

# Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#56 - August 15, 2007

The Blue Goose Alliance (BGA) continues to challenge the Department of the Interior (DOI) use of Annual Funding Agreements (AFA) as justification to convey management authority of National Wildlife Refuges to Native American Indian Tribes. A recent letter (May 15, 2007) from Representative Nick J. Rahall II, Chairman of the House Committee for Natural Resources, to Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne, lends support to DOI negotiating an AFA with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of Montana.

An initial AFA signed in 2005, allowed the CSKT to assume supervisory control and management of more than half the staff at the National Bison Range Complex of refuges at Moiese, MT. The AFA expired on September 30, 2006. Activity continued informally pending negotiation of a new AFA. An extensive report by the Refuge Manager detailed serious failures of performance by the tribe. There was a further issue of a hostile and unsafe working environment for long-time Federal employees. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service terminated all negotiations on December 12, 2006.

A letter (June 1, 2007) from the BGA to Chairman Rahall, called for hearings and an investigation by the GAO into the complete background and justifications for awarding the AFA to the CSKT. The BGA has been steadfast in referencing both the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act as not allowing delegation of management authority on a wildlife refuge away from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. James Steele, Chairman of the CSKT sent a letter (July 12, 2007) to BGA President Don Redfearn taking issue with the BGA letter to Chairman Rahall. Mr. Steele went to great length to defend CSKT, the interpretation of the Acts in a way that permits tribal participation in managing refuges, and the capability of the Tribes to perform.

The BGA sent another letter (July 30, 2007) to Chairman Rahall clarifying the ambiguities in Mr. Steele's letter, and providing additional comments and useful background information for the Committee's consideration on the issue of management authorities. The BGA response to Mr. Steele (letter dated August 1, 2007) attempted to make clear, one more time, the necessity to maintain the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System regardless of where the threats originate.

We have hope that BGA efforts and special attention from Representative Dingell, relative to the legislative mandates disallowing AFAs, or any other threat to assign management authority of a National Wildlife Refuge away from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, may at long last begin to be heard.

The full text of the referenced letters is available on our website at:  
<http://www.bluegoosealliance.org/info/national-bison-range-correspondance>

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<http://www.bluegoosealliance.org>

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