

Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#7 - November 5, 2000

Earlier this year, a number of former refuge employees recognized the importance of the National Audubon Society's proposal to create a separate agency for the National Wildlife Refuge System. A letter expressing their support for this proposal was prepared and 36 individuals added their names. Although this letter was widely distributed, some may not have seen it. So, it is reissued as a Bulletin for those who may have missed the earlier distribution.

Open Letter to Friends of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System was born almost a century ago as part of the Bureau of Biological Survey. For many years, the Refuge System played the major role for the Survey in the acquisition, development, and protection of habitats for important wildlife species. Since the Refuge System was the predominant component of the Bureau of Biological Survey, the growth of the System benefitted from an organizational structure that was focused on the management of wildlife refuges.

Since those early days, the Bureau of Biological Survey has become the Fish and Wildlife Service, which has become the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which has become the current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And, the bureaucratic landscape has changed dramatically. Major fish and wildlife responsibilities, such as endangered species, have been added to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the administrative responsibilities of the National Wildlife Refuge System have been de-emphasized and fragmented within the parent organization.

Over the past three decades, two factors have become increasingly clear. One, the National Wildlife Refuge System is a federal resource management program equal in national scope and significance to those of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Two, for the Refuge System to even begin to approach its potential for protecting and preserving important fish and wildlife habitats, and the populations therein, for future generations, the Refuge System must occupy a position in the federal bureaucracy equal to its sister federal land management bureaus. Only then can the Refuge System receive the national attention, Congressional support, leadership focus, and chain of command it requires.

The National Audubon Society has presented us with a historic opportunity to raise the stature, importance, and significance of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Society has proposed the creation of a National Wildlife Refuge Service, a bureau within the Department of Interior that would have as its sole responsibility the promotion and administration of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In the 1997 Campfire Letter to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 125 Refuge Managers recommended a return to a strong Refuge System alignment and an organization that elevates the Refuge System in line with its stature as the premiere system of wildlife lands in the world. The National Audubon Society proposal for a National Wildlife Refuge Service provides a strong alignment and elevated stature.

We, the undersigned, have collectively devoted over 1,000 years to the National Wildlife Refuge System. We remain dedicated to the best interests of these precious wild lands, and we strongly support the Audubon proposal.

Although we acknowledge that the National Wildlife Refuge System has taken some steps forward in recent years, especially in securing modest (though significant) funding increases, we believe it is clear that the System still suffers from serious and chronic problems with its organizational structure. Fish and Wildlife Service leadership has acknowledged that management and administration of the Refuge System is a full-time job. However, the current structure of the Fish and Wildlife Service makes that full-time attention at all levels impossible.

We must not be distracted from the important work at hand. We endorse the National Audubon Society's proposal to support our wildlife refuges and the important resources they are meant to protect. We encourage you to join us.

Electronically signed and endorsed by:

Gail S. Baker (21 years) - Florida
Leslie F. Beaty (34 years) - New Mexico
Harold W. Benson (38 years) - Wisconsin
J.C. Bryant (28 years) - Missouri
Forrest Carpenter (36 years) - Minnesota
Edward S. Crozier (37 years) - Minnesota
John H. Doebel (35 years) - Washington
Larry Ditto (28 years) - Texas
Larry Dunkeson (32 years) - New Mexico
John R. Eadie (34 years) - Georgia
John Ellis (33 years) - Minnesota
Bob Fields (37 years) - Oregon
Jerry D. French (31) - New Mexico
George W. Gavutis, Jr. (33.5 years) - New Hampshire
J. Brent Giezentanner (33.5 years) - Colorado
Bob Gilmore (30 years) - Alabama
Berlin A. Heck (28.5 years) - Oklahoma
Denny Holland (32 years) - Virginia
Jim Hubert (31 years) - New Mexico
William H. Julian (31 years) - Texas
Robert Karges (33 years) - Colorado
David H. Kimbrell (36 years) - New York
Joe Mazzoni (40 years) - California
Phillip S. Morgan (33 years)- Georgia
Edward S. Moses (34 years) - New Hampshire
Burkett Neely (33 years) - Florida
Gordon Nightingale (33 years) - Massachusetts
John Oberheu (32 years) - Florida
Don E. Redfearn (30 years) - New Mexico
Richard S. Rodgers (37 years) - Oregon
Royston R. Rudolph (37 years) - Georgia
Lawrence S. Smith (33 years) - New Mexico
Walter O. Stieglitz (34 years) - Florida
Robert H. Stratton, Jr. (33 years) - Kansas
John R. Walther (40 years) - Louisiana
Joe D. White (35 years) - Florida