

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Customer Service Center Pilot

On July 1, 2003, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) launched a national toll-free call and email response center pilot project. This is a Department of the Interior (DOI) partnership with the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) USA Services, one of the President's E-Gov Initiatives. The two DOI bureaus currently involved in this pilot are FWS and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM).

With the assistance of contractors at the National Contact Center in Indianapolis, Indiana, the Service is now equipped to handle the thousands of public inquiries received from both telephone and e-mail more quickly and accurately than ever before. USA Services contractors (Aspen Systems, Inc.) at the National Contact Center (Tier I) answer FWS frequently asked questions on the primary public inquiry line (1-800-344-WILD) and e-mail generated by the Service's homepage link, [Contact Us](#).

In the first month of the pilot, 9,367 telephone inquiries came in through the 800 number. Calls are handled in three ways:

- 1) through an interactive voice response (IVR) for frequently asked questions such as hunting and fishing license information (recorded messages),
- 2) personally by USA Services agents (Tier I) and,
- 3) by FWS Customer Service Center staff (Tier II) when questions become more complex requiring Service employees to handle.

About 56 percent of calls in the first month were successfully dispatched by the IVR, with less than 1 percent of those hanging up during the menu announcement. Approximately 40 percent were answered by Tier I, and 4 percent were escalated to Tier II.

During the same time period, USA Services answered 223 e-mail inquiries and referred 155 to FWS Customer Service Center. Most e-mail inquiries were answered within 2 days of receipt and the majority of those were answered within an hour.

FWS Tier II staff, located in Arlington Virginia, are knowledgeable and equipped to answer almost any question that might come their way. However, they sometimes must forward an e-mail to other Service staff, such as Regional Public Affairs Officers, Refuge Managers, Law Enforcement staff, etc. We appreciate the willingness of other Service personnel to help us respond to public inquiries in a timely manner.

For more information about the Service's new Customer Support Center, please contact Anita Noguera at (703) 358-2294 or [anita\\_noguera@fws.gov](mailto:anita_noguera@fws.gov).