

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Wilbur Newton “Skip” Ladd

Date of Interview: October 12, 2006

Location of Interview: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Interviewer: Norman Olson

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: October 1972- October 1999 -28 years with Fish and Wildlife Service (retired from Park Service in January, 2003) Note: I actually had several years more than that with FWS as I was employed for several field seasons while working on my M.S. project at Valentine NWR and was also employed for about 6 months with Research in ND before becoming permanent at Upper Souris NWR.

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Assistant Refuge Manager at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge; Habitat Requirements Specialist for Office of Migratory Bird Management in Washington D.C.; Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator for the Alaska Area; Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Alaska; Acting Regional Director, Alaska; Recovery Coordinator for California sea otter, California (part of Region 1 at time); Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator, Denver Regional Office; Central Flyway Representative for Office of Migratory Bird Management; Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife, Denver, Colorado; became one of the Geographic Assistant Regional Directors in Region 6 for Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota; in October of 1999 went to Park Service as Assistant Regional Director for Natural Resources

Most Important Projects: Developing a nationwide plan for protecting key waterfowl habitats which eventually was incorporated into the North American Waterfowl Management Plan joint ventures; implementing ANILCA; helped with comprehensive conservation plans in Alaska; developing an environmental impact statement to get a second colony of California sea otters established.

Colleagues and Mentors: Dick Pospahala, Dr. John Rodgers, Jan Riffe, Gordy Watson, Jim King, Cal Lensink, Bob Leedy, Bill Reffalt, Keith Schreiner, Scott Schlebe, Leroy Sowl, Bill Eldridge, Chuck Hunt, Jon Nelson, Bruce Conant, Rod King, Fred Robards, Jack Hodges, Clay Hardy, Dirk Derksen, Bill Shake, Jim Pulliam, Harvey Nelson, Pete Jerome, Glenn Elison, Ave Thayer, Galen Buterbaugh, Ralph Morgenweck. Also worked with Dan Timm, Tom Rothe, Wayne Regelin, Ron Somerville, and John Burns with Alaska Department of Game and Fish.

Most Important Issues: Figuring out how to manage subsistence taking of waterfowl and marine mammals by Natives in Alaska after the State gave marine mammal management back to the Federal government.

Brief Summary of Interview: Mr. Ladd went to college at Colorado State University where he completed his bachelor of science degree in biology, and then would earn his master of science degree in fish and wildlife biology, conducting his field work on Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska. He joined the U.S. Army in 1970 and worked for the State of Colorado before joining the Fish and Wildlife Service. He discusses the positions he held, projects he worked on, and colleagues he worked with, including those from Alaska Fish and Game. Mr. Ladd spent 28 years with the Fish and Wildlife Service before stating he needed a change and took a job with the National Park Service from which he would retire in 2003.

Norm: Hello, my name is Norman Olson. I'm a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, and a volunteer at the Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Today is Thursday, October 12, 2006, and it's about 9:30 in the morning. My guest is Skip Ladd, and this interview is being conducted during the FWS retirees' reunion at the MCM Elegant Hotel in Albuquerque, NM. Skip is also a retired FWS employee and lives in La Veta, Colorado (currently Pueblo, Colorado). Skip, I wonder if we could begin by having you give us your full name, please spell it out for us, when and where you were born and raised, when and where you went to college, the degrees you received, how you first came to work for the FWS, and how you wound up in Alaska in 1978.

Skip: Okay Norm. My name is Wilbur Newton Ladd, Jr. WILBUR NEWTON LADD Jr, most people know me as Skip. I was born and raised in Pueblo, Colorado, born October 20, 1945, and went to college at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. I began there in the fall of 1963, completed a Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife biology in 1967, and completed a Master of Science degree in fishery and wildlife biology in 1969. Actually, my master's degree project was funded and supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was a study of duck nesting and land use relationships on Valentine National Wildlife Refuge in the Sand Hills of Nebraska. So that was my initial actual employment to the Fish and Wildlife Service. However, after I completed my master's degree and a short stint of working for the State of Colorado, I went to work for Uncle Sam in a

different capacity with the U.S. Army. So I worked with the U.S. Army as a military person from January of 1970 until October of 1971. After that, I got out of the Army and went back to work for the State of Colorado in their waterfowl research program. Then in the spring of 1972 I was courted, so to speak, by two different offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to come to work for them. Both of them were actually temporary positions. One was with Research at the Carolina Sandhills Research Station in McBee, South Carolina, to work primarily on mourning doves. The other offer was to work at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota. Again, both temporary jobs, but the prospect of a permanent job with the Fish and Wildlife Service actually seemed to be a little better if I took the job in North Dakota, with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, because I had some people in places of the Fish and Wildlife Service pulling for me to get on permanent. So I had always wanted to work with waterfowl and certainly I always wanted to work in the prairie pothole region my entire adult life for sure up to that point. And so I took the job with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, was stationed at the Woodworth Station near Jamestown, ND. And again that was a temporary job, but the promise of a permanent job with, at that time, it was Region 3 that administered that area out of the Minneapolis, out of the Twin Cities. So after my summer experience in 1972 with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center I was picked up as a permanent employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service and was sent to the Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge in October of 1972 as their first assistant refuge manager.

Norm: And then actually after that I think, if I remember correctly, you wound up working in Washington, DC for a while, is that right?

Skip: Pretty interesting story for me, anyway. After I got to Upper Souris I was thrilled with working as an employee, as a refuge employee, out in God's country so-to-speak of North Dakota. I loved North Dakota. I loved working with the resource out there. But within about 6 or 7 months of my arrival at Upper Souris, which means I hadn't even gone through a summer period at Upper Souris, I was being courted again, this time by the recently created Office of Migratory Bird Management in Washington. They were establishing an entire new office. They'd been given a lot of the functions that the old Management and Enforcement Division had had in the Fish and Wildlife Service. They also were taking on a lot of the functions that the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center had had. So all the management, waterfowl management kinds of functions, the surveys, the waterfowl surveys and banding that type of thing, was being consolidated into the new Office of Migratory Bird Management. And during the course of the time I was at Upper Souris, the Office of Migratory Bird Management was advertising and recruiting to fill these new positions, one of which was a habitat requirements specialist position. And they had failed to recruit the person that they wanted, that they thought they needed for that job, so they came to me. They knew I had had considerable habitat, waterfowl habitat, wetland experience both in my graduate work as well as with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and with refuges. And so they courted me for the habitat

requirements specialist position. Late in the spring of 1973, I finally succumbed and the reason that I did was I felt I needed to see the bigger picture of waterfowl management, more than what I might see just being an employee on an individual refuge. As much as I enjoyed the refuge work, I guess I felt a calling so to speak for the bigger picture. Of course Washington was about as big a picture as you could get, and I was pretty fearful as a brand new, young employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service, I think I was about a GS-7 at the time and was being asked to take a job that was ultimately a GS-13 position in the Washington Office; that was a lot to bite off. A friend of mine, Dick Pospahala, who was with the Office of Migratory Bird Management at the time, was one of the people that really encouraged me, and also encouraged the chief of that office, who was Dr. John P. Rogers, to contact me and try to recruit me for that position. So John did recruit me and Dick Pospahala did encourage me and lo and behold I did, in June I believe of 1973, make the move to the brand-new Office of Migratory Bird Management in the Interior building of Washington, DC.

Norm: That lasted, I guess, that position lasted until 1978 and it was at that time I guess that you wound up moving to Alaska. Can you tell us how that occurred?

Skip: Well, again an interesting story. My time as habitat requirements specialist in the Office of Migratory Bird Management was an absolute super experience for me, being exposed to just a myriad of national and regional issues throughout the country and some international involvement as well. It really gave me probably a unique

experience that most people in Fish and Wildlife Service never get. By the same token, after 4 or 5 years at almost any job I'm kind of ready to try something new and different. And I actually had been courted in 1977 by my friend Jan Riffe, who had been in the Washington Office in Planning and Budget I believe but then moved to Alaska. He and I had worked together in Washington. He courted me to come to Alaska or to apply for a job of Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator in Alaska in 1977. Well after lots of discussion and thought, discussion with my wife, I decided to do that, but unfortunately Jan had already decided to select somebody else for the position. So after all the build-up and soul-searching and all that I was not selected for the job in Alaska. Dr. Jim Bartonek was selected. He had been in Research, Fish and Wildlife Service Research, doing a lot of waterfowl and seabird work for Research in Alaska. He was selected for the job, that was one of my first experiences of being courted for jobs in Fish and Wildlife Service that didn't come through. I had many of those over the years, and of course by the time I retired, I realized that promises for positions, don't ever listen to them because often times things happen that they just don't come to be. But at any rate within a year's time Jim Bartonek was courted to another position to be the Pacific Flyway Representative for the Fish and Wildlife Service, leaving open again the regional migratory bird position in Alaska. Jan called me up and said, "I sure would like to have you apply for the job that's going to be advertised for the Regional migratory bird coordinator". So I says, "Well, Jan okay," but I'd lost a little faith in the system by then. As it turns out, Jan called me several months after

that and asked me why I didn't apply for the job. I said, "Well because I'd never seen it advertised." He said, "Well yeah, it was advertised and it's already closed." And I says, "Well if it was I sure didn't recognize it." And Jan went back to the green sheet advertisement and looked at it, and sure enough it didn't look anything like a regional migratory bird coordinator position. So, there we sat again with him having a closed register with people on it and me not on it, and I was still sitting in Washington waiting for a job in Alaska. After he realized that the description of the job was certainly not clear at all, he did have it re-advertised and I did apply and he selected me, much to the chagrin of some of the people who were on the original register.

So, that said, in March of 1978 we packed up the car, I packed up my wife who was about 7 and a half months pregnant with our first child, got her to Colorado which is where our families lived, then got her to Seattle where my sister lived, and got me to Seattle, and I got on the ferry, and Marilyn waited for a phone call so that she could fly to Anchorage, because she wasn't in a position to ride and drive from Seattle to Anchorage. I did get to Anchorage in March 1978 after some harrowing experiences during the winter time getting to Alaska, but it felt good; getting to Alaska in March of 1978, and after having had the experience of the ferry ride from Seattle to Haines, I think that was what about 3 days maybe on the ferry, and then a two-day drive with some people I had met on the ferry. One of those people had actually had an accident on the road from Haines to Anchorage, they rolled their pick-up. Nobody was hurt but we had to unroll

the pick-up and get it back on the road, sort of began my Alaska experience I guess.

And at the time that I got there, again some experiences, the regional office at that time, and Gordy Watson was the Area Director at the time, it wasn't a Region yet, as I recall. And I got to Anchorage, got to the Regional Office, which at that time was still in downtown Anchorage in a leased building, was given a desk somewhere in the building, and started my work as regional migratory bird coordinator for the Alaska Area. At any rate, I had had some experience dealing with Alaska before I ever actually transferred up there, and I think that was maybe one reason why I was contacted and encouraged to apply. When I was with the Office of Migratory Bird Management, a couple of things were going on there that I was brought into that involved Alaska. One of those was an effort by the U.S. Government to negotiate some kind of treaty amendment on the Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada, Russia, Japan, to allow for the legitimate taking of migratory birds by the Natives of Alaska and Canada, to be able to take birds during the closed season for migratory birds, as closed by the treaty requirements.

Norm: Would this be for spring hunts?

Skip: For subsistence. Yeah, the spring hunts of waterfowl for subsistence purposes. Needless to say that's a pretty controversial issue, but the migratory bird office was in the position to be the primary office for the U.S. Government to try to develop a strategy or a legal way to not only provide for subsistence

taking by the Natives of waterfowl during the spring, but to manage that taking, because it really hadn't been managed. It had either been ignored or there had been attempts to enforce the treaties by either the Federal Government or the state government. So part of the process to try to develop an amendment to the treaties was to go through a development of an environmental assessment on a proposed amendment. So I was the lead along with John P. Rogers in the Office of Migratory Bird Management in developing a document that was going to be sort of the cornerstone for pursuing this amendment to the treaties. So I was real involved with the Alaska people in the preparation of that document. The other thing that I was pretty involved with Alaska, one of my jobs, in fact I guess I'd say my primary job with the Migratory Bird Office in Washington, was to develop a national land acquisition strategy for protecting key habitats for migratory birds nationwide, or for waterfowl at least and water birds. So one of the things that I got involved with Alaska was working with them to develop a plan, the area office, for protecting key waterfowl habitats in Alaska. And of course those habitats had already been clearly delineated as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and the preparation for the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA. There were a lot of people, people like Jim King, Cal Lensink, Dan Timm with the State of Alaska, people that had really worked, Bob Leedy, worked hard to describe the most important waterfowl habitats in Alaska that could be the basis of protecting those through subsequent legislation, namely ANILCA.

But we still needed some kind of internal strategy or document for trying to bring that into the US Fish and Wildlife Service system of protecting habitats, through Duck Stamp money or the other Land and Water Conservation Fund moneys. So I worked with the Area Office people when I was still in Washington on trying to develop a way to bridge the gap between the Federal legislation that described these key habitats, back with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, to a system within the Fish and Wildlife Service that would allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to be able to pursue protection of those habitats, whether it was through national legislation or some other purchase/acquisition process. So because of those, again people like Bill Reffalt was involved certainly with the identification of those important habitats, but also in working with me to try to bring Alaska into the fold of the Fish and Wildlife Service processes to protect habitat. And that was one thing that I think Bill Reffalt did. He was sort of a rabble rouser and he got under a lot of people's skins, because he did try to get people in the rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service to recognize that, number one, Alaska was critically important to the kinds of things that the Fish and Wildlife Service stood for. And secondly that Alaska was different and had to be dealt with a little differently than other regions because of all kinds of things, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was only one of the things that made Alaska different. So anyway, the bottom line is I'd had quite a bit of experience working with the Alaska folks before I ever arrived on the scene.

So when I got there in '78, a couple of things that we worked on initially was sort of an Alaska strategic plan that laid out, as the other Regions were doing, from a programmatic standpoint, what were the most important things that we needed to accomplish in Alaska for migratory birds, since I was migratory bird coordinator. And then continuing to work on some sort of a habitat protection strategy for key waterfowl habitats and wetland habitats in Alaska. But it wasn't long after that that Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, ANILCA, and of course that brought a whole new set of challenges to all of us in Alaska with the Fish and Wildlife Service to try to implement the requirements of that Act. Of course just by the stroke of a pen, I'm trying to remember the acreage now, but I think something like 70 million acres, 70 some millions of acres, were protected under the National Wildlife Refuge System in Alaska, but because Congress had said they were protected that didn't necessarily mean they were protected totally. We still had a lot of work to do, we had a lot of inholdings in those refuge lands that were brought into the refuge system, we had a lot of neighbors that we had to work with, both within the refuges as well as external. We had to figure out what was on those lands, more so than the broad-brush approach that was done in the years before for, for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. We had to have staffing there on those refuges to protect our interests there, deal with things like oil and gas, subsistence, develop cooperative working relationships with the local Native villages all those things that conceivably could impact those lands that now we had responsibility to manage and protect.

We had a lot of special areas. The big one of course was the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the 1002 Area that was established in ANILCA that basically allowed industry to do studies to determine the likelihood of oil and gas resources to be found within that area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. That was a big issue. The Bristol Bay Area was established as a study area to study its resource values and determine whether or not it should be brought into some sort of a national federal status for protection and management. So all of these things, just implementing ANILCA, took on the lion's share of my time and everybody else's time in Alaska, by that time it was an Alaska Regional Office I believe.

Norm: I think when ANILCA passed in 1980 it became a Regional Office and had a Regional Director there.

Skip: Right, right. So lots of folks involved that I could name –Keith Schreiner, certainly, came up as Regional Director as I recall to replace Gordy Watson, he was a pretty hard-charging, gritty Regional Director; somewhat like Gordy Watson, only different. But we all had a big job to do to implement the requirements of ANILCA. And so that basically took up the time, but by the same token, we still had some ramifications of ANILCA, the big one of course was subsistence, the federal role now in taking on the management of subsistence, taking on these new lands that were brought into the federal system, the park system, the National Wildlife Refuge System. We all of a sudden became managers of subsistence uses by the Alaska Natives per ANILCA. That created its own set of challenges and turmoil's, particularly

with the State of Alaska, who from their perspective had been managing subsistence all these years. The thing with Alaska was, according to their state constitution, they could not make a distinction for subsistence priority use based on ethnicity or whether you were a white living in rural Alaska or whether you were an Alaska Native. They couldn't make that distinction, but ANILCA required that distinction. So therefore not only did the National Park Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System, Fish and Wildlife Service, we had to take on these responsibilities to maintain that priority use for subsistence by Alaska Natives. At least on the federal lands that we were responsible for.

So that meant we had to develop a major subsistence program to manage and understand and work with the people to allow subsistence taking and to manage it on these new federal lands. Another ramification was, again because the state's Constitution didn't allow them to make a distinction for Alaska Natives, the Federal Government was put in a position of having to take over marine mammal management as well. So again the Fish and Wildlife Service was put into a role of trying to figure out what to do and how to manage subsistence taking of three of the marine mammal species – polar bears, walrus, and sea otter – things that we hadn't done before at all, at least not since Alaska became a state in 1959. Research in Fish and Wildlife Service had done studies and monitored some populations of sea otters in particular, but the state had always done the surveys to monitor the status of walrus and polar bear. And certainly to manage any taking that was going to be done, it was the state. Now the Fish and

Wildlife Service had to get its act together and take on this huge management responsibility. And needless to say all of this was highly controversial at the time, I mean there were just highly charged meetings and media attacks and legislative attacks and all these kinds of things because the State really felt like it had been undermined by the Federal Government and by the U.S. Congress through the enactment of ANILCA.

Norm: Now the situation with the marine mammals and the Fish and Wildlife Service assuming responsibility for those three species, did that come about with the passage of ANILCA or did that pre-date ANILCA?

Skip: You know, Norm, I'm trying to recall exactly the details, because there's nothing in the Marine Mammal Protection Act—I'm trying to recall if there's something in the Marine Mammal Protection Act that specifies allowing take by Alaska Natives. I believe it does. And I think it's one of those things where it was the state's conclusion that its constitution did not allow them to make the distinction for Alaska Natives.

Norm: So it's tied back to the subsistence take.

Skip: So it is tied back to the subsistence take even though the Marine Mammal Protection Act had for years allowed Native take of, I think it was the interpretation, the state in its mind, rural users constituted subsistence users. And then when ANILCA was passed and the Federal law pertaining to subsistence take in ANILCA, all of these things together, the state felt that its

constitution simply did not allow it to continue to manage marine mammals or subsistence take of anything else associated with the federal lands. All that happened at about the same time. We in the Fish and Wildlife Service encouraged the state to continue to manage marine mammals. We didn't feel that we wanted to take on that responsibility. But they felt because of the interpretations that they had received from their attorneys, and probably in some lawsuits as a result of ANILCA, that they simply weren't able to continue to manage marine mammals because it made the distinction of Native take, at least according to their attorneys. So they turned it over. They said, "We're not going to do it anymore. We'll help you, we'll provide data, we'll do what we can from a scientific standpoint, but we're not in a position to manage subsistence taking by marine mammals." So that's when they turned it all over to the Feds.

So that entered a whole new arena for the Fish and Wildlife Service. We had a small, as a recall it, two-person subsistence unit within the regional office of Fish and Wildlife Service, to try to figure out how to manage and work with the Native people and work with the refuges to manage subsistence taking on refuges. But then when the marine mammal thing came along, and we had to take that on, we had to hire a new cadre of people to actually go out in the villages, live with the villagers, to monitor populations of polar bears and walrus in particular, but also to get their confidence and their willingness to provide data to us on their take of those marine mammals. And amazingly, we were very successful in that we didn't get any real resistance at all from the

Native peoples to put our people in their villages, live in their villages, actually in some cases go out on their boats with them when they were hunting walrus or polar bear. They actually were willing to work with us and allow us to monitor and document their taking of those species. There was, you know from a general standpoint the Natives were fairly trusting of the Federal Government; they didn't necessarily trust the state government. So in a lot of ways they were glad to see the Feds come along and were more willing to give us information and to let us live and work with them to gather information on marine mammal harvest. But by the same token we were sending kids in there, usually it was younger people maybe right out of college, females and males alike, to actually go in and establish themselves with these villagers. And so it worked out fairly well. We felt like we got reasonable information on the harvest of polar bears and walrus, people like Scott Schlebe were there in the regional office, oversaw and actually conducted a lot of the polar bear harvest monitoring. We had a cadre of people in the villages to monitor the walrus harvest. Migratory bird taking during the spring, again back to what I talked about even when I was in the migratory bird office in Washington, that was still an issue. We were still having periodic meetings with the villagers, primarily on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Area. Fifty some villages out there that we were still working with, trying to come to some solution to monitoring their harvest of waterfowl in the spring, and also getting some sort of legitimized system in place to allow them to legally harvest and for us to monitor the harvest and manage the harvest of those waterfowl. So all this

was going on especially subsequent to enactment of ANILCA in 1980.

Norm: You've mentioned, I think a little earlier, there had been two people in a subsistence office in Anchorage. Who were those two people?

Skip: Bob Leedy was my initial subsistence coordinator that I hired. And then Bill Eldridge, as I recall, came into that group to work with Bob and with Scott Schlebe too who was doing the marine mammal management stuff. Those were the two, and of course a lot of people were hired out in the field to help us communicate and coordinate with the Natives villagers, people like Chuck Hunt out on the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge was actually an employee of the refuge but he was a Native villager from the Yukon Delta, very helpful in opening doors, so to speak, to communications with the Natives and in discussions, setting up meetings and that sort of thing. Leroy Sowls, who at that time was the deputy regional director, was somewhat instrumental. He was a pretty gruff guy in dealing with the Natives but by the same token he was a person that the Natives knew and were able to talk to and he would participate in meetings out in some of the villages at times. He wasn't there too long after I got there, but Cal Lensink had certainly been involved, as was Jim King. There's a lot of people that I don't even remember their names now but a lot of people that had been in Alaska for some time that had worked with the Natives, knew the Native culture, and were able to provide us openings to working with the Natives, even though they didn't necessarily stay involved with those discussions, they opened a lot of doors for us to go into a

village and actually sit down with the village leaders and elders and talk about these things when we could have easily just been run out of town.

Norm: Yeah. People like Chuck I would assume were probably pretty critical too because Chuck being a Yupik Eskimo and speaking the language when he went and worked on, I knew when I was there and worked on the Delta, everything had to be translated from Yupik to English and English to Yupik.

Skip: Exactly. Chuck was very good at that, although Chuck never really wanted to be in the lead role as an interpreter, but he would open the doors, he would certainly serve in the interpreter role at times, but mostly it was to get us into in a friendly way to where we could actually discuss with them. And we would always, not always but normally, we would have to have interpreters at most of these village meetings, particularly the coastal villages of Yupik Eskimos, even if they knew English, which a lot of them did, but a lot of the elders didn't or didn't know it well, so you would still have meetings conducted in two languages. You still would have to do the Yupik and you would have to have an interpreter, and then in English. Most of the meetings were very slow and laborious, having to work through interpreters, but I guess most of the time I felt those meetings were pretty, they were mostly positive, they were, the Alaska Natives that I worked with were mostly, obviously very concerned about what was happening to their culture, what was happening to their way of life, even though they were mostly living in two different worlds. They were trying to live a traditional lifestyle but they were still buying the snow machines and

the rifles and all the things that you know modern white man had brought to their culture. So they were conflicted, but most any meeting we ever had was not hostile. It was rough, they'd ask a lot of hard questions and they'd make some pretty serious demands on us, but all in all they were pretty professional meetings with fairly objective discussion about the issues. So again I credit a lot of that to people like Chuck Hunt and others who were able to convince the villagers that we weren't so bad to work with.

Norm: Hierarchy, first in the area office and then in the regional office at the time, in the late '70's, you mentioned that Gordy Watson was the Area Director at that time. Who else was in the area office at that time in terms of a directorate kind of level focus?

Skip: Yeah, I'm trying to remember, as I recall when I went up there and Gordy was area manager, area director at the time, I believe Leroy Sowls was his deputy, if I remember right. Then when I arrived, Jan Riffe of course was the assistant regional director for refuges and wildlife, or whatever it was called at the time, I think it actually had a different name at the time. I believe Jon Nelson was there as chief of Fisheries, but actually Jan was the Assistant Regional Director for almost everything including Fisheries under him as well, so he had Fisheries, Refuges, I think he even had Law Enforcement at the time under him, other wildlife functions like the migratory birds was under Jan. And then there was an Ecological Services Assistant Regional Director and I'm thinking that Keith Bayha was in that position, and then there was a Budget

and Finance Assistant Regional Director whose name I can't recall.

Norm: Was it with the passage of ANILCA that you began to have more of a layer of Assistant Regional Directors for Fisheries and for the other functions?

Skip: Yeah, I would say that it was happening probably even before ANILCA, I think they just felt that Jan had too much power. Too much power, and too many things to worry about and to be knowledgeable about, that they needed to begin to spread that out. Again I'm almost positive that he also had Law Enforcement, and I think Law Enforcement was very concerned about Jan having all of these responsibilities instead of someone that could focus on Law Enforcement.

Norm: Purely on Law Enforcement.

Skip: Fisheries was always kind of a weird deal because, particularly until ANILCA, our Fisheries responsibilities were very limited, you know they were basically limited to refuges. We didn't have any responsibilities outside the refuges and before ANILCA the refuge lands were pretty minimal, I mean really; Jan loved the Fisheries aspect actually. He really got in, and he really, I remember Jan taking cloth visual aids, that he put on great big cloths, that he could roll up and take on an airplane and go back to Washington and convince people in Washington that Alaska Fish and Wildlife Service had a lot more responsibilities for Fisheries than what they were given credit for by the Washington Office. And of course that was a pitch for money and positions and Jan really went back to bat for the Fisheries Program, even I think probably

even the first year that I was there, '78-79, even before ANILCA. I remember Jan making those big wall hangings of data and visual aids and stuff to go back and convince Washington that they needed a Fisheries program up there. And it may have been Jan that pushed for a separate ARD, I don't remember for sure. But he certainly was pushing for funding for the Fisheries Program because he recognized that we weren't anywhere close to meeting even our limited of responsibilities for Fisheries. And then ANILCA of course changed everything, when we all of a sudden had Fisheries responsibilities on 76 million acres of refuge lands, that's a pretty good chunk of real estate out there, a lot of which included a lot of entire river basins, you know ecosystems and watersheds and habitat for the various fish species, so.

Norm: Did the move to the new Tudor Road office, did that occur in the late seventies while you were there?

Skip: Actually it was occurring as I got there in March of '78, I think we actually moved to the new offices, I'm thinking that summer. I was only downtown for probably 2 or 3 months.

Norm: Speaking of Anchorage and the Tudor Street office, Tudor Road office actually, what was Anchorage like when you first moved there?

Skip: Anchorage was a pretty bustling place. As I recall the population there was about 180,000. The statewide population at that time was about 420,000, if I remember right, and it was almost surrealistic. In fact I mentioned before that I had been involved with some Alaska things when I was still in

Washington, and I'd actually made some trips to Alaska. And Alaska and Anchorage in particular just seemed very surrealistic. I mean here you were in this cold, what I thought of as Arctic country, you had the mountains there, the clouds, the inlet, the ocean; it was an international hub for airline stops from all over the world, certainly from Asia, and Europe, and you had a highly charged environment because of the politics going on at the time. State politics in Alaska are just like everywhere else, just highly charged, and then you throw on it some of the federal things that were going on, ANCSA was one at the time of course. The oil industry was huge at that time with the Alaska pipeline that had recently been built, and I don't remember what year that actually started flowing, but I think it was either just before or just after I got there. So I know from economic and population standpoint when I went up to look at houses, while my wife was back in Washington D.C. area and I was going up on a house hunting trip, the realtor basically said if you see a house you like you probably better grab it up because it probably won't be there tomorrow. So everything that my wife told me that she didn't want in a house was in the house that I selected because I didn't want to run the risk of losing out on the purchase because the housing market was just really booming at the time. And then to be able to get into a plane, a government plane, and fly to the Arctic Circle, fly to the North Slope of Alaska, and especially, that was one of the things you realized that a lot of people in the lower 48 probably don't realize, is the fact that when winter comes to Alaska nothing really stops. Life goes on, meetings go on, activity goes on, recreation goes on,

oil drilling goes on, you don't get to go fishing like you do in the summer but other than that almost everything else continues albeit wearing a lot heavier coats. So that was really an eye-opener I guess to me that we got there in March which was almost still the dead of winter. Everything was going on just like it would 3 months later in the middle of the summer, and then Anchorage was growing. There was a fair amount of construction still going on at that time, of new houses, new highways, new buildings downtown were being built; it was a bustling place at the time.

Norm: You mentioned flying in Alaska. During this period, the late seventies and early eighties, did you get a chance to spend a lot of time out in the field, going to meetings?

Skip: I did. As the regional migratory bird coordinator in that region, which was different than most of the other regions, I actually supervised a field crew of migratory bird biologists. And one of those groups that I supervised were the pilot biologists that did the waterfowl surveys every year. Jim King was head of that, Bruce Conant, Rod King were part of that, they came on I think a little bit after I got there. I also supervised a raptor management group which basically consisted of two people down in Juneau, Fred Robards was the head of that group, and Jack Hodges was his assistant. And they were the ones responsible for doing a lot of the bald eagle work, bald eagle studies and surveys that ultimately resulted in the recognition of the importance, for example, of the bald eagle wintering area in the Chilkat River near Haines, which sometimes upwards of 4,000 bald

eagles would concentrate there in the winter. Trumpeter swan surveys, those kinds of things, were done by the waterfowl group, as well as standardized duck breeding pair surveys every spring throughout the key habitats of Alaska. Waterfowl banding was a big program of that group, where they'd go out in the July August period and band flightless waterfowl all over the state, well at key points around the state that were identified as areas they needed to band clear up, including on the North Slope of Alaska, the interior of Alaska. So I would, as supervisor as those groups, I would go out the first couple of years at least, I got out with them on a lot of the banding and survey work that they were doing, so that gave me real flavor for the field work and what was actually going on out on the ground as well. And of course meetings were constant. We thought nothing of getting on Boeing 737 and flying to Bethel out on the Yukon Delta for a meeting with the villagers in Bethel or flying to Galena right on the Arctic Circle and meeting with the Natives up there. Or visiting refuges, flew out to St. Lawrence Island one time for a meeting that, again I think we were talking marine mammal subsistence stuff and they had gotten into walruses, or polar bears, I can't remember which, but we waited for two days out there on St. Lawrence Island for somebody to show up for our meeting because they were out hunting while the hunting was there. So it was that kind of thing, there was always kind of a joke, you know, are you on Eskimo time or not, because if you were on Eskimo time, you know, you waited for them to be available for a meeting, and it might be two or three days, it might even be a week. If they had other things that came

up that were more important for their sustenance, you waited.

Norm: Oh yeah. I ran into a lot of that on the Delta myself. In fact I know in planning meetings when we were working on the comprehensive conservation plans in the interior, in places like Yukon Flats, we had to plan our meetings sort of early, as the rivers were freezing up I should say, because people were stuck in the villages, they couldn't go out on their trap line, so that was a good time, you know, October and November and that period to go out and do meetings. But once you got into December/January people had gone trapping you know, or in the middle of the summer they were at their fish camps on the river.

Skip: Yeah, we would have, I recall, it was nothing to have meetings at a village out on the Yukon Delta or the Arctic Circle or the interior of Alaska in the middle of the winter. I mean that was just routine; you didn't wait for good weather, you just went. If it was cold and snowy, you were just like the people that were living out there you know, life went on.

Norm: For sure. Then actually you had a change after a while up there, where you wound up going into the Refuges and Wildlife Program at the directorate level, is that right?

Skip: Yeah. Clay Hardy was actually the Deputy Assistant Regional Director to Jan Riffe for refuges and wildlife most of the time that I was up there, or at least part of the time, I don't remember how long. Clay sort of focused on certain things, probably those things that were pretty specific to the ANILCA

requirements, as I recall. Jan the ARD kind of used me as a deputy as well. Even though I was the Migratory Bird coordinator he kind of used me for broader things along with Clay, who was his official deputy. So I got exposed pretty much from the day I walked in the door up there to a lot of things that were beyond just the migratory bird coordination stuff. One of those for example was, Jan assigned me to be the Fish and Wildlife Service's liaison to the State Game and Fish Boards that set the state seasons on game and fish. So what that meant for me was I had to work a lot with those refuges that had state managed hunts on them. Caribou was a big one, bears, you know, most anything we tried to coordinate and work with the state to adopt their regulations on the refuges unless there was some specific reason we felt we couldn't. One big issue was the use and activities of commercial guides on refuges, which the Service had to regulate more tightly than on non-Service lands. So there was a lot of interaction between the State Game and Fish Department and the refuge people, and so I was assigned to be sort of the liaison between the refuges and the Game and Fish Boards on those different hunting programs and to some extent, fish. I didn't get as involved with the fish stuff, but that was still a role that Jan had me playing that got me involved with working with the state hierarchy as well as with the refuges. And that was when I was still migratory bird coordinator. Then we reorganized at some point after the state gave us back marine mammals, marine mammal management, we reorganized into, I took on a whole division of people that included the migratory bird people but also the subsistence and the marine mammal people. Still not part of the

regional directorate, but I had a broader role in the region at that point and a lot of time was taken up of course with the subsistence and the marine mammal stuff, because the migratory bird stuff was running relatively smoothly. I actually hired Dr. Dirk Derksen, as the regional migratory bird coordinator who worked for me then as I took on this larger division, broader responsibilities. And then at some point there Clay Hardy left the region, left the Deputy Assistant Regional Director position open, and Jan encouraged me to apply for that job when he advertised it. Well, he did advertise it, I did recognize it on the green sheet, and I applied and I was selected. Well about two days after I was officially put into that job, Jan was moved up into the Deputy Regional Director position, leaving the ARD position open. So what he did, he basically put me into the assistant regional director position as an acting almost immediately after I became the Deputy ARD. So I acted as ARD for about a year and at that point, Jan told the regional director that he didn't want to be deputy regional director any more, he wanted to go back to being the assistant regional director, back in his old job. So I was part of the Directorate for about a year there, till Jan was put back in the ARD job and I was officially back as his Deputy Assistant Regional Director. Jan and I quite frankly, up until the time that I became the Deputy ARD and Acting ARD, Jan and I had had a superb relationship. He had a lot of confidence in me, called on me to do a lot of things for him, he was my mentor. But during that year that I was acting ARD, in his old job, things didn't go really well. I think he was wishing he was back in that job and so he was not going to make it really easy for me to be

the acting ARD, despite the support that I had from virtually all of the staff in Refuges and Wildlife. Jan was not my best friend during that year, so it was a tough year. Fortunately, I did have the support of the staff who did enjoy working with me. But then when Jan came back into the job, it was clear that enough water had gone under the bridge that one of us was probably going to have to go, he or me. So in the end we had a very rational, calm discussion about that and basically, we both agreed that it was time for one or both of us to go. I mean, he said basically it was really time for him to go, he'd been there long enough, and he had been given five different options, but they all were in Washington, D.C. And I said, "Well Jan, I don't know, you do whatever you gotta do, but I think it's time for me to move on too." So I started looking for opportunities, and he was sort of being asked to look for opportunities in Washington. And I was called by Region 2 Regional Director, Mike Spear at the time. I had always wanted to go to Albuquerque; ironically here we sit today in Albuquerque. I had always wanted to go to Albuquerque to work. I love this area, this part of the country, I love this town, I'd always wanted to come to work here. And about two times, two other times before this, I had tried for jobs in Albuquerque, thought I was going to get them and didn't. So about the time that this was going on between Jan and I, which would have been about 1984, probably early 1984 I guess, I get a call from the Regional Director in Albuquerque, asking me to come to Albuquerque, and he gave me my option of two different positions that he would like to see me go to one of those and I could have my choice as to which one. So needless to say I was

thrilled out of my mind, because by that time we'd been in Alaska about 6 years, and it was time to move on. And so I selected one. Well lo and behold it dragged on for two or three months and it entailed having to create a new position in the Albuquerque Regional Office. Not for me, but for the guy that was in the job that I was going to be going to. Well, Washington and Mike Spear got cross-wise over this and they basically told Mike he couldn't fill that position. So he had to call me and tell me the deal was off, that it might be on again later but for now it was off, so I was very disillusioned with that. I was having to deal with the situation with Jan in Alaska, and then I was called unexpectedly by Bill Shake in Region 1, Portland, and he was asking me to come down to California to take on one of their controversial jobs, namely the recovery coordinator for the California sea otter. And you know I weighed my options for a few minutes because that entailed a down grade for me if I was going to do that, even though it sounded pretty enticing, and I looked at the situation in Alaska. I had actually been asked by the Regional Director in Alaska to stay and take a higher-level position but considering my family and what all was going on with me, I decided that it was time to move on. So I did. I accepted the job in Region 1 and went to California as the sea otter recovery coordinator. So, but while in Alaska, it was such a thrilling and exciting experience, virtually every part of it, and that last year when I was acting ARD was some of the most exciting because I did get the opportunity to be in a managerial capacity and responsible for the implementation for a lot of ANILCA for which I'd only done staff work on before. Well now I had the

responsibility as an acting assistant regional director to pull off a lot of the things that we needed to do for implementing ANILCA, staffing the new refuges.

Norm: Staffing the new refuges was a big job, certainly, at the beginning there.

Skip: It was a big job, and of course trying to justify money from our friendly Washington Office, when again they just, they still; they just saw Alaska as being this big black hole that you could probably take the entire Fish and Wildlife Service budget, plunk it down in Alaska and Alaska would still be asking for more. So everything you did with the Washington Office was always; they were a little bit on the defensive, cause they knew if they got caught off guard they'd be sending money to Alaska. So that was a big job trying to justify the staffing needs and the funding and all that for, you know there was still the perception in Washington that my gosh, you had all these areas locked up by legislation, 76 million acres or so, and yeah you have some responsibilities but really, they were protected so you didn't need many people to staff those. I mean that was the line of thinking in Washington at the time. You'd had a few folks in there, and I'm trying to remember, I think Jim Pulliam as I recall was pretty sympathetic. Harvey Nelson was pretty sympathetic. I mean they were rational and objective enough to know that just because you drew lines and said that these areas were protected up there that that was, that didn't mean they were protected, that we still had a lot of responsibilities up there. So they went to bat in trying to secure resources for us. So, we were, by the time I left, we had every refuge staffed with several

staff members at least. We were getting them equipment, airplanes lined up, all the basic things that they needed at least to begin to work with the locals and with the villages in their area, getting some biological capability to begin to understand better the status and trend of the resources on their refuges. We had the 1002 study area going on Arctic NWR with the oil companies doing their exploratory drilling and the Bristol Bay study was going. Subsistence management was getting developed into a systematic approach during my last year there. So I felt good about a lot of the things we were doing. We were getting a land acquisition program underway to be able to respond to opportunities if a Native corporation, for example, or a Native association, wanted to sell an inholding or something, we wanted to be able to respond to that. And so, we were. I mean, we were moving ahead and dealing within the greater system of politics and Federal Government and all the things going on there. I think we made reasonable progress for the short time after ANILCA was passed; actually became a viable force so to speak. And a force to be reckoned with in our own right with the other agencies and with the State and with the Native villages, village associations, and Native corporations; we were a part of it. So, I really enjoyed my years in Alaska, all of them, but it still seemed so surrealistic, because it was so different; Alaska is different. Everything up there is different. The planning that you were involved with, Norm, I mean that was huge, trying to develop the comprehensive conservation plans. A lot of stuff going on with a pretty limited staffing capability really.

Norm: You were involved, before you left in 1984, you were involved in the start-up of all the comprehensive conservation plans, Kenai and some of the plans down in Bristol Bay area that Pete Jerome was working on, so you got to see the start of all of that work.

Skip: You bet. And Alaska you could almost say is planned to death, between ANCSA and then ANILCA, I mean they were huge plans and they came out in the form of Environmental Impact Statements, but they were basically plans for these important areas in the State of Alaska that needed to be conserved and protected and managed. And then following on that, we had the comprehensive plans for each refuge that were mandated by ANILCA. That was another huge planning effort, so you could almost say Alaska was planned to death. But I think on the other hand, you know it's important to have these plans to show people the road map of where you hope to be, you know ANCSA and to some extent ANILCA were putting circles around the important areas, but the comprehensive conservation plans were a living, breathing road map to getting to know what do we do with these lands, and how do we work with our neighbors, and how do we work with things like subsistence and those kinds of things, and really critical functions. This was all foreign to Fish and Wildlife Service folk.

Norm: Yeah, and talking about Alaska being different, it was certainly true in terms of planning the refuges, because unlike lower 48 plans, we weren't necessarily talking about habitat restoration or management of the habitat necessarily.

Skip: How to keep it intact.

Norm: Right. Yeah.

Skip: But to allow traditional uses of those lands to continue while still keeping them intact. And of course, as with the lower 48, any time you put a piece of land into the Federal Refuge System or the National Park system, that automatically does create, certainly creates a protective barrier, but that doesn't end there. Oil companies, timber development companies, all of the development industries are still always looking at those lands and licking their lips at some way to get in there and utilize those resources. And so a refuge manager couldn't just sit there with the knowledge that his, you know, 10 or 20-million-acre refuge was secure. They had to fight to keep those resources secure. Because somebody, whether it was mineral rights or timber developers or tourism or guiding or whatever were always looking at those lands as you know sort of the nirvana of their industry, whatever it was, to try to get in there and get some of those resources. And a lot of times they wouldn't stop at anything. They were often highly connected with the politics and the politicians and the governors and the congressmen and the Senators and you know the high rollers of government, the President, you name it. And so we had to have people who not only were biologically inclined or planning inclined, but we had to have people with people skills. And I think Alaska, and I don't know if I can really say this or not, but it struck me that Alaska refuge management was really on the cutting edge of having to figure out how to work with people. Because in the lower 48 if you create a 20-thousand-acre refuge,

usually that was pretty protected. I mean there's certainly encroachment and what not, but you're not going to get major runs of resource developers trying to go in there, unless they had a legitimate right like some of the mineral rights on some of the refuges. But in Alaska where you had villages within refuge boundaries, you had navigable rivers running through refuges, you had still development interests that had either some rights or at least interests in coming on and doing development on those refuges. All the villagers that were within and around the refuges that use the refuges for subsistence, you had to find people that had people skills.

Norm: Absolutely.

Skip: More so than I would say the Service had ever thought of before, at least in the areas that I was involved with. And so over time I think, being a good negotiator and a good people person, became real, those things became real important as criteria in hiring people to work on those refuges, and particularly to manage the refuges, that became real important.

Norm: Oh, absolutely. No question about that. As you say, I think I came to realize that. But many of the issues you were dealing with in Alaska were people issues, either the subsistence users or recreationists floating the rivers, or hunters that were coming in from the cities to hunt or fish or whatever it was, so it was people management problems really.

Skip: And just to add to that, virtually every one of the refuges that was established became a political interest area so to speak. There were members of

Congress not just from Alaska but from all over the lower 48 too, that would almost adopt a refuge. You'd have congressional trips, congressional tours, constantly on a lot of those refuges, looking at what was going on, and you know maybe they were boondoggles but by the same token you were still dealing with the highest levels of government and Congress as maybe a GS 13, or in some cases a GS 12 refuge manager out there with a 10-million-acre refuge. And here they were having to deal with the highest members of Congress and the highest members of government on an ongoing basis. I mean it became routine to have visits by these high-level people on most of the refuges in Alaska.

Norm: Especially in the summer.

Skip: Yes, especially in the summer, and I suspect that a lot of things happened as a result of those visits that seemed like boondoggles at the time, but you know if you look at what's going on today in Congress, what is it 26 years now since ANILCA, when you had the 1002 area set up on the Arctic, that 1002 area is still a battleground in Congress. People like Glenn Ellison who was the manager at the time of the Arctic Refuge right after ANILCA, Ave Thayer who was the refuge manager there at least up to ANILCA, I can't remember if he was still there at the passage. But I mean these guys set the groundwork, I would say, for a lot of what's happening today for national and international support for maintaining the integrity of that area. They obviously weren't in a position to take a position on whether or not they should be developed for oil or not, but clearly there are a lot of people in Congress that have become strong supporters of maintaining the integrity of

the Arctic Refuge because of the people that were there at the time that were able to show them the values associated with that area, and the fragility of the area. That's one thing in Alaska, while it is rather intact, it's still a very fragile environment. Whether it's the North Slope of Alaska, or the Yukon Delta, or the rivers of the southeast Alaska area or the interior; they're all fragile in that environment. So while they're not highly developed, most of them now, if they were to be in the future they would potentially be damaged much faster because they're a very fragile system up there.

Norm: Absolutely. You had a lot of opportunities I think during the time you spent in Alaska, both in migratory birds and the marine mammal program and then Refuges and Wildlife, to have dealings, a lot of dealings with the State, State counterparts, in Alaska Fish and Game. Who were some of the people that you worked closely with during that period?

Skip: Yeah, the ones that really come to my mind, and I'm even having trouble remembering some names now, but when I first got up there, we were in a cooperative program with the state on banding waterfowl and waterfowl surveys; the state was involved with that. Dan Timm was the leader of the State's waterfowl program. We were doing banding. Dan was actually kind of the leader of a banding program to try to determine whether or not the Tule White-Fronted goose was a separate species or sub species from the other white-fronted goose, and that was a cooperative program. Tom Rothe took over the waterfowl program for the state after Dan moved up the ladder. We got

quite involved with as I moved up the ladder and was the Deputy and acting Assistant Regional Director we got real involved with the State on some pretty controversial wolf management programs and moose management. We had an issue of wolf packs on the Kenai Peninsula, as I recall, that were impacted by lice infections and we had public meetings on what to do about that, whether we should go in and thin out the wolf packs and take them out, or what we should do, and people like, well Dan Timm was even involved with that as I recall as he had moved up into more higher management.

Norm: I think he was the area supervisor of the Kenai area.

Skip: Area supervisor. Wayne Regelin, who now is Director of the State Game and Fish, at least I believe he still is, he was last year, he and I went to school together. But I interacted with him because he was like I think an area manager or something along those lines at the time. Ron Somerville was there. Ron, I recall at the time was the Deputy Director for the State Game and Fish Department. He was sort of the really strong state's rights standard-bearer for the state. And when it came to our efforts to develop the amendment to amend the Migratory Bird Treaties to allow for Native taking for subsistence of waterfowl in the spring, when it came to marine mammal management, Ron was always there; he was somewhat our nemesis. But Ron was standing up for the interests of the state and the sportsmen of the state. So he was involved with most any meeting that I ever had on subsistence or marine mammal management. John Burns, who was a longtime marine mammal person

for the State, he was the one that probably did more for understanding marine mammals, particularly walrus and to some extent polar bear, seals, he was a real expert on the various seals, which of course we didn't have responsibility for. But John was very knowledgeable and he was one of the people in the state that was very amenable to helping us. I mean his interest was with the resource. He didn't want to get into the politics any more than he had to, and so he would do whatever he could to help us manage the marine mammals now that we suddenly had responsibility for. I'm trying to remember who the director was who actually was a former Fish and Wildlife Service person, he moved on and became the director in Michigan, still is I believe. I can't remember his name now. He was one, that being a former Fish and Wildlife Service person, he was amenable to discussions with Fish and Wildlife Service and was somewhat sympathetic with us, but a lot of his underlings were just, they just wanted to do battle sometimes, because they just saw the Feds coming in and taking over their territory. Anyway, those are the ones that I can remember. There were some others but those I guess were the primary ones.

Norm: And the relationships quite often were good at the working level, and at other times they were very controversial, adversarial at the higher levels perhaps.

Skip: Yeah, but you know even at the higher levels, everybody kind of knew what the rules of the game were. So when you'd have a meeting, it would almost always be pretty cordial. I mean you knew what the State's position was going to be, they knew what you wanted

and you didn't agree, and a lot of times you'd agree to disagree. And I don't remember very many table-pounding meetings because you'd just kind of knew what the rules were and you just had to get together once in a while to try to figure out if there was some little glimmer of hope or some little inch of progress that you might make in cooperation or coordination. And the State was in a lot of ways they were cooperative with the Feds given here the Feds were coming in totally green on how to work with the Natives, how even to manage some of these species that traditionally were state-managed species. A lot of people at the State, both in the field and to some extent at the higher levels, they were willing to work with us, they just knew, it wasn't; while they didn't agree with it, they knew it wasn't our fault that this had happened, namely ANILCA, especially when they started getting their legal interpretations that ANILCA was their downfall as far as managing a lot of these species, certainly on the federal lands.

Norm: Then, in 1984, you did leave Alaska, and you mentioned that you went to the sea otter program in California for a while, and then you moved on and eventually did some other things.

Skip: Yes, I was sea otter recovery coordinator for 3 years in California. I was really brought down there specifically to undertake and manage the public involvement process for trying to establish a second sea otter colony as part of the recovery program, and that's exactly what I did. Sea otters in California were highly controversial as their expansion and recovery threatened the commercial fishing and oil and gas

industries, but the sea otter was absolutely adored by many people and environmental groups. I got involved with a few other things, but I managed the public process to develop a major environmental impact statement and rulemaking that allowed us to move forward in trying to establish a second colony of California sea otters, which were designated as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. And three years after I got there we had completed that process, we had initiated the translocation of sea otters, so I felt that what I was brought to do had ended. I wasn't planning to be a part of the implementation of that, ever. So I started looking for opportunities during my third year when it was clear that this process for the sea otter EIS was going to be completed. And I was invited to come to Denver to the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office. And the only job they had available at the time was Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator. So I sort of felt that was really kind of going backwards since I had already really done that in Alaska when I first got there and was looking to go up into higher management positions, but that's what they had, and they basically offered to put me in that, so I did. Another region that I was looking seriously at, actually two other regions, one was Region 3 in Minneapolis and the other one was a position in Region 5 Regional Office. The Region 5 position was particularly intriguing because we had always wanted to spend some time in the northeast in the New England area. And there again, not unlike some of the other opportunities that I thought I had in the Service, I was courted by the assistant regional director at that time, to come up and be her deputy. Well, that fell through. So that was off the table. The

only position in Region 3 that they had open at the time in Minneapolis was as, I think, it was chief of their planning group in the Regional Office as I recall, or a refuge position out at one of their refuges, and neither of those appealed to me. So I went ahead and agreed to take the Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator position in Denver. Galen Buterbaugh was regional director and John Spinks was his deputy at the time, and both those folks were interested in having me in their region. I'd worked with them in various situations over my career and they knew me and they wanted me in the region, but that was the only thing they had to offer. So I went and even before I got there I was again being courted by the Office of Migratory Bird Management to take an about-to-be vacant Central Flyway Representative position in Denver. So when I got to the regional coordinator position in Denver, it was only a matter of days probably or weeks at most that the chief of the Migratory Bird Office basically had convinced the Regional Director that my talents were going to be wasted as regional migratory bird coordinator and that I should be the Central Flyway Rep. under the National Office of Migratory Bird Management. So they came to me and basically said we want you to be the Flyway Rep, I think I was regional migratory bird coordinator for just about three months before everything had gone through the process to make me the Central Flyway Representative, so I went over to that job and stayed in that for about three years. It was a tumultuous time as well. The relations between the Central Flyway States and the Fish and Wildlife Service were probably at an all-time low, and basically, they wanted me to come in and fix that. That's what I was told. Try

to recoup a good relationship between the Central Flyway states and the Fish and Wildlife Service, which over a three-year period I made quite a bit of headway in restoring a reasonably good working relationship between the flyway states and the Service. That was for three years, and at that point, that was like in '87, I still had another I figured at least 10 years, let's see, in '87 I was 42 years old, so I had at least another 13 years actually to go in my career. I mean it seemed like I had already gone through a whole career at that point, moved around the country and whatnot, and various positions, but I realized I had at least another 13 years to go before I could even hope to retire, and I felt that even though the Flyway Representative positions had traditionally been encumbered by long-term Flyway Representatives, I mean, that's what they were, they were sort of like the history book of the Flyway, and they were in those positions for sometimes decades in the past, but I just couldn't see myself being satisfied with being Flyway Rep for the next 13 more years. And so I began to get interested in moving up in the organization again, preferably Denver or Albuquerque, because I grew up in Colorado and still had family in southern Colorado, so we didn't want to stray too far from there by that point. So the position of Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife in Denver came open. Nels Kverno had been in that position and had, I believe, retired on a medical, and so I was asked to apply for that job. Well I really didn't think I had much of a chance of getting that job given the reputation in Region 6 for hiring some of the good old boys, so to speak, and what not, but I threw my name in the hat anyway. Well lo and behold, I think there were eight of us on

the list for that position and they did, they interviewed all of us. And I knew there were some really strong candidates that I felt would be the kind of people that Galen and John Spinks were probably looking for. After a couple of months of not hearing anything, just before Christmas in 1989, Galen called me into his office and he says you know, he said, "I just want to let you know before Christmas this year, and you have to go off on Christmas not knowing who's going to get that position, I just want you to know that I selected you for the ARD position." And you could have knocked me over with a feather. I got dizzy and almost passed out when he told me, because I never thought that I would be selected. So a few more weeks went by and finally the approval for my selection got through the system, so I actually took over Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife in Denver in January of 1990. And the long and the short of that story was that I was in the Assistant Regional Director position until October of 1999, so roughly nine plus years I guess that would be. But during that nine years there was a lot of evolution of the position because in about 1996-97 under Director Mollie Beattie of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Service was going to move toward an ecosystem approach, which conceptually pleased me a lot, because I had always thought more from an ecosystem standpoint than traditional program standpoint if you will. I thought, I'd always had a high regard for the other programs I guess I'd say, because they all played a role in the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service as far as I was concerned. So an ecosystem approach was a real natural thing for me to support, didn't necessarily like the politics associated

with moving in that direction, the internal politics. But we began to move in that direction, and of course everybody was jockeying for their position and this, that and the other within the Service, but the bottom line is between 1996 or 1997 and 1998, we did move toward more ecosystem thinking in the Service. And I began to get more involved with ecosystem teams and with people in other programs around Region 6. I thought it could be a good move, depending on how it was actually implemented and what not, and then in 1998 they elected to actually reorganize officially to a geographic based organizational structure. So I was one of the Assistant Regional Directors that was asked by then Regional Director Ralph Morgenweck to be one of the Geographic Assistant Regional Directors in Region 6. And we split up the region into three geographic areas, and we had three geographic assistant regional directors, and then we had the program assistant regional directors....

Norm: The GARD's and PARD's

Skip: The GARD's and PARD's, the PARD's had the money and pulled the strings on the money. The Geographic ARD's managed the issues, that was about the bottom line, and supervised most all of the field stations in their geographic area, except for Law Enforcement. So from '98 into October of '99, I was the Geographic Assistant Regional Director for ultimately, because we ended up collapsing down to two geographic areas, I was the geographic manager over the Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota geographic area. So I got involved with every kind of issue in that four-state area that we had, whether it be fisheries,

endangered species, contaminants, Missouri River, as well as refuges, private lands, migratory birds, fish and wildlife assistance, all of those things were under my purview for the four-state area that I managed. That was a real exciting time. It was stressful because of the politics between the GARD's and the PARD's, you could see it probably wasn't going to be sustainable, but it was great for me to get exposure to it. I supervised the coordinators for the grizzly bear program, for the wolf recovery program, for the black-footed ferret recovery program.

Norm: People like Ed Bangs.

Skip: Well yeah only I had all these; people like Ed Bangs, the wolf recovery coordinator, of course Ed and I had worked together in Alaska. So Ed and I were kind of; in fact he came to me when he first started the EIS process for the wolf translocation and reestablishment effort in Yellowstone and Idaho, Ed came to me to pick my brain for how he should approach that because of my experience with the California sea otter as it related to establishing an "experimental population" under the Endangered Species Act. So there again even though it was sort of a blip on the screen of my career, the sea otter recovery position actually was real helpful to me in helping Ed with the wolf recovery program and dealing with a lot of people that I had never had to deal with before. So, anyway, the bottom line was, being over those programs during the time I was geographic ARD was a super-neat experience. I was over the Missouri River Coordinator, the Missouri River Program. But the problem, you know you had problems with the

programmatic system under the old traditional programmatic system, because of boundaries. Well, you had problems with the geographic system because you have boundaries there too, and you had to deal with the program people that held the purse strings. So it was not an easy system to work with. It was only that I was associated with a lot of great people, especially in the field, and in the national offices too. I mean, because of my role supervising like the wolf coordinator, the grizzly bear coordinator and the black footed ferret coordinator that, I was looked at by the Washington Endangered Species people as a contact and a conduit and someone that could try to help get things done too, so it was a good experience, but it was not very sustainable and I really got pretty sick of the internal politics. The issues were great, the field people were great, the critters were great, but the internal politics was at an almost new high, I would say, and I really got sick of it and I felt that I needed a change if I was going to keep going for a few more years. So I began to look for opportunities actually outside the Service, outside of government even. I thought about an IPA or something with a conservation organization, Ducks Unlimited or Nature Conservancy or Audubon, one of those. And then an opportunity actually came up right down the street with the National Park Service. So in October of 1999, and by the way, the guy that was in the position in the Park Service that I eventually went to, I had brought him over several years earlier to be my acting deputy assistant regional director in Fish and Wildlife Service. So he got exposure to Fish and Wildlife Service, I got a little exposure to the Park Service through him, and so he had actually been hurt in an accident

and was out of the assistant regional director position in the Park Service, it was vacant. So I pursued talking to Park Service about the possibility of going into that position, at least on a detail basis, to get some experience in another agency and sort of get out of the internal politics that were going on in Fish and Wildlife Service. So I did, in October '99 I went to Park Service as the Assistant Regional Director for Natural Resources. The position eventually became permanent so I stayed with the National Park Service for about three years and three months or so, and as the assistant regional director for natural resources; got exposed to a wide array of National Park Service issues and programs and internal politics. And if I thought Fish and Wildlife Service was political, the Park Service is three times as much.

Norm: Is that right?

Skip: Internally and externally. Very powerful organization, very steeped in their culture, so it was hard to break in, in a way, but in another way especially the resource people, natural resource people in the Park Service, valued having somebody with a natural resource and wildlife background come in and be able to relate to them, because they often had trouble conveying things to superintendents, for example, who weren't very natural resource inclined. So it was a mixed experience overall, it was a great experience seeing a lot of the great places in the national parks and monuments around the country, actually being directly involved with some of their issues on some of the national parks, working with their resource people and their superintendents, things like the Great Sand Dunes, where I'm

actually contracting on a project to the Great Sand Dunes right now. But I helped them with a piece of the legislation that eventually led to their great expansion here a couple of years ago into a full blown national park; they'd just been a small national monument before. So it was a great experience, one that I'd never trade for anything. But again, the politics internally of the Park Service is vicious, I mean it's tough. Park superintendents, I mean if we ever thought refuge managers were in with the politicians, the park superintendents are ten times so. And Congressional Representatives and Senators and Assistant Secretaries and you name it, they go straight to park superintendents usually, and they deal directly with those superintendents, even though people like regional directors try to keep that at a minimum, those superintendents are very autonomous. Sometimes they work well with the Regional office just because they feel they should, but if they don't want to, man they just work the politics. It's a tough organization, and yet those folks are as dedicated to those national parks, or more so even, than any refuge manager was. They love the National Park System, and a lot of culture there. They get called on to do things like the Flight 93 memorial after September 11, the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the 9/11 World Trade Center area. You know the Park Service gets called on because of their expertise in trying to pull together people and create a memorial for the values that those represent, or the memories and history that they represent; quite an organization. So I was with them until January of 2003 at which time I decided I'd had enough fun and I retired.

Norm: After you left Alaska, before you retired in 2003, did you ever get a chance to go back to Alaska?

Skip: I was back there one time to the North American Wildlife Conference, and I can't even remember what year that was, maybe close to ten years when I went back. And so I was back for just a short period of time, and it was in March again, and so I didn't get to do a lot other than got to ski a little bit but other than that we didn't get to travel or anything.

Norm: Were you in Anchorage for that?

Skip: We were in Anchorage. Yeah, that's the only time that I've been back.

Norm: Well we've about reached the end of the tape, and our time period. I know you have to check out at 12 and I've got to get ready to go interview Bill Reffalt this afternoon, so we probably should wrap it up. Any other thoughts you'd like to share with us as we close out on those years you spent in Alaska? Anything else you can think of?

Skip: Well, just in retrospect, the people in Alaska with Fish and Wildlife Service, the regional directors, the field people, the long-term Alaskan field people, guys like Jim King and Cal Lensink, and people like that, Bill Reffalt of course, they put the Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska on the map. I mean Alaska has been a political hot potato for years and years, largely because of the oil potential up there. But this little Fish and Wildlife Service agency that was very limited in its authorities and its scope of interests in the past, I think really was put on the

map because the people that were hired, all the way from top to bottom, were people that knew what they were doing and could get in there and pitch with the best of them. And they did know how to work with Native Americans, much to the chagrin of National Park Service people who thought they had a corner on that market. Fish and Wildlife Service did a commendable job of working with the Natives, working with oil industry, and the fishing industry, and the state, frankly. So as a consequence that huge piece of real estate in Alaska that's called national wildlife refuges I think is in pretty darn good hands, because there's been some people, you being one of them Norm, that helped put the Fish and Wildlife Service on the map up there and become a recognized force to deal with. So that's about all I would say.

Norm: Okay. Well, it's been really great to be able to sit down with you and talk like this. I don't think I'd seen you

for quite a few years, so it was nice seeing you again here at the reunion and then just sitting down and talking this morning and I appreciate you spending some time with us to share some of your experiences in Alaska. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

Skip: Thank you Norm.