

From: Ralph <ralphwebber@frontier.com>

> Subject: NBR Issue: Meet the National Wildlife Refuge System

> To: dan_ashe@fws.gov

> Date: Saturday, March 19, 2016, 2:21 PM

> Director Ashe,

> It has been several years now but you and I

> met either in Portland, at NCTC, or at Tualatin River

> National Wildlife Refuge, a station that I directed during

> its stages of development and one where I oversaw its

> management for 16 years as the Refuge Manager. Our

> meeting is foggy to me so I certainly don't expect you

> to remember the time or place of our meeting either, but I

> do recall it was prior to you becoming Director of the

> Service. That said, I assume it is okay to refer to

> you as Dan instead of Director Ashe? Dan, it was a

> difficult decision, but after 35 years of being an employee

> of the Service and managing stations of the Refuge System I

> found it time to hand over the reins and move to northwest

> Montana, not far from the National Bison Range. Be

> rest assured that my fire and passion for the National

> Wildlife Refuge System has not strayed and has stayed the

> course into retirement. This brings us to the primary

> purpose and reason for contacting you, that being the

> seeking of sponsorship legislation to transfer all lands and

> management of the National Bison Range to the Confederated

> Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

>

> Over the last several weeks I've been in

> close contact with many former colleagues and friends to

> discuss and take action on the Bison Range issue. We

> are all deeply troubled and concerned, and quite frankly,

> finding it difficult to follow the thinking behind your

> leadership decisions and those of the directorate. How

> can a Director of the Service send a letter to Assistant

> Secretary Reed in 2011 stating that management of the Bison

> Range or any other refuge will not be turned over to the

> Tribes or any other non-Service entity, and 5 years later,

> seek congressional sponsorship for its removal from the

> System? How can the Service not prepare a

> Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Bison Range with

> full public scoping and participation as mandated under the

> Refuge Improvement Act and the National Environmental Policy

> Act? As one of the alternatives, the significance of a
> transfer action alone would most certainly require a full
> blown Environment Impact Statement. Finally, how can
> the Service release a publication almost one year to the day
> that features its front and back covers with the National
> Bison Range as an iconic flagship of the Refuge System and
> historic symbol of the west, and one year later propose its
> removal from the Refuge System? Dan, take note
> of the final passage of that publication which states,
> "Providing a healthy and complete National
> Wildlife Refuge System, as envisioned by past generations of
> conservationists, would stand as a treasured testament to
> the nation's ability to pass on a lasting natural legacy
> to future generations." I think you will agree
> that the key words to this statement are "healthy and
> complete".

> We are all aware of the failures encompassing the
> nearly 20 years of effort to partner with the Tribes under a
> functioning Annual Funding Agreement, but the surgical
> removal of a refuge unit of the System will do nothing more
> than instigate fragmentation, and thereby threaten the very
> integrity of that System. The seriousness of this
> entire matter is underscored by the fact that it will set
> precedent with profound implications to all of our federal
> Refuges and National Parks. To put it bluntly, what is
> being proposed is simply unethical and is not in the best
> interest of our nation. Please spare me the arguments
> that have been used for the Bison Range transfer as they
> insult the intelligence of current and former employees of
> the Service, especially those that are most knowledgeable
> with the Refuge System.

> I want you to know that I have the utmost respect
> for the men and woman who serve the fish and wildlife
> resources under the emblem of the greatest conservation
> agency in the world, that being the Fish and Wildlife
> Service. That is why I ask that you help me
> understand your leadership thinking on this issue. I
> can only hope you have some silver bullet strategy up your
> sleeve to keep the System whole and are not just playing out
> the role of a good soldier. Bring this issue full
> circle and provide us with a decision we can all be proud of
> and one that will demonstrate the importance of what the

> Refuge System means to you. We need to know you are in
> our corner with full intent of protecting and conserving the
> greatest network of lands and waters on the planet.
> Please don't disappoint the people you serve,
> especially the American people who truly own the National
> Wildlife Refuge System.
> Thank you for your time and consideration of this
> matter. I look forward to hearing from
> you.
> Sincerely,
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