

# Blue Goose Alliance Bulletin

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## **Alliance Approves Resolution Regarding Management of Refuges**

Resolution of the Blue Goose Alliance regarding the proposed delegation by the Department of the Interior of management authority over National Wildlife Refuges to Indian Tribes under authority of the "Self-Governance Act," P. L. 103-413 of 1994.

WHEREAS, the Blue Goose Alliance (Alliance), a national 501(c)(3) conservation organization incorporated under the laws of New Mexico, is dedicated to educating the American public, the Congress and others about the needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including the need to strengthen its leadership, management and integrity; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Interior (DOI), citing authority in the 1994 amendments to the Indian Self-Determination Act known as the Self-Governance Act (SGA), has proposed an extensive list of programs, services, functions, and activities administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as eligible to be negotiated with qualified Indian Tribal governments, in whole or in part, for contracting (See Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 66, pp. 16431-16435); and

WHEREAS, the FWS listing of eligible programs (part III (F), p. 16434, in the F.R. notice) contains a number of refuge programs including construction, farming, concessions, maintenance, comprehensive management planning, biological program efforts, habitat management and fire management, the Alaska subsistence program, and thirty-one specified National Wildlife Refuges; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of (the) fish, wildlife and plant resources, and their habitats, within the United States and its Territories for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance believes that for the National Wildlife Refuge System to accomplish its mission, it must be planned, organized, guided, developed, managed, and evaluated as a single integrated system with each refuge contributing to the System goals as well as accomplishing its original establishing purposes; and

WHEREAS, based on reports of negotiations with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana (CSKT), for management of the National Bison Range (NBR), Pablo and Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuges, and the NW Montana Wetlands District, and the announced intentions by CSKT to immediately and substantially modify the existing programs and features of the NBR complex, the Alliance believes the proposal severely threatens achievement of establishing purposes of the refuge units and the System purpose, while also threatening existing staff and raising uncertainty about the health and safety of refuge visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance believes that the federal laws governing administration and management of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Constitutional bases of

those laws, renders it inherently federal in nature and therefore ineligible for contracting under the provisions cited by DOI; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance believes that current laws establishing existing programs of the National Wildlife Refuge System do not authorize the type of participation sought by the CSKT;

NOW THEREFORE, it is the position of the Blue Goose Alliance that the present DOI Self-Governance program on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System violates the provisions of the enabling legislation, exceeds the authorities vested in the Secretary, and is a threat to the legal, effective and efficient operation of the Refuge System, and the achievement of statutory objectives, and should be halted.