

Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#62 – April 11, 2009

Don Redfearn, President of the Blue Goose Alliance, announced today that the Alliance has sued the Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. The suit seeks to terminate the Funding Agreement between the Department of the Interior (DOI), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of Montana.

That agreement, signed in 2008, assigns significant portions of the operations and management of the National Bison Range Complex (“NBRC”), consisting of three National Wildlife Refuges and many Waterfowl Production Areas located near Moiese, Montana, to the CSKT for a three year period ending in 2011.

The lawsuit alleges that the agreement was signed in violation of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Administrative Procedures Act and the Freedom of Information Act,

The **Refuge System** is guardian of 150 million acres and more than 550 individual refuges located throughout all States, and most Territories and Possessions of the United States. The diversity of habitats is unique in the Nation’s land conservation systems and the populations of animal and plant species protected are among the most comprehensive in the world. The Alliance has attempted since 2003 to convince the Government that the form of agreement being negotiated would violate laws governing management of the Refuge System. The Alliance has also sought to obtain greater oversight by the committees of congress having jurisdiction over the Refuge System. Neither of those efforts has been successful.

With the signing of the 2008 AFA, covering fiscal years 2009-2011, it became clear that DOI and FWS remained unaltered in their intent, thus it became obvious to the Alliance that it must seek full review in the federal court system to protect the management integrity of the NBRC.

Also of great concern is the precedent established by the provisions in this agreement, and in the processes used at Interior to develop the management structure. The future of the entire National Wildlife Refuge System is being threatened by the approach taken by the DOI and the FWS. Several millions of dollars have been spent for negotiations and for the work assigned to CSKT. The NBRC has suffered near complete loss of experienced staff and serious disruption of its operational and management requirements.

The Blue Goose Alliance determined that our nation's wildlife and wildland heritage require the recourse taken in filing this suit. The tens of millions of visitors to refuges throughout the system deserve an accounting for failures in the Department of the Interior to adhere to legislative mandates.

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**NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES....WHERE THE EXTRAORDINARY IS
EVERY DAY**