The Oral History of Doug Frugé

November 12, 2019

Interview conducted by Tom Worthington
Annapolis, MD

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Doug Frugé
Date of Interview: November 12, 2019
Location of Interview: Annapolis, MD
Interviewer: Tom Worthington

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:

39 Years with USFWS. 1978 - 2017

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:

Vicksburg Ecological Services Field Office: Fishery Biologist

D'Arbornne and Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuges: Asst. Refuge Manager

Alaska Regional Office: Refuge Oil and Gas Coordinator

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Deputy Refuge Manager

Fairbanks Fishery Resource Office: Fishery Biologist

Ft. Worth/Arlington Ecological Services Field Office: Asst. Field Supervisor

Gulf Coast Fishery Coordination Office: Coastal Fish Coordinator

Denver Regional Office: Fishery Program Coordinator

Most Important Projects:

Oil and Gas Exploration EIS and Regulations: Arctic NWR

Beaufort Sea Coastal Fisheries Study, Arctic NWR

Golden Cheeked Warbler Emergency Listing

Gulf Striped Bass Restoration

Partnership work with Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

FWS representative (proxy for Southeast RD) on Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

National Fish Hatchery Review (2012 – 2013)

Hartland Dam Fish Passage Project

Brief Summary of Interview:

Doug Frugé was born and raised in southwest Louisiana. He attended college at McNeese State University (BS 1973), and then graduate school at Louisiana State University (MS 1975). He worked for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for two years before joining the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Vicksburg ESFO. He worked on the D'Arbornne and Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuges in northeast Louisiana before moving to Alaska in 1982. He became the Oil and Gas Coordinator for the Refuge Program in the Anchorage Regional Office, working on the EIS and regulations governing the oil and gas exploration of the Arctic NWR. He became Deputy Manager of the Arctic NWR, and then was a Fishery Biologist in Fairbanks, documenting and recording fishery resources of the Beaufort Sea along the Arctic NWR coast. In 1989 he returned to the lower 48 states and became the Assistant Field Supervisor of the Fort Worth/Arlington (TX) ESFO. Then, for 17 years he became the Coastal Fish Coordinator for the Service at the Gulf Coast Fishery Coordination Office in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. He finished his career in the Denver Regional Office where he was a Fishery Program Supervisor. Doug retired in 2017.

INTERVIEW

TOM WORTHINGTON: All right. I'm starting to record right now. This is Tom Worthington. Today is November 12th, 2019. I am interviewing Doug Frugé this (afternoon). It's about 4:15 p.m. We are in Annapolis, Maryland. And I have explained to Doug that this is an oral history interview, and he has signed the release form. He knows that the information will become public once it's transcribed and corrected.

And so I have a series of questions. This takes typically, well, they say an hour, but honestly, I've never had one go only an hour. We can certainly take a break at any point if you want to. And I see the recorder is working. It's rolling just fine. So, Doug, where and when were you born?

DOUG FRUGE: I was born in November of 1951, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, which is in the southwestern part of the state.

WORTHINGTON: And who were your parents?

FRUGE: Well, my dad, Louis J., Louis Joseph went by the . . . you know, typically he was called L.J., and my mom was Lorraine Joy. And her last name was Verret.

WORTHINGTON: And did you have brothers and sisters?

FRUGE: I have a brother, Daniel and two sisters, Colleen and Cindy. My mom and dad grew up within a few miles of each other about 20 miles to the southeast of Lake Charles. So within that that general area where I was born.

WORTHINGTON: Did you grow up in Lake Charles or did you move?

FRUGE: After I was born, I think we briefly lived with my mom's grandmother, one of her grandmothers, and then they moved to a rental house in the town where my dad was actually born. The name of that town was Bell City. And we lived there for, I don't know, until I was about 3 or 4. And then they moved to Lake Charles. My dad was in the auto parts business all his life. And at that time he was working for the Ford dealership in Lake Charles. So, we moved there, and I started school there, went to, I think, the fifth grade in Lake Charles, and then I think it was a 1962, maybe, my mom and dad decided to move back to where she grew up in Hayes, which was about three miles from Bell City.

And so, I went to sixth and seventh grades at a small school, right across the road, the street, from where we lived in Hayes. And then I went to high school in Bell City, which is about three miles away, which is where we were living right after I was born.

WORTHINGTON: Is Bell City a big town?

FRUGE: Bell City. Oh, probably the population there probably was and still is maybe a couple of hundred people if that. Very small. Yeah, very small farming community. And of course, I completed high school there, graduated from Bell City High School in 1969. And then from there I went on to college in . . . at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

WORTHINGTON: During high school, did you have typical high school classes, did any courses stand out in your mind?

FRUGE: Yeah, we pretty much had the full kind of spectrum of typical classes for a school that size. I think the student body there was probably 500 if that and our high school, my high school class was about 20, I think 21 people graduating.

I had a science teacher, and it was just basically general science. She taught biology, general science, and chemistry. We did not have a physics class at that school, but she kind of recognized, I guess, an ability in me and an affinity for sciences and really encouraged me a lot.

WORTHINGTON: Do you remember her name?

FRUGE: Her name was, well I don't remember her first name, but her last name was Thomason. Mrs. (Linda) Thomason. But prior to that, I had not been a really, you know, outstanding student. And she really gave me a lot of confidence and brought out this affinity for science that she recognized that I had.

It's kind of a turning point. She taught general science. And then I also took her chemistry and biology classes.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have an affinity for the outdoors in those years? Do you remember spending a lot of time outdoors?

FRUGE: I hunted and fished with my dad, and my grandfather. It was the thing to do in that area; it's very rural.

WORTHINGTON: Do you know how many kids in your graduating class went on to college?

FRUGE: I bet you there was. I don't know for sure, but probably five maybe. That was typical for that area. Most people, you know, just kind of stopped at high school. But there were probably about 5 or 6 of us that went on to college in 1969.

WORTHINGTON: After graduating high school where did you go to college?

FRUGE: I went to McNeese State University and started out majoring in biology.

After that first year I developed an interest in biology because of hunting and fishing and, you know, developed an interest in the outdoors.

And I also during high school years, I became very interested in space exploration, astronomy, those types of things. I was never very good at math, so I pretty early recognized that I probably would never be very good in physics. But I decided just for the heck of it to just give a go at engineering for my second year in in college.

So I switched into a general engineering program and did okay in calculus but decided that I really had to work too hard at it. So I decided to go back to biology, and I got my zoology degree at McNeese. But of course, that was also during the Vietnam War years, and I wound up with a fairly low draft number. I think it was like 98 or something like that. So, you know, I really did not want to get drafted out of college. So I did enroll in Army ROTC, which was an option there at McNeese.

And so got my second Lieutenant's bars when I graduated. I think because of my biology degree, I was kind of put into the Medical Service Corps as my army branch and as soon as I finished my degree, which was in 1973 at McNeese, I went to Officers Basic at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.

WORTHINGTON: How long did that last? Was that half a year?

FRUGE: Actually, you know, while I was at Fort Sam Houston, Vietnam started winding down. And by the time I got out of officers basic, which is basically a 3- or 4-month program, at that point, Nixon was pulling us out of Vietnam. I probably could not have gone on active duty even if I really wanted to, no matter what branch. So I went into the reserves.

For most of my time in the reserves, I was basically inactive. I went for two-week trainings in the summertime during the year. I spent maybe a year or two with a reserve unit.

This is a few years down the road after I had finished my master's degree, in Jackson, Mississippi, which is near where one of my duty stations with Fish and Wildlife Service. But other than that, I didn't have any really extended active-duty time.

WORTHINGTON: All right. So you've got a degree in zoology. McNeese State. And then the officer basic. When did you enroll in graduate school?

FRUGE: So as soon as I got out of well, while I was at Fort Sam Houston, I was, you know, looking, trying to get into graduate programs at various places. I don't remember exactly all where I applied. I know I applied to Kansas State maybe; where I wound up going was Louisiana State University.

And just through some connections I had with a friend of mine, he knew a graduate student at LSU that put me in touch with one of the major professors there in the Fisheries department. And so as soon as I got out of Fort Sam Houston, which was would have been probably May of 1974, no, 1973, I started graduate school at LSU.

WORTHINGTON: LSU in Fisheries?

FRUGE: Fisheries, a Master of Science program in fisheries.

WORTHINGTON: Did you know fisheries was where you wanted to be or is that just happenstance? How did you choose fisheries?

FRUGE: I was always interested in wildlife management and biology from a broader perspective. In fact, I even thought about veterinary school for a while. But I seemed to have more of an affinity for the fish aquatic environments and fisheries. So yeah, that's kind of where I where I wound up.

WORTHINGTON: Were you the first in your family to complete college and then go on to grad school?

FRUGE: Yeah, I'm the oldest of my siblings. So I was the first. I was not the first in my more extended family. One of my cousins had actually gotten a degree before I did.

WORTHINGTON: What was your master's thesis topic?

FRUGE: I did a study on larval development of a couple of the sciaenids, the drum species, coastal drum species. And did a comparative larval development study of the Atlantic croaker and another related species called the spot. The drum and the spot. So that was what I did my thesis work on. But I also had an assistantship there in the department that involved another project. So in one sense, I did, you know,

kind of a double. It wasn't really my thesis work, but it's what I did for pay. I was part of a team that was doing a kind of a comprehensive ecological assessment of the Atchafalaya Basin, which a major distributary of the Mississippi River and the Corps of Engineers was, you know, they've been involved in re-plumbing that whole system for many years and they were studying some possible additional work in the system.

And so they had a contract with the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit there at LSU to do these studies. And my part was collecting and analyzing zooplankton in the Atchafalaya Bay.

WORTHINGTON: So that was that over the course of the whole two years of the program?

FRUGE: Yeah, the program actually continued on beyond my time there.

WORTHINGTON: Were there some significant instructors that you had in graduate school or professors that were key influencers on your career?

FRUGE: Well, my major professor was Frank Truesdale, and of course he was a major influence on how my studies went there. But then Fred Bryan, Dr. Fred Bryan was the leader of the co-op unit. I worked for him on this flow-based study. And my association with him actually continued or actually resumed later in my career after I was working for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

WORTHINGTON: So he was the co-op unit leader?

FRUGE: He was he was the leader.

WORTHINGTON: In grad school, did you have other activities that helped shape your work?

FRUGE: Not really. I was, you know, I was pretty much focused on collecting data, going into the field, getting the samples for the lab study.

Now the samples that I worked with for my thesis, those samples were collected on a couple of research cruises that Dr. (Frank) Truesdale, my major professor, was able to line up on a (NOAA) vessel called the *(RV) Oregon II*. This vessel sailed out of Pascagoula, Mississippi, which was 150 miles or so to the to the east of Baton Rouge where I was going to school.

And so we went out, I think, for probably about a month-long cruise, the first time, which was in the spring. And then the following fall, I think we went on another cruise and got more samples. Those were the samples that I utilized for doing my thesis work.

WORTHINGTON: Wow. That must have been pretty exciting.

FRUGE: It was. Yeah, it was.

WORTHINGTON: So, having a chance to look backward, having now retired and many years working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, looking back at your college experience, were there any classes or courses that gave you a good preparation for your professional work, or were very helpful in retrospect, more so than any others? In graduate school or even in undergrad school?

FRUGE: I think that the class that I probably most enjoyed and which gave me a broad, broad understanding of taxonomy and field biology was probably vertebrate zoology at McNeese. And I also

took herpetology and mammalogy while I was there, you know, the basic kind of courses for a zoological program.

But, looking back, those probably were the most helpful in my later career. They gave me a good grounding in and vertebrate biology and the basic understanding of genetics and taxonomy and so forth.

WORTHINGTON: Okay, so you're ready to graduate with the master's degree. Do you know what you're going to do next?

FRUGE: It was really a matter of practicality. Even before I completed my thesis work or completely completed writing my thesis, I married my first wife, (Gail). We had met at McNeese, and we had this kind of long-distance kind of relationship going. She was still in school at McNeese while I was at LSU working on my master's, and we got married in spring of 1976.

I had the opportunity to pick up my first professional position with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries there in Baton Rouge.

And the work was with the Water Pollution Control Division, which since has gone into Louisiana's DEQ. But at the time it was with Wildlife and Fisheries and the work itself was involving sampling wastewater from industrial facilities as part of a relatively new national pollutant discharge elimination system or NPDES system.

And so my work was collecting water samples and inspecting refineries and other kinds of industrial facilities for wastewater compliance. Gail, my first wife, moved to Baton Rouge, and we were there for just a few months. And then we had the opportunity of transferring to a different location, the same basic work, same work with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, but back in Lake Charles, which is where Gail and I both had grown up and near our parents and so forth. So we did that.

We moved back to Lake Charles, and (I) worked in that job for another year or so. And then in the fall of 1977, I had the opportunity to transfer out of the Water Pollution Control Program to their Fish Management Program. Which is kind of more like what I wanted to, you know, where I saw my career. I mean, the water pollution stuff was kind of interesting and it was a good experience. But I really wanted to get into more hands on with fish.

WORTHINGTON: Was it a tough transition?

FRUGE: It was fairly simple. Some folks with the state's fish management program kind of clued me into this position that was coming open in their in their program and kind of helped me apply. There was a fish biologist in Lake Charles; his name was Dudley Carver. He kind of took me under his wing and made contacts with folks in their program.

WORTHINGTON: How did you know him?

FRUGE: He was just stationed there, and I knew him by reputation. From reading (his research) papers and so forth. That work that he had done. And so this new position that I went into was actually in a different area. It was the way the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries was set up. They had district offices. So I was working in the Lake Charles district and this fish biologist position was in the district that was headquartered in Ferriday, Louisiana, which is, just as an aside, the birthplace of Mickey Gilley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and their other cousin, Jimmy Swaggart.

WORTHINGTON: Oh, no kidding. Oh, they were all from that area? Must be something in the water there.

FRUGE: Yeah, but anyway, Ferriday is right on the Mississippi River. Across the river from Natchez, Mississippi. So Gail and I moved to there, and we actually lived in Natchez. She had a nursing degree, so she got a job at the hospital in Natchez. And I was working across the river in Ferriday.

WORTHINGTON: I was just in Natchez in April. We did the Natchez Trace. We spent a few days in Natchez and driving the Trace.

FRUGE: Natchez is an interesting place. A lot of history there. I was in that position a little over a year. But unfortunately, while we were there, Gail and I decided to part company. So she, she left and went her way. And in December or in the in that fall of 1978, after we separated and I had applied for a position with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Vicksburg, Mississippi, which is just up the river from Natchez.

It was a permanent position, but part time. But you know, 36 hours a week, almost full time. And I got that position and moved up to Vicksburg.

WORTHINGTON: So when you say you applied for it back then.

FRUGE: It was through the register as a fish biologist with Ecological Services. I believe it was a GS 482, GS-7 position.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Interesting. And did you know to be watchful for the register's opening?

FRUGE: Yes, I was. When I was going to LSU, you know, I kept my eye on the, on what they called the green sheets. Back then, the job notices. It seemed like there were lots more fish positions being advertised at that time. And so that kind of helped to keep me in the fish arena, although my interests were certainly much broader than that.

WORTHINGTON: What was the work like in Vicksburg?

FRUGE: It was reviewing lots of 404 permits. For wetland impacts.

WORTHINGTON: And you may have said, was it a fishery resource office?

FRUGE: Ecological Services Office, and just kind of as another aside, I got into that position just a few months after Dale Hall was there. And Mitch King came into the program right about the same time. So Mitch, Dale and I were kind of started our careers right there. About the same time.

WORTHINGTON: You weren't in grad school together, were you?

FRUGE: I was in grad school with Dale. So he went through the LSU fish program as well. But then went a different direction; he went to work for a private aquaculture facility in Mississippi and then came to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

WORTHINGTON: Was the who was your supervisor in Vicksburg?

FRUGE: Joe Hardy.

WORTHINGTON: Oh, there was a Joe Hardy in Refuges.

FRUGE: Yes, he went up to Shiawassee Refuge, right?

WORTHINGTON: Yeah, he was at Shiawassee Refuge when I met him.

FRUGE: And Joe and I interacted again later in my career. When he was the manager of the Mississippi Sandhill Crane Refuge in south Mississippi.

So Joe was my first supervisor. Now, not long after I got to Vicksburg, he took another position still right there in Vicksburg. But it's kind of a liaison or coordinator, kind of interacting more with the Corps of Engineers. So he left the field supervisor position. So most of the time that I was with at the office in Vicksburg, we went through a series of acting supervisors. People who were there at the office. Steve Forsythe was one of those. Robert Barkley was another one of the senior staff who acted.

WORTHINGTON: How many people were in the office at Vicksburg, 10 or 12?

FRUGE: That's probably about right. It wasn't a gigantic office, but you had a fairly substantial staff. And then most of the other work that we did was just reviewing Corps of Engineers, various Corps of Engineers projects and writing, you know, recommendations. To help them avoid impacts to fish and wildlife.

WORTHINGTON: Did you get out in the field very much?

FRUGE: Yes, looking at project proposals.

WORTHINGTON: How long were you in Vicksburg?

FRUGE: So I was in Vicksburg just a little bit over a year. And like I said my interests were broader than just fish, and I'd always really been interested in the Refuge Program. So I applied and was selected for a position as an assistant refuge manager at the D'Arbonne and Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuges in Northeast Louisiana.

I think those refuges are now part of the Northeast Louisiana complex. And so I started work there in December of 1979. And my supervisor there was Daniel Doshier. Did you know Dan?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. I believe he worked at Crab Orchard Refuge.

FRUGE: So I worked there as an assistant refuge manager. But you know how those are. I did a little bit of everything from maintenance work to doing a little bit of law enforcement as a collateral duty officer.

WORTHINGTON: I should have asked you this, but at Vicksburg. What kind of training did you get from the Service?

FRUGE: None. None at all. It was all on the job. I mean, I got safety training, that kind of stuff. But as far as technical training for the work I was doing there, really, I don't recall that there was any training.

WORTHINGTON: So when you got to D'Arbonne as an assistant manager, did you get any refuge training?

FRUGE: Yeah, I was pretty fortunate. Not long after I started that job, Daniel was able to get me into the Refuge Manager Academy at Beckley, West Virginia. So I think within a couple of months of arriving there on station. I was going off to Beckley for four weeks.

And then later that year I went back to the station and then I guess again, fortunately fairly early in my refuge career, I was able to get into the federal law enforcement training class, which was maybe the first nine-week class that they ran at FLETC in Brunswick, Georgia.

WORTHINGTON: So you went to the first of the nine-week programs? I think I was in the second of the nine-week programs, so we were close. Did you do a lot of law enforcement, do you recall?

FRUGE: Not very much. Hunting and fishing enforcement. It was, you know, a lot of routine, kind of work, checking hunters because we did have a waterfowl hunting, you know, and white-tailed deer hunting program on the refuge.

WORTHINGTON: Any difficulties encountered that you could recall? Any stressful situations?

Not that I recall. At that duty station. I was the primary assistant manager at the Upper Ouachita and then there were a couple of other assistant managers, Donny Browning. And if you know Donny, he was one of the others there primarily working on D'Arbonne. And then Tom Barnes.

WORTHINGTON: So what were the main refuge management activities you got involved in? Management plan preparation?

FRUGE: I did. I drafted a management plan for Upper Ouachita. It was still at that point it was a fairly new addition to the refuge system.

WORTHINGTON: Was it a forested refuge?

FRUGE: Yes. Bottomland hardwood forest along the Ouachita River.

WORTHINGTON: Did we do water management there at all?

FRUGE: Not really. There were there were some small, you know, relatively small water control structures that had been built, I think, by the previous owners, which was basically a land management timber company. Kind of operation, where they were doing timber harvest.

WORTHINGTON: What do you recall as being some of your favorite activities at that refuge?

FRUGE: I did some hunting while I was there. The only other person really on the staff was a guy by the name of Huey Rhodes, and he was classified as a maintenance worker. No, that's not right, he was classified as a public use specialist, but he mainly did law enforcement and maintenance work. He had come out of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries from their law enforcement program, and the Fish and Wildlife Service had picked him up.

But he was a local, a native to that area, so he knew it very well. So I worked with him a lot, on various maintenance projects, and we built under contract a maintenance facility there on the station.

WORTHINGTON: And you worked on some of the management plans for the refuge?

FRUGE: Yeah, I'd drafted a management plan and it was finalized while I was there.

WORTHINGTON: And it sounds like you got quite a bit of training done.

FRUGE: Yes, and I went through some fire management training and safety and all the usual stuff while I was there.

WORTHINGTON: How many years?

FRUGE: So I was there till August 1982. I had for a long time been interested in Alaska and, you know, wilderness and those types of things. So I had applied for a position in the Regional Office in Anchorage as the oil and gas coordinator for the refuge system in Alaska and got the job and then moved up to Alaska in summer of 1982.

WORTHINGTON: And that was a specialist position in in the refuge program?

FRUGE: It was a kind of a coordinator position on the regional refuge staff.

WORTHINGTON: Who was your supervisor?

FRUGE: The person who kind of who interviewed me and was the point of contact initially for that position was a guy by the name of Jerry Leineke in Anchorage. But the program was growing because of the recent passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. And so there was a lot of flux in the program. They were really adding lots of staff, mainly in planning and so forth, and allied kind of things to develop management plans for all the new refuges that had been established up there.

WORTHINGTON: I remember there was a lot of hiring going on up in Alaska.

FRUGE: So for most of the time that I was in that position, my supervisor was a guy by the name of Ron Hood. And while I was in that position, the bulk of what I did was in association with finalizing the EIS and the regulations for managing a congressionally mandated seismic and surface geology exploration of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain.

And that consumed probably at least 95% of my work while I was in that position. And of course I was working with folks who were on the Refuge staff up in Fairbanks. And, you know, various folks there in the regional office, including with other programs.

WORTHINGTON: Did your work involve the oil extraction at the Kenai Refuge then. Was that part of your duties?

FRUGE: Technically they were, but there were other folks who were managing that program. So I guess I had, you know, some oversight of what they were doing. But that was that was already well (covered), and my involvement was pretty minimal. My work was mostly focused on the Arctic Refuge.

WORTHINGTON: So did you have to coordinate with the BLM staff on this extensively?

FRUGE: With both BLM and USGS. Because USGS was given the technical responsibility of helping to develop the regulations and the program for how we would go about managing this seismic, particularly the seismic exploration program.

WORTHINGTON: What did you know about seismic exploration before you got that job?

FRUGE: Not a whole lot. My experience at Upper Ouachita is kind of what helped me to get that position. The Ouachita area had an active gas field. So there were quite a number of old and still currently operating gas wells on the Upper Ouachita. And so I think having that experience kind of helped me to get the position in Anchorage.

WORTHINGTON: So at least you knew what a what a gas and oil fields were like and feeder pipes and all that.

FRUGE: Some basic understanding of it anyway. Developing, the EIS and developing the regulations was already ongoing and I kind of was the point of contact at the regional level for our involvement. And so it was not all on me. I was working as part of a team that was working, including folks at the Washington level too.

WORTHINGTON: I imagine, there was a lot of public input that on that effort?

FRUGE: I worked as part of a team that held public meetings, mainly in the village, the villages and in Fairbanks.

WORTHINGTON: You got to get up to the Arctic Plain some.

FRUGE: Yeah, quite a bit. Okay. Yeah. It was hectic and intense, that's for sure.

WORTHINGTON: When was the Valdez? I can't recall when that happened.

FRUGE: That happened the year that I that I left Alaska, which was 1989.

WORTHINGTON: Well, that's a pretty significant accomplishment. Did it get finished while you were working on that?

FRUGE: While I was in Anchorage, the EIS got approved and the regulations went through the federal register process and got finalized. And right about that time the refuge, the Arctic refuge they advertised for a deputy refuge manager, and I applied for that and was selected for that job in January of 1984.

So a little over two years after I arrived in Alaska. I got that position on the refuge staff in Fairbanks and moved up there. I was directly supervising probably half of the refuge staff. The other the other half were doing studies under the chief wildlife biologist who was supervised by the refuge manager. And they were involved in lots of studies on the coastal plain in support of this pending oil and gas exploration and, potentially oil and gas production on the refuge.

WORTHINGTON: Who was the project leader at the Arctic?

FRUGE: Glenn Elison.

WORTHINGTON: And tell me some of the other staff that you supervised.

FRUGE: My role may for the most part in that position was to manage the compliance monitoring program to oversee and monitor the seismic work as well as the surface geology work that was going to be going on under the regulations we had just developed. There was a woman by the name of Pam Miller, who was one of the one of the people I supervised. And Kate Moitoret was another one.

There were some others whose names escape me at the moment, but we also put together teams of folks who would go out with the seismic crews and we would rotate in and out. Usually I think our tours were a couple of weeks out in the wintertime with our staff stationed with the seismic crews.

WORTHINGTON: So what kind of activities were you watching out for?

FRUGE: They were doing both the explosive type drilling, drilling into the ground, and exploding, you know, using explosions with the seismic detectors on the surface. The second year they actually utilized the vibrator trucks or vibrator type equipment that was in some ways less disruptive to wildlife, but in other in other ways more because they roll across the tundra and vibrate on the surface. This was going on the winters of 1984 and 1985.

WORTHINGTON: What were the things you learned as you manage this?

FRUGE: I guess it was my first real experience directly supervising folks. So it was quite a challenge because a lot of the supervision was direct, but a lot of it was supervising people who were out away from where I was physically located. So there was that learning experience.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have any formal training at being a supervisor at that point?

FRUGE: At that point, I think I had had basic supervision, but that was pretty much it.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have any particular issues with people, or did they have problems that you needed to try to help resolve?

FRUGE: I don't recall any unusual things. Some of, you know, the usual scheduling and some it was a very stressful situation, being located with the seismic crews on the tundra in the middle of winter.

WORTHINGTON: Not necessarily welcomed by them?

FRUGE: Not welcomed. They were cordial to us. But, you know, they certainly would prefer that we had not been there. And, you know, our major tasks were really just to try to make sure that they adhere to the rules that had been set up for the for managing the program.

WORTHINGTON: Did you find that they were familiar with the rules or did your team have to instruct them along?

FRUGE: We had to do some instruction along the way. Yeah, there was there one time, I don't remember if it was during the first year of the second year. But we required that they divert significantly from an area that they wanted to really explore. And it was mainly due to potential impacts on overwintering fish on one of the rivers up there. And that that created a fairly stressful situation with the folks who are managing the seismic program.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have support from your supervisors?

FRUGE: Yeah. They backed us up. And Anchorage staff backed us up as well. You felt confident that you had the backing of leadership.

WORTHINGTON: What else about that job do you recall? I mean, it sounds really interesting. Kind of unique for the service.

FRUGE: It was. I wasn't aware of anything comparable where you were so dependent on the people you were monitoring for your, you know, basically staying alive up there.

WORTHINGTON: Well, that's a long way from Louisiana. How was living in Fairbanks? What was it like?

FRUGE: Well, when I moved to Anchorage, the furthest north I had ever lived was northeast Louisiana. So it was a major a major geographic change. And, you know, in terms of climate and so forth. But moving from Anchorage to Fairbanks was almost as much of a change. Anchorage is, you know, it's winter there, but temperatures usually didn't get much below the teens and there were some thaws during the wintertime. So you weren't really totally exposed to long-term temperatures below zero and so forth. But of course, Fairbanks is quite a bit different. We would go for weeks at 20 below.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have a car at the time up there?

FRUGE: Yeah. I drove I drove my truck from Louisiana. And drove it back south when I left.

WORTHINGTON: You have to plug your car in at night, I suppose.

FRUGE: Yes, had to keep it warm. But then conditions on the North Slope during the wintertime were really, really harsh. You get these temperatures in the 30, 30 below, but then with 40, 50 mile an hour winds that would drive the windchill down into the low 90s. And you know under those conditions you just hunker down you don't really get any work done outside. And it was dark.

WORTHINGTON: But you found you enjoyed living those kinds of conditions?

FRUGE: It wasn't something I would do by choice. But yeah, I tolerated it pretty well, I thought, for being someone who grew up in a subtropical environment.

WORTHINGTON: Do you feel satisfied with the work you were doing?

FRUGE: You know, I really got ingrained in me the desire to really protect the area and to this day, that still remains one of my primary interests, that area not become an oil field.

WORTHINGTON: Do you keep up and in touch with what's happening at the Arctic?

FRUGE: Yeah. I do.

WORTHINGTON: What did your parents think of your job up there? Did they ever come try to visit those years?

FRUGE: My folks never really were, I think, very interested in visiting up there. You know, when I would go home for visits, I would take a bunch of slides and show them what things were like up there and try to explain the issues. But I'm not sure that they ever really understood exactly what I was up to.

One of my sisters actually visited when I was living in Fairbanks, but that was the only, only relative that ever visited. I had friends who visited with me while I was living up there. But she was the only one from the family.

WORTHINGTON: So how many years in Fairbanks?

FRUGE: I was in that position from basically 1984 to 1987. And while I was there, I decided that it was a very stressful kind of kind of situation, and highly political. And I found myself missing the fisheries work. There was a Fisheries Office co-located there with the refuge offices in Fairbanks. So I decided to try to make another switch in my career and go back to or go into the fisheries program. And I was able to work out kind of a three-way job swap and I actually took a downgrade.

I think I was a GS-12 in that position at Arctic Refuge as Deputy Refuge Manager. I took a downgrade to an 11. I didn't lose any money, but you know, still a downgrade. I moved to a fish biologist position there at the fish office and actually took the place of Robin West, who's here at this reunion. He was in that position at the Fairbanks Fisheries office. And so I basically switched positions with him.

He went to a position at Yukon Flats Refuge and another guy from the regional office came in and took my position at Arctic as Deputy Refuge Manager.

WORTHINGTON: So you and Glenn Elison and the Regional Office staff agreed to do this?

FRUGE: Yeah. They totally agreed to it.

WORTHINGTON: Who was the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges back then?

FRUGE: At that time I think it was Joe Mazzoni.

I was in the fish office in Fairbanks for a couple of more years, you know, summer 1987 to fall of 1989. And my job the whole time in Alaska was somehow connected to the Arctic Refuge. So I was in charge of a fish study in coastal waters of the Beaufort Sea on the Arctic Refuge. I was actually putting more field time in the summer on the coastal plain than I did while I was Deputy Refuge Manager, because I had other, you know, other more administrative responsibilities as Deputy Refuge Manager for the Arctic.

WORTHINGTON: What were the studies revealing? Kind of information where you gathering?

FRUGE: It was basically a combination of general inventory of the fish populations near shore along the Beaufort Sea coast, but also trying to get a handle on movements, localized movements, and migration of fish across the Beaufort Sea.

We were tagging fish. We mainly sampling with fyke nets, which are a kind of a net that runs perpendicular to shore and then you've got some traps that are out at the end of those that trap fish. And we were doing some tagging and just generally identifying and counting fish during the summer.

WORTHINGTON: Were there native peoples up there on that part of the refuge?

FRUGE: Kaktovik is the only village located on the refuge and they were right on the Beaufort Sea coast. We had a field station there, which was kind of our base of operations for the summer. And then we had other people who were studying, you know, waterfowl, others that were doing bear and moose and wolf studies.

WORTHINGTON: So what was living like up in the summertime? What would a typical day be like?

FRUGE: For this fish program, we were actually out at field camps, so we're living out of tents.

WORTHINGTON: And you'd get out there by plane?

FRUGE: By helicopter. So we had a helicopter on station at Kaktovik for the summer.
The Service didn't own any helicopters, so it was all contract charter, helicopter service. They would take us out to the field camps and bring supplies out. And we would typically, I think we were working probably on a two-week cycle. Being two weeks out of the field camp, then, you know, we would cycle people back to either Kaktovik for a few days or even back to Fairbanks for a week or so and then come back out.

So, we would work ten straight days and then come back and take four off.

WORTHINGTON: But what would a typical day, a whole day be like?

FRUGE: In the Arctic during the summertime? We found that our day cycles tended to kind of become later. So we were generally, you know, maybe getting up 8 or 9:00 in the morning and then because you had almost total daylight. We would go set nets, check the nets, come back to camp and getting, you know, having lunch and so forth.

WORTHINGTON: How many people would be in a camp?

FRUGE: I think our field camps were 3 to 4 people, 3 to 4 for fish camps. And we had, I think, two fish camps working at the same time on the coastal plain.

WORTHINGTON: Would you have radio contact with each other?

FRUGE: Yeah, we had the old, you know, kind of hand-held radios and a radio base unit in our main tent.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have battery packs. Or did you have a generator?

FRUGE: Just batteries. Just batteries. I don't believe we had any generators out there. So we'd get up in the morning, late morning, get out to the fish camp, come back, have lunch, then go back out again in the afternoon and do more.

And typically working until later in the evening. So we were we're typically getting to bed kind of late and then getting up later in the day.

WORTHINGTON: What were the bugs like?

FRUGE: The fish camps were fairly close to shore. So didn't have the kind of bug problems as further inland where it was warmer and there were more problems with mosquitoes.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have to watch for polar bears?

FRUGE: Yep, definitely. We had shotguns in camp. I never had any bear encounters. But a couple of my camps did. Later in the fall when the bears were starting to come back to shore from after being out, you know, in the ocean for the summer. They were coming back to shore to look for den sites. And there are a couple of my camps that actually had to fire their shotguns to scare off bears.

WORTHINGTON: After the fish were in the traps, what did you do?

FRUGE: We weighed and measured the samples. And then just handwrite the data. It was all, you know, taking notes down on waterproof paper in little field notebooks.

WORTHINGTON: What kinds of meals did you eat?

FRUGE: We took our supplies from Fairbanks. We had a lot of canned goods, but also, some fresh stuff that we would take up there in coolers.

WORTHINGTON: Well, that sounds like a wonderful way to spend a summer or two.

FRUGE: Yeah, there were some nice days, but, you know, a lot of a lot of nasty days, too.

WORTHINGTON: Did the campers get along well together?

FRUGE: Generally, we did. I don't remember any, any major confrontations or difficulties that we had.

And after the field season, we put everything back into storage and some things went back to Fairbanks. But, you know, the tents and most of the equipment just got stored in container units at Kaktovik. And then I went back to Fairbanks and spent the spent the wintertime looking at the data and drafting up reports.

I was in that position into the fall of 1989. And during that last summer I got news that my dad had been diagnosed with cancer. And so I started looking for a way to get back south. I applied for several positions, and I was never formally selected, but word came back through the grapevine that I was going to be selected for a position in the Fisheries Program in Headquarters.

But for various reasons, I never really understood exactly what was going on, there was considerable delay in getting that selection approved. I don't know if it was a funding issue or some other kind of problem, but in the meantime, I was selected for an Assistant Field Supervisor position at the Ecological Services Office in Fort Worth, Texas. So I decided to accept that position. And in the meantime, I married my current wife, Joyce.

WORTHINGTON: Where did you meet her?

FRUGE: In Fairbanks. She was working for the Park Service assigned to the Gates of the Arctic National Park. She also worked a short time, I don't know if it was a whole year, but for a while she worked as the admin assistant at Yukon Flats Refuge. But then she had an opportunity to get a permanent position with the Park Service Regional Office in Anchorage and actually moved down to Anchorage.

And we got married, she got another permanent position, but back at Gates of the Arctic as their admin officer. That occurred about a year before we moved back south.

So we ended up in Fort Worth, I was the assistant field supervisor of the ES Office there and spent about a year and a half in that position. I supervised most of the staff while I was in that position. And while I was there, we actually moved the office from Fort Worth to its current location in Arlington, which is kind of between Fort Worth and Dallas.

And that office was still doing some of the typical project review kind of stuff that I had done when I was at the ES office in Vicksburg. But it was a lot more involved in endangered species work by that time. And at the time that I was there, the Fort Worth office, (the FWS) had two other offices in Texas. One of them was located down at Galveston and the other in Corpus Christi.

So they had those coastal areas, and Fort Worth had all the rest of Texas.

But most of our endangered species issues were down in the Austin area. With the various cave bugs and, you know, salamanders and fish and so forth. And then the birds. While I was in that position, we did an emergency listing of the Golden Cheeked Warbler in the Texas Hill country.

WORTHINGTON: That was controversial.

FRUGE: It very much was. Yeah. And we went through that emergency listing, which created all sorts of political hassles in Austin.

WORTHINGTON: What is an emergency listing?

FRUGE: The emergency listing is basically an accelerated process for listing a species because of unusually serious threats.

WORTHINGTON: Who made the declaration of an emergency? Did the recommendation come from your office to Albuquerque.

FRUGE: Yeah, to Albuquerque and then to Headquarters. It would have been our field station that made the initial recommendation based on the data that they had been collecting and analyzing.

WORTHINGTON: Talk about how that process went. If you don't mind.

FRUGE: The person who was kind of the lead biologist on the listing was Alisa Shull. And she's now in, I think, Twin Cities in the Endangered Species program there. She was the lead biologist on that listing. And once the listing happened and it immediately changed how things could happen on the ground in the within the range of the species. And one of the major threats, as I recall, was clearing and trying to do away with Ashe Juniper (trees) in the hill country, which is one of the major habitat components for the Golden Cheeked warbler.

And the listing, of course theoretically, immediately put a stop to any kind of removal of that species from the bird's habitat. And so, it created a situation where we, because of the political uproar that this was causing in the Austin area, we wound up sending people down to Austin to personally meet with landowners and, you know, go over their situations. And they had to do site specific kind of approvals for Ashe Juniper removal.

Some of this involved some swapping of habitat, you know, being able to clear habitat in one place as tradeoff for not clearing somewhere else.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have allies in this with Texas?

FRUGE: The Nature Conservancy, I think was one of the one of our major allies in all this work. But the State also provided support and were basically supportive of what we were trying to do. And of course, all this kind of led to establishment of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, and eventually the establishment of the Austin ES Office. And of course, Alisa and her husband, Pat Connor, you know, moved down to that Austin office.

So the Austin office initially was staffed with a lot of the people who were at our office in Arlington. And so I was there, like I said, for about a year and a half. While I was there, I was approached by one of my colleagues, actually someone I knew in grad school, but who was at that time Deputy ARD for the Fish program in Atlanta and recruited me into a position, a new position on the Gulf Coast as a coastal fish coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service on the Gulf Coast. And so I got that position in 1991, spring of 1991. And so, Joyce and I moved down to Ocean Springs, Mississippi, as a Gulf Coast Fisheries Coordinator.

WORTHINGTON: What were the duties of that position?

FRUGE: So that position was kind of a combination of things. I had a sub-office, a Fisheries Resource office, that was co-located at that time with the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery. And so I supervised that person doing the usual kind of fish studies and fish management recommendations for refuges in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. The other part of my job was working with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council assisting with the developing management rules and regulations for managing coastal fisheries across the Gulf.

I helped coordinate coastal fisheries management across the Gulf Coast. So working with multiple state agencies and individuals and industry involved in this at all. As well as the fishing industry.

I guess another component was kind of overseeing or coordinating efforts to try to restore the Gulf, what we call the Gulf race of Striped Bass, which was had been shown to be a genetically unique striped bass that had been native to the Gulf Coast. So I was working pretty closely with the Panama City Fisheries Office and ES office and in that work. That was probably my longest stretch of being in one place. I worked there from 1991 to December of 2008.

WORTHINGTON: Wow, that's 17 years. So you must have enjoyed the job. What did you like about it?

FRUGE: I had always been primarily interested in coastal fisheries, so it was a job that I was really interested in. And it brought me back down closer to my family in Louisiana. I've always maintained close relationship with my immediate family as well as extended family in Louisiana. So I was close to them.

WORTHINGTON: And where was Joyce's family from?

FRUGE: Joyce was born in Ohio but moved down to Fort Pierce, Florida, when she was very young. Her dad worked as a commercial fisherman down there, so she grew up in Fort Pierce. Her dad later kind of

gave up on the fishing and got a job with Chrysler rocket division at the Space Center. So Joyce spent most of her formative years in the Cocoa Beach and Merritt Island areas of Florida.

WORTHINGTON: Did she work down in in Louisiana or Fort Worth?

FRUGE: When we moved to Fort Worth, she kind of cast around for federal positions there, but wasn't able to really find anything she was interested in. So she went to work for private industry while we were there and worked for an aircraft company -- a helicopter customization company, I guess is the best way to put it.

She worked as their admin person. And then when we moved to Ocean Springs, she worked for a small engineering firm as an admin kind of person and then got a job as the office manager for a law office. In fact, probably the oldest law office still in existence on the Mississippi coast.

She did that for a while until we went through Hurricane Katrina while we were there. That was a major disruption for her office. Their office was in Biloxi right on the shore. And, of course, their office got totally wiped out. So she had to find new office space for them and actually moved them to a place in in Ocean Springs. She got kind of burned out on that job about that time. It was very stressful for sure.

WORTHINGTON: Were you personally impacted by Katrina, your home, or your property?

We had . . . she was really interested in rental property. So we had bought four rental houses that we owned at the time. One of those was totally wiped out by flood water. And then the other two or three had some cosmetic damage. But not anything major. She later got another administrative job as office manager for an insurance company.

WORTHINGTON: Did you get any additional training when you're doing this coastal fish coordination position?

FRUGE: Yeah. All the usual stuff, right? Some additional supervisory training and, you know, various types of training. But while I was in that position, I was selected for and went through the Advanced Leadership Development Program and did my . . . I did a job swap with someone in the Denver office. I think her job was kind of a staff position with Refuges in Denver.

And so that was the job swap. My detail while I was in that position (training program) was as one of the refuge supervisors in Anchorage. So I went back to Alaska for my detail. I was there for two or three months as the acting refuge supervisor for my old refuge, Arctic, and some of the other refuges in the northern part of Alaska.

WORTHINGTON: Did you get out in the field again?

FRUGE: Yeah, I went out to some places that I had not visited while I was in living in Alaska.
I went to Tok, which is on the western coast of Alaska.

WORTHINGTON: How did you find the ALDP training, was it useful to you?

FRUGE: It was definitely a learning experience. And, you know, the classroom training was valuable, but the job swap and the detail were really, I think, where you really got the benefit out of that program and then learned a lot about yourself through some of the programs there at NCTC.

WORTHINGTON: So you're back south and then in 2008 you make another change. What prompted you to look for a different job?

FRUGE: The fish program in Region 4 was going through, at least the whole time I was there, was really struggling with funding and being able to maintain all of the field stations that we had. And I kind of saw the handwriting on the wall that at some point I was probably not going to be able to stay in Ocean Springs and would probably have been forced to move to Atlanta and work up there.

I didn't really want to do that. I wanted a little more control over my destiny.

WORTHINGTON: In the Ocean Springs job were you reporting to the ARD for Fisheries or to someone else?

FRUGE: There were there were a number of different arrangements. When I first got there, I was reporting directly to the Deputy ARD. But then they brought in someone who was more of a regional supervisor. So I went through a whole series of supervisors while I was there, changing the strategy of how the field stations were supervised.

My first supervisor was Leslie Holland-Bartels, who kind of recruited me into that position. And then Garland Pardue. But he came out of ES, but then went into the fish program. So he was my supervisor for a while. And then Rick Nehrling, who was one of the one of the hatchery supervisors, supervised me for a while and Roger Schultz, who was the other hatchery supervisor.

But, while I was on detail in Denver, you know, working in the in Mountain West had always been another interest of mine. So an opportunity came along to apply for one of the program supervisor positions in Denver. And the job came up and I applied for it. And Mike Stempel, who was the ARD for the Fisheries Program at the time, selected me and I moved to Denver in winter of 2008.

The Denver supervisory structure for the Fisheries Program was a little bit different than what we had in Atlanta. In Atlanta, we were aligned along: cold water hatcheries, warm water hatcheries, and Fishery Conservation Offices. But in Denver it was more of a geographic kind of structure.

So, I was supervising both the hatcheries and the FWCOs in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. And so that's pretty much the job that I did the whole time I was in Denver.

WORTHINGTON: Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. So how many field stations were there?

FRUGE: I supervised 10 different field stations. Most of those were hatcheries. There were three Fish and Wildlife Conservation offices.

I had the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, which was kind of unique in in the Service. It was almost entirely the role of that office to manage the fish and wildlife resources on several military installations. So we had a program at Fort Carson, at the Air Force Academy, and at Buckley Air Force Base in Colorado.

WORTHINGTON: So as a supervisor, you were making budgeting decisions between field stations, personnel decisions.

FRUGE: Working with regional staff and developing those budgets.

WORTHINGTON: What stood out in your mind as that was the hardest aspect of the job as being the supervisor?

FRUGE: While I was there the Director of the Service, Dan Ashe, decided that we really needed to take a hard look at the hatchery system. And this was nationwide because of budget concerns again. And so while I was there, I was one of the key people involved in developing information for what we called the Hatchery Review. This took place like around the 2013 and 2014 time frame. This was the most difficult project I was involved with (while there).

WORTHINGTON: Can you describe what was in this workload assessment?

FRUGE: For the workload assessment. Looking at all the (fish) culture programs that the various hatcheries were involved in and trying to prioritize which programs were the most important, and if we had to downsize, which hatcheries would need to get cut. And in my area, two hatcheries were potentially on the chopping block if we were forced into a downsizing situation. And those were Leadville Hatchery (in Colorado) and Jones Hole in Utah.

WORTHINGTON: Did those project leaders know that or was this information kept kind of tight?

FRUGE: The information was kept tight until the report was released nationwide. But, you know, I think both of those managers kind of suspected because the questions we were asking and so forth, they kind of suspected that their hatcheries were the most vulnerable.

WORTHINGTON: So about this review. Who else worked on that?

FRUGE: It was a nationwide team. It was basically the ARDs, the deputies and regional supervisors from all the regions.

WORTHINGTON: Was it hard to come up with the matrix on what data you're going to use to analyze and compare stations? How hard was it to come up with the strategy and the technique you were going to use?

FRUGE: Well, it was definitely a process. It was fairly difficult because each region is different, but yet we had to come up with kind of a standard protocol so that it could be applied uniformly across the regions.

WORTHINGTON: Was it hard to reach agreement on the approach and then the conclusions? Was it hard to get everyone to agree and consensus on?

FRUGE: No, not so much. Once we agreed on a process, each region kind of did their own thing in terms of applying those criteria to their hatcheries. And so from that perspective we were kind of free within the regional structure to come up with our own priorities, based on the overall criteria that we had developed.

WORTHINGTON: And I presume Dan Ashe had been briefed as this was being developed and before it got released. So no surprises. So what happens after it gets released?

FRUGE: One of the difficulties that we in Region 6 faced is that a lot of the basic strategy of the (national) criteria wound up being based on programs that were focused on native species restoration and

recovery . . . those were the highest priority. But in Region 6 and also in Region 4 the bulk of our fish production on our hatcheries was based on mitigation for water development projects.

And most of that involved non-native species, you know, brown trout, rainbow trout. And so, for the most part, our hatcheries ranked relatively lower than some of the other regions like Region 2 and Region 5 and the Pacific Northwest, where they are dealing with native salmon. And so that's why Leadville and Jones Hole were especially vulnerable because the bulk of their programs were involving non-native species.

So, one of the ways that we tried to deal with that in Region 6 was to start a greater focus on using native species at Jones Hole. We were able to develop a strategy, a plan for phasing out the rainbow trout and the brown trout and so forth and substituting native species for the programs there.

And we were fairly successful in doing that. And I think they are still involved in moving in that direction.

WORTHINGTON: I don't recall that the plan actually got implemented?

FRUGE: It didn't because after the report was released, we did get some additional hatchery funding.

Some additional funding from some lobbying that our state partners did and other outside interests. So we never got into a situation where we actually had to cut or close down any hatcheries.

WORTHINGTON: But you feel like this exercise was valuable and maybe it helped to refocus.

FRUGE: Some think it was really helpful to refocus our priorities and what we really should have been doing.

WORTHINGTON: Was it a tough sell to the hatchery staff to make these changes, or did they accept it, and go along with it?

FRUGE: Hatchery staffs are always resistant to change. You know, you're basically you're basically a farming operation. When you get right down to it, you're raising fish and you're putting them out there and it becomes a routine. So any kind of change, and rightly so, because every species is different. We had to really start doing things differently when we moved from the rainbows and so forth at Jones Hole to rearing cutthroat; they're harder to grow. One of the reasons rainbow trout were so popular with these put, grow, and take programs is because they're an easy fish to culture.

And some of the other fish are more challenging. It's just the way it is.

WORTHINGTON: Did you use some active change management techniques during all this or help coach your hatchery managers as they dealt with their staff?

FRUGE: Well, they knew why we were having to do it. So that was that was a motivation. It was either change or really run the risk of getting shut down.

WORTHINGTON: Well that's a significant piece of project work. What else sticks in your mind during that time period of big, important activities?

FRUGE: One of one of the other projects that I wound working on, and this is early on when I first moved to Denver. I became the point person at the regional office level for a major fish passage project in western Colorado, the Hartland Dam project. One of the staff people in Denver, in Fisheries had kind of championed this project and got it started and was able to get money for it. And then she took a job with the Park Service and left, and there was nobody else really at the regional office available to kind of pick up the program at the regional level and kind of champion it. So that was one of the other challenges I had early on.

And the project ran into a lot of difficulties, mainly in terms of funding. We had to try to get supplemental funding because the initial amount we thought we could do it for, we found it was not enough. We had to get additional funding. And then there were some other setbacks; we really lost favor with the Regional Director. And he was really kind of threatening to shut it down. But it finally got built. And after it was in operation, it was determined to have been a successful project.

WORTHINGTON: So that was another good project! Did we do the engineering on that in-house or did we contract out for that? How did how did you get the engineering done for that?

FRUGE: Our Fish Passage folks had some input into it, but as I recall, the Bureau of Reclamation helped a lot. And then the final design was contracted out to one of the companies in Denver that designed whitewater fish passage projects.

WORTHINGTON: Was that done with construction money, or was there a whole different funding source for this?

FRUGE: The initial funding was from the Recovery Act. You know, after President Obama took office. So there was all this this, this Recovery Act money that really pumped money into all sorts of projects. And this is one of, you know, one of those.

And then after that, when we needed additional money, we were able to cobble it together from a variety of sources from outside the Service and within the Service.

WORTHINGTON: Have you been out to see the final product?

FRUGE: I got out there after it was built. It was an impressive project. And a lot of people were really skeptical that it would even work for the species that we were focused on. But we did some sampling after the project was built and discovered that it really was effective.

WORTHINGTON: Well, congratulations! What else about the position would you like to describe?

FRUGE: We had two supervisors. So I supervised the Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming offices. And then we had another regional supervisor who had Montana, and the Dakotas. We did not have any field stations in Kansas and Nebraska. So the two of us each had three states. And we were fairly evenly balanced in terms of the number of field stations and employees. We worked well together.

Probably the most difficult part was just not having stable program leadership for a good bit of the time that I was there. Mike Stempel was the ARD when I got there; he was in place for maybe a year and then he decided to retire. And so we went through a fairly lengthy time, maybe almost a year of a series of acting ARDs.

I served as acting ARD for a time. We did not have a deputy. So, the other program supervisor and I served as the *de facto* deputies for the ARD.

So we kind of did double duty. And then we finally got an ARD assigned who really didn't have any fish experience. And she was kind of forced into the job. She had been the ARD over another program and was kind of forced into the fish program, you know, really without wanting to do that. She eventually retired.

We went through another period of not having an ARD and another series of actings. And then finally, I guess the last year or so that I was there, we finally got another permanent ARD and he's still in place doing a good job. Greg Gerlich. he came out of the State of Colorado from their fish program. He is doing a fantastic job.

I was approaching the endpoint of my career. I really wanted to continue working through 2017 to the end of the year. But when I reached the point of being fully eligible for full retirement, my wife was really wanting me to retire.

So I kind of compromised. I said, well, I'll work till, March of 2017 and not go the whole year. I toyed around with the idea of doing a re-employed annuity. But then, you know, this was the early, early stage of the Trump administration and that whole, you know, everything with respect to filling positions was thrown into a really disruptive situation.

And so I did, you know, tell Greg that I would be interested in a re-employment position, but it never really got there. So I retired March of 2017.

WORTHINGTON: And you guys moved?

FRUGE: Yep, we moved almost immediately, put our house on the market within a month of retirement. My wife Joyce has three kids from her previous marriage, we didn't have any kids together, and she really wanted to move somewhere to be closer to one of her kids.

Her son had preceded us to Colorado. He had gone to Vail and started working the ski slopes there and got into skiing and snowboarding and so forth. And so we wound up moving to Denver, you know, probably a year or two after he had moved to Vail. And he married a woman from Brooklyn who had gone out to Vail for a while.

And they got married. And she is really close to her family, went back to New York to finish her degree that she had kind of interrupted to move to Vail. And she decided that she really wanted to stay on the East Coast and the Northeast. And her grandfather or her great grandfather actually had built a house in southern Vermont as a summer kind of a summer cottage and place to go, so that's where they moved. And that's where they're still living.

And Joyce's other kids, one of her daughters still lives in Wasilla, Alaska. And we knew we didn't want to go back to Alaska at this point in our in our lives. And her other daughter lives in the Atlanta area. And we decided we didn't want to move to Atlanta.

We had visited her son and his wife in southern Vermont a couple of years before I retired. We liked it and thought let’s give that a try. So that's how we wound up in Vermont.

We put our house on the market. The real estate market in Denver was just booming at that time. So we did very well on selling our house in Arvada. We picked up and without having any kind of place to go in Vermont, we just headed up there, did some house hunting, found a house just by chance within about three miles of where Andrew and Carrie are living. So that's where we are.

WORTHINGTON: Any regrets about retiring?

FRUGE: I don't have any regrets about retiring. I miss a lot of the people I was working with because I really, really liked working with the people in Denver, and all the people I supervised.

One thing that I guess was kind of the low point of my whole career - the high point of my career I still consider to be the time I spent at Arctic Refuge. But the low point was that last year in Denver because it seems like all of the personnel and EEO kind of issues that I avoided somehow earlier in my career kind of hit me during that last year.

I had five or six different issues that I was dealing with at the time I left some, none of which were really totally resolved before I left.

WORTHINGTON: Dealing with personnel and conduct issues is one of the most difficult parts of a supervisor's job and you probably hadn't faced too many of them.

FRUGE: Never had (before). I'd had some minor things that I had to deal with earlier, but those were more like kind of interpersonal things. Not with people I supervised, but with other people I was working with. But here I was having these issues with people that didn't work directly for me, but were, you know, (staff) people at my field stations.

WORTHINGTON: Did you have anyone to help coach you through how to handle this with HR?

FRUGE: Yeah, they were they were really helpful in helping to work my way through these things.

WORTHINGTON: Our training never does prepare us for human resources issues.

FRUGE: You really have to go through it on the ground. So in some ways I was fortunate that I avoided a lot of those issues earlier in my career. But to have several of them all of a sudden kind of come at me all at once during my last year made it not a very pleasant last year.

WORTHINGTON: Well that'll fade in your memory. And you'll just remember the high points. Are there any other areas you want to talk about?

FRUGE: I don't know of anything major that we haven't really touched on. But, you know, I just really value my career in Fish and Wildlife Service. I had the remarkable opportunity to work on issues I really still feel very strongly about - conservation of fish and wildlife and trying to protect the environment. It's in some ways kind of bittersweet, you know, looking into the future because the challenges are going to really be difficult going forward and realizing that a lot of what we work for is really just trying to hold the line on things that are happening out there.

But certainly there have been some successes, but also some disappointments.

WORTHINGTON: You're tracking what's happening in the Arctic. That remains a passion of yours.

FRUGE: Yeah, I will always be interested in that issue and hope that we never see lots of oil rigs going up

WORTHINGTON: Great, great interview. You remember a lot of detail. You must have done some thinking about this interview.

FRUGE: I made some notes last night and refer to them a lot, this was helpful with my positions and times and dates and that sort of thing.

WORTHINGTON: You've seen some incredible places from the Arctic to the Gulf.

FRUGE: And I achieved my one of the goals, you know, one of the reasons I went into the Fish and Wildlife Service was to get out of Louisiana and not spend my entire career there. So I certainly achieved that.

WORTHINGTON: Congratulations on a wonderful career. I think we'll conclude the recording at this point in time.