Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Paul Schmidt
Date of Interview: October 10, 2006
Location of Interview: Albuquerque, New Mexico
Interviewer: Norman Olson

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 1978-

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Outdoor Recreation Planner, Back Bay, NWR Virginia; Alaska Resources Support Chief/Refuge Supervisor; Special Assistant to the USFWS Director, Washington D.C.; Chief of Migratory Bird Office, Washington D.C.; Deputy Assistant Director, Washington D.C., Washington Office with Division of Refuges;

Most Important Projects: Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)

Colleagues and Mentors: Sue Matthews, Chuck Hunt, Bob Gilmore, John G. Rogers, John P. Rogers, Dave Olsen, Glen Bond, Joe Mazzoni, John Doebel, Chuck Diters, Stephen Talbot, Janet Ady, Patti Gallaher, Dave Patterson, Bob Siemel, Clay Hardy, John Kurtz, Bob Delaney, Bill Mattice, Dan Doshier, Ed Baines, Mike Hedrick, Rick Johnston, Norm Olson, Ron Berry, John Martin, Walt Stieglitz, Jim Gritman, Bruce Batten, Rich Barcelona, Dick Smith, John Turner, Rob Shallenberger, Rick Coleman, Dan Ashe, Tom Melius, Jamie Clark, Jim Frady, Bill Mauer

Most Important Issues: Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Kenai), Modification of Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada/Mexico, Exxon Valdez

Brief Summary of Interview: Mr. Schmidt gives his personal background and discusses his career. He talks about the personnel upheaval in Alaska around 1986, the Tiglax research vessel, public meetings, native views, reintroduction of caribou in Togiak, and reindeer removal on Hagemeister Island. He also talks about the Exxon Valdez spill, and other tragedies, such as deaths, that occurred in Alaska.

Keywords: employee, birds, hunting, indigenous populations, man-made disasters, migratory birds, Native Americans, oil spill, public attitudes, tribal lands conservation, work of the Service, wildlife refuges, Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Exxon Valdez spill, Tiglax

National Heritage Team of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Oral History Program
Subject/USFW Retiree: Paul Schmidt, ANILCA **(**Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act)
Date: Tuesday, October 10, 2006
Interviewed by: Norman Olson, USWS employee and volunteer at the Service's National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV
Place of Interview: Conducted during the Fish and Wildlife Service Retiree's Reunion at the MCM Elegante Hotel in Albuquerque, NM

Norman Olson:
Paul Schmidt is a current Fish and Wildlife Service employee and lives in the Washington D.C. area. Paul, I wonder if we can begin by having you tell us your full name, and please spell it out for us, when and where you were born and raised, when and where you went to college, the degrees your received, what your current position is with the Service, how you came to first work for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and then how you wound in up in Alaska in 1986.

Paul Schmidt:
Well thanks, Norman, it's special to be with you today and think about the things that you are asking me. My full name is Paul Rudolph Schmidt, and I was born April 24, 1956 in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. I was raised, actually, we moved around quite a bit, so there is no one particular place; I moved from Air Force base to Air Force base, starting in St. John's, Newfoundland to Panama City, Florida, to Great Falls, Montana, to Suffolk County on Long Island, New York. Eventually my father retired and I finished my high school days in Northern, Virginia, actually Arlington, Virginia, now only about a mile or so from where the Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters staff are in Arlington, Virginia.

I went to college at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia from 1974 to 1978, graduated with a bachelor of science degree in biology, and proceeded to my first position with the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1978, a couple of months after graduation. It was a time when I was trying to make a decision between working and going to graduate school. I actually had been accepted to Duke University for graduate school at that time but I got a call, a random call you might think, out of the air. A man by the name of Glen Bond, who was a refuge manager for Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, had been given my name as a result of the career entrance exam. I forgot what they called it; way back then with federal employment you take a standardized exam. I had done very well on the exam, and had put my interest down but really wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But I got a call from Glen Bond sort of out of the blue and he offered me a job at Back Bay, and I took that job on August 11th or 12th of 1978 and reported for duty at that time.

I didn't know much about the Fish and Wildlife Service frankly; I knew just little bits and pieces, and so I was going in, sort of, as a brand new fresh employee. I was hired in as an outdoor recreation planner; I really wasn't even sure what that position was all about, but I needed a job and it seemed like a good thing to do. I came to realize what a great

decision that was in 1978, and maybe we will explore that somewhere along the line in the interview.

But the other thing you wanted to know, how I wound up in Alaska in 1986; at that time I was in the Washington Office with the Division of Refuges and had been recruited by Joe Mazzoni, who at that time was the Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife, and he and John Doebel collectively. John Doebel, by the way, and he, were really close colleagues, and I came to find out later that it was actually a communication between the two of them that stimulated Joe Mazzoni to pursue me, because I was working for John Doebel at the time in Washington, D.C. John thought enough of me and gave me a really good recommendation to Joe and Joe trusted John. Joe didn't know me from anyone, but Joe hired me as the Chief of Resource Support. I came to find out later that Joe was hiring me up to take a look at me in order to determine whether I would be a good selection for the refuge supervisor job. So the refuge supervisor job was also about to be opening, and he knew that because Delaney, Bob Delaney, was about to move to some other position and they wanted somebody in there, but Joe was not willing to sight unseen on John Doebel's recommendation, have me become the refuge supervisor, so he wanted to see how I might perform. It turns out in hindsight, I didn't know this at the time, but in hindsight, the three months that I spent as the chief of Resource Support Division, I guess it was, in Alaska, was a sort of a trial period for me! And then Joe proceeded three or four months later after Bob had transitioned out, to set me as a refuge supervisor position there. For the southern refuges, Bob Delaney was the refuge supervisor there, and John Kurtz was the refuge supervisor for the northern refuges; and so they split the state in half basically by that. That's how I came to Alaska and into the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Norman Olson:
Who was then the Director at Anchorage at that time?

Paul Schmidt:
At that time, Bob Gilmore was the Regional Director, it was Dave Olsen who was the Deputy, I believe, and John P. Rogers was the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife, Dr. John P. Rogers. Easily confused with John G. Rogers, John G. Rogers was later to become the Deputy Regional Director there. And frankly one of the kind of cute little stories is that at one point in that time period when I was in Alaska I sat between John G. Rogers and John P. Rogers in an office, and it was confusing for the secretary, needless to say, when they'd get a call for John Rogers and they weren't sure which one the person meant. But anyway, the regional director was Bob Gilmore; Bob wasn't there probably but about, I would say, six months or maybe as much as a year when I got there before he was then moved out of that position in a very tumultuous time. In fact, I can remember the day and the moment he got the word from the Director that he was to report to duty in Washington, D.C.; that was kind of a tense time.

Norman Olson:
It was a bit of a directed reassignment.

Paul Schmidt:
It was a bit of a directed reassignment; if you want, I can explore that, I can tell my recollections of that.

Norman Olson:
Oh absolutely. I was there but I was busy doing other things so I don't know all of the...

Paul Schmidt:
It was an ominous moment; as part of being the refuge supervisor, I guess I was part of the regional director who had meetings once a week. I believe it was Monday but I could be wrong about that, it probably was Monday morning when we'd go into the office and Bob Gilmore would run the meeting essentially and the various assistant regional directors and key supervisors would be in the meeting; well, as occasionally, Mary Smith, who was the secretary to Bob. Well, Bob was running the meeting and it just started, and I can remember Mary Smith came into the room and interrupted the meeting; and she said, "Bob, you have to take a phone call." And we had this big oval-shaped table and Bob was at the end of it, and he said, "I'm in the middle of a meeting, can we just call them back later?" Mary Smith knew the ropes of this job, she said, "No, Bob, you have to take this call, it's the director." And it was Frank Dunkle who was the director at that time, and Bob left the room, took the call. It couldn't have been five minutes later that Bob returned to the room with a different look on his face, and proceeded to say to us that effective immediately he was no longer the regional director and that the director, Frank Dunkle, had sent Jim Gritman on a plane that day and he was halfway to Anchorage as we spoke, and he was effectively the regional director at that moment, and Bob assumed another seat in the room and didn't conduct the rest of the meeting.

Norman Olson:
Wow! And it was abrupt, but I didn't quite realize it was that abrupt.

Paul Schmidt:
It was that abrupt. He said, "Jim Gritman is your regional director effective immediately." And you could have heard a pin drop obviously in that room. It was quite intimidating I would say for everybody to think that that would happen that way. But that was early on in my career in Alaska.

Norman Olson:
So you actually weren't with the resource support group that long?

Paul Schmidt:
Not very long, not very long at all; after I left that position, Gail Baker, I believe, became the Chief of Resource Support. But during that time, the staff of the Resource Support, while probably not all the names, but that was at a time when there was the Resource Support and there was the Planning Division, which you were in Norman, but in Resource Support we had various experts, technical experts, who were joined in one division that were resources to the whole region, whether it be field or regional office. We had a cultural resource archeologist, who was Chuck Diters; we had a botanist, who

was Steve Talbot, or Stephen Talbot. We had an education branch, I'll call it that, which was Conrad Gunther, who was sort of a branch underneath that division if you will, who had in his branch, I believe, Janet Ady, who was there at that time; I believe Sue Matthews would have been there at that time, and there were a couple of others there.

Norman Olson:
Patti Gallagher I think might have been there.

Paul Schmidt:
Patti Gallagher was there; absolutely, she was there under Conrad as well, and then we might have a couple of others; I think we had one or two wildlife biologists as well in the division, and I'm sorry I can't remember everybody's name.

Norman Olson:
Dave Patterson?

Paul Schmidt:
Dave Patterson, thank you. He is a recreation specialist who was there then.

Norman Olson:
Bob Siemel?

Paul Schmidt:
Oh, my gosh, Bob Siemel! I just adored Bob and the way he handled things. So I shouldn't have forgotten Bob, but I'm sorry it's twenty-some years ago and my memory is not so good! That whole group was incredibly warm to me; I was a brand new person, I was relatively young, I was probably 30, something like that. I came up there sight unseen to this staff and I'm sure they had quite a bit of anxiety and concern about who this young guy was from Washington, D.C. who was coming in there. But to a person, they were very open and welcoming to me, and to this day I appreciate that. They all had far more expertise in their particular field than I did. As you said and I said, I was only there for a few months but came to appreciate their expertise. It was sort of a team; it really was a team because each brought different kinds of skills and expertise to share, if you will, with the rest of the region.

Norman Olson:
We used them quite often in our planning, if we had comprehensive conservation plans they were active players and also they were good people, good resources to have.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, because each CCP had a section on vegetation, for instance, and so you would need Steve Talbot probably to kind of help in that regard, or certainly Chuck; Chuck was like all over the place, Chuck doing the archeological work in cultural resources, which was sort of a never-ending job, I mean endless work could have been done there. They were great resources.

Norman Olson:
Who was the chief of resource support before you actually? Do you remember?

Paul Schmidt:
We didn't overlap, and so...

Norman Olson:
Was it, the name escapes me but he went down to King Salmon as the refuge manager?

Paul Schmidt:
That's exactly right, Ron...

Norman Olson:
Ron is right, what is the last name?

Paul Schmidt:
A big fellow and Joe Mazzoni had just elected him to be the refuge manager at King Salmon, and King Salmon (unclear) Alaska Peninsula of the Becharof Refuge when they combined those refuges; and his last name I can't recall.

Norman Olson:
We will remember it later.

Paul Schmidt:
I hope we do. I ended up being his supervisor when I became the refuge supervisor obviously, an interesting experience. I'm glad you remember that.

Norman Olson:
I don't imagine you got a chance in the three months to get out of the office very much.

Paul Schmidt:
I didn't, I didn't much at the beginning that's for sure. We arrived in March of '86, and so weather in Alaska in March is not particularly great. I thought, you know, I'm coming there kind of very green in terms of understanding Alaska environment and culture and the whole thing, but the first couple of months I think mostly, was around Anchorage. One of my first trips, and I think it might have been my first trip, was that spring when we went to the Nunivak Island to present the draft of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Norman Olson:
Yes, if I remember correctly, that was in 1987; it would have been probably the beginning of 1987, because I remember there was snow when we there, so it probably was that late winter or early spring.

Paul Schmidt:
And I was so ill prepared for that trip I can tell you! I thought spring meant spring and spring does not mean the same thing on Nunivak Island! You can't look at the calendar and determine that spring is here, based upon Nunivak.

Norman Olson:
So once you became, was Joe actually your boss as resource support as well as when you became the refuge supervisor?

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, exactly. All of the various supervisory positions were worked through Joe; Joe, who was the deputy to John P. Rogers, and Joe supervised refuge support along with Clay Hardy in the Division of Planning, and then of course the two refuge supervisors would have been John Kurtz and Bob Delaney at that time and Realty as well. That would have been the realty chief before Sharon Janis arrived.

Norman Olson:
Mattice, Bill Mattice.

Paul Schmidt:
That's right, Bill Mattice, oh, my gosh, yes, that's right, Bill Mattice was there. And so I think he supervised probably six or eight people in total. The Refuge and Wildlife, of course, was by the far the largest part of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska, with all of the huge refuge presence that was our there across the landscape, and then just the Realty program functions associated with that and all that went with that huge amount of land.

Norman Olson:
What were the refuges that you supervised as refuge supervisor?

Paul Schmidt:
Initially we split the state in half, and that came to change over time because we did combine it after a couple of years. So I became the refuge supervisor in late 1986, I believe, and then for the next couple of years. The first couple of years it was the southern refuges, so it was Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Peninsula Becharof, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. So it was sort of the coastal and southern refuges, and of course the Alaska Maritime stretches from southeast Alaska all the way up north to northwest Alaska, and so it's really a huge coastal presence in that refuge, and spread out for hundreds if not thousands of miles, I suppose. And Kenai, I mentioned Kenai first and Kodiak, I may not have mentioned Kodiak, but certainly it was. The issues that I dealt with in the first couple of years really were focused on all of those refuges, but particularly we had issues at Kenai Refuge, Alaska Maritime a bit as well, and the Yukon Delta all ended up taking quite a bit of time in the first couple of years because of different, but sort of, critical issues. I can remember, for instance, the development of the Tiglax, the huge investment in a brand new research vessel that we

were going to have. It turned out it wasn't delivered for a couple more years, but it was all in the design and how we would use this vessel and the work planning associated with this one-of-a-kind facility for the Alaskan Maritime Refuge. In the case of the Kenai Refuge, the issues were public use and how we would manage public use in the new environment that we were transitioning to, because I think the days of the 1960s and '70s in terms of how we would manage these properties was changing. Heretofore, it had been sort of a hands-off kind of a management scenario, but as we had built up a presence in the state and that staff had been hired in all of these refuges, and not just the refuge manager but now they had full-blown biologists and they had planning expertise, they had fisheries expertise, they had, of course, maintenance workers and the like. We began to really be managers of the property, and with management comes controversy, particularly, when it coincides with uses, public uses and other uses, and Kenai was certainly a focal point for that, with the growing concerns about the use of the Russian River and the fishery resource that runs through that refuge. We had huge issues between their biologists when it came to managing for mammals as well; I mean things like fur bears, moose, and caribou; how we would manage the hunting programs and the trapping programs. And so that refuge became sort of a lightning rod for issues that were sort of an indication of things to come. The conflicts always seemed to show up at Kenai first, and it was only a sort of forewarning of the kinds of conflicts that would occur at other places as we, as the service built our presence and our management goals and objectives in a way that might be not totally in sync with other people or the ruminations.

Norman Olson:
Kenai was unique too in that it was the one Alaskan refuge that was clearly most like a lower 48 refuge because it was road-accessible when you mentioned the public use, because it was the one place people could drive to in a day or an afternoon from Anchorage and fish or hunt or whatever it was.

Paul Schmidt:
Absolutely it was, if we're going to visit Alaska or even if you were a resident of Alaska, you at some time went to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, even if you didn't know you went to the Kenai, because you might be going there just to catch a King Salmon on the Kenai River and had no idea that it was a refuge, or you might want to backpack on the refuge or get to one of the wilderness cabins that were out there, and you might know more that you were on a national wildlife refuge. But it certainly was Anchorage's playground, if you will, in terms of hunting, fishing, and just general recreation. And with that, comes all of the challenges confronting people; people management and people resource management issues, and so it was the one refuge that was most like the lower 48 as you say; I think you are right, you are dead on.

Norman Olson:
And Kenai was also unique in that it was the first Comprehensive Conservation Plan that was completed. And so when you were involved, it was at a point where we were implementing basically that new plan, not a lot of which, you know, some people, including the state appreciated.

Paul Schmidt:
That's exactly right, and I think that was when we finally put down on paper, and the CCPs were a chance to put down on paper, what actually was the value added of that national wildlife refuge. That then brought out all of the different perspectives or opinions about how that should take form, and in the end the refuge manager, and I guess ultimately the regional director, would have to make a decision about what were the goals and objectives and what was the value out of this refuge. And it wasn't the same anymore as it was, and we were going to manage it differently because it was a special place, or is a special place, and it wasn't going to be in the total control of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and we were going to have to sort of manage this together. That then sparked different opinions; we certainly had our biologist's wars, as I called them those days when we had the two Ted's; we had our Ted Bailey as a biologist at Kenai, who was very passionate about what he believed in and how it ought to be managed, and we had Ted Spraker, who was the game biologist for the southeast; however, they broke it out, he was the regional biologist for the area for Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and he had his views of it. And they were very different views and they were very different personalities, and those personalities and those views clashed and became sort of one of the myriad of challenges that occurred. We developed the CCP, and that gave sort of a general direction and our plan, as you know better than I, Norm, was to then step that sort of broad plan for this multi-million acre property into implementation or step-down plans, and we had a number of those developed on Kenai first, and again, things seemed to always happen first at Kenai. The refuge manager at that time, I had hired him to become the refuge supervisor; we had lost the refuge manager and we had to replace Bob Delaney.

Norman Olson:
Bob Delaney was the manager while the plan was being done and then he became the refuge supervisor.

Paul Schmidt:
And we had that open for a while, and then I recruited and we hired Dan Doshier as the refuge manager at that point, and Dan had come without Alaska experience but had lots of refuge experience. In hindsight, it was a big step for Dan because of lots of new things Alaska and things were different in Alaska, and they really are different; I mean, we say that cavalierly often and we make a joke of it in the Fish and Wildlife Service, you know "Alaska's different." But that was a case of where I think Dan found that while Kenai was similar in some ways to the lower 48, it was still in the middle of Alaska, and the culture and the people and the history is all different, very different, and it was a tough kind of transition. And you add the formula where you have very strong-willed staff who were at Kenai and competent. Interesting, I just had a chance to visit with Ed Baines the other day.

Norman Olson:
Oh really?

Paul Schmidt:
He is in the Advanced Leaders Group Development Program for the Fish and Wildlife Service at NCTC.

Norman Olson:
Yes, I got a card from him and he said he was going to be at NCTC last week.

Paul Schmidt:
He was, and I hadn't seen Ed in some time. He moved from Kenai some time, and I don't know when, probably in the '90s sometime after I left Alaska, but he moved to Montana to work on bears and wolves for the Fish and Wildlife Service there. Anyway, he was in this program, but it brought back old memories of those days, and Ed was a very passionate guy, and Ted Bailey was there as the lead biologist, and Mike Hedrick was a very strong-willed and passionate deputy refuge manager.

Norman Olson:
And you had Rick Johnston.

Paul Schmidt:
Rick Johnston, who was the pilot biologist and just loved the area dearly, just wanted to kiss every square inch of that Kenai and flew it all. So it was really fun to see the passion, but obviously that brings challenges, and one of them that I mentioned in my brief little history and remember fairly well, is trying to resolve at Kenai. And since we are on Kenai, I suppose I should stay there for a minute, is the charrette that we did; we had a Fur Bear Management Plan, one of these step-down plans, that we thought we would use to resolve differences, to set a course as so much as anything for the specifics of what this CCP had laid out for fur bears, and, of course, we wanted fur bears to be well managed and sustainable and used, etcetera, etcetera. But fur bear management trapping, if you will, let's just say it, trapping really became a lightning rod for it because there were folks on the staff who felt that the taking of, we were not managing the trapping and the fur bears as we should, and it was more weighted towards the use by trappers, and then the Fur Bear Management Plan was going to kind of set this course. Well, all it did was stimulate the, provoke the debate, I guess, in a more robust way. Of course, we had the Alaska Department of Fish and Game feeling that we ought to use the refuge as a source for trapping, whether it be recreation or commercial or whatever it's a wonderful place to be trapping and has a long history of trapping. And there were other interests at play, both within our staffs, the two staffs, but more importantly is anytime we deal with these plans, whether CCP or step-down, we should be doing that in light of public interest as well.

The public debate on Fur Bear Management Plan for Kenai was pretty intense; we had folks on the side of the Alaska Wildlife Alliance very passionate about not particularly appreciating the trapping that was going on there, and felt it was hurting some of the populations. Certainly they had some just fundamental problems with trapping them to say it that way; it wasn't in their value system to really embrace trapping, if you will. And so they, we, in Alaska as well as other interest groups like the National Audubon

Society, the Kenai Peninsula Trappers Association and all, brought different perspectives along the way, all of which we were going to try resolve in this Fur Bear Management Plan. Well, we struggled and struggled and struggled! There were very drawn out kind of series of skirmishes for lack of a better word and trying to get, of course, forward, and it was clear that we weren't going to get a consensus and that the parties were beginning to really kind of auger into their positions on this, and it was not going to be resolved.

I can remember the day that you came to my office, Norm, and said, "I've got an idea. You know this is kind of an immovable object, this thing called the Fur Bear Management Plan for the Kenai Refuge, and it's causing acrimony throughout; our staffs are now not talking to each other, we are just in constant conflict. I've got an idea how we might resolve this, a thing called the charrette." And I looked at you, Norm, and I thought, "Well, I will be willing to try anything but I at least have to know what this thing is first!" Because I was pretty desperate to figure, and I was working with my counterpart, Dan Tim at the time, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and he and I were trying to moderate this like war, and he was a very reasonable guy and he had his opinions as I did mine, but we were able to work them out together, he and I, but all of these other interests weren't. We said, "Okay, what is this thing Norm, what is this thing called the charrette?" And you explained it to me, it was sort of a prolonged, intense meeting that was intended to force people to talk and force people to resolve these things and not just have them linger, and really people in a room together, living together for a couple of days frankly, where they couldn't escape and they couldn't just throw stones at one another and leave, they had to work together to kind of come up in a pressed time period with a solution. And so I said, "Well, I'm game to try anything, let's go for it!" And so we proposed that to the regional director, who looked at us and what were we talking about, and I'm not sure he was all that enamored with the idea, but let it go on and let us do it because I suppose he thought there was no other real good choices either. So you organized and we invited some of the folks I mentioned before from the National Audubon Society, Dave Cline, and Ginny DeVries from the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, and folks who, heretofore, if they were ever in a room together would not appreciate each other. Let’s put it that way, you know, it goes on from there! So like the Kenai Peninsula Trappers Association and Soldotna, we had a Soldotna school teacher.

Norman Olson:
Representing the general public, yes.

Paul Schmidt:
The general public, and he was a very articulate guy. I can remember Larry Rockhill. One of his roles during this weekend-long effort was to sort of negotiate or facilitate some reasonable middle ground in all of this, and we had Sarah Scanlan from the Alaska Board of Game which was important for us in setting regulations in the state, I was there along with my counterpart, Dan Tim with Alaska Department of Fish and Game. And then we had staff who would come in and give us sort of the technical presentations about where we were in on the draft for Bear Management Plan and different opinions, and that is when the two Ted's, Ted Bailey from our staff on the Kenai Refuge and Ted Sprake from the ADF, and (unclear) and Mike Hedrick, the deputy refuge manager, all attended

as presenters, and the refuge manager was there just to sort of watch all of this go on. He was not an active participant; he was an observer to this. And we were coming together to bring these interests to try to resolve it once and for all and have a way forward. And I think it was a tremendous success. I mean at the end of the week, actually, I guess it was during the week, but it was a couple of days, period.

Norman Olson:
I think we started on a Wednesday like at 1 o'clock in the afternoon and we ended it on Friday at maybe noon or something like that, and we held it in the Kenai bunkhouse.

Paul Schmidt:
We did indeed.

Norman Olson:
And people had to stay.

Paul Schmidt:
They had to stay there, we had to eat together, we had to sleep together I'll say in a way that you would in a bunkhouse, and had to realize that we were, each of us were human beings and had to learn to respect each other, even if we didn't appreciate the opinion of another; we gained something by being there together. I thought it was a marvelous setting and a marvelous process, frustrating at times because everything was thrown out on the table and the disagreements were all exposed in full glory. But at the end of the day, we had a way forward, I say the end of the day, the end of those two days we had a way forward, and we tried to bring that to a head, move it forward and get buy in from those. And one of the deals was when you leave this room, you leave this process, we were to support the outcome of that thing, and most did. We had some problems afterwards because there were some folks who decided that when they went back to their constituencies that the outcome wasn't appreciated as much and so they began to distance themselves by force of their own cultures and their own environments, forcing them I guess in a way to kind of step away from it. But it was the single biggest event to kind of resolve what had been a fairly acrimonious issue, and we ended up finishing the Fur Bear Management Plan and getting on with business. And I think the charrette was one of those things. I'd do it again in a heartbeat, given the same kind of dynamics and same kind of thing at stake.

Norman Olson:
You know, it's interesting too; one of the reasons I think suggested it was because my long involvement with the public; in dealing with the public, there's a situation that occurs in a public meeting of duration of an hour or two where basically--I like to refer to it as people peeing on the post--that is stand up and say, "This is my position and that's it, period." And if you can get those same people together for a day or two or three, living together like that, you find that there is a tendency to find some common ground once you sort of draw the line in the sand.

Paul Schmidt:

Yes, and after peeing, which they all do, okay they can all pee on their post even in those meetings, they've got to follow it up now with work, being forced to work out their opinion with somebody else's opinion and here is somebody else's opinion in its entirety, and then try to find some way to go forward.

Norman Olson:
Yes, it was an interesting experience.

Paul Schmidt:
It was, it was, I thought it was a great idea that you had. Moving on, I would say a couple of other really bright experiences or memories that I have of Alaska would have been in that spring of 1987, when you and I and others...

Norman Olson:
I think Bill Mauer went with us because he was running the meeting for us.

Paul Schmidt:
He might have, I think he did. We had somebody who was physically running the meeting in Nunivak, and of course I was supervising, at that time I was probably 31 or 32, and all of the refuge managers were older than I was and I was fairly intimidated by that, but the one at Yukon Delta was the one probably most advanced in age, are the ones I was supervising, Ron Perry, and Ron had been out to Yukon Delta for quite some time and had developed quite a reputation, a good one, a good reputation, he was loved by the community but he was probably 10, 15, or 20 years older than I was at that time. I was very green and didn't know a lot about the Alaska ways, and certainly I was very green in terms of my understanding of the natives and the relationship, the special relationship that our refuges have with Alaska natives. It was at that meeting that really brought that home to me, not only did I learn how green I was and inexperienced I was at this, but also it gave me a huge education beyond my own sort of limitations; it also moved me to be smarter, a little bit, incrementally. The first education I got on that trip was flying out there, and it probably was March or April, and I thought well that's spring. We flew to Nunivak and proceeded right off the plane to hop out and I was not prepared clothing-wise. I will get right to the point. I did not bring the right clothes, Norm, for that trip. I brought the nice refuge attire, I probably brought a tie or the formality because we were going to be presenting to the whole community, certainly a uniform, and the uniform at that time wasn't particularly warm, I don't think. But we go out there and we proceeded to land, we had no time to change or get stuff out of the bags, so we hopped right away onto snow machines from the airport to get to the village where we were going to have the meeting that evening, and it was not a short trip; it seemed like it went forever because I was, I think, there has only been a few times in my life I can remember being that cold! On a back snow machine, ill-prepared for this trip, and going to the community center I think, but I don't remember. I can see it but I don't....

Norman Olson:
Probably the council chambers or meeting building or town building.

Paul Schmidt:
Yeah, and Ron Perry, the refuge manager, was with us, and Chuck Hunt, I dearly loved Chuck Hunt, who was our refuge interpreter and who was a longtime native of the Yukon Delta. We had hired him a few years before that, a number of years before that, to sort of bring us along in terms of the refuge and its relationship with the people of the Yukon Delta, and he knew Yup'ik and so we needed him in case people presented information in Yup'ik, and he could also translate our English to the native language. So we went there and the meeting was supposed to start at 7 o'clock. So you know Paul is very prompt, Paul Schmidt is very prompt and he's used to the east coast ways, and you start meeting at 7 o'clock when you say you are going to start a meeting at 7 o'clock. At that time I was a fairly impatient person, young and impatient and ready to go and change the world of course. We went there and 7 o'clock came and nobody showed up; it was just us and in fact, I don't think Ron was in a particular hurry to get to the place because he said, "Nobody would be there yet." And I asked, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Well, we might say that it starts at 7:00, and the community may know it starts at 7:00, but they're not going to be there at 7:00." And he said, "We'll probably be lucky to start the meeting by 8:00." And I thought, "Well, that can't be so." Well, he was right, it was probably close to 8 o'clock before we started, and we finally realized there was a critical mass to the attendance, and probably the majority of the village was present eventually because it was a full room, I remember it like it was yesterday. The room was packed with people eventually, they kept kind of coming in in little dribbles and drabs and then eventually it was kind of like critical mass, everybody was there. And there was something that signaled to Chuck and Ron that it was time to start, and I think it was because some of the key elders from the community had arrived and they were probably one of the last to arrive at that time. So Norm Olson, or probably Ron introduced it, I think, and I might have said a few words at the beginning and then Norm Olson, the best planner that the Fish and Wildlife Service has ever had in my estimation, began to show what our, what do you call them?

Norman Olson:
Our alternatives?

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, alternatives but they sit up on these hard boards.

Norman Olson:
On foam core boards.

Paul Schmidt:
Foam core boards, and you had beautiful artwork I'll say, but you know designs and sketches of the plans for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and particularly focusing on Nunivak at this point, Nunivak Island. And it was giving some of the history of the island and giving some of the ideas for us and moving forward and some of the wildlife populations, things like that. And Norm, you were eloquent and articulate, and all along Chuck was interpreting this for the crowd, for the people who attended. And then it came time for us to hear from the public, so we probably had the stage for a half

an hour, an hour, I don't remember precisely, to give that information, and then it was their time to say, "Well, what do you think of our ideas?" And the room got quiet and this older gentleman, an elder from, I think he was in the back row, but if he wasn't in the back row he was near the back, and he stood up, and you could have heard a pin drop in my memory of this thing when he stood up, because that was a signal to the community that here was going to be the real, this was going to be the real comment, whatever it was that he was going to give. And he proceeded, it lasted forever, I bet he spoke for fifteen minutes.

Norman Olson:
And everything had to be translated back into English.

Paul Schmidt:
And he spoke in Yup'ik, and Chuck tried to translate it along the way, a little bit, and then eventually Chuck pulled away, and it wasn't long after he proceeded that Chuck pulled away, and the elder kept going on in Yup'ik, and I stood there and Norm you stood there and Ron Perry stood there and we listened, not understanding a word what he was saying but being respectful for him and of him and for the whole community. At the end, Chuck stood up and I said, "Chuck, I have to know basically what he said." And the message was crystal clear, Chuck said, "Well, you don't really want to know everything he said because it wasn't all flattery." And particularly he said, "But the summary is." And the statement at the end that elder concluded with was that, "You never asked us and we never voted." And what he was saying was volumes, was just volumes, because what he said was the people whose land it was, and they had lived on this land for generations, the Fish and Wildlife Service in the early 1900's came in and declared a National Wildlife Refuge. Their consensus and they are voting kind of a people, and they said that the Fish and Wildlife Service at that time never asked the locals whether they cared one way or the other about, it was declared and not asked. And so his point was that the government, the U.S. Government never asked them if they wanted a National Wildlife Refuge to be established, and they certainly never voted on anything that would have given it some stature in the community. And so essentially he threw us back 60, 70, 80 years of development of the National Wildlife Refuge, and my jaw just sank because I knew where would you start? You know I can't apologize for the generations that came before me, but realized how green I was in understanding what this land meant to these people and what we had done, we white men from the lower 48, had done to the land that they loved and they subsisted on, and had we truly respected that? And the answer of course was no, and that now where do we go from here? It was hard to go from there. Frankly, I am sure that many more people got up and spoke that evening, but none are in my memory now, the only thing that is that memory is that elder, who apparently during that long diatribe called me all kinds of names because I was the head, if you would, of the U.S. Government as it were, and so I was the devil as far as he was concerned in his remarks.

But I have to tell you that the meeting when it was over, that gentleman came forward to me and invited me to his house, and it was late, I bet it was 11:00 or 12:00 at night, whatever time it was, and I didn't know him and he had just said all of these bad things,

and I looked over at Chuck and I looked over at Ron and I said, "What I should I do?" Accept the invitation, of course. And so I went to his house, and his house was no bigger than this room almost in its entirety, maybe a little bit bigger than this room, and the walls seemed very, very thin for the environment it was in. We had coffee, terrible coffee, until like 2 o'clock in the morning, and there was seal oil there and there was muktuk, and my first taste of muktuk, which is the belly of a whale. And all of that night for the next couple of hours in this room, and he was a joy to be with, a pleasure, and I learned more in that couple of hours than I could ever have learned from a book or anything of that nature. He told me how he had raised eight or ten children in this place; it was just a fascinating evening, a very warm and understanding kind of environment. So it was really an education that you could never buy, and at that moment for somebody who was young, inexperienced, naive, but wanting in his heart, me, is to do the right thing, and it was a wonderful experience and I will never ever, ever, ever, ever forget that.

Norman Olson:
I remember thinking back to that too afterwards, when talking to Chuck afterwards there were some very specific things that they were concerned about; one was the fact that I think it was the Department of Agriculture had introduced reindeer on the island back in the 1920s or 1930s, and not asked the local people whether they wanted reindeer. So they had all of these reindeer on the island, and it was okay, they ate them, and so it was okay, but no one ever asked them if they wanted them. And the other thing was wilderness, there was a wilderness line that had been drawn right straight through the island, the southern half was wilderness and the northern half was not wilderness; and no one had ever asked them about that.

Paul Schmidt:
Exactly.

Norman Olson:
There was some issues dealing with like they had a lot of their fish camps and old village sites and ancestors buried in the wilderness, and they were concerned about that wilderness, that they would be able to go down there and use it.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, what did that mean? Can I trust what this means? How will this affect me? Oh you bet, oh, my gosh, Norm, I'm glad your memory is better than mine in that, yes I can remember those issues coming up. And we probably didn't have great answers for that, in terms of why do it the way we did, I don't know, but there was a proposal, it was a draft, CCP.

Norman Olson:
Right, it was a draft CCP.

Paul Schmidt:
And we were looking for their comment about it. But I think they hadn't learned or had

enough reason to trust us, and so there was lots of, particularly you and me I would say. They probably trusted Ron, and certainly I think they had trust in Chuck. But what you and I might say, "Well, gosh, these guys are coming and going, these faces I see from Anchorage, can I trust what they're going to do?"

Norman Olson:
That was a difficult part of the job, was trying to explain fairly complex western concepts of planning and maps and drawing things and ownership and everything to a society that really were there, was alien.

Paul Schmidt:
I mean ownership of property, it's not even, I mean they use it, they don't own, they use it to live but they don't own it. And we were talking about owning and deciding what happens on this property, etcetera, etcetera. You're right, exactly, that's a foreign thing to them, wow!

Norman Olson:
It was an interesting, I mean I was the same way when I first went to Alaska and my first meetings in the bush, I was just totally, I was really a romantic almost about it in a sense and very naive, and then you discover the harsh realities of what it's like to live in places like that and deal with people who have done you wrong in the past.

Paul Schmidt:
Absolutely.

Norman Olson:
It made it very difficult.

Paul Schmidt:
It made it very difficult, we tried to be sensitive to their needs but in the end there was lots to recover from, I think, in the past. We're still recovering from it I'm sure up there.

Norman Olson:
Oh I think so, I think so absolutely. And the Yukon Delta was especially difficult because of the language barrier, it was one of the few places, one or two places in Alaska where people still rely, where English was a second language, they relied on the Yup'ik or Athabaskan in the interior, so you had to rely on translation, which made meetings a lot longer and a lot more difficult. And you'd get to those things where someone would say a lot of stuff and Chuck would talk back to one of the other interpreters, and then they would look at you and say, "Okay, we can go on with the meeting now." "Well, what happened? What were you guys talking about?"

Paul Schmidt: That's true, and Chuck would do a great job of just telling us what we needed to know in terms of...

Norman Olson:
Distilling it down to the essence.

Paul Schmidt:
A very interesting dynamic.

Norman Olson:
Chuck was a wonderful guy, sorry to see him pass away.

Paul Schmidt:
I was sad that day as well; Chuck had a rough life.

Paul Schmidt:
And Ron Perry, bless his soul for all of the work and how he worked with Chuck, and the other staff members, to try to keep him productive, and he was a wonderful contribution to Alaska, to Fish and Wildlife Service, Chuck had a lot to offer but he had many, many challenges.

Norman Olson:
A great guy, and I always remember that warm smile, he was always smiling.

Paul Schmidt:
He was always smiling, and he knew the first time he saw me he had a green guy in his midst and he was going to take full advantage of that! But I love him for it.

Norman Olson:
I really enjoy seeing his picture in the commons there in the dining hall at the (unclear) conservation.

Paul Schmidt:
A very special picture, it brings a lot of memories to me as well.

Norman Olson:
Some would say a marked experience, a learning experience.

Paul Schmidt:
I grew a lot that day or two days, whatever it was, probably spent the night someplace.

Norman Olson:
Oh yeah, I think we stayed in, actually the service had a small cabin just outside the village with a few bunks in it and I think we stayed there, spent the night there and then left probably the next day, flew out the next day. It is one of the things I fondly think back on too, in terms of Alaska and my experiences there. There were a couple of other things I want to sort of jump back to; we were talking about Kenai and the problems with Kenai, especially the public use-related problems, and one of the things that came out of

the Comprehensive Conservation Plan was the concept of the Skilak Loop Recreation area, where we proposed to take about 30,000 or 40,000 acres and close it to hunting and just provide, which didn't sit well with the state, if I remember.

Paul Schmidt:
Of course not, because that was the road-accessible, that was most accessible areas and certainly the prime hunting areas for people who couldn't or wouldn't get out into the back, and so you take away the prime hunting spots in some cases, and Kenai had produced some big bull moose over the time, and lots of them around the Skilak Loop. That was the tradeoff, if you will, because now we're going to take advantage of the moose, the big bull moose in a different way, we're going to harvest them and we're going to enjoy viewing them. And that was really tough; another issue is right, because now those moose were going to be treasured for the viewing opportunities that they provide around the Skilak Loop, but somebody couldn't look through the scope at them anymore.

Norman Olson:
I remember the story that was always told when I worked at Kenai on the plan; it was about a family that had stopped on the Skilak Loop Road to view a moose that was off in a meadow, and then another car pulled up with some local people and they walked off the edge of the road and shot it, which I have no doubt that that happened.

Paul Schmidt:
Oh my gosh; I have no doubt that that happened either, and I have no doubt that left a mark on those people, both parties I'm sure in some respect, but certainly the party that was enjoying this moose and watching it die in front of their face. I'm sure that wasn't their goal in that one.

Norman Olson:
And I remember when we did the public hearing for Kenai Plan up in Anchorage, I remember someone standing up and saying, a white fellow standing up and saying, an Alaskan resident standing up and saying, "Well, this is the first step to the Fish and Wildlife Service closing down all of the National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska to hunt."

Paul Schmidt:
Yep.

Norman Olson:
And it was 30,000 or 40,000 acres out of millions, which are still open to hunting.

Paul Schmidt:
Millions of acres which are still open, it's amazing, yes. But it's always that fear of the government and the future, and people will turn that into whatever, however they've been mistreated in the past, and create a future based upon their perception of that. Oh yes, that scare tactic has been used many a time, and, "Oh, the Fish and Wildlife Service is going to turn into the National Park Service." It was always nice for the Fish and

Wildlife Service to have the National Park Service out there because there was only one group hated more than us! It was always going to be the National Park Service, at least to local people; I mean, of course, if their value, properties to the world in a sense and appreciated by many, many people, the locals didn't necessarily appreciate the management of the National Park System up there and so they would always compare and contrast. Whatever bad names they called the Fish and Wildlife Service, they had worse names for the National Park Service.

Norman Olson:
The other thing that came to mind as we were talking about the Refuges that you supervised, Alaska Maritime, and you mentioned the Tiglax, the vessel, research vessel, which is still in operation and widely used, I guess, throughout the Aleutian Islands and whatever; were you involved at all with the Visitors Center for Alaska Maritime?

Paul Schmidt:
Only at the initial kind of concept; there was always deemed that Homer would be a great place for a world class kind of visitor's center, but I left before they really put pen to paper and the planning really got involved. It was more of a vision and a concept by John Martin and some of his staff members of the Alaska Maritime Refuge, and it's really come to fruition. I can't wait to go see it; I have not seen it to be honest with you, and I would dearly love to see that place.

But speaking of the Tiglax, I can remember christening it; interesting, you know I am a biologist but you know a bunch of things in Alaska brought to me experiences that I never would have imagined, you know they didn't pay me for it but when it was time to christen the Tiglax, once we got it finally inspected, it was brought up from probably Bellingham, I can't remember exactly where it was built, Bellingham, Washington, and it was on site and now it was time to christen it, to bless it essentially before it would be used. We had Catherine Stevens, Senator Stevens's wife; I guess it is tradition to have a woman somehow be a part of the christening; anyway, she was going to be that. And I wondered how we would get a bottle of champagne to break on the front of it; it was just a funny kind of day, a fun day; it was overcast, actually rainy day, and Senator Stevens was there and his wife, Catherine, was there, and all of the public came out to see this christening. Believe it or not, they do make special bottles of champagne, but you have to specially order these bottles so that they do break, and they come netted so that when they break they aren't a hazard, and sure enough, it worked. I think she had to actually swing at it twice because it didn't break the first time as I remember, but it did break the second time, and we christened it so it was ready to be operational. The next however many years since then, that vessel has gone thousands and thousands of miles out the Aleutian Islands, and I've been able to travel on it a couple of times and it's just a huge pleasure to be there and to see it actually be used in wildlife management. Some of the key things it's done is not only in research, which is really important in areas like that where we don't know a lot, but also in management and reestablishing populations; the birds that were extirpated because of predators and our mismanagement in the past. The Aleutian Canada Goose is a great example and where we now, through the use of the Tiglax and other things that introduced foxes and rats on islands, and the population of

the Aleutian Canada Goose once threatened and endangered is now not only not on the endangered species list but now it's like growing leaps and bounds because of that action that people have taken; in fact now it's on the verge of being overpopulated because we're over successful with that. But what a rewarding thing to see those kinds of things develop as a result of a vessel, in this case a vessel. It sees the most spectacular lands in the United States, and in my estimation the Aleutian Islands are just special places, the weather is crappy all of the time virtually but they are very, very special places. If anybody ever gets a chance to fly out to the Aleutians or boat out to the Aleutians on a crystal clear day and see that ring of fire if you will, the volcanoes that were there or are there, not active in most of them anymore but they're there, and the creation of these islands that are just very, very spectacular. I will just say that, lovely places to be all the way out to the end. Well, I can tell you a story; I flew out once to Shemya Air Force Base, which is actually on refuge lands, it's an Air Force base that was built years ago to keep an eye on the then Soviet Union, not our best of friends in those days, and so it had about a thousand people stationed out on this place, and it was really intended to watch what was coming on the horizon from the Soviet Union, and it was literally a flat rock on the end of the Aleutian Islands, have you ever been there?

Norman Olson:
No, no.

Paul Schmidt:
It's probably about a square mile flat rock, it is a desolate looking place at the very end, and it's not the end of the world, I guess, but you can see it from there; it's just like... I've been there a couple of times, visited a couple times; the first time I got experience of this thing, and wind blows constantly; in fact, they have a windsock there that's humorous because it's actually a log on the end of a chain and it's called Shemya windsock because the wind blows so much, it's going to blow this log essentially that's hanging there. Well, this one day I was flying out there, we were doing some business out there, I think I was joining up with the Tiglax or something and I was going to stop at Shemya, and next to me in the seat, next to me in basically, it’s a commercial flight but it is basically for the military to take people to and from the Air Force base, and after this long flight from Anchorage, we are about to land, this guy next to me, this GI, had been totally quiet the whole trip. I'm not a particularly talking person on a plane, but usually I will at least visit with them a little bit, but clearly he was contemplating in this thing, as we're landing he is looking out the window of this plane at where he was going to live for the next year, because they had a year assignment without families on this rock, flat rock, crappiest weather you could ever imagine, for a year with facilities that I can't even begin to describe, and we're landing and he speaks for the first time after this three-hour flight I guess it probably was, and he says, "Only 364 more days to go." He didn't have to say anymore, he was not looking forward to his year assignment out there after he looked out at it, but I just can remember the one thing he said the whole trip was, "Only 364 more days to go."

Norman Olson:
That would be tough duty.

Paul Schmidt:
Tough duty, yeah.

Norman Olson:
What are some of the other highlights of your tour of duty as a refuge supervisor in Alaska? One of the things you mentioned when you gave me your biography here was the reintroduction of caribou in Togiak.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, that was a great little project; the refuge and part of their CCP wanted to reintroduce; caribou had been extirpated and there were very low populations out on Togiak, and yet we knew that the environment and the habitat were capable of holding a sustained population of caribou, and so part of the CCP was to say that we would like to reintroduce the population out on Togiak. And so that was one of the visions for the refuge. Well, how do you begin to do that in a place that hasn't seen them in awhile and where the locals are very anxious for fresh meat, they didn't have a lot of big game to pick from. Togiak had some moose populations but not particularly robust moose populations; caribou populations hadn't been in there in years, although occasionally you would get some migrants that would come through, but not real good populations. And if we were going to invest in reintroducing populations out there we needed the support and, in fact, the patience of the locals, and they weren't quite sure. Again, back to what we said earlier, about trusting us in this whole effort, but a lot of work went into it from people like Sue Matthews in particular; I'll call her attention and give her credit for this; she gave me some advice as we were sort of planning out this effort, is that we really have to have their total buy in it, so we invested a lot of time in public meetings and getting people to buy into the idea, and part of the buy in was that eventually we would have populations that would sustain a harvest but that we needed some time before we could have a harvest because if we started shooting, you know, if we bring out fifty animals and if we started hunting them right away we wouldn't sustain this population. And so we had biologists who would chart out the growth of the population and what they thought it could sustain in terms of a harvest and when it could sustain it, and we began to put that forward. Well, the biologists in their zeal to have some significant growth to the population had proposed to me that we would not hunt them, for I want to guess I think maybe ten years or something like that, and I had Sue Matthews come into the meeting and she said, "Oh, the locals won't stand for that. You want their buy in, you've got to give them something sooner than ten years, that's too far out." So we began to work on this biological question with the public interest at heart in trying to figure what we could give them to keep them supportive of the overall project. And so we laid out a different kind of scenario where there could be a harvest of maybe only a couple of animals in the first few years and manage it very tightly but it would still allow for some growth, albeit not as fast as the biologists had wanted. But it was a real case of getting the public to buy into it and it turned out to be a great success in the end. So we spent a few thousand dollars to capture caribou, I can't remember where they came from, but we captured caribou and translocated them there and we allowed people the second or third year to start hunting them but under very managed conditions, and now to this day they're

hunting caribou out there. So that was a neat little success story, I'll say, where you really valued the public's interest and the local people and the biologists' opinion, too.

Norman Olson:
You had to balance those things.

Paul Schmidt:
We had to balance those things out a little bit! Another memory, speaking of caribou, I mean you said reindeer earlier about Nunivak; here's another little, here's the funniest story and the most embarrassing story probably for Paul Schmidt up there is the removal of reindeer from Hagemeister Island. That was under my watch.

Norman Olson:
Oh, okay.

Paul Schmidt:
And so I don't know what national papers I made that day, but the plan was, as you may remember, Hagemeister Island was a part of the Alaska Maritime Refuge and it was a part of the CCP. We were planning to remove reindeer from that island. Reindeer had been introduced, they had denuded the island, had really destroyed the island of vegetation and it was really impacting the full ecosystem of the Hagemeister Island because of these reindeer. They were unmanaged, they were managed maybe historically by natives under BIA's watch, but long since, no management, and apparently no one claimed ownership to them. We tried to find out who owned these reindeer and who the rightful manager of them was, but we were unsuccessful in finding out who really it was; we had a couple of people come forward but they didn't want to have anything to do with them, and they certainly weren't about to get out there and manage them and reduce the herd and whatever. So, after many, many attempts by John Martin and others to work to kind of lay the groundwork for this, the decision was made, and I made it, was after they recommended that we need to get out there and eliminate, take, kill all of the reindeer on Hagemeister Island. That was the only plan because no one was willing to manage them, and they were destroying the habitat, thousands of acres of this wonderful habitat for seabirds and other things. And so I said, "Okay, I'll give the go ahead; you will go out there by plan and your goal is to eliminate them." And when would you do that? "Well, the most efficient time to do that would be..." And by the way, a lot of things had gone on down ahead of that; we opened it up for anybody to go out there and take the animals, use the animals, translocate them, or kill them and salvage the meat, all of those offers had been made. And so all the groundwork had been laid to this, but we weren't able to take care of them through that method within the public, so we had do something, we felt like we had to do something. I gave the approval for them to go out there, and the most efficient time do it is when there was snow on the ground so that you could spot the animals from the air, and you would use aerial gunning to eliminate these animals. If you could see them from the air, I mean, the contrast of the dark fur of the animals on the white snow makes it efficient. Well, that happened to be a month or two before Christmas; now you're beginning to see that Rudolph and Santa Claus and the reindeer, and the story that could evolve here! So I gave the order, they went out there and they

started to eliminate them, there were, and my memory is not perfect on this, but there were more than a hundred animals to be eliminated, I'm thinking there was a couple hundred but I could be wrong about that. They went out there prepared to do that in one fell swoop sort of operation, and I approved of the investment of the money for the planes and the staff and whatever, and they proceeded to shoot the animals from the air and let them lay there, and unfortunately, as a part of the operation they had not brought enough bullets to do the job in one fell swoop. So my fear was that they wouldn't do it all in one fell swoop and that word would get out because you cannot, as much as you would like to, get permission by the world to go shoot reindeer from the air; that's just not something we would have ever gotten the public to generally agree with, even as much as we could show them pictures of the bare ground and all of the damage that the reindeer were doing, the general public would not allow us to do that, they would find the court system or some other way to, public interest or whatever. So we had to go out there and we had to be effective at one fell swoop, and then sort of ask for forgiveness to the world. They were not successful because they didn't bring, they ran out of bullets in the process of doing this operation, they came back and weather set and they couldn't get back out there. In the meantime, and they eliminated a lot of animals, they brought back the word to me that they had done a great job but they hadn't finished the job.

Word spread of this operation, I mean you're not going to shoot a bunch of animals and not have somebody find out about it, and so word spread that the Fish and Wildlife Service was out on Hagemeister Island shooting reindeer before Christmas, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and all of Santa's reindeer and all of that stuff! It hit the Anchorage papers, it got all the way back to Washington, D.C., and it was the joke of the Fish and Wildlife Service at that time that they had done this. And I can remember Walt Stieglitz who was the regional director at that time, having had replaced, eventually had replaced Jim Gritman, who had replaced Bob Gilmore, even though Gritman wasn't there for very long, and Walt was not a very happy camper at that. Walt was particularly dismayed that we had not finished the job, and that we were having to answer a lot of questions to the media that were not easy to answer! Well, it put us back a year, and we eventually got back out there because we had explained to the whole world many, many times how there were no other solutions in place, and so a year went by and we finally got back out there and eliminated the full population and were successful but it was a hard, an embarrassing year needless to say! We hadn't finished the job, and Walt was not happy at all with me or with the refuge in terms of not having done it, and I hadn't even asked, I don't believe I even asked permission, and I certainly hadn't prepared the press for this, and so everything was sort of a total surprise. Poor Bruce Batten, who was our public affairs officer in Alaska, was doing his damnedest to keep me out of as much public scrutiny, I guess or embarrassment, as possible, but he was jumping through all kinds of hoops, with people making these comments.

Norman Olson:
Oh, I'll bet.

Paul Schmidt:
That's one of those things that I will never forget either.

Norman Olson:
Who was the refuge manager at Togiak when you did the reintroduction?

Paul Schmidt:
Fisher is his last name, um...

Norman Olson:
Dave?

Paul Schmidt:
Dave Fisher, thank you for helping me to remember that.

Norman Olson:
Okay, was that before Pete went out there?

Paul Schmidt:
It was, but then Pete did a huge amount of work in this, he worked a lot with Sue Matthews in sort of preparing the public for us, yes.

Norman Olson:
Peter Jerome had been the planner for the...

Paul Schmidt:
He had been, and he was a key to the implementation of that translocation, no question about it.

Norman Olson:
Did you have anything to do with the River Management Plan for Togiak, which...?

Paul Schmidt:
A little bit, but I didn't have a lot to do with that. By that time, a couple of years went by as the refuge supervisor, and by then, John Kurt retired in that time period, and so then I became the refuge supervisor for all of the Alaska refuges, including the north slope, all 17 refuges came under one refuge supervisor at that time. Then eventually I became the... To answer your question, I didn't work a lot on the River Management Plan, but a little bit. I became then deputy assistant regional director when Joe Mazzoni left, and I think he went from there to Albuquerque as the assistant regional director there. So I worked as John Rogers's deputy, or assistant, for a couple of years in the late '80s and early '90s, and then John retired and we had a wonderful send off for John, and I assumed the job of acting for him for almost a year after John left and before Rowan Gould was elected as the ARD (Acting Regional Director) for Refuges.

Norman Olson:
If I remember correctly, thinking back to that time, the division between the deputy regional manager or the deputy regional director and the assistant regional manager, that

John had pretty much focused on the Waterfowl Plan, the Waterfowl Conservation Plan for the Delta and that the deputy, Joe, and I would assume you, pretty much ran the refuge program?

Paul Schmidt:
That's right; I think that's a fair statement. John really, I mean, although I will say John gave over sort of overarching direction on how to deal with everything, but he did chief operating officer, I will say, for the refuge system up there, was really in that deputy position, because John really invested his heart and his soul in the reestablishment of those four depressed populations of geese.

Norman Olson:
Declining species of Arctic-nesting geese.

Paul Schmidt:
It was the issue for the Yukon, Delta and National Wildlife Refuge, and it became a model for how to work with the public in wildlife restoration and in almost a no-win situation where the public had historically used those animals for their subsistence lifestyle, yet not in a legal fashion, and trying to get them to buy into.

Norman Olson:
It was a spring hunting issue.

Paul Schmidt:
It was spring hunting, and it was not authorized under the migratory bird treaties with Canada or Mexico and it was only later when I moved, with that knowledge and understanding, moved from Alaska to Washington, where I was determined to amend that treaty. And that is one the proudest things of my career at the moment, is to having been successful and amending the treaty that would give some management foundation and get buy in from the locals who now could legally use those birds as they historically have, and to be a part of the management, and frankly the restoration. Now they have a reason to participate, they have a reason to actually abide by regulations. But when the regulations don't have anything in it for them, there is nothing for them to support. And they were the people who lived and used some of the best waterfowl habitat, and controlled some of the best waterfowl habitat in the world, and if we weren't going to have them embrace as a part of the management, then we were never going to be successful. And John was trying, trying, and trying, and certainly was successful in getting that and laying the groundwork for it, but in the end we had to amend that treaty, or those two treaties, in order to really put this on a legal footing so that people didn't feel like outlaws out there. No one wants to feel like they are breaking the law, no one wants to be an outlaw; I don't believe that many people, certainly those people don't. And so we needed a regulatory system that would embrace them and we could work with them on, and fortunately, we have that now.

But John, to answer your question, I got off on a different tangent, but John was instrumental in sort of laying the groundwork for that and understood, even though he

was a white guy from the east as well, a biologist and all of that, he is a very patient man and a dear, dear, dear man and friend who had the patience to work with the natives and realized that this was a long-term thing, and it wasn't like me, this young whipper-snapper who wanted to see results in a day. John realized that the investment that he put in it would pay off, but it wouldn't pay off in increments of a year; it would pay off in increments of decades, but we were in this for the long haul and we should be in it for the long haul. I learned a lot from that man.

Norman Olson:
I had the chance to go out to the Yukon Delta while I was working on the CCP for some of these meetings with John, and talking about elders in the villages and the importance of elders in the villages, and I always felt that the communities, the Yup'ik communities and the elders in the community, had something very close and that they felt akin, I think, to John Rogers because he was an older man and had a head of white hair, and I thought they probably worked quite well together you know, as opposed to young biologists coming in and trying to sit down and talk to them.

Paul Schmidt:
No question, I could have said the same things that John said and not gotten near the respect and been embraced like he was. But, he, of course, said it a lot better than I ever could, and he had worked with those people in a very collegial and cooperative fashion, and he had the patience that they truly loved.

Norman Olson:
Patience I think is the key because things moved very slowly, meetings moved very slowly, and you had to be very patient really to sort of get to where you wanted to go; he was very good at that.

Paul Schmidt:
He was the right person at the right time.

Norman Olson:
Oh absolutely, no question.

Paul Schmidt:
The Joe Mazonis and the Paul Schmidts and the... you name us, the rest of us out there who were always eager, had the same maybe vision but didn't have the same skill set that John had. We would get impatient too quickly and too easily and we were definitely these guys who were just ready to get, if we didn't get results, we demanded them, you know that kind of thing. Well, that's not the way to do it; John taught us all a big lesson in that. And you're right, his age helped but his whole personality, and he earned the respect not only from his white hair but from his character and I will always treasure and keep that dear.

Norman Olson: Well actually, one more thing I wanted to ask you about; the 1989 Exxon Valdez fiasco, did you have any involvement at all with that?

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, one March morning in 1989, I am driving up the new Seward Highway, I can remember, I mean it's just like vivid, and I had the radio on and I'm sure it was about 7 o'clock and I was going to work and I heard this radio report of the grounding and the spilling of oil, the grounding of the Exxon Valdez tanker and then the spilling of thousands of gallons of oil, and daylight was just beginning to come and so there wasn't, the radio clearly had an ominous report to it, but it wasn't yet, had not come to light how big this was by that moment, but I knew in my heart and through my ears in hearing this report that our lives were going to change that morning. And so I got into the office and the word was beginning to spread around the office quickly and quickly up to the regional director's office and I can remember John Nelson, who was at that time, we probably called it Ecological Services, Assistant Regional Director of Ecological Services, they had the contaminants programs, and spills would be technically under their jurisdiction, if you will, and he was very excited, I mean in a negative way, I don't mean happy excited, he was like anxious about this report and what this meant to us. We began to scramble in the office and try to figure out how we would respond to something that was as the minutes or hours went on, how it would be sort of overwhelming to respond to. And it's not our job to be responding to oil spills; it's the Coast Guard and it's the company who is responsible. Another thing is, we don't have the facilities to actually respond to the spillage if will, but then we have the wildlife to worry about and all of that and that is a bit of our responsibility. Well, a long story short is it did change a lot of people's lives that day, and I'm sure the company of Exxon and I'm sure Alaska Department of Fish and Game and I'm sure many, many publics who were affected like fisherman and others, but it certainly affected the Fish and Wildlife Service. And yes, I was called upon because at that point I think I just became the deputy assistant regional director and migratory birds were under that program, and that was obviously one resource that was going to be impacted. The refuges, the refuge properties were going to be affected, but migratory birds were going to die; they were going to die as a result of this spill, and it's in a treasured place on the Prince William Sound, treasured for sea birds in that area.

And so we began to lay out a plan and over the next three months I worked on the Exxon Valdez in one way, shape, or form almost fulltime. We set up operations in Valdez and as well as in Seward, we had an operations office and Mike Hedrick helped us, I think, in Seward. We immediately began to pick people out of their normal jobs across the state, and that was basically my job with consultation with other people was, who should we get to set up offices here. Before that, we had responded to this, and so we sent key people down to Valdez and Seward and Kodiak and I think one other place, but operational areas. I can remember, that was the time when fax machines were just coming onto the scene, 1989, I mean it's funny to think of it that way now, and so gosh, we now have fax, we can communicate other than by a phone, of course, now by passing these pieces of paper through these phone lines, it was kind of a big deal. And so we bought fax machines for all of these offices and we thought that was a huge deal, each office was trying to set up and bring people down as sort of incident command centers while the Coast Guard and Exxon and the state of Alaska were busy trying to actually

respond to the oil that was still there. And one of the memories I have of that; Valdez, if you've ever been to the end of the pipeline there, it's not much, I mean there's some big facilities there for storing oil and big tankers that come into there but the town of Valdez is a little town, there's not much to it. And I've been there once or twice before, and I think more on my own for fishing expeditions when I went to Valdez. I was amazed, it was a day or two after the spill and I was flown there by one of our refuge pilots, I can't remember who was the pilot, so we flew from Anchorage to there because I had to get there to work with Exxon to establish a bird treatment center so we could wash birds and treat birds and hopefully save a few birds in the end. But the memory is of flying into this sleepy little town that had now become a metropolis of activity, I mean, this little airport that probably had never seen more than five takeoffs and landings in a day was now seeing five takeoffs and landings in ten minutes or less; they were lined up. And in fact when we left that day, I just flew for the day to kind of worked for something, we were getting ready to leave that afternoon and we had to get in line for takeoff; there were helicopters, there were jets, there were planes, they were everywhere on this little sleepy little town, and we were lined up and I think we were fourth or fifth in line for takeoff, and it would never, ever, ever have been like that except for that time. It just became like a little city of activity (unclear). Everybody had all of their opinions and all of their fears about such a big oil spill in such a critical area, but it was an emotional time for lots of people and it was for me. It will probably go down, for two reasons, it will go down as the worst three months of my life; one is trying to deal with a disaster like that, people's lives being affected, wildlife dying, and all of this, just a bad thing, and combined with my mother had just been diagnosed with cancer. So it was a really tough time.

Norman Olson:
I'll bet, I'll bet. I wound up spending thirty days in July as a service monitor, on-site monitor, in Morning Cove on the islands, working out of Seward and working with Ann Rappoport.

Paul Schmidt:
Was Mike Hedrick there?

Norman Olson:
No, it wasn't Mike, it was Tom Early.

Paul Schmidt:
Oh yes, of course it was.

Norman Olson:
So I lived out on a fishing boat essentially; it was an interesting experience. It was a mess, a horrible mess, but it was an incredible experience.

Paul Schmidt:
How long were you down there?

Norman Olson:

Thirty days. I was there for two weeks, had a week off, and someone from the Denver office came up and replaced me, a fellow named John, I can't remember his last name, and then I came back for another two weeks after that.

Paul Schmidt:
Everybody was called to action; I mean everybody was affected in the Service, at least in Alaska and other places as well because we didn't have the resources and the people to do this.

Norman Olson:
What surprised me is, I volunteered to do it and I figured I'm not a biologist, they'll never select me to go but I got to go; you needed people.

Paul Schmidt:
We needed people bad and people were doing it, you know pick up and stop their job and give up whatever they were doing there and do this.

Norman Olson:
It's one of those things like Kennedy's assassination, I guess; you'll always remember where you were, because I was down at Kenai that morning and I can remember we were talking, I was out at the maintenance shed talking to Jim Frady; he is the Jim Frady that left the regional office and had gone back down there as chief of maintenance.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, chief of their operations.

Norman Olson:
Talking to him, and all of a sudden, the radio was on and came the announcement that this boat was hung up on the rock out there.

Paul Schmidt:
It is just like Kennedy, I mean, everybody remembers where they were. I was in a classroom, I can remember, whatever grade I was, and when we got the news of JFK's assassination, and I can remember almost within a hundred yards of where I was on the Seward Highway when the radio and this news thing came on. That is funny; I'll bet you could ask that of...

Norman Olson:
Lots of people that were in Alaska.

Paul Schmidt:
Hundreds of people at the time and they all would remember where they were.

Norman Olson:

Remember where they were for sure. Along the vein of oil, did you ever get a chance to get up to the North Slope?

Paul Schmidt:
I did, and what an interesting place. I only went up there after I became the refuge supervisor that included them.

Norman Olson:
The whole state.

Paul Schmidt:
The whole state, and I went to Prudhoe Bay one time as a part of, our Arctic Refuge of course was there, and a long debate about whether to drill or not drill in the Arctic, and still to this day, twenty some years, we're still debating that one. So the idea was I think I was going to Barrow, and I can't remember all that we were doing there, but I went and I can remember going to Prudhoe Bay for my first time and it was like a very eye opening thing. I can remember the facilities that just seemed to go on forever, and you almost never had to go outside, you just go from one little, you know these tunnels, and they had great food, I do remember that, it was great food!

Norman Olson:
Yes, that was the BP Hilton or something like that?

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, and the people who worked there would go up there for usually, two weeks on.

Norman Olson:
I don't know if it was two weeks or thirty days, it might be thirty days on and thirty days off.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, some of them would live in the lower 48, something like that, they could live in Seattle and just take a plane up there every so often, for their two weeks of work and then go back home for two weeks and have off. Many people in Anchorage, of course, who did that.

Norman Olson:
Kenai, as well.

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, who would just fly up for their work on the oil patch and then go back. Yes, it was fascinating, no place else like it. Well, I suppose there is but never that I've seen anything like it before in my life.

Norman Olson:

I had a chance while I was working on the Arctic Plan to drive; we drove a Suburban, a service Suburban from Fairbanks up the Haul Road to Dead Horse and left it there for a crew that was working that was going to be driving back down. So we flew back, we got to tour the BP Hilton and we got to spend the night at Dead Horse in the lodge there and all that sort of stuff. And I remember getting on the plane, Alaska Airlines plane, leaving Dead Horse, and the first thing they did was gave everyone two free drinks because you couldn't drink when you working up there! So we just happened to be happy to be there at the right time and we got two free drinks, but that was standard operating procedure. As the planes took off, you gave everyone on the plane two free drinks.

Paul Schmidt:
Oh, my gosh, I can remember those, yeah, I do remember those days when the alcohol flowed on planes a lot more than they do these days. That's funny.

Norman Olson:
Yes, that was an interesting thing to see and experience.

Paul Schmidt:
It was, it was. I never really got much involved in the actual debate about whether to open the Arctic to oil drilling or not; it was just way over my grade level, all the way to the White House and the Congress and everybody else could worry about that, I just figured what will be, will be. I knew Paul wasn't going to have any influence on that. Let's invest my time in caribou transplantation or other things like that.

Norman Olson:
We talked a little about it, but how did your life and your job change when you actually became the director? You went from being the refuge supervisor to being the deputy, did things change, did you get out to the field as often, or?

Paul Schmidt:
No, of course I did not, that's correct. I think the refuge supervisor was probably, if I look back on my almost thirty-year career now, that was probably my most favorite job because of the experiences, some of which I have relayed to you. But you could see and get to the field, and you could see results of things that you, and you could have an impact on sort of a broad scale, but you would also see the actual results materialize and getting to get out in the field and see the best places in the world, many of them are in Alaska. And so that was a special couple of three years in that job, and I'm looking back on it right now and saying, "That was the best job I've ever had, and probably ever will have in the Fish and Wildlife Service." Because then I did become part of the directorate and didn't stay in close enough contact with field of that, and there was more administration and more supervision, and things like that would take your time up, none of which are particularly enjoyable but part of the job.

Norman Olson: So, while you were a member of the directorate up there in Alaska, was perhaps the Exxon Valdez the big event?

Paul Schmidt:
I think that was the big event, yes, I mean worldwide event in a sense. I mean it touched people, the lower 48 were crying because of what it had done; they had never seen Prince William Sound, and so it was a huge event.

Norman Olson:
Oh, the coverage, it was on television every night and on the front page of the paper every day.

Paul Schmidt:
Every paper and every magazine; Time Magazine, Newsweek, and all would cover all the happenings associated with that. I learned a couple of things about that that I will tell you; we used to think of the Federal Government as being just a horrible bureaucracy. Well, I'm here to tell you Exxon Corporation is the most bureaucratic institution I've dealt with by far. When we tried to get them to make decisions during that couple of months time period it seemed like nobody had the authority to make any decision, they had to ask ten more layers up the line before they could get the little actions that we wanted to get done, very frustrating. I never really took criticism about Federal bureaucracy too well after that when I saw that big companies have their own bureaucracy, and just as frustrating and just as immovable, in some regards, as the Federal Government. I think it's just the size, when you organize people and that big, you're going to have inertia! That's just part of it. That was probably the biggest collective event, a couple of other little, not little events but memorable events, were when we lost humans, we lost Rich Barcelona.

Norman Olson:
You mentioned Rich.

Paul Schmidt:
When he was doing a waterfowl survey in the Yukon Flats, I think.

Norman Olson:
It was (unclear) Lake I think.

Paul Schmidt:
A very capable young biologist, everybody loved, and drowned as a part of that exercise. And we learned from there that we need to have better training of people before they were put out onto boats by themselves. We learned that it's dangerous everywhere, I guess, and you make a mistake in Alaska and you can lose your life, and we need to prepare people for that. People are our best and most cherished resource, and Rich was one of those and when we lost him, it told us we weren't doing things right, so we developed a whole training program after that. We lost a couple of people out on the Aleutian Islands; it was a very sad event as well. We lost a Student Conservation Association student and a refuge employee as a part of a capsizing of a boat on the

Aleutians while I was there. One of my duties at that time was to give that bad news to the families; those are sad times, memorable in their own ways. Of course a decision was made up there in trying to get from here to there and the weather came up on them and they weren't able to handle the bad weather between and where they were headed, and four people were on the boat and two were lost and two survived. And then there was one other experience, and again these are all such sad moments, but I'll get them all out at once, is that we had a maintenance worker, I think, King Salmon Peninsula, Becharof, who committed suicide while he was out there.

Norman Olson:
Ron Hood.

Paul Schmidt:
Ron Hood was the refuge manager, thank you, Norman. Golly day, I'm so thankful that you remembered his name. He was the refuge supervisor and the maintenance worker had gone out behind his house and had killed himself.

Norman Olson:
I can remember that.

Paul Schmidt:
I can remember Walt Stieglitz, when I got the word and I went and told Walt, you know reporting through the system, the director and all of that, and Walt said, "Well, you've got to go tell the next of kin." And that was before I had to do it for the kids and this was the first time I had to do it, and boy, you don't forget that kind of training anywhere. But it turned out his next of kin was his sister who lived in Anchorage, so I kind of got my wits about me a little bit and went and talked to her. I can remember talking to Sue Matthews a little bit because I felt she was always a very personable person and a good relate, she was a very sensitive kind of person and I wanted some advice on how do I approach this woman and tell her, you know knock on a stranger's door and say, "Your brother just committed suicide." So she helped me through that, kind of planning it out even, and then I went and asked her to go with me because you know how to approach it, but I knocked on the door and introduced myself and went into her house and into her living room and proceeded to tell her that her brother had just died, and we worked through that, but that was an emotional experience.

Norman Olson:
Oh, yes, I bet.

Paul Schmidt:
To face somebody like that, I never had to do that before; they didn't train me for that, they didn't train me for that one.

Norman Olson: There is lots of firsts in just being in Alaska, I know it's the only place I've ever lived in my life where I've known people who died violent deaths, either

committed suicide or a spouse shot them or something like that. It's the only place I've ever lived where I have been that close to something like that.

Paul Schmidt:
It once was a way too common occurrence up there.

Norman Olson:
Oh, clearly it really is, especially in the villages with the alcohol problem. But you mentioned training a little while ago; I was thinking I went to Alaska and I remember we were supposed to take training, cold weather training, at Fort Richardson or something; I never got to do that.

Paul Schmidt:
I didn't either.

Norman Olson:
You were also supposed to take training if you flew in small airplanes and I never go to take that training, so I never did any of those things but flew thousands of miles up there, and it wasn't until I came back here in probably '93, when I was working on the Conte, Silvio O. Conte Refuge Project on the Connecticut River, we had a service pilot that was going to fly the river and our biologist was going to go with him, and I asked if I could go with them too, and they asked if I had the training and I hadn't had the training so I couldn't go.

Paul Schmidt:
Good for him, that's a great... and we should have got the training for you.

Norman Olson:
Well, yes, that's stuff I think back to, I mean, being out there on two-week river trips and all of the stuff that we did, and the winter travel we did. I mean, I've been an outdoor person all of my life, I could probably figure out most of it except flying an airplane; I couldn't figure that one out, but thinking about that, you know, we were kind of lax and stuff like that, which we shouldn't be. I hope today that that is not the case, that people do get that training.

Paul Schmidt:
I hope they do, too, Norman, it reminds me when I said Rich Barcelona; you know the old expression is really, really true, it is that “every safety regulation or training is written in somebody's blood.”

Norman Olson:
That's right.

Paul Schmidt: And it's true, so we didn't train people before Rich died in handling boats and all that you need to do up there to be safe, and so then we planned out a whole training program. If you are going to be in a boat in Alaska, you are going to have boat

safety training period, that's just it. But you're right, we are a little lax, and we certainly were at that time.

Norman Olson:
Yes. And so 1991, you wound up going back to D.C. What was your job when you went back?

Paul Schmidt:
Yes, in fact...

Norman Olson:
You stayed in refuges I think for awhile, didn't you?

Paul Schmidt:
No, I took a little side trip, actually, but fairly brief in nature. It was actually in 1992. I got a call from Dick Smith. I had been as the acting assistant regional director when John P. (Rogers) retired, and Dick Smith called me and he said, "I would like you to come in here." And if you knew Dick Smith, it was always rough conversation. Dick Smith said, "Paul, I want you in here, talk to you." And I said, "Okay, when Dick?" And he said, "Well, I want you to fly in here tomorrow." And I said, "Okay." So I flew from Alaska, I flew on a red-eye (flight) because he wanted to see me first thing, and he wanted to see me in the morning. I didn't know what it was about but they wanted me there. And so we got a plane, took it, and I went out there, and flew out there in the morning and met with him. It was weird because he just wanted to talk to me, and I thought, "Why did I fly all the way back here just to talk to you Dick?" I couldn't quite figure all of that out. I flew back there on a red-eye and I flew out the next afternoon and flew back to Anchorage; it was a whirl-wind tour. Well, that was so he could informally interview me to be his special assistant. Walt Stieglitz ,I guess, had talked to him and was recommending that I be his special assistant, and so I was the special assistant to Dick Smith and John Turner, who was the director. It was the waning days of John Turner's directorship in terms as the director, and it was in October or maybe it was sooner than that, it could have been September of 1992. And so I worked with Dick and John as their special assistant for like eight or nine months until the spring of '93, when more transition was occurring. John Turner had left because of the new administration and the election and Mollie Beattie was coming in; Dick Smith was the acting director, and Dick had a plan at that time; it was that he wanted his special assistants, they were really used as training positions for people to see the broad (unclear) of the Fish and Wildlife Service, if you were working for Dick you obviously were going to be see everything, whether it is endangered species or administration or refuges or fisheries, whatever, you were going to see all parts of the Fish and Wildlife Service. He said to me when I first came in there for that job he said, "Well, here, Paul, this is what I want you to do; you're not going to be here a day over one year. Your job is to learn as much as you can this year and to help me, but you need to be looking for your next assignment." He wanted people in and out of there, and he would put people in there for one year sort of stints as to train them and work their asses off while they were there and then they would get another job. So I did that, it was a great job, outstanding job. You did see all of those things that were

happening; you saw the works and the good things and all of that of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and it was really a fun kind of experience for me.

And then I became the chief; I applied and David Olsen selected me to be the Chief of Migratory Bird Office at that time, one that, by the way, John P. Rogers was the first chief of that office, and started that years before. And so it was really fun for me to do that job because I had a lot of respect for John and he was the one that opened that office, if you will, in the '70s, I think it was the late '60s or '70s. And so I did that for five years from 1993 to 1998, and it was still within Refuges and Wildlife because migratory birds was under Dave Olsen, and so I still kept my connection with the refuge program that my colleague over there, colleagues actually, was Rob Shallenberger at one point, Rick Coleman at one point, who was the division chief over there, and some other folks who were in the refuge program, and we were colleagues in that. And so I always felt I was still part of the refuges and wildlife family, if you will. And then I became the Deputy Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife under Dan Ashe, who was then; Dave Olsen had retired and there may have been somebody between Dave and Dan but I can't remember, and Dan selected me to be his deputy for that position. And then there were a number of re-organizations that occurred that ended up taking me different places. Migratory birds and federal aid were merged in what is called Migratory Birds and States Programs, and I was the deputy there for at that time. Tom Melius, who was called upon to be my Mollie. It was Mollie or Jaimie, one of them, put him as the assistant director and I was his deputy, I think it was when Jamie Clark was there, yes it was when Jamie Clark was there. And then they broke off Migratory Birds and then made me the Assistant Director for Migratory Birds back a couple of three years ago now. So that's sort of been the career evolution through all of this, and now I don't see enough of the field or have enough fun as I do remember in those days that we have been talking about and visiting about in Alaska as much.

Norman Olson:
Has your job since you left Alaska taken you back there very often?

Paul Schmidt:
Not very often. I have had a chance to go back there a couple of times, a couple of times I went back on my own for recreation with the likes of John Doebel and Glen Allison and Dave Olsen, when we would have our annual float trip per se; it was our recreational time, and I treasure those. Every year when I was in Alaska I would take a better part of a week to go with a bunch of buddies and go float trip fishing, and experiencing Alaska. That continued even after I left for a couple of more years but it became tougher, not only more expensive, of course, because now I have got to fly from Washington, D.C. there, but also it became just tougher to fit it into the schedules. I have been up there a couple of times since then for work-related meetings and the like, but I never really have reconnected with the field and what's all going and what's happened since the CCP days. What an evolution, I mean, we were really organizing ourselves during the '80s and the '90s up there, and now, I am assuming if I were to characterize it, is now implementing those things and...

Norman Olson:
Well, they are actually in the process now of rewriting, revising the CCPs.

Paul Schmidt:
When they were developed, we had that in mind, you know, we said they had to revise them to keep them alive.

Norman Olson:
They are doing it now but it's not going quite as smoothly as it did the first time.

Paul Schmidt:
They don't have Norm Olson up there, and I mean that. I mean you and the staff, the planning staff up there, worked incredibly hard and in concert with the refuge managers to put their skills together, skill sets together to make it reality. Of course, it didn't work smooth everywhere but...

Norman Olson:
No, it didn't work smoothly, but it was a good group of people who was pulled together, and they were exciting times.

Paul Schmidt:
We were very excited because you knew you were making history in a way because we were putting on paper what was in people's minds before, and I think it was a big difference and it was a transition to this niche. Why, there weren't the conflicts because you could keep something in your mind, if you will, and this is my plan, when you had to write it down, now it became, "Oh, that's what you said, that's what you want to do!" And so I think those are great things to do, I mean, you have to do those.

Norman Olson:
They were fun times.

Paul Schmidt:
They were.

Norman Olson:
No question about that. Do you think Anchorage has changed a lot since you first went there in 1986?

Paul Schmidt:
Sure it has, I saw it change while I was there in the six or seven years that I had been there. And I have been back a couple of times, as I said, and I think one of the marks of change is when I saw my first Walmart up there, I said, "Oh, things have changed here." It used to be the mom and pop, I'll call them, sporting good stores and the Gary Kings and the other little places that people would go get their gear and stuff, and now it's Walmart. I think that's a sign of change; I am not going to characterize it as plus or minus, I am just characterizing it as change! Change in the traffic seems to be worse

when I go up there; things just are different as they are everywhere. In the ‘80s at some point, in some ways, it was still a little bit of a frontier; it's not in the 2000s, it's not there anymore.

Norman Olson:
It really has changed, especially if you look at the area down along Tudor Road, now where the regional office is. All of those open spaces are now hotels, and...

Paul Schmidt:
I got lost one of the last times I was up there; I couldn't recognize, well, the landmarks that I was looking for were different, and that was scary to think of that.

Norman Olson:
That's for sure. Well, I think we've almost filled our tape.

Paul Schmidt:
Oh, my goodness.

Norman Olson:
So, we've done a good job. Do you have any last thoughts about your Alaska experience that you would like to share with us before we sign off?

Paul Schmidt:
It was an incredible time for me in many, many ways, professionally and personally, it was probably the most interesting time of my life. Going to Alaska sight unseen, with a fairly new bride, I had only been married about a year, and my two kids were born up there, I grew up there in a way because when I went up there, I did shave but I was still pretty young! And I grew and I am sure I got a few gray hairs as a result of my experience up there, but I got so many just fond memories of it and, as I said, both professionally and personally. I can't think of a better place to work, time period to work, with such great people, and characters, oh, my gosh, characters, you know, all the way from people we work with and the public. Going up there and finding the first year the governor's election that had like fifteen people on the ballot running for governor, anybody could run for governor if they just got a handful of people signing petitions, and I wondered what is this about, it was sort of like this old frontier thing, a frontier mentality. It's a land of extremes, not only because of the weather, but people and their attitudes; there are a lot of people on the far right and the far left of issues and there are extremists all over the place. I mean there are strong environmentalists and then there's rabid developers over on this side, and they come together in a boiling pot of what's called Alaska. And there's no place else I've been where there is such an expression and passion and opinion about what we should do, what the government or the people should do with that land, and it is very tough to balance all of those things. Anyway, it made it a very interesting place to live. I enjoyed all of the natural resources of the state, and that natural resources now, doesn't only mean fishing and hunting and watching, but experiencing earthquakes and volcanoes, blizzards, and all of the things that make it a very, very special place to live and to work.

Norman Olson:
For sure, interesting times, and we were lucky, I think, both of us to be part of it.

Paul Schmidt:
Very lucky, very lucky.

Norman Olson:
Well, I want to thank you for spending this time with me this afternoon and sharing some of your experiences and thoughts and remembering... (end of dictation)