that as an example for a task force. John Doebel offered the following motion – "That a task force, led by Glenn Elison, be established to explore options for

conducting and funding a study that will develop a strategy for achieving the goal of establishing a National Wildlife Refuge Service". Florence LaRiviere seconded the motion. Discussion followed the motion. Reffalt endorsed the idea because of the improved political climate. Elison stated his position of what the motion is intended to do. He said he would have a difficult time explaining to a garden club why a SERVICE is needed. Therefore this overall strategy is needed. His task force would not develop the strategy, but would study the options for developing the strategy. Vote called. **The motion passed.**

Mid Morning Break Task Forces

After the break there was discussion about the possible use of Task Forces. It was decided that a "grants task force" was not needed at this time McLaughlin proposed that we provide an advocacy site promoting refuge mission. Doebel made a motion that McLaughlin discuss with Chuck Danner the possibility of creating a service on the BGA web site that provides an opportunity to post refuge issues of concern by external groups and to recommend a follow up of implementation which he/she would approve. The motion died for lack of a second, but the proposal was looked upon favorably and McLaughlin will discuss it with Danner, the VP for Communications.

ELECTIONS

The following is the Nominating Committee Report made by Phil Morgan: The term of these board members expires this year: John Doebel, Florence LaRiviere, Bill Reffalt and Glenn Elison. Florence, Bill and Glenn have agreed to serve another two-year term and were so nominated. John has declined to serve another term. Eileen McLaughlin has been nominated for a position on the board. Jim Hubert resigned his position on the board earlier this year. Gail Fishman has resigned her position as treasurer but desires to remain on the board. John Doebel resigned his position as Vice President effective December 7, 2007 and Phil Morgan accepted that position on the same date. Phil agreed to serve until the 2008 annual meeting. In summary:

Phil Morgan, the NOMINATING COMMITTEE, presented the following slate of candidates:

BGA Board of Directors: (1) Florence LaRiviere (2) Bill Reffalt, (3) Eileen McLaughlin (4) Glenn Elison Treasurer: Les Beaty
There were no nominations from the floor. Morgan then moved "to accept the proposed slate by acclamation." Reffalt seconded. Vote called-**motion passed.**

Break: 12: 00 p.m.- resumed: 1:15 p.m.

Need for VP

Vice President Morgan began the second session by saying he wanted to know before he leaves that there is continuity beyond the end of President Redfearn's term of office.

Redfearn passed out a draft presentation script (using slides) as a jumping off place for a DVD as proposed earlier. It had been shown to a professional graphics designer, who suggested there be a video of people who speak to the need.

Redfearn brought up the subject of additional PR such as-news releases and blogs and asked for comments. There was a wide ranging discussion on blogs-covering their effectiveness-the demands of a good blogger - the favorite bloggers of NGOs. Morgan suggested that maybe BGA could utilize a blogger.

Redfearn emphasized how important it is to identify task force leaders for NGOs, Refuge Caucus, political parties and legislation.

Doebel talked about getting advice for some congressional point of contact – maybe there is someone in Congress would advise the BGA on how to proceed.

Crozier mentioned that there might be an opportunity to develop relationships with members of the Refuge Caucus. A suggestion was made that providing the Refuge Caucus leadership with copies of the NBR correspondence might help give the BGA greater recognition.

Reffalt and group will go to D.C. in April where they will explore NGO and Congressional contacts to further the BGA mission.

Doebel will try to make some contacts with congressional offices in his area

Discussion re: appropriation letter drafted by Crozier will be revised by Reffalt using additional information that he has available.

Break: 2:50 p.m. - resumed: 3:15 PM

A discussion continued about Eileen McLaughlin becoming the Vice President. She said that she would accept if Phil Morgan would continue as VP until June 1st. Bill Reffalt made the motion "I nominate Phil Morgan to be Vice President with the understanding that Phil will resign as of June 1st at which time Eileen McLaughlin will accept the appointment as Vice President." John Doebel seconded the motion. Vote called-**Motion passed.**

Closing comments.

Redfearn talked about potential transfer of the NBR to the Indian tribe and the involvement of the BGA in that issue. He said that the BGA involvement with that issue has benefited the BGA and without the BGA the refuge might have been lost.

Reffalt mentioned the 100-Year Celebration of the NBR that is coming up.

There was general agreement that a brief periodic report of activities should be made to Affiliates

There was a general agreement that when the DVD is developed in a draft form that we ask Affiliates for contribution to polish the DVD.

2009 Annual Meeting

Redfearn led the discussion about next year's annual meeting. There was general agreement that the meeting should be in March as the Alliance usually meets in the spring of the year. There was discussion about the meeting near to Bosque del Apache NWR, Tensas NWR and Minnesota Valley. The discussion was followed by Crozier making **the motion** "that the 2009 Annual Meeting be held in February at Socorro, New Mexico." Glenn Elison seconded the motion. Vote called – **Motion passed.** Redfearn agreed to make arrangements and look into things that the spouses could do, including visiting Ted Turner's nearby ranch/facilities.

Morgan made the motion "to close the 2008 Annual Alliance meeting." Seconded by Beaty and **passed unanimously** at 4:00p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/ _____

Ed Crozier

Acting Secretary

Approved: _____

Attachment

Affiliate Survey Report

Leslie F. Beaty
February 14, 2008

At our annual meeting in March 2007, I volunteered to contact each affiliate to obtain input regarding work on Alliance efforts. I decided to expand the purpose of the survey to obtain feedback from affiliates about the Alliance itself and the direction we are going.

Initially, I planned to contact each affiliate by telephone to talk with them personally. Upon reflection, I decided to conduct this survey via email. This would permit affiliates to provide more thoughtful responses in a format that would facilitate tabulation and analysis.

After planning and testing, a survey questionnaire was emailed to 60 affiliates beginning on December 14, 2007. A due date of January 15, 2008 was set for responses. As of January 16, 2008, 23 responses had been received, a response rate of 38.3%. On January 16th, an identical questionnaire was email to the 37 non-respondents as a follow-up. A due date of February 1, 2008 was set for those responses. As of February 2, an additional 14 responses were received, a response rate of 37.8% (curiously, a nearly identical response rate as the first round).

The survey was concluded on February 2, 2008. The total response was 37 out of 60 affiliates, an overall response rate of 61.7%.

The survey questionnaire consisted of nine questions and included opportunities to provide comments or remarks associated with each question. A summary of the responses to each item in the questionnaire is presented below.

It should be noted that not all 37 respondents answered every question. Some did not answer one or more questions. In a few cases, no questions were answered and only a narrative response was provided. Those narrative responses are included in Item 9.

1. Are you willing to dedicate some of your personal time to projects identified by the Alliance leadership? (Place an 'X' in the appropriate blank.)

Of the 31 affiliates who answered this question, 24, or 77%, responded in the affirmative. The other seven respondents stated that they would not contribute personal time.

Only 22 of the 24 affirmative respondents stated how much time they would contribute. Their choices were as follows:

<4 hrs./week	11 (50%)
4-8 hrs./week	5 (23%)
8-15 hrs./week	3 (14%)
>15 hrs./week	<u>3 (14%)</u>
	22

A few respondents added narrative comments that they were already heavily committed to other personal and family priorities.

2. In what area(s) do you feel you can offer particular expertise or are interested? (Place an 'X' for all that apply.)

The number of respondents who checked categories of effort is as follows. Eleven respondents made no selections.

- 2 Fund Raising, including Grant Writing.
- 14 Contacting/writing to members of Congress and/or preparing News items.
- 5 Working on an initiative for more interaction with Friends groups.
- 15 Working on individual Refuge issues, e.g., drilling on the Arctic NWR.
- 1 Working on/assisting with web site maintenance.
- 5 Membership recruitment.
- 6 Working with stakeholder NGOs.
- 7 Other. (Explain below)

Several affiliates noted areas of interest more specific, or narrow in scope, than the general categories listed in Question 2.

3. Are you open to consideration of specific assignments from the President?

Of the 30 affiliates who answered this question, only 16, 53.3%, indicated in the affirmative. This is a confusing and somewhat disturbing statistic. While in Question 1, 24 affiliates said that they would dedicate some of their personal time to projects identified by the Alliance leadership, only 16 stated here that they were even Aopen to consideration@ of specific assignments from the President.

That discrepancy could be interpreted as an indication that affiliates prefer to decide when and where they contribute their time but are resistant to being assigned tasks to complete.

4. Do you believe the Alliance is headed in the right direction? If no, please provide your views below.

Of the 31 affiliates who answered this question, 24, or 77.4%, responded in the affirmative. A number of affiliates offered a variety of comments about the Alliance=s mission and current strategy. There seems to be a difference of opinion regarding the direction the BGA is headed.

5. Are there any changes or adjustments you can suggest to the Alliance strategy? If yes, please describe below.

Although 21 of the 30 respondents answering this question felt there was no need for changes or adjustment to the Alliance strategy, many affiliates offered comments indicating that clarification of that strategy was warranted. Others felt that the single refuge issue emphasis was more than the Alliance could handle; others thought it was a worthwhile venture. Since this question is related to Question 4, some overlap occurred in the responses.

6. *Would you be willing to serve on the Board of Directors?*

It is pretty clear that very few affiliates want, or feel they have the time, to serve on the Board of Directors. Only 10 of the 31 respondents answered Yes.

7. *Do you know anyone you would nominate to become an affiliate? If Yes, who would you like to nominate (list below)?*

Only 9 of the 31 respondents indicated that they know someone to nominate. However, most generally indicated that they would nominate persons if and when they came across them. In other words, it wasn't that they were unwilling to nominate affiliates; rather they couldn't think of anyone at the moment.

8. *Are there affiliates who you would like to see on the Board of Directors? If Yes, who would you like to nominate for the Board (list below)?*

This response was similar to Question 7. Only 7 affiliates out of 27 respondents answered Yes. However, some noted that they were willing to nominate affiliates to the Board and even suggested possible names.

9. *If you have any other comments about the Blue Goose Alliance or your role therein, please provide them in the space below.*

Of the 37 total respondents to the survey, 30 provided narrative comments under Question 9. These comments covered a very wide range of topics. They tended to cluster into three areas:

Some respondents expressed appreciation to the active affiliates for their efforts on behalf of the Alliance=s mission. These respondents seemed to be apologetic for their lack of involvement.

A number of respondents, including those in the above group, expressed continued support for the Alliance=s mission. They continued to believe that the Alliance was on the right track. Their opinion that refuges should be housed in a separate bureau or agency remained unchanged.

The largest group, which again included some in the above groups, expressed frustration and disappointment with the lack of progress toward accomplishing the Alliance=s mission. These feelings ranged from mild disappointment to serious doubt that the mission could ever be accomplished.

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Attachment

Blue Goose Alliance Activities re: National Wildlife Refuge Issues—2007 A Report to the Board of Directors

List of Involvements:

A. Active projects requiring routine, if not daily activity and action, obtaining materials, maintaining contact with other NGOs and agency personnel and, often, writing letters or comments or initiating strategic actions.

1. National Bison Range Complex, MT: AFA with CSKT
2. Yukon Flats NWR, AK: proposed land exchange to initiate oil and gas development, threatening watersheds, ground waters, wildlife and subsistence
3. Izembek NWR, AK: land exchange to construct road through Refuge Wilderness
4. Little Pend Oreille NWR, WA: effort to return economic grazing into refuge
5. Sheldon NWR, NV: proposed control of horses and burros gets political
6. Baca NWR, CO: proposed oil and gas activities threaten refuge wildlife and habitat, and may severely impact future refuge developments
7. NWRS Appropriations: fighting to raise funding to core level of adequacy

B. Projects on “active monitoring” list following initial BGA actions, staying abreast of the issues, maintaining contact with others, and obtaining basic materials to enable action when necessary:

8. National Elk Refuge, WY: monitor CWD and other disease threats
9. Charles M. Russell NWR, MT: initiating CCP, several important issues arising
10. Lake Umbagog NWR, NH&ME: CCP input and monitoring refuge expansion
11. Wichita Mtns. NWR and Sequoyah NWR, OK: possible AFA refuges
12. Lower Rio Grand Valley refuges, TX: border fencing proposals threaten important movements of wildlife between Mexico and U.S.
13. Aransas NWR, TX: proposed major home development threatened several endangered species near refuge and within adjacent waters
14. Cabeza Prieta NWR, AZ: proposals for border fencing (anti-vehicle only so far) and installation of “personnel detection towers in Wilderness”
15. Kofa NWR, AZ: proposed electric transmission line through vital desert bighorn sheep habitats
16. Kofa NWR, AZ: proposal to install “real-time” cameras at water tanks threatened bighorn population
17. Buenos Aires NWR, AZ: construction of 16 foot anti-personnel fence, other immigration and drug smuggling issues swamp refuge staff, divert funds
18. Desert NW Range, NV: take-out of ground water by Las Vegas affects refuge
19. Alaska Peninsula NWR, AK: proposed helicopter use for fly-in activities
20. Yukon Flats NWR, AK: AFA with CATG
21. AK Maritime NWR, AK: proposed Chukchi Sea leasing threatens refuge units, important wildlife
22. Designations of multi-modal utility and energy corridors throughout federal lands of the West threatens 11 NWRs with half-mile wide reserved corridors
23. Global Climate Change: Role of NWRS in mitigating affects; needs of refuges to avoid initial affects; how strategic acquisition of refuges can assist U.S. efforts.

National Bison Range Complex, MT: AFA with CSKT

The BGA involvement in the NBRC began in 2002, with activities such as Congressional contacts beginning in 2003. Three BGA Presidents have authorized this involvement and played active roles in working to stop the give-away of this important, congressionally established refuge (and related refuge units comprising two additional refuges, and an entire Wetland Management District with multiple WPAs).

During 2007, a BGA “Task Force” comprised of four affiliates including President Don Redfearn has accomplished important gains in the relative position and current status of the issue. Following the FWS withdrawal from the initial Annual Funding Agreement (AFA) in Nov. 2006, the DOI leadership moved forcefully to reestablish negotiations and promised to have the Tribes back into the refuge by March of 2007. Reffalt attended a January 2007 meeting in Montana at which the Associate Secretary of the Interior announced the plans, but also heard from a small group of refuge supporters. Following that meeting, and exchanges between Reffalt and Redfearn, the Task Force was formed. For now Task Force members and roles remain on a need to know basis.

Task Force actions have resulted in active support by a powerful ally from earlier DOI leadership who traveled to DC, making important contacts in the House of Representatives. That action launched inquiries at DOI causing direct involvement by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, resulting in slowing of activity and lengthening of the DOI process. During that time, nearly the balance of 2007, the BGA Task Force worked constantly to develop and send materials, to offer strategic counsel to key officials, congressional offices, and the ally who continued to press the BGA position. These actions have resulted in no return of tribal employees to the NBRC to date.

Currently, newly appointed A/S FWP Lyle Laverty initiated efforts to negotiate a new AFA at the Complex. His deadline is March 28. The negotiations seem to be proceeding (not without rough spots) toward completion. The most difficult aspects remain to be negotiated. The BGA Task Force continues its almost daily involvement (during the past year, BGA Task Force members have devoted 40-80 hours per week to NBRC; some weeks have involved over 100 hours divided among the members.

Congressman John Dingell has taken an active involvement during the past year and has routinely contacted DOI on behalf of maintaining the integrity of the NBRC per his “Game Range Act.” The BGA is known to be the primary NGO on this issue although, of necessity, much of its efforts have been held confidential. Our opponent is wealthy, well staffed, and is devoted to taking the entire complex and all its funds and positions. Their tactics have caused people to lose jobs, to be reprimanded, transferred, or retired. They have two lobbying-PR firms on retainer, one in DC, another out west. Anonymity and confidentiality are in the interest of ultimate success for the BGA, but the Board can rest the Task Force continues to work efficiently and with effectiveness toward its ultimate objectives on this important matter.

Yukon Flats NWR, AK: proposed land exchange will initiate oil and gas development, threaten watersheds, waters, fish, wildlife and subsistence uses.

Although largely inactive during 2007, the FWS has released a huge Draft EIS calling for comments by March 15. Reffalt has been involved with a coalition of people and organizations in Alaska that have

been actively convincing all villagers in the Refuge to oppose the exchange (all of them are “shareholders” of the Doyon Native Regional Corporation which initiated the exchange concept).

In addition to the activities of going to the villages and presenting carefully developed materials, the groups aligned against the exchange have been actively working to convince FWS people in Alaska that the inherent damaging likely to result, the precedents, and the serious impacts to the intended refuge management concept in the Yukon Flats warrants stopping this proposal. Efforts in DC have also been on-going with the congress and among selected organizations. BGA has been able to provide ideas, and helped to develop materials, media advisories, and strategic action plans. With the release of the Draft EIS, a considerable amount of work is now devoted to analysis of the proposal, and its impacts so we can put forth important and accurate information about its ramifications to the interested public. BGA is considered an important and integral partner and will continue work in that vein. Precedents set by such an exchange would be harmful to refuges throughout Alaska, and potentially elsewhere.

Izembek NWR, AK: land exchange to construct road through refuge wilderness

Activities have been on-going throughout the year. The leadership of the Alaska Borough involved and the town leaders at King Cove have actively pursued legislation to authorize a land exchange and construction of a hugely expensive gravel road through the Izembek NWR and its designated Wilderness. The damages are severe and would affect nearly the entire populations of Pacific Black Brant and Emperor Geese, as well as threatened species (Steller’s Eider) and populations of other shorebirds and waterfowl.

The BGA involvement has been similar to that discussed above for the Yukon Flats, without the village involvement. This road is simply political, is unnecessary because of the special hovercraft-ferry (authorized and paid for by congressional actions in 1998), and offers inordinate damage for the supposed benefits. Much of the countering effort during the past year has been to obtain time for the Ferry to prove its merits and thereby demonstrate that no-action is needed by congress. As this report was being prepared we discovered that a new Bill has been developed for Senate introduction (with referral to the Energy Committee rather than the Public Works Committee which has refuge jurisdiction). The House Bill was introduced last year and lobbying by the Borough and city was devoted to obtain action. However, that bill may be slowed or stalled as the FBI investigation of Congressman Don Young unfolds. Senator Stevens also is under active investigation. Still, a lot of activity is expected during the next few months. BGA is a respected participant in this very important situation involving several potential precedents that would open refuge areas to destructive developments.

Little Pend Oreille NWR, WA: efforts to return economic grazing into refuge

The BGA began participation in this issue two years ago. During the past year, activity has been focused on keeping the FWS Regional Director from agreeing to change previous decisions in the refuge CCP process to discontinue economic use grazing in the refuge because it was incompatible. A court decision was rendered during 2007 that supported the Refuge CCP process and refuge decisions. Still, political interference brought the so-called National Riparian Service Team to the refuge at the request of the RD to review the scientific basis for removal of economic grazing. That team’s presence revived the harsh feelings against the refuge by a small group of locals (those associated with grazing in the refuge, County officials who believe they should determine management practices on federal lands, and

some national grazing interests that believe they are fighting precedents of removal of grazing from refuges and other federal lands.

By planned actions, letters to the Regional Director at selected times, and by working closely with local advocates for the refuge, BGA was able to prevent a likely overturning of a key CCP process and decision. Thus, the integrity of the CCP process has, at this moment in Region 1, been upheld. We will continue to monitor but believe this issue is now behind us. This is a worth victory.

Sheldon NWR, NV: proposed control of horses and burros gets political

Feral horses and burros have increased substantially at Sheldon NWR since the cattle were removed several years ago. Thus, the intended benefits to refuge habitats for antelope, sage grouse and other native wildlife have failed to materialize. The refuge project leader decided in 2007 that action was needed and issued a draft EA to launch a reduction effort aimed at achieving horse and burro populations levels appropriate for the refuge. However, wild horse and burro advocates were able to lobby the new chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee (Nick J. Rahall II, WV), causing him to intervene and derail the control program. At that point things became more complex.

BGA had taken a strong position favoring a vigorous program to rapidly reduce the feral animal populations as that offers economies of scale, and brings relief to sensitive refuge springs, limited wetlands, and vital riparian habitats most rapidly. After hearing of the intervention, which threatened to derail the control program, BGA wrote another letter of support for the proposed refuge action. In addition, BGA made contacts in DC with potential to influence matters at that level. The issue is yet to be resolved. The Complex Project leader now says that the upcoming CCP will serve as the “decision document” related to reduction of feral animals on Sheldon. The BGA anticipates need for continued active involvement in this important matter. If refuges are to maintain a “Wildlife First” commitment, they must be able to manage alien species in an appropriate manner.

Buenos Aires NWR, AZ: construction of 16 foot anti-personnel border fence, other immigration and drug smuggling issues swamp refuge staff, divert funds

A recent visit to Buenos Aires NWR to observe the completed \$31 million seven miles of border fencing and to discuss related matters with the acting refuge manager was informative and successful. Several days were spent exploring the refuge and observing many of the impacts from the “invasion” of the recent past by a large numbers of illegal immigrants across refuge lands (estimated at 2,000-3,000 per day at the peak). In addition, drug smuggling has become a growing and quite serious problem. Refuge law enforcement staff spends over 90% of its time on these issues, and the Refuge Manager and key staff are consumed by the related onslaught of border patrol and customs agents, other Homeland Security people, and the ramifications of these factors.

All refuge buildings used by staff on a regular basis, and all outlying housing occupied by refuge personnel have been enclosed in chain-link fencing topped by barbed wire and then topped by razor wire. Doors and windows are all heavily barred (Photos available). The result gives an appearance of a refuge under siege. Refuge funds and staff work have been diverted to accomplish the “hardening” of refuge facilities, building railroad rail fencing around the staff parking areas and equipment storage areas (after several vehicles were stolen), and taking other actions necessary to insure staff safety, avoid dangerous incidents, and assist the Homeland Security goal of controlling the border (for example, the refuge manager closed to all entry a four mile by one mile stretch of refuge adjacent to the border).

Staff, including volunteers not accompanied by LE officers with confirmed HQ communications, is prohibited from that area. Most other areas of the refuge require two staff members in order to heighten safety as encounters with groups of illegal immigrants, or drug smugglers may occur at any time.

For now, BGA has placed Buenos Aires on the active monitoring list, but intends to seek avenues to support funding and manpower improvements at this refuge to overcome the impacts from the current border problems. Similarly, we will monitor Cabeza Prieta, Kofa, other lower Colorado River refuges, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Refuges all of which are impacted in serious ways by border control issues.

Baca NWR, CO: O&G exploration threatens refuge wildlife and habitats and may severely impact programs to achieve purposes

The Baca NWR is a new refuge encompassing about 92,500 acres in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. The refuge was authorized by Act of Congress which also expanded the adjacent Great Sand Dunes NP, Monument, and Preserve. However, before the refuge could undertake its CCP process to determine objectives and programs to achieve refuge purposes, a Canadian mineral company exercised its ownership prerogatives to explore for gas. That proposal and related activities has delayed the CCP and is likely to impact future refuge developments, programs, public uses, and wildlife conservation.

The BGA decided to become involved. Contact was made with a coalition of local groups with offer to assist their efforts, but to remain a separate entity to preserve BGA rights to make independent decisions. On Feb. 28, 2008, Reffalt submitted comments on the draft Environmental Assessment recently released for the project. The EA was done under contract to the mineral company, but was the responsibility of the FWS. The DEA was wholly inadequate and BGA comments have called for the withdrawal of the document and a new EA to be produced in full compliance with CEQ guidelines and regulations. The Coalition will submit separate critical comments, and other major NGOs (such as NRDC) are likely to generate a large public outcry against the proposal. The Coalition had taken FWS to court last year, and the court agreed that NEPA compliance was necessary—overturning a previous FWS decision. Now the court may be called upon to determine if the draft meets minimum CEQ guidelines and standards.

BGA functions as an integral partner in the efforts to bring this proposal in line with conservation goals at the refuge, protection of Valley fish, wildlife, waters and aquifers, and other habitats. There are substantial migratory bird, elk, deer and antelope populations that rely on this area of unique wetlands and other wildlife habitats. It is important that the refuge not be diverted from its conservation mission at this critical point in time. Ownership complexities have kept FWS from taking the strong protecting posture that would be expected. BGA is attempting to press them to heighten their legally founded authorities with stronger permitting action.

Aransas NWR, TX: proposed major home development threatens several endangered species of the refuge and adjacent waters

During the summer of 2007, BGA received word that a developer was proposing a large development of up-scale homes at the north end of San Antonio Bay, adjacent to Aransas. The Corps of Engineers was reviewing permit requests for activity and marina developments in the Bay and adjacent waters, associated with the housing development. BGA determined that the proposals would likely have serious impacts on the threatened brown pelican, marine mammals and turtles that regularly use the waters adjacent to Aransas, and other fish and wildlife in the immediate vicinity. Outreach to other NGO

organizations developed a cadre of groups willing to fight the permits, and urge COE to undertake the necessary Section 7 consultations for the several listed species.

Ultimately, the developer withdrew his proposals and decided to develop elsewhere. We continue to monitor the general area, but consider this another victory. BGA influenced the approach, the strategy, the message, and the outcome.

NWRS National Appropriations: fighting to build funding to core level adequacy

BGA involvement in the refuge appropriations issue has always been mostly indirect support rather than direct testimony or lobbying involvement. In 2007 our efforts continued by obtaining the budget justification documents, analyzing the data, building charts and graphs that allow comparative visual interpretations and sharing those with other organizations, such as PEER, TWS, and others. In addition, in 2007 Reffalt was interviewed on more than one occasion for news articles on the affects of the proposed Workforce Management plans developed by FWS regions. Reffalt also had input to testimony of other organizations as a reviewer/commenter. Efforts of Ed Crozier to keep BGA Affiliates informed of the appropriations process and needed letter writing and phoning were very helpful. Don Redfearn and several other affiliates also increased contact and activities to influence the subcommittee outcomes in DC. All of those things made BGA activity more prevalent and effective in 2007 than in previous years. We are planning a more direct involvement in 2008 by submitting BGA testimony. Future efforts will attempt to reach out to affiliates to gather vital refuge-needs information to use as anecdotal examples of the negative effects of inadequate budgets and staffing at refuge field stations across the country.

The BGA active monitoring list.

Projects on BGA's active monitoring list most often come from previous active involvements. Once such projects reach a point where direct action is required, it remains necessary to watch for back-sliding or sudden shifts in the status. Monitoring keeps BGA abreast of the continuing evolution of resolved issues. Projects on this list can become active if events warrant. Benefits accrue to BGA by active monitoring as refuge personnel know we remain interested in the welfare of the refuge, and alert to problems. We have received messages of thanks, and other praise for these efforts.

Respectfully submitted to the Board of Directors
BGA Annual Meeting , March 3, 4, and 5, 2008

William C. Reffalt
Member of the Board