

Presidential Awards for Exceptional Performance

Jim Kurth, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deputy director for operations, and Robyn Thorson, the Service's Pacific regional director, have received Presidential awards for exceptional performance.

Jim Kurth received the Distinguished Executive Award, offered to only one percent of Senior Executive Service members. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Service, overseeing a budget of \$2.5 billion and a staff of 9,000 employees. He was chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System from 2011 to 2015, when he led the development and implementation of *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*, a blueprint for the future growth and management of the Refuge System.

Kurth began his Refuge System career in 1979 at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. He served at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee Refuge, FL; Bogue Chitto Refuge, LA; Seney Refuge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Ninigret Refuge, RI. From 1994 to 1999, he managed the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, proving adept at bringing competing interests together and navigating complex environmental challenges at one of the nation's most prominent refuges.

Robyn Thorson, honored as a Meritorious Executive, manages 1.3 million acres on 64 national wildlife refuges, 24 fish hatcheries, eight fisheries stations and 11 ecological services field offices. The Pacific Region includes Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands. Thorson's career with the Service began in Portland, OR, in 1985. She has worked in regional Service offices in Alaska, the Midwest and the Southwest and in the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Thorson was an attorney with the State of Washington before starting her federal career. In 2011, she received the Ira Gabrielson Award, which recognizes significant contributions to conservation by a person who reflects the powerful commitment and leadership qualities of Gabrielson, the first director of the Service.