

Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

#19 - June 2, 2002 (Revised June 15, 2002)

National Wildlife Federation Chapters Endorse Alliance Mission

Two prominent chapters of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) have resolved their full support for the establishment of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) as a separate agency within the U. S. Department of the Interior. They are the Albuquerque and the New Mexico Chapters, adding their support to the growing list of groups endorsing the mission of the Blue Goose Alliance (BGA).

Jim Hubert, BGA member and proponent of the separate agency action, made a presentation to each group. One response was particularly notable, by a former director of the NM Department of Game and Fish, "I'm all in favor of it. I found it nearly impossible to get through the maze of the Fish and Wildlife hierarchy so I could talk to refuge people." Another member of the board, a former President of the Wildlife Society (National), said "I can't be present at the meeting but I completely agree with the effort. It would be best for refuges." Many other comments were made which bolstered the matter as an idea whose time has come.

Hubert pointed out that it is about impossible to cut a pie in 28 slices, yet that is what the FWS attempts to do every year in distributing it's budget among it's many competing entities. The NWRS is buried in the organizational structure at least 3 levels below the director resulting in there being no consistent high level advocate for the NWRS when the budget pie is cut. All other major federal land managing agencies focus primarily on their land managing function. The NWRS does not fare so well: land management corners 95 % of funds in the National Park Service, 86% in the Forest Service, 78% in the Bureau of Land Management, but only 37% in the Fish and Wildlife Service. The NWRS simply cannot be effectively administered by a part time director. That is not to say that the FWS doesn't have an important function, for it does have many critically important conservation missions. The separate agency movement is not meant to harm the FWS in any way; it's just that refuges can not be all it can be when it is diluted by so much bureaucracy.

The fact that the idea of a separate Refuge Service has been around for some 40 years was explained. During these years around 30 studies have been made about the plight of the NWRS, all of which identified the same problem --- there is a serious need to establish greater NWRS autonomy. Several of these studies were made by blue ribbon panels composed of noted conservationists with national significance. The Leopold Committee, for example, was headed by a descendant of Aldo Leopold, who is sometimes called the father of conservation and spent many formative and productive years in New Mexico. There are many Leopold disciples in New Mexico, including some on the boards of the National Wildlife Federation chapters.

The resolution, by each NWF chapter, ".....resolves it's full support for the establishment of the National Wildlife Refuge System as a separate agency within the United States Department of the Interior".

Clarification

After this Bulletin was distributed, Dr. Douglas Inkley, Senior Science Advisor for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), wrote to let us know that the NWF does not have "chapters" as part of its organization. Rather, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation are separate and independent organizations which are called "affiliates" by the NWF. Such affiliates are free to adopt positions which may be contrary to those of the NWF. Our thanks to Dr. Inkley for calling the chapter/affiliate distinction to our attention.