

Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

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FWS Director's Office Functions Affirm Alliance's Contention

In Bulletin #16, issued on January 26, 2002, the Alliance pointed to Congressional questioning of Steve Williams at his Senate confirmation hearings as further evidence that the FWS Director cannot devote adequate attention to National Wildlife Refuge System matters. In a recent memorandum to the Service Directorate, Director Williams detailed the "roles and responsibilities in the immediate office of the Director in Washington, D.C.." These roles and responsibilities affirm the Alliance's contention.

The Director has assigned to Deputy Director Marshall Jones all day-to-day operations of the Service, including direct supervision of Regional Directors and Assistant Directors, as well as routine regional and program issues. This would presumably include all day-to-day operations and routine issues concerning the National Wildlife Refuge System. Thus, Deputy Director Jones supervises the Assistant Director for National Wildlife Refuges as a staff position with no line authority over the Refuge System. That line authority goes from Deputy Director Jones to the Regional Directors.

The Director has assigned to Deputy Director Matt Hogan all high-profile issues and special initiatives related to the National Wildlife Refuge System. He has retained for himself the personal oversight of, among other things, the "Fire Program," which presumably refers to the National Wildlife Refuge System's Fire Management Program. This program is a major component of the Refuge System.

The net result of this management arrangement is that seven Regional Directors and one Assistant Director deal, in one way or another, with matters concerning the Refuge System. For those issues which are routine in nature, these individuals report to Deputy Director Jones. For those issues which are high-profile or are considered "special initiatives," they report to Deputy Director Hogan. And, for topics related to the Fire Management Program, they report to the Director.

This does not appear to be the strengthening and streamlining of management structure which the Refuge System requires and so richly deserves. It seems, instead, to be yet another attempt to integrate the management of the Refuge System into an already complex, multi-function management organization.

The Alliance fully recognizes the problem with which Director Williams is trying to cope. The fact is, he must deal with a Refuge System that has reached "critical mass" with enormous land management responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges. The System simply can no longer be accommodated within the organizational structure of the Fish and Wildlife Service. It is increasingly evident that the Refuge System must be recreated as a separate agency to make both Refuges and the Fish and Wildlife Service better able to fulfill their respective missions.