

New Refuge System Chief

Greg Siekaniec, a 24-year veteran of the National Wildlife Refuge System, has been named the new Assistant Director for the Refuge System by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall. Just before taking the helm of the Refuge System, Siekaniec spent eight years as the refuge manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, one of the Refuge System's most remote and far flung units. Alaska Maritime Refuge encompasses more than 2,500 islands and nearly five million acres.

Among his many achievements at Alaska Maritime Refuge, Siekaniec is credited with developing a host of restoration partnerships with national conservation organizations to restore island biodiversity and ridding islands of destructive invasive species – foxes and rats – that had nearly eradicated native seabirds and other wildlife. Alaska Maritime Refuge provides nesting habitat for approximately 40 million seabirds, about 80 percent of Alaska's nesting seabird population.

Siekaniec started his career at J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge as a refuge clerk and moved up into management positions in Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming in addition to Alaska. He served as deputy chief of the Refuge System before taking over leadership at Alaska Maritime Refuge in 2001.

Through a varied career with the Fish and Wildlife Service – always working in the Refuge System – Siekaniec has gained experience with small to large construction projects, large-scale habitat restoration, law enforcement, wetland management, environmental cleanup, land acquisitions, establishing new refuges, and sensitive wilderness stewardship issues.

Siekaniec earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Montana. He completed the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in 2008, the same year that he completed the Senior Executive Fellows Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Siekaniec and his wife, Janelle, and their two children credit his work with the Fish and Wildlife Service for the opportunities to live a rural subsistence lifestyle and, at other times, be immersed in an urban area with a rapidly growing population. “The varied cultural and geographic experiences have led us to firmly embrace the importance of conservation partnerships,” said Siekaniec. “Whether acquiring lands for the Refuge System or working to remove Norway rats from a seabird island, it's all about working together and maintaining relationships.”

During their years in Alaska, the Siekaniec family could often be seen fishing the Kenai River, hiking and camping across the state, and hunting from the end of the Alaska Peninsula to the northern Brooks Range.