

## Interview with John Rogers

April 12, 2000

Mark Madison:

Well, let's start at the beginning and what attracted you to the Fish and Wildlife after you got your Doctorate in Wildlife Ecology.

John Rogers:

Well, I had, in growing up, maybe not growing, that's too extreme, but first starting out in the field in school the, my primary objectives, whatever reason, had always been to go to work for the Research Branch of the Fish and Wildlife Service. So I was attracted by the whole complex of everything the Service did and the mission and what we worked on and why we did it. So it was just kind of an evolution. It was never, eureka, this is what I'm going to do. It was kind of an evolution of thought.

Mark Madison:

Did Research and Fish and Wildlife, was it well known in the universities at that time when you were working on your graduate degree?

John Rogers:

Yeah, the Fish and Wildlife Service Research co-op units and some of the allied, labs surrounding, part of Research formed the core, the nucleus of the finest Fish and Wildlife Research Branch, not only in the Fish and Wildlife Research outfit, not only in the country, but in the world, and my opinion, it's a close union within the Fish and Wildlife Service and Research and management that has led to the strength of this agency over its history.

Mark Madison:

Now, when you first started for us, did you start out at Patuxent or...

John Rogers:

Well, I started out at a field station of Patuxent, actually in Philadelphia.

Mark Madison:

Okay, and what was the atmosphere like in 1969?

John Rogers:

Well, the atmosphere in working for the government back then was considerably less formal. As an example, I was a graduate student finishing up my work at the school, and the person who turned out to be my supervisor told me where and when to report. So I showed up in Philadelphia, started working. He called about three weeks later and said, "Do you intend to get paid?" And I said, "Well yeah, that's kind of nice." He said, "Well you ought to come down here and sign up as an employee of the government." I'd never filled out an application, I'd never done anything. They just said when and where to go. I went, started work, and nowadays, as anybody knows, there'd be a long agonizing process of applications and selections and interviews and everything else. I just had to, I just showed up.

Mark Madison:

They really were the good old days.

John Rogers:

In that sense, for sure.

Mark Madison:

What were the people like you worked with when you first started?

John Rogers:

See, it was kind of interesting. I was at a one person field station at a research institute attached to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, although it was a field station, which I started up, of Patuxent. So I didn't really work around Fish and Wildlife Service personnel on a day to day basis. I worked with behavioral psychologists and dentists and electro physiologists and biophysicist and biochemists, the whole interdisciplinary group of people who talked language that I didn't even understand.

Mark Madison:

Did you eventually go to Patuxent later on?

John Rogers:

Only much later. After about eight years at, in Philadelphia, I decided, doing what I guess was reasonably decent research, I decided as part of another thought process that I either ought to join the main stream of the Fish and Wildlife Service or just go to academia. At that time, I got an opportunity to come to Washington as a, on the Research staff of the Division of Wildlife Research and that's what I did. It was not until three or four years later that I went out to Patuxent.

Mark Madison:

So, in some ways, Philly sounds like it was almost like a post doc.

John Rogers:

Well, what it was, it was almost, yeah, it was a post-doc and it was really part of my doctorate, because when I finished, I started it in graduate school and started a few research projects that were going to be for my dissertation that failed, and I finished all my course work and done everything else, and the opportunity to work for the Service came along, and I just made sure, as part of my pre-employment negotiations that whatever research I would do would be of sufficient interest and depth that it could apply for my dissertation, and that's what I did. So it was, it was a pre-doc and post doctoral experience.

Mark Madison:

Do you think we've lost some of those ties with the academic scientists, or are they...

John Rogers:

Well, I mean, we have through a loss of the research function, and again, I have lots of feelings on the loss of research, but we're not feeling necessarily the impacts of that yet, but 10 or 20 years, we're going to be an agency that's poorer for the loss of our research function and with it the loss of ties to the academic community.

Mark Madison:

Now, let me ask you, there's an assumption that research and conservation go together, but how do you think they actually work together? I mean, how do they form like a...

John Rogers:

Well, as the Fish and Wildlife Service as an agency that's based on science, we need to have the most up to date information on a wide variety of issues in order for us to make the day to day decisions, and the generation of that information is not a passive process. It's an active process that is best managed and conducted by people who are trained in and actively engaged in asking questions and seeking ways to generate the answers to the questions. Saying nothing about our biological folks in the Fish and Wildlife Service, they aren't practicing, although many are trained, they're not practicing research scientists, and their full-time job is not the generation of information, and without, without an active ongoing research branch, we are going to be a poorer agency in terms of the richness of our whole information base and poorer in terms of our ability to make sound, informed decisions. To my mind, to my knowledge, for as long as we had research, we never lost an issue because we made a decision that was based on a lousy information base. We lost plenty of issues because we made bad decisions, but we didn't make those decisions poorly because the information base was poor. I fear for that in the future, and I think that strikes at our very credibility as an agency. Because I'm going off in the sunset, I won't see it, but the resources of this country will.

Mark Madison:

When you were working with Research over, how many years would that have been?

John Rogers:

17 years.

Mark Madison:

17 years, what were some of the more important discoveries?

John Rogers:

Well, we developed the entire base of information and supported the conversion of, and the support of the conversion from lead to steel shot, non-toxic shot. That's a major migratory bird conservation effort. That wouldn't have been possible without the right information base to support it. All of the environmental contaminants were, that supports much of our recoveries and much of our ecological services project planning work, that supports all of our natural resource damage assessment work, most of that has been generated or at least begun by the Fish and Wildlife Service people. Obviously, Rachel Carson's

heritage in the Service, Fish and Wildlife Service was really, again, first in the world to look at the chain of events between industrial manufacturing in America and what was actually happening in critters.

Mark Madison:

When you entered Research, did people think of Rachel Carson like they were following her legacy, or does that happen later on?

John Rogers:

I didn't, I think that happened later on. You know, there's a, you know, people are either, either because it's cool or for whatever reason, discovering people like Rachel, Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold and treat them as kind of mythic creatures, but they were actually real people doing real work who left a legacy of words and thoughts beyond just the numbers that, certainly Rachel Carson created. I had the pleasure of working at Patuxent with and under Lucille Stickle who was the Director of Patuxent when I was in one of my incarnations as Assistant Director there who, of course was, worked directly with Rachel Carson earlier in her career, and she, both as a woman and as a scientist interested in contaminant effects on wildlife was a, was an important influence on me, on the Fish and Wildlife Service, and on the progress of that battle. But those effects were kind of by the way, not by the way, of course, the scientific chain of events rather than, you know, the mythic running and dancing around in circles with flowers in your hair kind of stuff, treating this people as gods. They were good scientists who led the way through their inquiries and their answers to the questions.

Mark Madison:

Do you have any memories or impressions of Lucille Stickle? She's our most recent conservation hero.

John Rogers:

I have, I have, interestingly, one of the, and it's absolutely not scientific in its recollection, but one of the strongest recollections I have of her was when I was at Patuxent, there were two Assistant Directors. The other one and I were engaged in some bureaucratic, mindless budget process, and she was about to retire, and she walked into the office and looked at us both, put her hands on her hips and smiled, and said, "Boys," she always called us boys, "one of these days you're going to think about this as the good old days," turned around and walked out. Of course, she was right, but...

Mark Madison:

Now, where did you go after you left DC?

John Rogers:

After I left DC is when I went to Patuxent.

Mark Madison:

Patuxent, all right. After you left Patuxent?

John Rogers:

I went back to DC again in the Cooperative Units Program and after three years in the Cooperative Units Program is when I actually left Research and went to the Division of Environmental Contaminants.

Mark Madison:

Okay.

John Rogers:

Environmental Contaminants, and then after a brief stint as Deputy Assistant Director of Refugees and Wildlife, I went to Alaska.

Mark Madison:

What year was that?

John Rogers:

I went up there in January of 1989, and I think one of the reasons I ended up, I went up there Acting, and one of the reasons that I think that I stayed there was because on the 24th of March of that year, the Exxon Valdez hit the rocks, and initially I was one of the point people engaged in it, and they didn't want to mess up the management chain of command, the management chain that was working at the time, so there I was.

Mark Madison:

Take us back to the Exxon Valdez.

John Rogers:

Well, again, you have these vivid little, maybe sometimes meaningless recollections, but I can remember that Friday, late in the afternoon, most everybody's gone home, and our contaminants person came running down the hall and said that there'd been, there'd been an oil spill in Valdez Harbor. Of course, in Alaska, you get some 200 little oil spills a year, and it was kind of a matter of course, okay, let's go out and see what happened. He said, well, he had a problem, the, that his vehicle was broken down and he needed to get a vehicle, and I said, "Well great, we'll get a vehicle." He said, "Well, the only available is at the research lab," the Alaska Research Lab there, and I said, "So go borrow their vehicle." He said, "Well, they won't let me have it unless I have a government driver's license, and I don't have a government driver's license." So I said, "Okay, give me the papers." So he handed me the papers and I signed some papers and gave him a government driver's license. Here's the biggest environmental disaster, maybe of the century, at least in this country of the century, and our response to it was initiated by having to have a government driver's license so we could borrow, borrow a vehicle to go down and make kind of a routine assessment of what we thought at the time was a relatively minor issue, and of course, it rolled on and still rolls on, the, both biological, sociological, economic impacts of it.

Mark Madison:

Let me push you on that a little.

John Rogers:

Sure.

Mark Madison:

I mean, why did it become such a <unclear>? Was it, was it primarily because of the biological damage or was it...

John Rogers:

Well, you know, you can find a lot of, you can find a lot of people who will argue about that. My impression always was two things. First of all, the biological damage being that it was, the whole thing was organic. Oil severe was going to be short term and would prepare us, and whether the people washing rocks contributed to it or not, I don't know, but I think largely the, the biological impacts have probably gone away. I think it was made, the whole thing was made worse by the reaction of Exxon to it. They stonewalled, refused to play, denied. They did everything that a public relations expert would tell you not to do. So they created, in everybody's mind, the impression of this big, bad industrial giant trying to save themselves a few shekels at the expense of the wildlife and the native peoples and others who depended on the resource up there, and they never got past that, and even still today, Exxon bashing is, is popular. Of course, and then, of course there are the impacts of the loss of the resources on the native communities, both their acquisition of fish, for example, and this huge influx of all these people running around with rags trying to wash beaches up, and the amount of money that was dumped up in Alaska during the early years there was just incredible and had a huge impact on the economy the way it was.

Mark Madison:

You sound like you have ambiguous feelings about the rock cleaning and so on. Scientifically...

John Rogers:

I mean, if you look at the, if you look at the expanse of country that was hit by oil, I cannot believe that, whether the steam cleaning the beach or people with rags on their knees washing rocks made any kind of impact other than employment, and maybe it made for good sound bytes and stuff, but I just really think it had



zero, zero impact and spent a lot of money that probably could have been spent elsewhere.

Mark Madison:

Do you think it had an impact on us as the Service? Did we learn...

John Rogers:

Well, in some ways, because we had, we were under the gun as far as damage assessment and a lot of other things. We needed a lot of people and a lot of people got experience and exposure both in Alaska and working in those kinds of issues, because we had people detailed from all over the Fish and Wildlife Service up to Alaska during, certainly during the first six to nine months, and a lot of people got lots of exposure to new issues, new places, new people. That was probably the biggest, biggest impact on us as a, as a Service.

Mark Madison:

After Alaska, where did you go?

John Rogers:

After Alaska, came back here, again, as Deputy Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife. Obviously, I didn't get it right the first time, so I did it again, but I didn't last, again, I didn't last very long. I was, for five months Acting as Regional Director in Minneapolis, and about the time I came back from that, they suggested I might want to be Regional Director in Albuquerque, and so that's where we went.

Mark Madison:

And that was...

John Rogers:

That was '92 through '95.

Mark Madison:

'92 through '95. So that coincided with the listing of the Mexican Spotted Owl.

John Rogers:

Yes.

Mark Madison:

What was your role in that?

John Rogers:

Well, it was already underway and had momentum, but I didn't, I didn't have a whole lot of impact on that process. Obviously, there's the, we kind of jumped in and made pronouncements at various times, but it had, the decision had been made and the process was rolling forward. There wasn't much, was not much for me to do after that, for me to influence.

Mark Madison:

How did that play out in the southwest, the listing of the Mexican Spotted Owl?

John Rogers:

Well, it's been contentious and remains contentious. The whole critical habitat designation, on again off again. The continuing impacts or presupposition of impacts on those who depend on principally the extraction of forest resources, and it will, it will continue to play out, some in reality, some <unclear>.

Mark Madison:

Does that tie into something you were saying early about research and so on, the listing of endangered species? Listing the Mexican Spotted Owl, is it much easier to do when the research stands strong?

John Rogers:

Well, taking any action, whether it's listing or a de-listing or management on a refuge is easier and more logical if you're confident in your information base. We don't have that kind of information base on lots of species, and without, again, without people doing, reacting to the needs of the Fish and Wildlife Service directly, we're not, we're not going to have that kind of information. Even what we had on the Mexican Spotted Owl, which was not really great, we're not going to have that kind of information if we don't have research.

Mark Madison:

Were there other issues that came up while you were in the southwest?

John Rogers:

Well the early, early decisions on the reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf was, was important. That began the whole, we also began the whole issue of trying to get the, all the water users along the Lower Colorado River together to try to assure management of that river in a way that was less impacting on both the sport fish as well as the endangered, endangered species. So that was important, as was the San Juan River effort contributing to that. In the middle, in the midst of that, we were continually hassling with the State of Texas over a lot of the listings over there. So it was, it was fun. Kind of dominated by endangered species issues, but plenty of other solid things were going on, too.

Mark Madison:

What about the Mexican Wolf? That's been back in the press again. A recent 60 Minutes thing on that. What went into the decision to try and reintroduce the Mexican Wolf?

John Rogers:

Well, you know, the Mexican Wolf's been endangered for quite awhile. They do not exist in the wild, and that was always, a recovery plan was produced, called for re-introduction, so it's kind of a long, slow, step by step process, and the reintroduction was all done in kind of a social climate. There is the continuing paranoia about wolves and livestock and wolves and children and wolves and dogs and cats. But again, I was there in the very early phases, not when we were actually putting wolves out on the ground. So the real controversy started after I left.

Mark Madison:

Let me press you as a wildlife biologist, John, on an issue here. Is there an exponential grade or degree of difficulty reintroducing things as opposed to just restoring numbers, what they actually are?

John Rogers:

Well, I mean, the difficulty, in my view, comes from the fact that you're, if you're restoring them, you have some, you have wild animals to deal with, and you need

to deal with the limiting factors that are keeping the population from expanding. If you're restoring them, you've kind of got a dual objective. First you've got to raise sufficient stock that is sufficient in numbers, sufficient genetically, and sufficient behaviorally that once reintroduced it even has a chance, and then, of course, you have to work on the factors that are limiting it, and many times, if it's not there, people develop a lifestyle that is independent of the critter that you're reintroducing, and the reintroduction causes a change, and people don't like that all the time. So yeah, I don't know that it's exponential, but it's certainly much greater difficulty reintroducing something, both biologically and sociologically.

Mark Madison:

I notice that's very exciting, historically, to make that effort to reintroduce things.

John Rogers:

Yeah.

Mark Madison:

So after the southwest, you came back?

John Rogers:

After the southwest, yeah, I came back here, and here I've been for the last five years under Director Beatty and Director Clark.

Mark Madison:

Was it hard switching back and forth between Washington and the field, especially two of the more distant regions, at least geographically?

John Rogers:

No, I mean, it wasn't difficult. For some, coming to Washington is like going to a foreign country. I've been in and out of here enough earlier in my career that, you know, we knew the area, we knew the people, we knew how to, how to get along here outside of work, which is where people really have the biggest problem and, so no, it wasn't, it wasn't much of an adjustment.

Mark Madison:

So you came here under Director Beatty.

John Rogers:

Correct.

Mark Madison:

Any recollections of <unclear>?

John Rogers:

Well, I mean, unfortunately, there, in terms of working under, they're very few and brief because I came in here, really got settled down at the end of March and she got, she had been, she had a heavy travel schedule through the spring, she got sick in July, and never really came back. So really I was just functional as her Deputy for a couple of months, and we were preoccupied with lots of other things rather than, you know, developing a, obviously though we had plenty of time to develop the kind of relationship..

Mark Madison:

Sure, sure.

John Rogers:

But it was, unfortunately, too brief.

Mark Madison:

What was the challenge like stepping up to be Acting?

John Rogers:

Well, again, that's, the stepping, the stepping in, both while she was sick for a year and after she had died, for a little more than a year, was not something that I had ever anticipated, not something that I had consciously prepared for, and you know, just kind of like, okay, here you go, do it, and some things, you know, things always come along that you might do differently than the way the, and the momentum that has already been generated, but I didn't feel in some instances it would be appropriate, I don't think this is right, so I'm going to change it. I didn't think it was appropriate there, so those kinds of things were not always the, not

always fun to do, but by and large as a whole, it was, it was an interesting two plus years.

Mark Madison:

Any issues come up in those two plus years that stick with you?

John Rogers:

Well, there were, there were, it may have gone bad now, I don't know, but the, our relationships with the states when I came in were not, were not as good as they could have been. I think some of that was reaction to Molly as a woman Director and as a non-hunter Director created as a deep well of suspicion, and anything she did that they didn't like, they attributed to her philosophy, so I looked at it as kind of a priority to try to work on that and represent state interests. I mean, that was one of the big areas that I spent a lot of time on.

Mark Madison:

How did you convince them <unclear>?

John Rogers:

It wasn't, it's not a matter of convincing. You can't go in and sit down and say, look, we really love you. You just have to do it by listening, paying attention, being at their functions, hanging around even though you know there's something else better to do. You've got to really demonstrate it rather than say, hey, we're going to throw our arms around each other and love each other.

Mark Madison:

You've been here a long time, like you said, 31 years. Why have our relations deteriorated with sportsmen and hunters and anglers?

John Rogers:

Well, yeah, I mean, many people phrase it, you know, that our relationships have deteriorated, and probably if you look at it, maybe that's not an incorrect way of phrasing it, but I tend to look at it as a reflection of what's going on in the world, and one of the big issues that the Fish and Wildlife Service is going to have to deal with is we have, as an agency or as employees in an agency, we've began, with people who have rural backgrounds, hunted and fished, and as an agency,

by and large, our programs were generally focused on issues and things that supported hunting and fishing with, in the '70's, the rise of the more environmental movement, the proliferation or the expansion of the endangered species program, the environmental contaminants program, some of these others have taken on some responsibilities that don't require people to have a hunting and fishing background to go into, and I don't say they necessarily require people who don't, but they've opened up, they opened up the employment opportunities of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and we hired lots of good people who were less rural in their background and less consumptive in their appreciation of wildlife. And so we have an agency that is as diverse as society, and we need to come to grips with that kind of diversity and appreciate each other's appreciation of, appreciate each other's appreciation of wildlife and the roles of both kinds of interest in the past, the present, and the future. I think that's going to be one of the big things we face, that we get along and understand, the fundamental commonality being you can argue about whether you ought to look at it through binoculars, just know what's there or hunt it, but at least you've got, we are, we're common in understanding that there's got to be something there to argue about, and that understanding, I think, I think it's growing. People are working hard at it. The differences, like many things, where we have differences tend to get magnified. Sportsmen see the change in the Agency and view it as a weakening of support, and again, look at the last two directors, Molly and Jamie, neither one hunters or anglers and neither one opposed to it, but neither one actively interested in taking it up. That perception coupled with the reality and diversity of our mission makes people suspicious. I don't know what we can do other than continue to support as we have the programs that are of interest to those who consume the resource rather than those who just look at it.

Mark Madison:

Do you hunt or fish?

John Rogers:

Yeah, both.

Mark Madison:

Probably saw that question coming. We just put up a shot of John Gottschalk, who's a conservation hero, of him fly-fishing in a beautiful trout stream somewhere. We're working on a sportsmen in conservation.

John Rogers:

Oh, you are.

Mark Madison:

Let me ask you that. We're doing a historical display on sportsmen and the Fish and Wildlife Service. How would you see the role between the two? I mean, you, in some way, outlined a change, but...

John Rogers:

Well, that's where we, that's where we came from, so it's an important part of our, of our roots, and I think regardless of what people say and, I don't try to make things suit their own minds, we have a strong interest, ongoing interest in programs that support sportsmen. They have not diminished over time. I think there's a recognition that hunters and anglers were our first constituents and they're, they're going to be there. Now, maybe we end up taking, because of that we end up taking them for granted because they've got nowhere else to go, but I don't think we do. We sometimes get distracted by other things, but we don't, it's not a conscious diminution of support. So I mean, sportsmen are extremely important, their voices, their dollars are what have fueled us in the past and what will stimulate us in the future.

Mark Madison:

Any recollections of working with Jamie in the last couple of years?

John Rogers:

Well, it's been, it's been a great pleasure, you know, for both of us. The way she came in as Director may have, could have been awkward, because she worked under me as a Deputy Assistant Regional Director in Albuquerque, and she was Assistant Director here while I was Acting, and all of a sudden, she was Director, but frankly, I don't think there was any, there was a hiccup along the way. She's a pleasure to work with. I think, as I've told her in the past, the fact that she had a baby a year ago, I think it made her a more interesting person and a better



Director. She used to be in here 12 hours a day, and now she's, without a personal life, and now she's very structured about when she gets in here and when she goes home, what her priorities are. I think that's as it should be.

Mark Madison:

Have you grappled with that yourself?

John Rogers:

Well, when she was out last summer, I had to, I had to act, but having been through two years of even more equivocal situation earlier, that wasn't a problem. She was there, and we would converse on, converse frequently on issues that were, had longer impact than just today. So it wasn't, I didn't find it really an issue.

Mark Madison:

What do you see the role of Deputy Director as being? You've done it for a number of years, then you've also been Acting Director. I mean, we see it in the organizational chart described as overseeing day to day activities.

John Rogers:

Well, it's easy to say it's the alter ego for the Director. A couple of things, the Director needs somebody who, to speak to, to speak with and hear from who is, not by virtue of their job, an advocate for any personal, any particular part of the Fish and Wildlife Service, somebody who can, who can be a little bit more objective to how things are run. Anybody else is got an agenda by virtue of who pays them. So I think that's an important role. The other, and I sometimes say it facetiously, but it's true, is anything the Director doesn't want to do, can't do, doesn't have the time to do, or otherwise doesn't know about that needs to get

done, you've just got a, a Deputy, a Deputy anything has got to see what the Director does and what he or she is doing or not doing and pick up the pieces and make sure the trains are running on time.

Mark Madison:

That isn't in the description.

John Rogers:

It's either a hard, it's either a hard job or it's an easy job, but there's certainly, the Director, nobody that I've ever, for whom I've been Deputy has ever said on a day to day basis, do this, do that, and do the other thing. You've just got to kind of see what needs to be done and make sure it gets done, whether you do it yourself or have somebody else do it.

Mark Madison:

Why have you decided to leave the office?

John Rogers:

It's just time. You know, 31 years and I don't want to get trapped by a, by a transition here and be stuck by guilt or something else in this chair. I want out early enough so that, people wish they can make the accommodations for the future but it doesn't happen and at least I haven't done something precipitous that it leads to it, and you know, I want to spend a little more time doing what I want to do rather than what I have to do, even though some of it may be some of the same issues from a different perspective, but you know, dealing with personnel grievances and haggling over who gets a few dollars here and there to do something that may or may not need to be done, I don't need it anymore.

Mark Madison:

Maybe get a little more hunting and fishing in?

John Rogers:

Yeah, yeah.

Mark Madison:

As somebody who's leaving and describe yourself as objective without, you know, who can see the program, do you have any thoughts on the <unclear>?

John Rogers:

I think it's the stupidest thing that ever happened, and it's, it's either tied for or the second, second stupidest thing that's been proposed, first being the action

that removed research, and maybe it makes it a little behind that because it hasn't happened yet. I think one of the things people in this agency, as well as people in this field have got to learn is that if we don't hang together and work together despite our little differences, nobody else is going to, is going to make sure that the resource is appropriately stewarded, and I don't care whether you do it as a refuge person, as a migratory bird, contaminant, or ES, or who, if you waste all your time fighting each other and create artificial boundaries, you're going to lose the ball game. There are too few of us interested in and concerned about the resource, and if we start splintering it up, it's not going to happen. On top of that, the small, the history of small agencies in this town or in this world is very brief, and the Refuge system is too important to conservation to get gobbled up by somebody else who has a different, a totally different mission and view of life. I recognize there's real issues that have got to get dealt with at the refuges, great, let's deal with them. But conservation in this country, now and in the future, is going to be about integration not disintegration, and bulkinization of the Agency administrative community that works on it can only lead one way, and that's too less efficiency and more disaster.

Mark Madison:

What do you think's driving this? I mean, this is a genuine question.

John Rogers;

I mean, what's driving it, I think there are some real issues with the Refuge System, on which we are working, but which aren't getting taken care of fast enough for some. I will say, only facetiously, not only, only somewhat facetiously, a lot of what is driving this is a bunch of people who are in the position that I'm going to be in, empowered by e-mail, who can come in after fishing or after a set of tennis or a golf game and sit down and blast off some vitriolic message about refuges and how bad the Fish and Wildlife service is screwing up and then go out and play another set of tennis and not have to worry about trying to make anything happen. A lot of these are people that haven't done a damn thing for the Refuge System or the Fish and Wildlife Service in the ten years since they retired. So that's kind of, that's something else that's driving it that I think is really unfortunate. But there are real issues, and we are and will deal with them, but we ought to be dealing with them as the Fish and Wildlife Service not as separate agencies.

Mark Madison:

As a soon to be, retiree and we're trying to get the retirees Fish and Wildlife News and set up a list, what, what could former employees do to help the Fish and Wildlife Service?

John Rogers:

Well, there's, I think there's a lot people can do to help. There's, there's involvement, engagement in the whole training effort. I think people who've been there, lived it can make a presentation or something a whole lot more relevant than somebody who just came out of school and is doing it because, you know, they read it in a book somewhere. I think that's very important. I'm not putting down anybody who, you know, who's, who's a professional trainer rather than a professional resource manager who is doing training, but there's a different perspective, and so I think that's one very important thing. Again, there's, there's obviously knowledgeable, active engagement on local issues, local issues important to the Fish and Wildlife Service, to conservation in general. People can, and I believe, should get involved, and there's working, obviously, on behalf of the Agency, local Congressional folks to make sure the right things happen in action like this. That's important. There's just remaining a part of the family, and I know, I'm sure I'll confront, there's probably a tough line between being useful and just hanging around, and the latter's probably not good, the former is, but probably is difficult to recognize the difference.

Mark Madison:

Challenging. One final question. What would you like to be most remembered for in your 31 years? What are you most proud of having done?

John Rogers:

Well, you know, I don't know how to answer your question, but you know, at this time, you know, people come running up to you and say well, you know, gee, you must be proud of all you've accomplished, what is your most important accomplishment, and that automatically, I mean, you start thinking about stuff, and I guess what I would, I've been involved in a lot of things, but I think it would be a huge mistake to say I did this, because there are other people who, sitting in the room say, "Wait a minute, I was involved in that, too." And it's, the specific

resource issues are really a joint accomplishment. I mean, I'm proud to have been involved in lots of stuff from straightening out the migratory bird research effort in Patuxent to bringing the Contaminants Program into some sort of, bringing some sort of respect to saving the Cooperative Units Program from being abolished to having dealt with some of the tough issues with Exxon Valdez and waterfowl hunting regulations and stuff like that. But it would be a huge mistake to say that I did anything. I was involved, and I was involved with a lot of really good people, and if I helped them or empowered them or whatever to

get those things down, then I'm proud of that. It ultimately comes down to people. Maybe, maybe the only thing I can think of that I can maybe claim credit for doing is getting NCTC to sell fishing licenses.

Mark Madison:

That's quite an accomplishment. Do you have any thoughts on NCTC?

John Rogers:

Well, I think it's, I think, you know, lots of us were skeptical early on that it was a boondoggle both in terms of what we were trying, what we were trying to do there as well as the physical plan, and I think, I think there aren't anymore skeptics left. I think it's physically, the physical plan and location is marvelous. The course work that goes on there is great. Together they, they really have formed what we all kind of dreamed of, the home of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and it's, you know, for once, and I've said it facetiously, and I'll probably say it again, the Fish and Wildlife Service had an opportunity to do something right, and they did it. Sometimes, very seldom do we have any opportunity to do things right, and this time we were given the chance, and we didn't screw it up, and I think that's, that's a marvelous tribute to everybody involved.

Mark Madison:

Thanks a lot, John.