



Association of Retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees  
698 Conservation Way  
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

<http://fwsretirees.org/>

March 25, 2016

Mr. Dan Ashe  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dan

The Board of Directors of the Association of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Retirees wishes to go on record as opposing the proposed Service action to remove the National Bison Range (NBR) from the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is our belief that such action would result in a 'slippery slope' that would likely impact other Fish and Wildlife facilities to the detriment of the Service as the World leader in the conservation and management of this Nation's natural resources.

We recognize that priorities must be set for allocation of scarce resources. We also recognize that the Service cannot manage all lands within the System to the fullest extent with limited financial and personnel resources. However, the NBR is part of a System, governed by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act of 1966 and various amendments including the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. It is part of the rich heritage of the Service. Each refuge has an intrinsic value as part of the System, and not just a commodity to be disposed of when it becomes difficult or of lesser priority to manage.

Besides its historical importance to the NWRS, the bison gene pool is unique. It is the reason the refuge was established, and it should be preserved. In addition, the refuge provides nearly pristine habitat for native bird populations, as well as outstanding visitation and educational opportunities for the public. It is part of the heritage that our Association has pledged to help preserve. The Service purchased these lands for all Americans to enjoy. The Board is gravely concerned that the proposed transfer is precedent-setting for future dealings with other tribal, state or even military organizations wishing to acquire and/or manage federal lands. This is a huge precedence for the NWRS, for wildlife conservation, for public use, and for the agency's heritage.

Our Association, with the accumulated depth of experience of our members, stands ready to assist in any way as this issue moves towards resolution. We are first and foremost members of the Service family and care deeply about our heritage and the resources we work to conserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Streeter".

Robert G. Streeter, Ph.D.  
Board Chair

cc: Secretary Jewel  
Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate