

# Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#61 – April 11, 2009

The Blue Goose Alliance has just issued the following news release:

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## **Blue Goose Alliance Sues Interior Department Over National Bison Range**

Don Redfearn, President of the Blue Goose Alliance, a national conservation organization, announced today that the Alliance has sued the Interior Department. The suit, filed in DC federal court yesterday, relates to an agreement signed in 2008 affecting management at the National Bison Range in Montana for three years. That agreement delegates significant federal responsibilities to the Salish and Kootenai Tribes creating a joint management arrangement at the refuge in violation of the laws guiding administration of National Wildlife Refuges.

The suit further alleges violations of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Endangered Species Act in the process used at Interior to develop the agreement. Those violations prevented disclosures vital to an informed public having knowledge and an opportunity to comment upon the proposal at the refuge complex consisting of three refuges and nine Waterfowl Production Areas.

The Alliance has been involved in the issue at the Bison Range since 2003 and has submitted many comment documents, has met with departmental officials and refuge personnel, and has urged the Congress to increase oversight and initiate a full investigation by the General Accounting Office. “All of those efforts have received only cursory and incidental attention” said Redfearn. He added that, “with the signing of the new agreement in 2008 that will substantially change the management arrangement at the refuge complex, it became obvious to the Alliance that our concerns and interests would only be given due attention by a federal court”

These actions by Interior will, in the view of the Alliance, seriously impair integrated and coordinated refuge management at the complex, which is essential to achieve long-term recovery goals for the iconic American Bison, and perhaps other species. In addition, the process used and action taken at this important complex of refuges also represents a precedent that could be used to create many more joint management arrangements throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System—thereby having a disastrous impact upon the world’s most comprehensive wildlife, plant and habitat conservation system. In essence, the Alliance felt that our nation’s wildlife and wildland heritage is threatened.

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