



Special Topic: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Bob Misso (Middletown, MD)

January 28, 2021

Phone Interview conducted by Libby Herland (Pittsfield, MA)

Oral History Cover Sheet

Approximate years worked for in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program: 1986-1996

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Chief, Branch of Private Lands

Most Important Projects: Establishment of Partner for Wildlife program, developing policy and funding support for field implementation of wetlands protection on Farmers Home Administration easements and fee title properties, Swampbuster, Conservation Reserve Program, Wetland Reserve Program, and habitat restoration on private lands. Bob worked extensively with Congressional staff and conservation organizations to preserve key conservation provisions in the 1990 Farm Bill and the Wetland Reserve Program in the 1996 Farm Bill

Colleagues and Mentors: Marvin Moriarty, Frank Dunkle, John Turner, Harvey Nelson, Jim Gritman, Rick Schultz, Dave Smith, Charlie Rewa, Gene Whitaker, Martha Naley

Brief Summary of Interview: Bob describes how the 1985 Food Security Act (the Farm Bill) brought the Fish and Wildlife Service into working on agricultural lands to protect and restore wetlands. He describes how the program was implemented in the regions, how the program was approved by Director Frank Dunkle and key testimony to support the program provided by Director John Turner. He describes how Executive Order 11990 helped the Fish and Wildlife Service protect wetlands on Farmers Home Administration inventory lands through easements and fee title transfers. FWS responsibilities through the Farm Bills also included Swampbuster and Conservation Reserve Program consultation. Bob describes the development and importance of the Wetland Reserve Program. Lastly, he describes how the private lands habitat restoration work being done in Regions 3 and 6 became a national initiative which grew to include dense nesting cover plantings, and grassland, riparian and stream restorations.

The Interview

LIBBY: Hi. This is Libby Herland. I'm on the FWS Heritage Committee, and today we are talking with Bob Misso. It is January 28, 2021. We're doing a phone interview with Bob because Bob was the national Partners for Wildlife coordinator – Partners for Wildlife became the Partners for Fish and Wildlife – in the Fish and Wildlife Service. But at the time it was the Partners for Wildlife program. Bob was the national coordinator, and we're doing this interview as part of a nationwide special topic look at the history, the development, the implementation, of the Partners program in the Fish and Wildlife Service as a, this is a special topic of the Fish and Wildlife Service Heritage Committee of which I am a member, a retired representative from Legacy Region 5 in the northeast United States. So, with that introduction, I want to say hi to Bob and Bob, thank you so much for being willing to do this interview. I think this is a critical interview because you were around really at the inception of the Partners program, and you were instrumental in its early establishment and development. Really thrilled that you are willing to speak with us today and give us your insight. So, why don't we start by telling us, you telling us when you worked in the Partners program. I know you worked in Washington. What your job title was, and we will take it from there.

BOB: Well, Libby, good morning. Thank you very much for this opportunity. Since I talked with you last week, I've tried to do a little thinking and come up with the memory of the great Partners program, 'cause it has been a number of years. I was the first branch chief I guess they referred to as the Branch of Private Lands back in about 1986. For two or three years, or a year or so before that, I was active in what you might say was the precursor of the Partners for Wildlife or private lands program. If we go back a little while...

LIBBY: Yes.

BOB: ...and think about the Fish and Wildlife Service, what the Fish and Wildlife Service really was, back in the mid-1980's and the early 1980's, it was a very traditional fish and wildlife organization. The dominant features were the National Wildlife Refuge System. There was a national fish hatchery system that was waning at that time. There was a very, very large and important Federal Aid program, distributing funds from Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson. There was a River Basins Studies, Ecological Services (ES) unit working on permits and licenses, federal projects, FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] permits. A fledgling little endangered species program getting started. I'll say a fledgling contaminants program getting started. But that was pretty much the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service really did not have what you would call a "private lands" outreach effort to really work with America's private landowners. That was kind of interesting because we all recognized that 70 to 80 per cent of the land base of the wildlife resource activity and potential and problems are associated with private lands that are beyond the scope of what was traditionally the Fish and Wildlife Service.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: The real change in the Fish and Wildlife Service came as a result of agriculture legislation. The Farm Bill of 1985, I believe it was called the Food Security Act...

LIBBY: That's right.

BOB: In that particular legislation, there was a movement in agriculture to establish a very large and very dynamic land set aside program called the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The Fish and Wildlife Service took a major interest in that legislation and the CRP because they could see that the CRP could put millions of acres of dense nesting cover particularly in the upper mid-west and the prairie pothole region. So, the Fish and Wildlife Service actually had a person working full time, coordinating, talking and hobnobbing with [the Department of] Agriculture, trying to help the CRP be as big as it could be, as good as it could be, that it would particularly help with dense nesting cover and waterfowl production in the upper mid-west.

LIBBY: Who was that person? Do you remember?

BOB: That person's name was Terry Casek.

LIBBY: Terry who?

BOB: Terry Casek.

LIBBY: Okay.

BOB: I believe that's the pronunciation.

LIBBY: Okay.

BOB: He was actually located in the wildlife refuge part of the Fish and Wildlife Service. At that time, I was in the Ecological Services part of the Service and was actually the assistant branch chief for Federal Projects. Now, in Ecological Services, we had a little bit of an interest in the Farm Bill, but not a whole lot of official designation since the Wildlife Resources [refuges] and Terry was doing the main coordination but there were a couple of features of the 1985 Farm Bill that were going to be very important from a private lands/Ecological Services frame of reference. That was the wetland conservation provision that was being put in. It's commonly referred to as "Swampbuster".

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: And there's another small provision that we had been promoting from the Ecological Services side. That was the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) debt for nature easement program.

LIBBY: Right. Right.

BOB: Actually, the sponsorship, the interest in that program was a senator at that time from Indiana by the name of Richard Lugar. I think Richard Lugar was actually the chairman of the Senate committee, I'm not sure, if I remember correctly at that time. [Interviewer's note: Senator Lugar was chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry from 1995-2001.] He had a staff person by the name of Jeff Barnum. Jeff, we worked with Jeff and talked about it. Basically, what this program would involve is landowners borrow money from the Farmers Home Administration. Farmers Home Administration was a lender of last resort. So, a lot of these landowners had extensive loans on very marginal agricultural enterprises.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Hence the FmHA was the lender of last resort. They could not, landowners who could not get loans from regular banks or didn't have the right collateral or the right potential would go to Farmers Home, draw extensive loans, get into trouble. There were, I think there were like 14 billion dollars' worth of Farmers Home loans at that time. It had actually been about 5 million acres of FmHA land base where the farmers had given up on the debt and had been foreclosed on and had actually landed in the federal inventory. So, we were working that particular aspect of the Farm Bill that came along in '85. Well, the interesting thing was that the most active Washington-level interface happened to be the Swampbuster and the FmHA. The CRP rollout was pretty much standard. Agriculture was proud of it at that time. It was the ASCS [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service] agency that was handling that. The ASCS became today's Farm Service Agency. The Wildlife Resources representative really wasn't terribly interested in Swampbuster, more of a regulatory program, or the debt for nature easements from Farmers Home. So, that fell pretty much on Ecological Services personnel, and particularly I was interested in it. So, we began working actively, developing regulations on both Swampbuster and FmHA. And that active involvement placed Ecological Services in a position for the Directorate and the Director to note our activities. I'm not sure exactly how it happened or why it happened, but the Director at that time, in about 1986, Frank Dunkle, made a decision one day that the lead for Farm Bill/Private Lands activities would be housed in habitat resources, habitat preservation, Ecological Services – that component of the Service, and not in the Wildlife Resources side. I suspect the reason for that was that we were extremely interested in both the Swampbuster and the FmHA and were active whereas the Wildlife Resources side of the house wasn't taking as much interest in it. So, when that designation was made in '86, shortly thereafter our leader in Ecological Services, Marvin Moriarty, gained permission to establish to Branch of Private Lands.

LIBBY: Okay, great.

BOB: That would handle Farm Bill and everything. This would have been in the late '86 timeline. That's when you might say, on paper, the program began. Now, of course you don't have a program until in the budget and appropriation act. You have a program that's recognized and identified, and funding is provided. At that time, in Ecological Services, we were just piggybacking on existing resources and existing funds. About the '86 timeframe, it may

have been '87, we were able to get a member of the United States Senate, Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, working with a young lady on his staff, Laura Hudson, to add a small amount of funds to the Fish and Wildlife Service appropriation for this Farm Bill/Private Lands work.

LIBBY: Okay.

BOB: I believe the amount was one and half or two million dollars. I remember at that time visiting with Laura and trying to make a pitch to her what we were trying to do. From my personal standpoint, what I was trying to do at that particular point in time was to gain a little bit of funding to provide resources for personnel to do this Swampbuster technical assistance work that needed to be done to support the Agriculture rollout of Swampbuster.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: And, to also allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to participate in the FmHA program. Now something very interesting had happened in the FmHA program that was the true “on the ground” pre-cursor of what we will get to, in just a minute, is the Partners for Wildlife. The statute of the '85 Farm Bill did include this debt for nature easement program, where the Secretary of Agriculture had the authority to forgive portions of a landowner's loan if that landowner placed portions of his or her land under a conservation easement, under a wetland easement or a wildlife easement under a habitat protection easement. Well, the interesting thing about that statute, as we learned, it was a discretionary statute. It said the Secretary of Agriculture MAY establish this program. It didn't state, say that it SHALL be established. So, I was working with Farmers Home for probably pretty much almost a year, trying to get regulations developed and every time we'd get a pretty good package of regulations developed, they'd come back with major changes. It just kind of seemed like a “rope a dope” approach. We'd almost get there and then, all of a sudden, they'd pull the rug out and do something different. We had two or three iterations of that. One day, I received a call from a friend who was working in the Farmers Home Administration. He said, “Bob, what I need to tell you is Farmers Home never intends to really implement this program.” I said, “What do you mean? They have a statute.” He said, “But the statute is discretionary. It says the Secretary MAY and there's really not any interest at key level staff over here to implement the program. So, they're just, they're just going to wear you out with negotiating regulations.” “So, what do you think?” He said, “Well, if you're really interested in easements, Farmers Home has about 5 million acres of land in its federal inventory. They are federal lands, and they are in the process of being disposed over time.” He said, “Under the wetlands executive order, Jimmy Carter's wetlands executive order, that executive order says we are not supposed – we, Farmers Home – are not supposed to sell these lands out of the federal inventory without placing protective covenants on wetlands.” And, he said, “Large portions of this land base that we have in inventory are wetlands, degraded wetlands. Not really effective farmlands but lands people tried to bring into production that aren't suitable for production and therefore, they went under.” So, he said, “If you'll get the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service to send a letter over the administrator of the Farmers Home, proposing that Farmers Home actively implement the wetlands executive

order, and if the Fish and Wildlife Service agrees to provide wetlands technical assistance - go out, evaluate these lands and identify these wetlands to be placed under easement, and if the Fish and Wildlife Service will agree to become the entity that assumes administrative national oversight/restoration of these lands," he says, "I believe our administrator will agree to do that." Well, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service sent that letter. Farmers Home administration agreed to establish an easement program to place these inventory wetlands under an easement in advance of being resold back to the private sector. And that began a very active, on the ground, Farmers Home Administration wetland easement program.

LIBBY: Right. So, Bob, I'd like to step in here for a minute and say that I really appreciate that history. That is perfect for us to know. That executive order was 11990. That was a really important executive order that was used by our agency and I'm sure others too in the federal government for quite a long time to help protect wetlands. But that information is - you know, we've done a lot of these interviews - we've done probably five, six, or seven of them so far, and no one has provided this information, so I really appreciate this, because this is exactly what we need to know.

BOB: Well, it does relate very specifically and I'm getting to the meat of the subject, Partners for Wildlife, because the money that we received from Congress in the appropriation that Bennett Johnston provided, the add-on as I'll say, referred to the Farmers Home Administration wetland easement program that the Fish and Wildlife Service was administering and the need for money to restore wetlands and administer these easements. We actually established our program - we were doing Farm Bill technical assistance, Swampbuster and this FmHA. Shortly thereafter, when we had this big easement program underway, we were able to get another senator from Arkansas, Dale Bumpers, and a representative from Louisiana, Jerry Huckabee, to establish another statutory provision that authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer fee title of these FmHA inventory lands to state and federal agencies for conservation purposes. So, we ended up with both a wetland easement program and a fee title transfer program to federal and state agencies. Again, Farmers Home had a little money, went into a year or two of that activity, and as you will probably recall, Libby, I believe you were the regional representative at the time, we had a Farm Bill representative, a private lands representative, in each region.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: We would meet in Washington once a year and talk about the program and where it was and what was going on, show slides of the projects that were being built on Farmers Home and talk about the FmHA in general, talk about Swampbuster. Well, in a meeting I believe it was in 1989, may have been early 1990, we were sitting in that meeting and again we were primarily looking at Farm Bill activities. Well up in Region 3 and in Region 6, particularly in Region 3, I know, they had established a little different kind of a program they called the Mid-Continent project. I know you've interviewed Carl Madson. I think Carl was running this little Mid-Continent project. They were actually doing wetland restoration work on the CRP lands and

providing some additional funds to try to get landowners to do more wetland work on the CRP lands. So, they were sort of doing some restoration on more of the “private lands” side. I think Region 6 was doing the same thing, Denver. Well, we were in the meeting, and you may recall Rick Schultz who was the coordinator from Minneapolis. He made a presentation and he said, “Bob, in the budget document, we think it’s time that we placed in that budget document that we were going to use some of this money to just go out and work with private landowners. Not Swampbuster technical assistance, not the FmHA easements or land transfers. Just work with private landowners who will allow us to restore wetlands and plant dense nesting cover and do good things for wildlife.” Well, we agreed to do that, and we started placing in our appropriation document and the budget proposal, language that talked about just doing private lands restoration and protection activities. And that would have been like 1990 or so.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Well shortly thereafter, it may have been Region 3, I don’t remember which region, wanted to have a catchy title, a more appropriate title for the program. We really didn’t have a viable title. We talked about trust species habitat conservation and restoration and stuff like that. The Director at that time – we had a new director whose name was John Turner – he was a former rancher; I think maybe he had been a state senator or something from Wyoming.

LIBBY: Yeah, I think he was a state senator. Right.

BOB: Great conservationist. He asked the regions to come up with suggestions for a title for this little program. One of the regions – I think it was probably Region 3 – came up with the phrase “Partners for Wildlife” which was an excellent term and that became the name of the program. This would have been about 1990. Private lands became an integral part of the Farm Bill technical assistance and today many years later, the Partners for Wildlife program is still going strong. A few years later, well a number of years later, a decision is made by the Fish and Wildlife Service to change it to “Partners for Fish and Wildlife” or for Wildlife and Fish, I’m not sure which way it goes. And that’s where it stands today.

Now, in terms of the old history, something that might be interesting for people to understand in the future. There was an awful lot of controversy and opposition to the Fish and Wildlife Service having a Partners for Wildlife program. Today, people think it is a very positive program, it’s a bread-and-butter program, it’s non-controversial, very good for wildlife conservation, working with landowners. But everyone didn’t view it that way at that time, back in the late 80’s, early 90’s. The reason – a couple reasons. One, in those days of appropriations, the size of the appropriation pie was perceived to be fixed. So, Fish and Wildlife Service had an appropriation budget of X.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: If the Service came up with something new and different to do, those dollars for that new and different page or two in the budget would have to come from somewhere. So existing

programs were not happy to see a new program emerging because that would be competition for financial resources in the appropriation fight. So, there was not a whole lot of interest in the Service on this fledgling new little outfit with a catchy title and a budget to achieve funding. Now another aspect that was surprising is there was a lot of controversy in the Fish and Wildlife Service working with private landowners. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and a lot of the state agencies perceived the Fish and Wildlife Service was starting to get out beyond the Federal bounds and start working with private landowners which were more viewed to be the prerogative of State fish and wildlife agencies.

LIBBY: Oh yeah, okay, yup.

BOB: So, there was a definite states' rights concern that the Feds are getting off the Federal reservation so to speak, moving out into private lands. You're going to start to work with private landowners. The Feds should not be doing that. There was a lot of controversy, and there were efforts for several years which undermined the program and stopped the program because it, just because of this strange concern. Of course, that's the reason that before we had the title "Partners for Wildlife", we referred to it as "trust species habitat restoration and assistance".

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Trust species, that core responsibility as opposed to game and fish species that the states would be responsible for.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Anyway, we moved on. Finally got the program established. I think the International Association realized what the Service was doing was very positive and very beneficial and was not stepping on the states' toes. So that settled that. Well, that's sort of the early days. One other aspect of the potential negativism, you might say, was the – in terms of the Service - at the time, [when] we were establishing the Private Lands/Farm Bill/Partners for Wildlife program, the National Wildlife Refuge System had come out with a report and there were huge unfunded needs for operation and maintenance in the refuge system. I don't remember the number. Hundreds of millions of dollars. And so, it was very difficult for the wildlife side of the house to become excited about a program where we were going to be going out, Fish and Wildlife personnel would be going out, and working with private landowners outside the refuge system. In many cases, refuge personnel, refuge equipment, expertise would potentially be involved and working on private lands, when yet we had this tremendous unfunded backlog inside the refuge system.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: That was a source of controversy. There were national wildlife refuge manager associations and other groups who were not very warm to the Partners for Wildlife program because of that legitimate concern about competition for resources. One of the things that sort

of added to that concern is, very early on, in '89 or so, Region 3 took it upon themselves to do some serious private lands work and actually move refuge equipment and construction personnel off of some refuges onto some private lands and start constructing wetlands. Of course, that's a great thing to do for wildlife conservation, but it was not viewed programmatically to be a great thing to do on a refuge system where you had unfunded refuge operation and maintenance needs. So, those were some of the background controversies of the early days of the program.

LIBBY: Can I – that's really helpful. Can I ask a question about the FmHA easements because they ended up coming in, the fee title transfers and the easements, ended up coming into the national wildlife refuge system? There were some regions where all the easement, all the FmHA work was handled by people from Ecological Services but then the easements or the fee title transfer would go to Refuges for management. And then in some regions, like Region 3, as far as I know, the Partners program, even though it was managed out of the Washington level in Ecological Services, in Region 3 which was the upper mid-west, at the time, and I'm saying this now because in 2021 the regions have been re-organized, and they are re-numbered. I don't know whether this will stay with the new Biden administration but for people that are reading this transcript or listening to this interview fifty years from now, under President Trump the Interior Department was reorganized and so we call it now "Legacy Region 3" which was the upper Midwest. So, in Region 3, the upper mid-west, I believe that the Partners program was always out of Refuges. Is that correct?

BOB: Yes.

LIBBY: Yes. So, was there

BOB: Yeah, let me give you a little background on that. That's interesting. See, before there was a Farm Bill technical assistance initiative in '85, Region 3 and Region 6, they were a little bit different than the rest of the Service. They had established wetland management districts throughout the prairie pothole region, and they were on the road. The refuge personnel in Region 3 weren't necessarily on a refuge per se. They were on the highway working their wetland management district, talking to landowners, trying to secure easements, trying to secure waterfowl production area acquisitions. Well, they were sort of in the private lands mode prior to the '85 Farm Bill. Probably for the last 25 years they had been in a semi-private lands mode – both Regions 3 and 6. The rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service, maybe with a minor exception of a few little places in the west, California, had not been into the wetland management district mode and doing easements through scattered landholdings. The rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service frankly didn't have a great deal of interest of moving in that direction. It was new and different, the rest of the Service was busy doing what they were doing. I don't recall any of the real leadership in the other regions outside of Regions 3 and 6 that were, you know, aggressively pushing Partners for Wildlife for a number of years.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: At the Washington level, quite dissimilar to that, the refuge personnel were pretty much traditional, worrying about the big refuge issues, unfunded operations and maintenance, and yet you had this little group over in Ecological Services that had sort of a wider view of things, that were excited about Farm Bill technical assistance, FmHA easements and transfers and private lands restoration. Because we had that enthusiasm, I think that is why the Director, back in '86, gave the initial lead of the program over to Ecological Services under Marvin Moriarty.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Of course, I was the first Branch Chief that Marvin established under his regime. So, we ended up with Regions 3 and 6 in Wildlife. The other regions ended up, I think in each case, placing the program under the Ecological Services umbrella. I don't know if that continues today or how it stacks up today.

LIBBY: I think it, yeah, I don't know about the southeast, but I know in the northeast it still is under Ecological Services, and I believe it is still out in the southwest and California and everything. I remember, because I was the regional coordinator in the northeast from late 1988 to early 1995, and I remember going to some project leader meetings, refuge project leader meetings, refuge manager meetings and talking about this program, and was, you know, met with mixed reception. Everyone was very nice to me. We were beginning to think that maybe we needed to work beyond the blue goose sign but there was still very much at that time, and I know a lot of it had to do with funding, I think that is absolutely correct. There wasn't enough people, there was concern that there wasn't enough resources to work on the other side of the refuge boundary sign and some people realized that you needed to work with your local communities or with the area around you because that affected your ability to provide the resource benefit on the refuge.

BOB: Yes.

LIBBY: But that was a mind, that was a mind shift. It was definitely a shift in perception and, you know. So, we were there sort of at the beginning of that.

BOB: Let me address something that comes to mind that I think is critically important. If you get a chance to interview Marvin Moriarty, he may be in a better position to answer this. I recall Marvin arranged for me to give a briefing to the Directorate. This was, this had to do with our Partners for Wildlife and the FmHA easements. I remember going over to the briefing room and Director Frank Dunkle came in, sat at the head of the table, and I began my little briefing. 'Course, as usual I talked too long, had too much information. I had been told that the Director did not like long presentations. Five minutes and that was it for him. So, I had my five minutes and he interrupted me. He said, "Are you finished?" I thought, "Oh my gosh, I've blown it." He looked at me and realized I was shell-shocked and said, "No, that's not what I mean. Are you finished talking and ready to start doing it?"

LIBBY: (laughter)

BOB: And I said, "Yes!" He, the whole Directorate was sitting around the table, and there was not a single member of the Directorate that was excited about this new initiative. There were probably members around that table that wished it would go away. The Director, he said, "Are you finished talking and ready to do it?" He said, "Well, then get started and do it." And he got up and said, "I've got another meeting." He turned the meeting over, I don't remember, maybe it was to Jim Pulliam who was the Director of Wildlife at that time, and said, "Handle the rest of the rest of the meeting." And he got up and left. He just said, "Do it." So, he gave a crisp order to do it. I remember him saying, "Is it good for wildlife?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, go do it." And, hey ...

LIBBY: Do you remember him saying ...

BOB: If we had the traditional Fish and Wildlife organization of the early, before 1985, before 1980, where people would have been very concerned about the traditional activities and totally consumed with this concern about needing additional budget resources for existing activities, I don't think there ever would have been a Partners for Wildlife program.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: We had a Director who was from the outside world, and he said, "If it's good for wildlife, let's do it." Now, another side issue is, Region 3, there was a Deputy Regional Director by the name of Jim Gritman, and Jim was incredibly strong, well versed in Partners for Wildlife-type activities, private lands, strong proponent, and he was very well liked by the Director. And of course, Harvey Nelson, the Regional Director there, they were champions of getting out and working with private landowners because the bulldozer was draining, and the draglines and tile folks were draining all the potholes in the mid-west, and we had to do something on private lands, or we weren't going to have any waterfowl habitat left. The potholes were going. So, Region 3 – Jim Gritman – hardnosed, working with the Director and the Directorate, I think was the strength that probably convinced Frank Dunkle just to say, "Go do it!"

LIBBY: I remember Frank Dunkle, I remember when there was some concern at least in my region about these FmHA easements because, to be perfectly honest, many of them were fairly small. Some of them were a couple of acres. We had some that were large but a lot of them were fairly small. People were concerned about managing this couple of acres here, five acres here, 15 acres over there. Not necessarily near any national wildlife refuge. And I remember something like, Frank Dunkle saying something like, "We'll worry about that later. Every acre is important. Just get it now. We'll worry about how we manage it later." Do you remember something along those lines?

BOB: I don't, I don't remember that particular statement, at that time. I wouldn't, I wasn't present. If he had said that in front of me, I would remember that.

LIBBY: Right. Okay.

BOB: But he was a very interesting person. Again, he was from the outside. He wasn't saddled with all these old, "We've got to do it the way we've liked for the last 50 years". Of course, that pushed the agency to the limit. When Region 3 decided to take refuge personnel and refuge equipment on flatbed trucks in a caravan style and ride around the countryside up there to private lands, restoring wetlands, Frank Dunkle gave permission to Region 3 to do that. Well, there was no appropriation.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: To do that! He just said, "Do it!" A more traditional Director in the Service would have said, "We can't do that. We don't have an appropriation for that." So, it caused a lot of controversy and a big stir in the agency, but it moved us forward where the agency needed to go.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: You might say, the end justified the means.

LIBBY: Right. So how did the ...

BOB: Of course, John Turner came in, '89, '90 or so, and Turner was from the outside world and was just as positive and just as supportive as you could ever imagine. And then, a few years later, Mollie Beattie came in and she was again from the outside and was just as positive and just as supportive. So, you had these three Directors in a row, and it just established the baseline that this was a real program that was going to make a difference and be a major part of the Fish and Wildlife Service in the future.

LIBBY: Right. So, you had, how did the program evolve? I don't know if we, it started off being Farm Bill implementation and every five years or so we'd get a new Farm Bill. But then we had this private lands, habitat restoration program also that seemed, to me now, it seems like that's the most important, not important but the most dominant part of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, is the habitat restoration side of it. I'm not sure how much Farm Bill, Farm Bill type work we're still doing. I don't know how the legislation has changed. And also, I'm not familiar with the real, I'm not in real farm country either where there is probably still, I know there is Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) now and the Fish and Wildlife Service got involved with that. Were you involved with any of that?

BOB: That brings up a very key point that folks in Partners for Wildlife today and in the future probably need to keep in mind. The Farm Bill activity in the Fish and Wildlife Service was critically important, at the time, in moving Agriculture a little bit further towards conservation. The Partners for Wildlife folks were out there and had done, I don't know, four or five thousand separate private land projects all throughout the country, working with private landowners restoring wetlands. Agriculture took note of that. Members of Congress took note of that. There's something happening out there, and it wasn't the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] doing it. Now, we had the '85 Farm Bill and the FmHA stuff. We moved up. Along

comes the 1990 Farm Bill. I believe the Farm Bill wasn't enacted until '91 but say it is the 1990 Farm Bill. Well, in the '90 Farm Bill, the agriculture community was upset with the wetland conservation provision - the Swampbuster provision. There were pressures to do away with Swampbuster. The Democrats were in the majority in the Senate at the time. Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont was the chairman of the Senate Ag Committee. He had a staff person by the name of Jim Cubie. I'm not sure what Jim's official title was, but he was the senior Farm Bill staffer. He wasn't the chief of staff for the Senator, but he was chief of staff for the ...

LIBBY: For the Committee?

BOB: Ag Committee and had a young staffer by the name of Tom Hebert working with him. So, Jim Cubie and Tom Hebert, they were trying to shepherd the 1990 Farm Bill through. I was given the opportunity, for about a year, to run around up on Capitol Hill and assist Cubie and Tom Hebert with the 1990 Farm Bill activity. The pressure was on Swampbuster and Cubie said the Senator, Senator Leahy, wanted to preserve Swampbuster. That was priority number one – was to hold the line on Swampbuster. Of course, we were very interested in establishing something called the Wetland Reserve to mimic the land Conservation Reserve putting grasslands under contract. Well, we wanted to do a wetland reserve with real easements, permanent easements, long term easements - not just contracts. Cubie and Tom Hebert were interested in that, and Senator Leahy was interested in that, but they wanted us to hold the line on Swampbuster first. I remember Jim Cubie saying, "Bob, you help us hold the line on Swampbuster and at the last hour of the last day, I will get a wetland reserve program put into the Farm Bill." Okay? So, for pretty much a year, we worked Swampbuster. The National Wildlife Federation had a young lady working, she was very effective. I forget her name right now, but they were very effective. There was a lot of conservation community initiatives to try to hold the line, and we worked very closely with both the Democratic and Republican staffers – 13 members of the Ag Committee, the Senate Ag Committee. They all had their staff person assigned and we would go and work, become friends with everyone on both sides of the aisle, and we were able to assist Cubie and Leahy on holding the line. Now, so how does that relate to Partners for Wildlife? Well, when we reached a point where there was going to be some serious consideration for a wetland easement program, a wetland restoration program, Leahy designated a senator from Arkansas, David Pryor, to ask him to hold a hearing, I guess you'd call it a subcommittee hearing of the Ag committee and invite people to come up and testify about what they thought about having a wetland easement program. I remember John Turner was on a panel with the president of the soybean association and two or three other ag groups. There was another panel with a lot of the environmental groups. I sat there in the hearing room. I'd written John's presentation and I remember when we were doing the pre-briefing in his office, I said, "Mr. Director, you know there's a lot of controversy out there and a lot of people are going to say you can't restore wetlands. It doesn't work. The science is not there." And the reason they were saying that is they were referring to mitigation projects that had been developed by construction agencies that didn't work, and frankly a lot of them didn't work. They were placed in the wrong place, trying to plant mangrove swamp in the high energy

environments of the coast, and things that were very, very difficult technologically and biologically to accomplish. I said, "We're going to hear a lot of that today." I said, "You know, restoring a wetland on a farm field is kind of like just falling off a log. You sit down on the log and fall off and you kick a little dirt in a ditch here and put a little dike there, and next spring it rains, the water fills up, the hydric soil is there, the seedbank is there, and you have a wetland. It's back!" (unintelligible) Well, we go to the hearing and the first panel of environmental groups they spent 30 minutes talking about how the science wasn't there for wetland restoration. Really the reason these folks were so concerned is, I think they believed that if, in fact we made a push that wetland restoration could happen to WRP, wetland reserve program, they were afraid that that would be used against the preservation of Swampbuster. Where we don't need Swampbuster anymore to stop wetlands drainage because we can just go to this other program and restore the wetland. That may have been ... But basically, all the environmental groups could do was build and restore wetlands. Well, it comes time for the next panel, and of course John Turner is on the panel, and the soybean association guy sitting beside him, and David Pryor from Arkansas – the soybean association guy was from Arkansas – and he and David Pryor were obviously buds – they knew each other. So, John Turner is asked to make his presentation, and he made his presentation. He looked up at David Pryor and said, "Senator, it's just kind of like falling off a log. You know, you kick a little dirt in a ditch, put a little dike here, the rains come, you plant a tree, and you got a wetland. It's that. It's not rocket science." Turner explained the Fish and Wildlife Service vision. There would be compatible uses. There would be long term permanent easements. There could be some forestry. It would be open to hunting and fishing and private landowner control of access and all those things. David Pryor had the soybean association guys speak next. The guy gave a presentation or something. And David said, excuse me, the Senator, Senator Pryor, I shouldn't call him David – Senator David Pryor said to the soybean association guy, let's say his name was Joe, I don't think (unintelligible), he said, "Joe, what do you think about this wetland reserve? You heard Director Turner. He just explained what he thought it ought to be and how it ought to work." The guy thought for a minute. He looked over at Turner, who was sitting beside him, and he said, "You know, David, oh I'm sorry, I mean Senator, you know, I've got a couple hundred acres of land. It's too wet too farm. Never should have been cleared. Little ditches out there don't do any good. I can't grow a good soybean crop. I believe if we had a program like Director Turner's explaining here, I believe I'd put my 200 acres in it and have a place for my kids and my grandkids to hunt one day." When that soybean association man said that, in response to John Turner's speech, Wetland Reserve Program became a reality. It was going to happen. Now the reason John Turner was able to be so successful - he had a stack of pictures. Remember every time we had a private landowners [Interviewer's correction: should be private land coordinators] meeting, we'd have people come in. I'd ask all of you to show slides of projects. Well, we took five or six of these projects that were in states that related to the members sitting on this old subcommittee, and they passed them – this is not paint pictures technology, not like you have today with computers – and then they passed these little pictures around. I remember one picture that we had that was so dynamic. We had a picture from Indiana. We

had a CAT [Caterpillar Corporation] bulldozer with a Fish and Wildlife Service logo on the side of it, and a Fish and Wildlife Service biologist standing beside it. I believe his name was Jim Ruwaldt. Up on this bulldozer was a man sitting there, and he had a Garfield the Cat puppet. This landowner on whose property this project was built, was the person that created Garfield the Cat.

LIBBY: Oh!

BOB: He was a partner. So, we had Garfield the Cat and this landowner and this photo and of course, that passed around. A picture – and John Turner told these folks that – “We’ve done, I forget the exact number, five or six thousand of these projects with private landowners all across the country, and they work and they’re beautiful. They’re productive.” And the pictures, and with that soybean association guy saying, “I’d put my land in this program John Turner is establishing,” the point I’m making is, what the early Partners for Wildlife folks did, the projects they built, formed the foundation for John Turner saying “Senators, it works. It’s real, we need a program, and Agriculture did millions of acres of this same stuff.” The Partners story became the story that helped quell the negativism of folks involved in wetland restoration.

(Unintelligible)

LIBBY: Right. That’s a great story. We are going to interview Jim Ruwaldt as well as part of this project.

BOB: Good. He ended up moving on and he was the State coordinator in Wisconsin, I believe. Yeah, he was in Bloomington, Indiana in the ES office when that project was built. He ended up being the coordinator up in Wisconsin before he retired if I’m correct.

LIBBY: Right, Wisconsin. That’s right. My notes say Wisconsin and also Indiana, and Tom Worthington is going to interview him, so I will pass the story on to Tom so he can make sure he asks Jim about Garfield that Cat. That’s so great, that’s great.

BOB: Actually, also they made a little video.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: It was a little Garfield the Cat video.

LIBBY: You’re right.

BOB: Garfield bopped across the screen or something. I think Jim was probably the person who created this little video. I remember I had that little video on a little machine. I carried it up to Capitol Hill, went around to some of the staff people, and showed the video. I remember they had Garfield the Cat was building wetlands, talking about ducks and wildlife and birds, and Garfield the Cat pops out on the screen and says, “Yum, yum, birds!” I don’t think I made that up. I think that’s true.

LIBBY: No, little stuff like that is – those are great stories. It does show the importance, I think one thing about the Partners program, it was really the landowners that we worked with who ended up saving the program. Do you know more about that, how the program almost was shut down because of lack of enabling legislation?

BOB: Well, no, that would be much after my time. I do know there was controversy in the early days of the program because the people that we against the program argued that the Fish and Wildlife Service had no authority to work on private lands. There was no enabling legislation for many, many years. It was fine as long as I was concerned, 'cause it allowed us to establish the program's specifics through the appropriations act. You write up a budget document, say you are going to do A and B and C and D with these monies, and that became our authority. 'Course whenever you have a statute, a statute can become empowering, or it can become limiting. I've never even seen the current statute so I am not aware of what it does or what it says, but there was a lot of controversy and people tried to argue we did not have the legal authority, and there was a Solicitor's decision. Pete Raynor was the assistant solicitor for Fish and Wildlife. Maybe it was Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and he was our ranking lawyer that did, oversaw the Fish and Wildlife Service [clarified upon review by the interviewee – Charles P. Raynor was the Assistant Solicitor in the Division of Conservation and Wildlife and Environmental Enforcement]. There was a Solicitor's Opinion, I actually have a copy of it, that said we had the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Act or something to spend appropriated funds on private lands. That would have been back in the early '90's or something like that [actually May 3, 1996], when the Solicitor's Opinion came out.

LIBBY: Right. Well, we're going to be talking to some other folks who are going to tell us a little bit more about the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act, which was introduced in 2005 and I think it became law in 2006. It's preserved. The program is protected. It's official from the point of view of being an authorized use, program of the Fish and Wildlife Service. I mean, it's an awful lot to be proud of and to think of where we came from and now that this has been, it was a law, the Fish and Wildlife – Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act passed in 2006, and here we are, fifteen years later, and it's still going strong. So, the Wetland Reserve Program – can you tell me whether the easements, so those easements could also come to the Fish and Wildlife Service for management, or did they stay with USDA?

BOB: Now, I'm dated. It's been 20 years since I left government, but unless something has changed in recent authorities, the Agriculture, Secretary of Agriculture, is empowered to acquire easements. The Secretary of Agriculture is not empowered to give the easement away as in "wash my hands of it, Forest Service take it, Fish and Wildlife Service take it. It's yours." But there is authority to allow Federal or State agencies, conservation agencies, with wetland expertise and resources – I forget the exact language – to be designated to administer the easements.

LIBBY: Okay.

BOB: That was placed in the initial 1990 authorization, and there are a number of cases, key important cases across the country, where that is happening, where we kept that. The US Forest Service now owns fee title to WRP, a 5,000-acre WRP project in Oklahoma called Red Slough which, in that case, of course, the Forest Service owns fee title, but the NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service] easement is still the dominant feature that controls what happens to that land. There was a USDA Solicitor's Opinion that says, "Secretary of Agriculture, the Forest Service may buy the land, but it's still a WRP easement under WRP authority and responsibilities of NRCS."

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: We have a huge refuge up in Minnesota – Glacial Ridge – that I believe there's like 13,000 acres of WRP. Fee title was ultimately purchased by The Nature Conservancy on top of that and the lands ended up being transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It's Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: The easement is still the controlling statute of what can and cannot be done on those lands.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: And there's probably a couple dozen places around the country where the state wildlife agencies may now own the land or make them designated, or delegated, or oversee some of the easements. But the federal statute and the USDA responsibility under the WRP - of course it's no longer called WRP; it's now called WRE easements or something, but it still prevails.

LIBBY: Okay. I figured it's important that people understand that you can have fee title land that's owned by a conservation agency or maybe the federal government or state, but it also has a conservation easement or a deed restriction depending on the state on top of it. So, you've got two layers of protection there.

BOB: Yes, but you know, in theory, a federal agency could buy the land and that federal agency could have another dominant purpose or mission and that would be not quite as strong as the wetland mission of WRP.

LIBBY: That's right.

BOB: In the case of the Forest Service owning the lands in Oklahoma now, they are part of a national forest but yet the lands still carry the WRP responsibilities and management every year. The state wildlife agency, the Forest Service and NRCS evaluate and review what the management activities will be on that land to make sure that what the Forest Service is doing is still consistent with the purpose of the WRP easement.

LIBBY: Right. So, so that was 1990. The Wetland Reserve Program was part of the 1990 Farm Bill. Were you around for the next Farm Bill?

BOB: Yes, I was. In '96, I had moved to Agriculture. I left the Fish and Wildlife Service and went to the Soil Conservation Service [which] became the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A gentleman by the name of Paul Johnson, a great conservationist, former senator I believe from Iowa, state senator from Iowa, [corrected upon review by interviewee to State representative, not senator], became the Chief and I decided to go work for him, for NRCS, to build the WRP program. The WRP had initially been with ASCS, now the Farm Service Agency, and then this, in a reorganization act, it was transferred over to the NRCS, formerly the Soil Conservation Service. So, I went to work for Paul Johnson to build the WRP under NRCS. As that Farm Bill evolved, you were talking about the management of Farm Bill activities. There were a lot of controversies going on and there was a lot of negativism towards the Fish and Wildlife Service. There were a lot of changes started taking place in the '96 Farm Bill that severely diminished the effectiveness of the wetland conservation provision of Swampbuster. The role of the Fish and Wildlife Service was severely limited. In the '90 Farm Bill, we had actually gotten statutory language in there that said wetland determinations and minimal effects determinations that allow a landowner to impact a wetland would have to be made with the concurrence of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Of course, that was further tailored to say if the Fish and Wildlife Service did not concur, and then a meeting within three weeks, they could be elevated to Washington, and Washington NRCS would make the decision. So, it gave the field Fish and Wildlife Service a strong role in determining these minimal effect determinations but then an out for Agriculture if Agriculture Washington level wanted to roll over what the Fish and Wildlife Service was arguing. But in the '96 Farm Bill, I think the Fish and Wildlife Service was removed from that role and diminished, and the state technical committee role along with others. And the FmHA program had pretty much been withered away with changes to prevent properties from coming into inventory. So basically, we had about a 10-year period where Swampbuster and FmHA was a serious conservation effort with a lot of input from the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Agriculture legislation changed it pretty dramatically, starting about '96.

LIBBY: Right. Right. Okay. That's really great information too. I think the last thing that I'd like to talk about was when, that I can think of, is habitat restoration programs started we were restoring wetlands. We started doing – I left in early 1995, you were still there – we had started moving into some riparian restoration work, later in the 1990's. Were you, in terms of how the program grew, and your responsibility as the national coordinator, you also had people working with you. I remember Gene Whitaker. I remember Martha Naley.

BOB: Charlie Rewa.

LIBBY: Charlie Rewa.

BOB: Dave Smith.

LIBBY: Right. There were some other folks too. Scott Johnston? Right? No, that's not who, not his name, Scott Johnson, I think. [Interviewers note – it was not Scott Johnston or Johnson that I was thinking of.] Anyway, some other - there were other folks there in your office. Can you just tell me a little bit about how your office grew and what you can remember about who was working on what?

BOB: Beginning in '86, I had a staff person with me by the name of Dave Smith. Dave ended up running the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Of course, he is retired now. Charlie Rewa came in to the Washington Office from Annapolis and worked there.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Gene Whitaker of course was there. There were four or five of us. I convinced Martha Naley – Martha Naley was doing great private lands work in California, in Sacramento Valley. She came in to work in the office. So, we had about four or five of us at that time, you know in the early days, say 1990. When I left, it was still a four- or five-person organization. I believe when I left, I'm trying to remember if Martha Naley became the Branch Chief or maybe Dave Smith was the Branch Chief for a while, and then he moved on to the North American and then Martha Naley became the Branch Chief. She was the Branch Chief for a number of years. But it was a very small operation.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: I have no idea what it is today. I hope it's still small 'cause the whole thrust of Partners for Wildlife was to do something different. By different, I mean to take the dollars and build habitat, restore habitat, move dirt, plant dense nesting cover, build fences along streams to keep the cows out of streams that had endangered mussel beds. Things like that. It was not to be another administrative, bureaucratic program, writing reports and going to meetings. It was to take the bulk of the money and to make something happen on the ground that you could physically see, working with landowners. Of course, to administer the FmHA easements. I believe in early 1990 - I looked at a budget document the other day that I still have - I think it is '94, I think there were an approximate quarter of a million acres of FmHA easements and fee title transfers had happened, as I recall. 1994, 1995. So, there was lots of dirt being moved and grasses being planted, and riparian corridors being established on that quarter of a million acres.

LIBBY: Quite a legacy. It's still a really successful program that's going strong. I've talked with some folks who've been involved with the Partners program virtually from the beginning and are still working, including Carl Schwartz. Some folks who just retired. What I found, what I find interesting with the Partners program is that this became a lifetime commitment for a lot of people who work for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Once they went into the Partners program, a lot of them didn't leave. They just, they loved what they did so much, and so many people have said it was the best job in the world. I think that's true for a lot of people in the Fish and Wildlife Service and probably other federal agencies too. You really, the mission of your agency and the

program becomes really meaningful to you. But I know that for a lot of people in the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Partners program – it became, once they started working in it – it became what they did for the rest of their career, which is why doing these interviews, it's really interesting because we are able to capture a lot of how the program evolved over time and how it grew, by talking to the same person 'cause they were there for 20 years, or 30 years, or 40 years!

BOB: When you think about it, working in the government has its plusses and minuses. The Fish and Wildlife Service had never had a restoration program. You know, back in late '70's, 1980, the Fish and Wildlife Service in some regions actually would refuse to even consider the acquisition of lands for the refuge system if they were damaged and they needed to be restored. They were only willing to require fairly pristine wetlands. I was in Region 4 and that was the philosophy and policy back in the late '70's, early '80's. So, to have a restoration program for the Service was very unique. Now Region 3 and Region 6 had that philosophy and that mindset for years earlier but expanding it to the entire Fish and Wildlife Service was very new and very different.

LIBBY: Right. Right. Right. Well, Bob, is there anything else you think we need to, you need to share with me before we conclude this interview?

BOB: Well, my career started with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. I was reviewing environmental impact statements and working with the Soil Conservation Service and watershed work plans and watching the bulldozer build bad stuff and drag lines destroy springs. Writing reports trying to convince people to do different. Went from there to River Basin Studies, Ecological Services in Fort Worth. Worked on Corps of Engineers projects, dam projects, Bureau of Reclamation projects, Soil Conservation Service drainage projects. Again, always trying to hold the line. Everyday you'd lose a little bit more, but you hoped to lose less than you would have if you weren't there.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: Along comes the opportunity to build a program and to be a part of a program that had not a lot of money and not a lot of people but to go out and find a landowner that had a drained wetland or didn't have any dense nesting cover around a wetland or didn't have a fence along a stream and yet there were endangered mussel beds in the stream on his property line. To be able to say, "We'll fund it. Sign this little agreement that says you'll honor it and take care of it for 10 years." We had a very simple little agreement, a page or two in those days. Basically, if you want it out there and will let us build it, we'll restore the wetland, we'll plant the grasses, we'll build a fence, you'll have a better wildlife habitat for your kids and your grandkids. There were thousands of landowners that had never been approached like that by a light-handed government that would go out and just make something happen. We might show up a month later with a contract bulldozer to go out there and build a wetland. I mean, it didn't take five years and an environmental impact statement to get a wetland built. It was built.

LIBBY: Right.

BOB: When you do that, and then you think about what you had to do in the other capacities of Ecological Services or the more traditional approach, it becomes almost like a, I don't know, just a miraculous thing that you can go out and do something on the ground. As the leader of the program, the greatest opportunities I had, I would travel the country, I would try to go to different regions and see projects and meet field people who were building projects all across the country. I had, in that five- or six-year period – I was there almost ten years – I had a chance to go to New York and Minnesota and South Dakota and California and Texas and Oklahoma and Louisiana to see stuff. I'd see stuff and I mean; I'd be so excited. I could go back to Washington just on a high, because yeah, I was sitting in an office in Washington pushing papers and trying to hold the budget together and trying to keep other folks from taking the money and changing the program, but then I could go out and see the projects and realize what the real people in the field were doing. They were building incredible projects.

LIBBY: They were, yeah.

BOB: You'd just go to bed at night thinking today someone built another wetland. We weren't just trying to stop them from being destroyed, but we were actually building one. And again, it was wetlands, dense nesting cover, riparian habitat, and we had some stream restoration projects even back in the early '90's. We did, in Montana we did some stream restoration for bull trout. So, there were, we were broadening the program, but we were still primarily wetlands, wetlands and more wetlands with dense nesting cover, but we did have some of the riparian and some of the stream. Of course, as I understand it has broadened quite differently.

LIBBY: Oh, it has broadened.

BOB: We see a lot of stream work today.

LIBBY: Right. Right.

BOB: I still hope and pray that the program will continue to have a wetland restoration focus. I know that may not be as jazzy as some of the endangered species and stream restorations and the brook trout in the northeast, but those wetland projects behind that dike, they're dynamic and they're so terribly productive for migratory birds.

LIBBY: Well, as I, I want to say that I think that your contribution to the Fish and Wildlife Service was just - remarkable isn't even the right word. This program never would have gotten off the ground, well I shouldn't say that, but I think that your presence, you were such a force of nature and your dedication to this program – you were absolutely the right person at the right time to be in Washington.

BOB: And realistically, I was a little bit of a nutcase. Probably the reason, well that's the main reason I ended up leaving the Fish and Wildlife Service. I won't use a nasty word but let's say, I was going to say I pissed off, but would say I made a lot of people mad because they didn't

necessarily like Partners for Wildlife, and I kept it in their face. A lot of regions that didn't want it were having to do it because I'd talk to the Director and the Director would call them and say, "Bob says you're not doing it. Get out there and do it!" So, you know, it ruffled feathers. But from a policy standpoint, the reason I was able to move to Agriculture to run the WRP program was because of the Partners for Wildlife experience. The experience I brought, the visibility it provided - to go to the chief of NRCS and say that "I want to run this program and make it happen." He created a job and hired me.

LIBBY: So, your contribution continued even after you left the Fish and Wildlife Service. Well.

BOB: And WRP was patterned in many respects after the Partners program. There was a policy document that John Turner signed. I don't have access to it, but I just remember. It was PL 89-72. He laid it out -the Fish and Wildlife Service private lands policy - and answered a bunch of questions, what we were going to do with the money, what we were not going to do with the money. I remember one of the little tidbits we put in there – we didn't want to be too tied up in knots with science, with people arguing over what is restoration, what is enhancement, what is creation. We would just talk about, we're going to restore, and we're going to establish, we'll establish a wetland where the conditions are such that we can establish a wetland, whether one existed there before or not. We had a definition of restoration. It would be 70% to original natural conditions to the extent feasible and up to 30% in out of type conditions where we wanted to do it that way, so we could improve upon what historically had been there, i we wanted to do, in working with the private landowners. When we wrote the first regulation for WRP, the definition of wetland restoration in the WRP regulation was that same 70/30 split. Having flexibility to do not just what was original, natural condition but having some flexibility to have some management decisions in that 30% flexibility.

LIBBY: Right. How about that.

BOB: So, Partners for Wildlife, John Turner made his presentation that helped establish the law and the productive activity of the field people in the field building the wetlands provided the field test of what would become WRP.

LIBBY: Well, I'm really glad we were able to have this interview because now this history will be, it's intact now. As soon as I send the audio tape to the National Conservation Training Center and we get the transcript done, people will be able to read this. This has been a really important interview.

BOB: So, Libby, what happens to this? What is this program you're in? I'm not familiar with it.

LIBBY: How about I'll tell you about that. What I'm going to do is I'm going to stop the tape recorder, or the audio recorder, and then I'll answer your questions. All right? So just hang on. I'll be right back. Thank you so much.

KEY WORDS: agriculture, Congressional operations, Directors (USFWS), grasslands, habitat conservation, habitat restoration, legislation, migratory birds, partnerships, policies, riparian environments, waterfowl, wetlands, wetland restoration