



The Oral History of Stewart Fefer

August 22, 2018

Interview conducted by Tom Goettel

South Thomaston, Maine



Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Stewart Fefer

Date of Interview: 8/22/2018

Location of Interview: South Thomaston, Maine

Interviewer: Tom Goettel

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 1980-2014

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Coop student, Moosehorn NWR; Biologist, Office of Biological Services, Maine; Biologist, Region 5 Realty Office; Biologist, Hawaiian Islands NWR; Biologist and Project Leader, Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

Most Important Projects: Maine Coastal Islands, Hawaii and Pacific NWRs, ITAP to Oman

Colleagues and Mentors: Bill Ashe, Ed Chandler, Joe Dowhan, Eric Kiviat, Glenn Kinser, Howard Mendall, Rob Shellenberger

Brief summary of the Interview: This is an oral history interview between Tom Goettel and Stewart Fefer, longtime friends and former colleagues at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They discuss Fefer's background and career path in conservation, including his early fieldwork experiences studying birds and wetlands that sparked his interest. Fefer recounts his work inventorying Maine's coastal islands and ecologically significant areas in the 1970s-80s which directly led to the establishment and expansion of the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. He highlights the importance of partnerships in conservation successes. Other topics covered include landscape-level planning, fish passage and dam removal projects restoring rivers like the Penobscot, climate change impacts, and the need for supervisor support in the Service. Fefer became interested in conservation in college through fieldwork with his biology professor studying birds and wetlands. His graduate work continued this with waterfowl research on the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge in Maine, further sparking his passion for wildlife refuges. In the 1970s, Fefer conducted pioneering inventories of Maine's coastal islands and ecologically significant areas for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This directly led to the establishment of the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge as the Service acquired many of the identified significant islands. Fefer stresses the critical role of partnerships with other government agencies, NGOs, local communities and landowners in achieving conservation successes. He helped demonstrate the value of collaborative grant programs leveraging multiple funding sources to protect land. He also expresses pride in ten years projects with the Department of the Interior International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP), especially with friendships he developed in Oman.

THE INTERVIEW

MR. TOM GOETTEL

Hi, this is Tom Goettel, G -O -E -T -T -E -L. It's August 22nd, 2018. We're in South Thomaston, Maine. And we're talking with Stewart Fefer, F -E -F -E -R and "Stewart" is spelled S -T -E -W -A -R -T. We're doing his oral history. I haven't seen Stewart in a few years. I got to tell you, I really like to do these oral histories with friends, and Stewart has been a friend for many years. He was the one who got me started on working on the Maine Coastal Islands back in the early 1980s. Stewart was assigned to Cutler, Maine, as an employee. He did a lot of work with getting the acquisition program and the biological program started on what is now the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. So I'll turn it over to Stewart. Stewart, maybe you could tell us a little bit about your background, where you came from, where you were raised, and how you got involved in conservation.

MR. STEWART FEFER

Thanks, Tom. So I started in conservation, I'd say, when I was in college – early on in college. One of my professors in college was a philosophy professor and another was a professor in biology.

MR. GOETTEL

Who are they?

MR. FEFER

Erik Kiviat was the name of my biology professor. Actually, he is still working as the executive director of the Hudsonia Organization in Annandale, New York, on the Hudson River and has been doing a lot of landscape conservation planning throughout the Hudson Valley and has probably been doing that for the past 20, 25 years. When I knew Erik he was teaching natural history. Erik and I would spend a lot of time on the Hudson River in the Tivoli North Bays where I did my senior project. Bard College had a senior project program. I did my senior project on the waterfowl migratory populations that used the Tivoli North Bays, and helped to write the proposal to have the Tivoli North Bays be included as a national estuarine reserve which it did eventually become.

So, I think I really got my start in conservation from field natural history type of work. I was one of those that grew up in the '60s. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* which was of monumental importance to me, and really got me started in conservation. Then, with my natural history background, I started taking some science classes. I ended up with a natural science bachelor's degree. I decided to go on to get a graduate degree in wildlife management because of that experience I had as an undergraduate. So, I think that's what started me in conservation, and I wanted to continue in that.

I was fortunate enough to work with the Maine Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. Mr. Howard Mendall was my advisor. He was the leader of the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. He was a real Maine gentleman. He was an old-time Mainer. He actually lived not too far from here in Thomaston and did his studies on Fisherman Island in the Muscle Ridge on eider ducks. And so, Mr. Mendall got me really interested in the Maine coast. I did my work for my graduate degree on the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, working on black ducks and ring-neck ducks and how to manage impoundments on the Moosehorn Refuge to maximize waterfowl populations. That was a great experience for me working with some really good people on the refuge. Ed Chandler was the manager there at the time, and he

was very supportive of my work. I learned a lot about the refuge at that time, and the refuge system, and I became very interested in the refuge system.

MR. GOETTEL

What year was that, Stewart?

MR. FEFER

That was in the mid – '70s. I finished my graduate program in 1976. So, it would have been from 1973 to 1976. I was working on the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, quite extensively doing field work while I was also taking classes at the University of Maine in Orono for my graduate degree in wildlife. So, as I was at the university, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, sometime around then, established a program called the Office of Biological Services which was a third part of the Fish and Wildlife Service – well maybe more than a third. We had refuges, ecological services, law enforcement, and we also had the Office of Biological Services. The Office of Biological Services was collecting information, a lot of it on coastal areas.

I was hired through the University of Maine to conduct seabird inventories of the Maine coast. I think that was in 1976, when we started to inventory the islands on the Maine coast that were likely to have seabirds on them, on the Maine coast. So those would be mostly the smaller treeless islands. And we identified, I can't remember the numbers now, but I think it was somewhere between 350 and 500 islands that had nesting seabirds on them, and about 150 of those were deemed to be nationally significant because they had more than 1% of the population of these birds nesting – 1% of their entire population nesting on this island. So, these became nationally significant islands.

After I finished this work on seabirds, I was hired by the Office of Biological Services on a contract to do an ecological survey of all of the Maine coast. That was called an "Ecological Characterization of Coastal Maine," which was quite an endeavor. We had many scientists working on that contract, synthesizing information, ecological information, on the various systems in the Maine coast, wetlands, rivers, and uplands. We cataloged the ecology of these areas and also what species could be found there. And we identified some really important areas along the coast of Maine that were worthy of conservation.

And this was recognized by then our deputy regional director in the Northeast Region, Bill Ashe, who had a long experience with realty and establishing refuges. And then he asked me to work for the refuge programs under the Division of Realty to help identify the most important islands that should be a part of the refuge system. At that time, they were going to be added to the Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, which eventually became the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge because of the large number of islands that the Fish and Wildlife Service was able to acquire over a very long period of time. I'm not sure how many islands are in the refuge now, but I expect it's over 60, 65.

MR. GOETTEL

65.

MR. FEFER

So that all started from just a few islands that originally came from the Coast Guard. And then Thomas Cabot was very interested in having islands that he owned in Down East Maine, near Cutler, Maine – Cross Island Complex - Old Man and a few others - Double Head Shots became a part of Petit Manan

Refuge. And then the Fish and Wildlife Service through our realty program identified these important islands that I was working on. And they became part of the refuge system. Realty was able to acquire many of these islands over time, working with many non-government organizations. And I think it was about that time that Tom came to Maine and became the manager of the Petit Manan Refuge division of the Moosehorn Refuge. And that included many of the islands.

MR. GOETTEL

Can I interrupt for just a second, Stewart? You know, “The Ecological Characterization of the Coast of Maine” was a huge accomplishment. I hope the listeners to this recording can - I hope I can get across how important it was. I think all the volumes of the maps, every inch of the coast was mapped and the different nesting islands and wetlands, et cetera, were delineated on the maps, big foldout maps. There was, in addition, there were books that went along with the maps that talked about the importance of the coast. And I think the whole thing must have been like four feet long. Wasn't it a literally four feet of...

MR. FEFER

It was *pre-GIS*, so all the maps were paper maps. It was pre when people were using GIS. And when I look back, it's so interesting to me because we were doing GIS without GIS at that time.

MR. GOETTEL

With a grease pencil, I guess, and a map! But I think the other thing that was really important, I think, was that every coastal town was given a copy of those documents. Which again is so important. The Fish and Wildlife Service was giving all this information to everybody. It's not just something that was internal, or just something to buy up every single island on the coast of Maine. That was not it at all. It was to point out the ecological values and the ecological importance of the coast.

MR. FEFER

It's funny, I still get inquiries about the Ecological Characterization. People looking for where they can find copies. Consultants use it all the time for environmental assessments. And the information is still relevant – the ecological information, the locations of the species may be different now, but the general ecological information is still relevant, and people still use it. I know our colleagues in the state and many of the local governments have it on their shelves. It's always interesting to me to see it. It's what, it's over 40 years old now!

MR. GOETTEL

Isn't that something?

Mr. FEFER

It is something, but that was really important for me in the sense of all that I learned about the Maine coast by helping put that together. And I think that it really set the stage for my career in looking at broad landscapes. Here I was looking at this whole Gulf of Maine identifying important natural resource areas. And I think that large landscape view continued throughout my career. And that sort of set the stage. And the other thing I would say in retrospect over the time that I was lucky enough to be employed by the Fish and Wildlife Service was that it was such a time of great growth in the

environmental movement. We were thinking in terms of landscape conservation in the Fish and Wildlife Service. We were thinking about the great value of refuges for wildlife and for the people of the country to learn about wildlife and to become engaged in wildlife conservation. So, my career was spent helping to build the refuge system, helping to build the conservation estate, whether it was for the refuges or for the states, or for the local conservation groups, whether they be land trusts or local governments. And I felt in retrospect, I felt I was so lucky to be involved with the Fish and Wildlife Service during that great time because now have a daughter who is a PhD student in conservation and the changes that have taken place just in the last several years are such that I wonder about the future of conservation, the future of the refuge system's growth, because the growth is still needed. We still need to be protecting these places. Yet there have been some changes that I think have happened in our society that may not have the majority of people valuing those things the same way they were valued during my career, during my time working for the Fish and Wildlife Service. So, I think that's... so what I'm really saying is that I feel really... I've been really lucky to have been working in a time when conservation was growing, when it was an understanding of the value of conservation, a greater awareness of how things are connected, and a greater awareness of the need to consider the entire landscape rather than individual spots.

So, Bill Ashe, who was our deputy regional director, was interested in using the information from the Main coast ecological characterization and the seabird inventories to help expand the refuge in Maine, the Coastal Islands Refuge. And over a period of time that really was successful and is continuing to be successful. And I'm encouraged to hear that it's continuing to identify areas that are needed for conservation by the refuge system along the Maine islands. So, it's great to hear that these things are still living documents and living programs. And the Service is moving forward with things that have been part of what they've been doing for years. And that's been really good.

So, after I worked for the Office of Realty, when Reagan was elected, there was a change in some of our policies relating to land acquisition. And that was, I think, in 1980. And so, there wasn't a great interest in acquiring more islands during that part of the Reagan administration. And I could see the handwriting on the wall that that wasn't going to be the near term future, to continue the growth of the Maine Coastal Islands Refuge, as the administration did not want to spend the Land and Water Conservation Funds on those purposes.

So, I started looking for work in other places in the Fish and Wildlife Service. I was lucky enough to get a position at the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, where I started as the biologist for the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. I think it was in 1980 or 1981 when I went out there from Region Five. And that was a really great experience because the Hawaiian Islands Refuge is spread out over, well, it was over like 5,000 miles at that point in the Pacific. And traveling to those places and having the experience to see 10 million seabirds on a 1,000-acre island was pretty incredible. More seabirds on one island in the Pacific than you'd have on the entire east coast of the United States. So you really had a feel for the significance of those places.

The Hawaiian Islands [Refuge] was established by Teddy Roosevelt. He had the foresight to see the value of these places. And again, I was there at an incredible time. It was a time when our technology was such that the military no longer needed islands to refuel planes that would have to go potentially to the Pacific Theater for lots of purposes. We now had planes that could fly that distance without refueling. We had military equipment that could do what it needed to do in that theater without having to be close by. So, the military started excessing their bases in the Pacific. And because of my background in

Realty and also because of my landscape level approach looking at the entire Pacific Ocean, I took the opportunity to work with the military, do surveys on military bases, so that when the military pulled out of the islands, we could then step in and get these islands to be part of the refuge system before they were transferred out of the government estate.

So, I had learned all that through my work in Maine with the Coast Guard, that when the Coast Guard excessed islands, we learned how to pick those islands up if they had nationally significant resources. So, when I went to Hawaii and the military was pulling out of their bases, we used the same processes. We identified what was important on these areas, and then we worked with the military to have those important areas transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service as National Wildlife Refuges. So now Midway is a national wildlife refuge, and Wake Island is a national wildlife refuge. Guam is a refuge, and those were former military bases that I was fortunate enough to be around, to play a role in having them become part of the refuge system.

And then I also was involved with monitoring programs of seabirds on the Hawaiian Islands because of the State of Hawaii's interest in establishing a fishery in these areas. They wanted to establish a fish transport station on the Tern Island National Wildlife Refuge, and they wanted to open up the refuge waters to commercial fishing. And the State was going to provide interest-free loans to fishermen for boats and equipment to fish in the Hawaiian Islands so the Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to determine what would the impact of a fishery be on the seabirds. So, we did energetic studies of seabirds. Craig Harrison did a monograph on the feeding habits of seabirds, and we determined what the amount of food and what species the seabirds were eating so that we could enter into the discussions about fishery management with the fishery managers on what would be a sustainable take and still allow for the millions of seabirds on these islands to have food. Well, the fishery never came to pass. There were few boats that the State did provide low-interest loans to fishermen. Other fishermen already had boats and they started fishing the Hawaiian Islands, but nobody could make enough money fishing in those areas to make a living, so it really never did materialize.

MR. GOETTEL

What were they catching? What were they after?

MR. FEFER

Lobster, mahi mahi, bass, ground fish. So, anything that pretty much, Kona crab was big out there too. But they never could really make enough money because it was so far from the market. And really it was so far from the market that it was hard to keep your fish fresh and get it to market. So, the values weren't there for the fishery. And the Fish and Wildlife Service wasn't going to permit a fishery transport station on the refuge on Tern Island because they would have to have airplanes and boats landing and the entire island was now a seabird nesting island. And it would have had devastating effects on the seabirds that were nesting there as well as disturbing the turtles and the monk seals which were both endangered species. So, the fishery station wasn't permitted and then the fishery didn't materialize. But we learned a lot about the seabirds' energetics and the seabird feeding and really helped to set the stage for managing the islands.

I worked in Hawaii for 10 years and returned to the Northeast. I think it was in like 1989 or '90 as the assistant refuge supervisor for the refuges in the Northeast. And that job was a little bit stifling for me. Number one, I hadn't really worked in a regional office before with lots of high-level supervisors and

that type of thing. And also, after being in Hawaii and managing a refuge that was 5,000 miles and incredible resources and no people, coming back to the Northeast where, really except for a few exceptions, the refuges were mainly involved in people management, and the refuges were little postage stamps on the large landscape. And I couldn't see how wildlife could survive with just these postage stamps. So, I really saw a need for more of a landscape level approach working with the refuges, the states, and all the partners that we could ever come up with to protect larger areas and manage larger areas for wildlife.

And I was fortunate to again be in the right place when the coastal program was established. And that was a program that was to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service, especially with Refuges, to assist with identifying areas that are important and to work with conserving those areas and restoring those areas and the species that use those areas. So I was fortunate to then work on the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program and I was stationed in Falmouth, Maine. I think we started in 1991. And I did work there for the rest of my career until 2014 when I retired and worked with the refuge system on the Maine islands and in Moosehorn and Rachel Carson and I identified important areas. I did a lot of work with grant programs including the North American Wildlife Conservation Program [correction: Plan] and the Coastal Wetlands Grant Program. That was big.

And you start applying for these grants and working with the State and the refuge system and start acquiring islands through grant programs. And oftentimes the refuge would end up with these islands. Sometimes the State ended up with a few of these islands. But what we were doing was - we were, in my view, creating what I called a virtual refuge. It was protected by a lot of different entities. The refuge system, the State would protect some. Some of the NGOs, Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, they would protect some. And so virtually with the refuge having now 65 islands and the State having maybe another 40 or 50 and then the Nature Conservancy and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and local conservation groups, land trusts having many others, there's quite a number of the most significant islands that have been protected. There's still a way to go, but the progress has been absolutely incredible really when you look at it over a 30 or 40-year period. So that's also very satisfying to me to look back and see how these programs take a lot of time, but there are a lot of professional people working on them and people work together and can make things happen. So that's been really great.

Now, so with the coastal program, we also focused on Atlantic salmon because Atlantic salmon were being considered at that time for listing as an endangered species. So, we did a lot of work identifying barriers to migration and then work to remove a lot of these barriers and provide fish passage at others where the barriers were not likely to be removed. And that program has really grown, and it has been very successful. We now have alewives returning [and] major river restorations.

One interesting story was the first dam removal project in Maine was on the Presumpscot River. And that was done with the non-government organization, the Coastal Conservation Association. And so, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided a grant to the Coastal Conservation Association to purchase the dam from the power company to then use that as a match for the Corps of Engineers program that removed dams. So, it was really the first dam removal and it was very complicated and there was a lot of moving parts. But once that was accomplished and people saw how that could be accomplished, things started moving forward on other rivers. The Kennebec, the Penobscot now have had major dam removals and very successful fish restoration in those rivers. And those are the largest drainages in the Gulf of Maine. So those are really great successes.

And I think that one of the reasons for providing fish passage is not only for the Atlantic salmon to spawn successfully, but also for all the other species like alewife and river herrings. And those fishes were the driver for the great cod fisheries in the Gulf of Maine. So, by providing this fish passage in our rivers, we're really helping to recover the entire food source for commercial fisheries, for fish that people eat in the Gulf of Maine. So, it's really another landscape restoration program that I think continues to be very successful.

MR. GOETTEL

There's also multiple purposes to it. A lot of the lobstermen use alewives for bait. That's a really good bait species or bait source for lobster fishermen. The tribal members, I know in the Penobscot, probably elsewhere too, but certainly in the Penobscot Indian Island, they're very appreciative of the restoration and the native fish coming back to their area.

Mr. FEFER

Definitely, they were.

MR. GOETTEL

That's a huge thing.

MR. FEFER

They're a critical partner.

MR. GOETTEL

Yeah. I remember when Bruce Babbitt was Secretary of the Interior. He came down to the Edwards Dam removal in Augusta on the Kennebec. So, it got national attention, which is a huge deal, I think, for, again, going back to your ecological characterization, an ecological restoration of parts of Maine. Huge deal, huge accomplishment, Stewart.

MR. FEFER

Yeah, it was just great. And then we had the Penobscot, which was really huge, with all the partners getting together and purchasing dams and then providing fish passage and removing dams and really helping to restore the Penobscot watershed. It's quite something. And I remember, again, you remind me of the ceremonies when these dams were removed. And I was really moved by the Native American connections to what we were doing. It was so important for them in the restoration of their communities and their culture. And then we even were successful in the St. Croix, helping to move alewives up the St. Croix, despite a lot of opposition at that time.

MR. GOETTEL

I remember that.

MR. FEFER

And again, what was gratifying to me was to see the people come out when we were having these dam restoration ceremonies to celebrate the success of these fish passage projects. And people would come out of the woodwork, so to speak, to be part of this and would speak and just be so pleased that this

was finally happening. And so, a lot of people really do understand and appreciate the values, despite what comes out as opposition. That gets a lot of press, I guess. And you don't hear about all the people who support it.

MR. GOETTEL

Right. Some people ask me, why would you take a dam out? If the dam is there and it's generating electricity, why in the world would you do that? And the answer now, of course, is, I mean, it's clear to a lot of people that the value of all the native fish restoration and the fisheries itself is so much more important than the relatively small amount of electricity that's actually generated.

MR. FEFER

You know, what was really interesting, I think - that was really recognized on the Penobscot, where despite the removal of several dams on the Penobscot, the power generation from the Penobscot remains the same, because as part of the overall restoration plan for the whole river, we're able to increase the head, I think, at one of the dams, I forgot which one now, in order to provide the increase in power at that one dam to compensate for the removal of two others. So, for the people of Maine, there was no net loss of power generated from hydro in the Penobscot. And I think that was an evolution to get there, and we got there. That was one of the keys to its success, I think, in that there wasn't a loss of power.

MR. GOETTEL

And that trickles down to the refuges too. I know at Moosehorn I was involved in replacing a lot of the dams where I worked a lot with Ducks Unlimited, and we always put in a fish passage now, which is something that years ago when I worked there in the 1980s we would never have thought of doing. So that trickled down really fast.

MR. FEFER

But the other thing that I've talked a lot about is what I did in the Fish and Wildlife Service. And I also was fortunate in my experience in Hawaii, as I mentioned I worked with the military bases a lot. And I also worked with Pacific Island nations on seabird conservation, with the Kiribati, which is in the Marshall Islands. And when I came back to the northeast and worked as their assistant refuge supervisor, I sort of started to miss some of that work with other nations. I was fortunate enough to be able to work with the Department of the Interior International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP), which is a program that provides technical support to other countries who ask for it in various activities, whether it be planning for hydro developments or creating terrestrial refuges or marine protected areas or managing protected areas. And because of my experience, I was recruited by ITAP to work on many projects involving protected areas, managing protected areas, mentoring staff on protected area management. So, I was fortunate to have been able to work in Central America, Africa, the Middle East, Indonesia, and I feel like I've been able to at least help mentor staff that were able to carry on in conservation and managing these areas when we left. But those experiences were really helpful to me and helped really keep me fresh for when I was working back in the United States and really provided me some good perspectives.

And also since my, since I retired in 2014, and I think it was in 2015, I started to work with the National Wildlife Refuge Association. And I'm working with them with refuges on the Gulf Coast of Texas, trying

to, or we are identifying restoration and protection projects along the Gulf Coast of Texas that would help mitigate from the losses from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. And there are numerous settlement funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation holds, through NRDA and through private foundations. And so we've been working expanding the Laguna Atascosa Refuge in Southern Texas, helping to establish a coastal corridor around the Bahia Grande, which is part of the Laguna Madre system, which is the one of the largest hypersaline lagoon in the world known for its wintering waterfowl populations and incredible recreational fisheries. And so, we've been working to expand the Laguna Atascosa Refuge to connect the ranch lands to the north of the refuge, that are huge expanses of incredible wildlife habitat with the protected lands in Mexico. So, we're going all across the southern border.

And also, this area would be a incredible corridor for the endangered ocelot. The ocelots are on the ranch lands to the north of the refuge. And there's the Rio Bravo Reserve in Mexico -a huge reserve south of the Rio Grande. And now we're helping to create a corridor of ocelot habitat through this project between these ranch lands in Mexico. And that's been really gratifying and successful to work with the state people in Texas and the refuge people who are really working well together and all working hard to make this happen.

And then we're also starting a new project for the central coast of Texas, around Matagorda Island and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, to protect the entire habitat for the wintering whooping crane. And the thought is that if we can protect these areas, wintering habitat, then we can de-list the species. So that's a big project.

MR. GOETTEL

In what timeframe?

MR. FEFER

Well, it would be happening over the next five years.

MR. GOETTEL

Wow. That's huge.

MR. FEFER

So that's what I'm working on soon. I have a meeting with the people in Texas and the Refuge Association next month, and we'll be embarking on this land protection plan for Matagorda and Aransas. And that would allow the Service to accept these lands that would be acquired through the state and the settlement funds, and then provided to the Fish and Wildlife Service once the LPP would allow them to accept the lands.

MR. GOETTEL

LPP is "Land Protection Plan." I know you used another acronym a few minutes ago, "NRDA."

MR. FEFER

“Natural Resource Damage Assessment,” which is what happens if there's an oil spill, then the damage is assessed through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Program, and then the responsible party has to mitigate whatever was impacted.

MR. GOETTEL

Okay. Go ahead.

MR. FEFER

The one thing that I didn't really emphasize, perhaps as much as I should, is the importance of working outside the Fish and Wildlife Service. One of the things that was a struggle during my career was that we're a very small agency, and we really don't have the resources to accomplish our mission. Yet our mission is so critical to the people of the country and the world. So how do you get the job done if you don't have enough money in your own pocket to get it done?

So, I started again Maine was a great place to work, is a great place to work. We were blessed with a lot of conservation organizations, statewide and local organizations that had a similar overlap with the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service for protection of important areas. They may want to protect them for recreation or for historical or cultural, whereas our primary mission was wildlife, but where we intersected, we had great capabilities.

And so, a lot of the work that was our most successful during my career that I was involved with wasn't just the Fish and Wildlife Service. It was getting the state involved and them having an interest in the project. It was getting the local governments involved, getting the conservation organizations involved and everybody stepping up to the plate and really providing some partnership funding. A lot of the federal funding is matching funding. Well, it has to match non-federal funds. So, in order to access those federal funds, you have to come up with non-federal funds. And so, by working with these organizations and working with the State, we could do that. We could say here we have an important area. State, you want to protect this. We want to protect this. The NGOs want to protect this. How can we do this?

So the State had programs like the Land for Maine Futures program where they were acquiring land and the local organizations, non-government organizations, they would raise funds privately to acquire these areas. And so, we would get together and we'd say, well, we want to acquire this area. Let's hypothetically, this area costs a million dollars. Well, I can probably come up with \$500,000 from a federal grant, but first I need the match. So, these folks would commit money from the State and from their organizations. And then we'd all work together to apply for the federal grant and it became very successful. We were very successful.

So, then the next time it happened, it was very easy. Everyone said, okay, we'll do that again. And we did that repeatedly and it's still being done. And what's really cool to me is it's been recognized now as a way to do business. So, it's expanded and a lot of others are doing it, at least throughout the Northeast, I know. And that is really good. So, I think we were able to really demonstrate what partnerships can do in reality. And once people saw how the rubber met the road, they would start doing it. And I say that because when I started doing this, I was challenged by my colleagues. They would say to me, “You're destroying the Fish and Wildlife Service. We put in for money in our budget for this and we don't get it. And then you go out and get the money from the privates and states and the grants and you do it. Well, the Fish and Wildlife Service will never get any money again because of you.”

So that was a challenge to me. People would be upset at me because I would be working outside the Fish and Wildlife Service and getting Fish and Wildlife Service projects done. They said, "No, you shouldn't be doing that. If the government doesn't want to fund it, we shouldn't be doing it. We are the government. We shouldn't be going outside the government to do this stuff."

But I think that was a sea change for the Fish and Wildlife Service to recognize that they can work with partners. They can work outside the Fish and Wildlife Service. They can actually talk to Congressional staff. They can talk to non-government organizations and work with states. Imagine that.

MR. GOETTEL

And not only can they do it but it's so much more the product that you get is so much better than if you've just done it by yourself. You get the buy-in and everything from everybody.

MR. FEFER

When I work overseas in some other countries, I see the Fish and Wildlife Service in these other countries 50 years ago. They have the same, they think, "Okay, we're the agency, we're responsible, we're not going to talk to anybody, we're going to put up our signs, everyone's going to know this is a protected area, we manage it, anyone wants anything they got to come to us and ask us," – that kind of thing.

And they're not working with others yet. And so that's one of the things that we always try to do in all foreign assignments is raise their awareness of working with others and you can get more done. And we were successful in doing that. And so that was a gratifying thing. So, the Fish and Wildlife Service career for me was great. I had a great career, and I feel like I really was able to accomplish a lot and was able to give back to the Service. And through what I learned in the Fish and Wildlife Service and working on the national wildlife refuges and working with people, I was able to bring that to other countries and help them see. So, what I realized is that we really are the conservation leaders of the world. We really do have an incredible conservation system.

MR. GOETTEL

Have you learned anything from going over there? Have they taught you anything?

MR. FEFER

Patience. I think I had a lot of patience working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, but I've worked in Oman for 12 years, and we've been working on some specific protected areas and trying to build their management capacity and also open them up for public use because in Oman they create these protected areas, but they don't tell anybody. So, I guess what I've learned was to really help them understand the value of these areas and the value of having the public be aware of the areas and be able to utilize the areas in compatible ways. That whole concept of compatibility is something that is instilled in us that have worked in the refuge system, but it's not a concept that is really grasped in other places. So, when we go to Oman and we talk about creating tourism on a protected area, you go back after a year and they're very proud. They come to say, "Stewart, we really have a great plan to create some use on this protected area." So, I look at the plan. They're building this five-star mega-hotel with three golf courses on the reserve, and they think that's the way to get public use on the protected area.

So, it's a challenge to try to say no, it has to be compatible with the purpose for which it was established. So, if this is the last habitat for Arabian gazelles, you can't build a golf course in the middle of their habitat. So, it was a challenge. But one of the things that I've learned is that we're traveling to countries that may not be our cultural friends, but when you're dealing in conservation with other people who are interested in conservation, all that goes away and there are no roadblocks. It's people working with people on a common mission. And everybody was working together. Everybody was friends. Everybody was going out together, and eating dinner together, and camping together. And then I'd go back to the embassy, because we always had to debrief, had to brief when we got there and debrief. And so, then all of a sudden, the Oman government started asking for us by name. Said, "Oh, we want these guys coming over. We need help from them." So, then the embassy became very suspicious, because Oman [Omani officials] wouldn't really talk to people in our embassy very much. But the people in the embassy, they had to wear three-piece suits. They had to be driven around in an armed Cadillac Escalade. They could not do anything but have a meeting at the embassy or in the headquarters of the ministries. And so, then they'd say, "Well, how come they talk to you? What's going on? Why are they talking to you? They won't talk to us." So, we tell them, it's obvious. We don't drive around in armed Escalades. And we don't wear three-piece suits. And we go to their homes.

So really, it's all about, again, it's personal relationships. You've got to build relationships. And I think that was the biggest thing that I learned working in these foreign countries is that it's the same as here. It's no different. They look different. Which reminds me - I tell this story. I'm a guy from the Northeast - urban Northeast. And I go to Oman. And everyone, they look different. Different sizes. They're all short. And they wear different clothes, very different from what I'm wearing here in Maine. And yet we're working on conservation. And we're all the same. Everyone's just really active trying to get the job done.

I go to Texas. They all dress funny. They wear these funny hats. They have these gigantic things on their waist. Buckles? And they wear these funny boots. They're pointed. And they've got all these decorations on them. They speak different than me. Oman, Texas. All the same. Conservation, those people in Texas, we're all working together. Everyone's great. No problems. Oman, same thing. So that's something that I think is the most valued. That's why I encourage my kids and I encourage everybody to travel. Because that's the best education. You realize that these people are no different from me.

MR. GOETTEL

Tears down the barrier.

MR. FEFER

Right. There's no reason for me to be fearful of these people. So, when I learned that, so I was in Oman when the ban on citizens from certain Middle East countries entering the United States occurred. And our administration came out with a map showing these are the areas that we're not going to allow any of these people into the country. And you look at the list of countries, well Oman wasn't on the list. But you look at the map and Oman was considered to be part of the Emirates, which was on the list. So, we didn't even know where Oman was, we didn't even know it existed.

Okay, so then, so the people in Oman, they're wonderful people, incredible people, very friendly, love the United States. And they were really hurt by the ban. I mean they were really hurt. I mean they were sad. So, someone played a hoax on them and announced in the newspapers that Oman wasn't on the

list. And that people in Oman were welcomed in the United States. And it wasn't true. But they didn't know that.

MR. GOETTEL

Who did that?

MR. FEFER

Nobody knows. So, all these people from the ministry, high level people would come into our office in the Oman ministry when we were there. And they were so happy. They thought it was the greatest thing in the world that the United States recognized that Omanis were their friends. So anyway, that was a very painful experience for me when working in this country where all these people love the United States; were so friendly to us. And there's no terrorists in Oman. There's never been anyone identified as a terrorist in Oman. And yet Oman is part of all of this. But just to see what it did to the people there was really sad. But we don't have any economic interest there. We don't have any Trump towers, no Trump hotels, no Trump golf courses. So, what they pointed out in the Middle East is that the only places in the Middle East that were not banned were places that Trump had golf courses and hotels. So that's really hard. That was hard.

MR. GOETTEL

You've seen a lot of changes. I know you've talked a lot about the changes that you've seen. I guess looking at it from a different point of view, if you could change things, if there was something you could change, what would that be in the Fish and Wildlife Service? Let's just say the Fish and Wildlife Service.

MR. FEFER

Well, one of the big changes I saw in the Fish and Wildlife Service in my career is that the Service was and is a field organization. We have stations in almost every state. We have refuges in almost every state, maybe every state now. We have Ecological Service Offices in a lot of states. We're a field office-oriented organization, a field oriented organization. And there used to be a need for some type of administrative headquarters to make things more efficient, to make sure that folks were doing things in a similar way and to make things efficient. But it was the field, and it was the support of the field.

I think that's changed. We're still a field organization, but it seems like the field is more supporting the region than the region supporting the field. It seems to me like a lot of decisions are made now at the regional level, and then they require the managers in the field to implement those decisions, rather than the field either on a refuge managing the refuge, or an Ecological Services office reviewing the permits, reviewing the endangered species consultations. It seems to me now it's more like the field still does the draft consultation, but now it has to be approved by the region and then whatever the region says has to be done by the field, and that's how it's implemented.

The EPA is an organization that is centralized in regions. And I see us becoming more like that. And I don't think that's a good way to go for the Fish and Wildlife Service. I just think that the people in the field know what's going on in their area and have the best view of how to proceed with the decision.

MR. GOETTEL

Why do you think that's happening?

MR. FEFER

Well, another thing that I've seen happen in the Fish and Wildlife Service, it seems to me, is that the political appointees are down at lower levels than they used to be. It seems like at least at the regional director level, seems to be very political now. And then even at the ARD level, it's gotten political because it seems like the regional directors are directing the region. And so, I think it's a combination of politics being political appointees and that changing every time there's a change in the government.

But also, I don't know, it just seems to me that there's less tolerance for dissent. It used to be you could have a conversation with your peers, a very intelligent, very lengthy conversation about what's the best way to go. And people can come up with a lot of different opinions and then try to reach a consensus on what's the best way to proceed. I don't see that happening much anymore. I don't see these discussions and give-and-take.

MR. GOETTEL

Do you think that's across the country in the whole Service?

MR. FEFER

I don't really know. It seems that way though. Seems that it's become more political. And maybe it's that, you know again, as I said, I was lucky to work at a time, maybe the environmental age, Richard Nixon was president, he signed all these important environmental policy acts and clean water acts and clean air acts. And maybe over time, there was pressure. It always seemed to me to be real honest that it wasn't, there's always economic pressure, and they wasn't always very truthful. I remember in Maine, after the Clean Water Act was passed, all the paper companies said they were gonna go out of business because they could no longer do log drives down our rivers. You know, our rivers used to be, you could walk across them on the logs. There was no place for any fish, there was no place for any fish habitat, it was all logs. We altered our rivers to create channels for the logs to flow, because the rivers used to have rocks in them, so we gotta get around those rocks, gotta take those rocks out so the logs can flow.

Well anyway, with the Clean Water Act, you couldn't take all the oxygen out of the rivers anymore by having all this wood debris in them. So, we ended the log drives through the Clean Water Act, not we, but they ended. But when it was up for authorization, the paper companies said, "If you passed this Clean Water Act, we're all going out of business." Look at the economics of those companies. They increased. They made more money after the Clean Water Act. So that's what I meant by false economics. You know, when the car company said they were going to go out of business, when they had these CAFE standards. And now we just reduced the CAFE standards by our government.

MR. GOETTEL

CAFE being?

MR. FEFER 01:07:11

The mileage that a car company can have for their total fleet of cars has to be above a certain miles per gallon [Corporate Average Fuel Economy]. So, which basically car companies said, "Oh, we can't do that. We're going to go out of business." Well, they didn't go out of business. So anyway, this is what I mean by false economics, but I think there's a lot of pressure.

And depending on who's in power, those pressures are very strong. So, if you're the Fish and Wildlife Service and someone is proposing a huge wind farm or industrial wind facility, as I'd like to call them, there's a lot of pressure to make that happen. So, the Fish and Wildlife Service comes out and says, "Well, we're not quite sure, but this is where all the birds migrate. And we think we don't have any experience with this, but we think that these windmills are going to take out a lot of birds." Well unless you know that you can't say that, because the wind power companies have a lot of money, there's a lot of pressure politically. So that's maybe part of the change is that we have these environmental laws. They mature. People now recognize that if you're trying to build a nuclear power plant and oil refinery or something major, it's going to be tough with the new standards. So, you try to change the standards because they think they'll make more money by doing whatever they want to do. Whether or not that's true or not, I question because I'm not an experienced economist, I'm not an experienced businessman, but I have lived for 67 years and have seen what industry said about gasoline standards, have seen what industry said about clean air, have seen what industry said about clean water. And if what they said was true, there'd be no industry left. Yet our economy is booming. So, I think a lot of problems are perceptions and greed.

MR. GOETTEL

You've talked a lot about the progress that we've made. We've talked about alewives and sturgeon coming back to the rivers in Maine. We have seen progress. Overall, do you think conservation is making progress? In the whole scheme of things, is it making progress?

MR. FEFER

I think the biggest bugaboo in my career was when we became aware of the impacts of climate change. I spent a lot of time in my career protecting islands for nesting seabirds, protecting rivers and restoring rivers for cold water fish -- salmon. With climate change, maybe we're protecting, maybe those rivers were now protected for shad because salmon may not make it with climate change. The seabird islands that we thought we were protecting for puffins or razor bills or Arctic terns. I'm not sure what we're protecting them for now. Cattle egrets

So that has been a real bugaboo for me. So yes, conservation is important because whatever land we protect it will be repopulated by a wildlife species, but maybe not the same wildlife species that are here now. So we'll have shad running up the rivers. Shad now run up the rivers of North Carolina more than they do in Maine, but they'll be moving north. So maybe we'll have shad and by not having dams and by having fish passage, the shad will be able to get up the rivers and spawn.

So yes to conservation, yes it had a value. It has a value. But it was a bugaboo for me because 20 years ago, 10 years ago, I would have said this is forever. We're protecting this seabird nesting island, and these birds will be here forever. But I can't say that now. And you know, I wrote a lot of things saying we're protecting these things for razorbills and puffins and Arctic terns and eider ducks. But that wasn't true.

MR. GOETTEL

Maybe not in the long run.

MR. FEFER

Right, in the long run.

MR. FEFER

Right, in the short run it was true. Climate change was a big change for the way I was viewing the conservation work that we were doing. Because it wasn't permanently protected for the things that are there or that will come. Now it's permanently protected and we're not sure what's going to come.

But I'm still uncertain of some of the science behind these corridors that we talk about. We're going to create corridors so that animals can migrate with climate change? That baffles me, I don't quite understand how that's going to happen.

MR. GOETTEL

Why is that?

MR. FEFER

Who's going to migrate? What's migrating? To where? I mean you've created these pathways to the north so that a deer can migrate to the north. I don't get it. Birds fly so that's a different thing.

MR. GOETTEL

Right, our trust species. So, you talked about Bill Ashe having an influence on your career. Did you have any other mentors along the way?

MR. FEFER

My mentor Erik Kiviat was a real mentor. Bill Ashe was a mentor.

MR. GOETTEL

Could you spell Erik's name, please?

MR. FEFER

Erik is Erik Kiviat. K - I - V - I - A - T is his last name, and Erik is E - R - I - K.

MR. GOETTEL

Great, thank you.

MR. FEFER

He's at Hudsonia in Annandale, and I think it's part of Bard College. Rob Schellenberger, who was a refuge manager when I first got out to Hawaii, was a great mentor because he was such a knowledgeable biologist, and he had lived in Hawaii for years and had worked for Hawaii Audubon and knew a lot of the issues in Hawaii. So, he was a great mentor to me. He was only there for maybe a year or so when I was out there at the beginning, but he helped me a lot in setting the stage.

MR. GOETTEL

Was that before he became Chief of Refuges? Before?

MR. FEFER

Before.

MR. GOETTEL

Because then I think he retired, he came back.

MR. FEFER

He went back to Hawaii. His wife is the daughter of a rancher on the big island. He passed away, and she inherited this incredible ranch up on Mauna Kea. Rob is up there with his airplane. Yeah, that was before he was chief of refugees. I think Glenn Kinser was a mentor also. Glenn K-I-N-S-E-R. And he was the head of the Annapolis field office for many years, project leader for the Annapolis field office. And then he became the deputy with Bill Ashe on the Coastal Program. And when he was in Annapolis, he really established the Chesapeake Bay Coastal Program and established the original vision for the program, which I thought was a great vision. And so, I always pulled that out and tried to make sure that what we were doing was in concert with that vision. So, I always had a lot of great respect for Glenn and his mentoring. And then there were people like Joe Dowhan who was with the coastal program in southern New England before I arrived back in New England in Maine. And he was the head of the Chesapeake Bay Coastal Program [Correction: Joe was the head of the Southern New England Coastal Program, not the Chesapeake Bay Coastal Program]. And he was a great scientist, biologist, and he was a great mentor in looking at landscape conservation. So, he was really...

MR. GOETTEL

That's spelled D -O -W -H -A -N, Joe Dowhan.

MR. FEFER

Thank you. But I think working with a lot of people over the years, I've really gained a lot from all of them. Even people that, I learned a lot from watching people do things that I wouldn't do. I learned a lot by watching how people were impacted by what their supervisor may have said or done. So even though it wasn't necessarily something that was obviously consciously I could talk about, I knew I could see things, and it helped me understand how I would react to something. So, most were positive, but there were some negative things that I observed that made me think, okay, I'm never going to do that.

One of the most important things that I think was tough about being a project leader in the field is that you're the supervisor. You're the one that is supervising the office. You're the one who directs the office. At least I thought I would have some control over what was going to be done in the office. But you were all alone. You know, the staff worked with the other staff. But when you were doing performance reviews or directing staff to do things or not do things that they didn't really like, you were all alone.

And that was really difficult because you're in a field. You're in it. It's not like you're in a regional office where, okay, there's three other supervisors in the next office or this guy above you, you could go talk to them or someone else. Nobody to talk to. You're alone. And it's tough. And I don't think that there's enough support for the supervisors. It's even the support of everyone getting together and talking these things out. Not just going to a meeting and learning about what the next priority is and what your budget's going to be and what the new directives are and all that stuff. It's actually supporting supervisors and empathizing with supervisors and understanding the issues and then learning from them. This isn't the first time this has happened. How do you get that information? I never figured it out.

I could call my friends who were supervisors and talk to them, and I did. But there wasn't any real support network and there was no help in establishing a support network. One of the recommendations I would have for the future is to support the supervisors because they're all alone, the field supervisors. And recognize that the staff, they can get together and they can commiserate over what the supervisor's doing. But who are you going to commiserate with? And I think it's important for people to have something to bounce off of, peers to talk to and to learn from and to learn from others' experience because this isn't anything new.

MR. GOETTEL

I always used to say, and I shouldn't this is your interview, not mine, but I always used to say that there should be case studies of a lot of the personnel problems that have happened. And I know, and everybody says, well you can't, there's privacy and blah, blah, blah. And you don't have to invade somebody's privacy because you've got, there's a huge rumor mill. You know, the agency is so small and somebody, something happens to somebody and the rumor mill spreads. And so, chances are we're going to find out about it anyways, whether we should or not, legally should or not. But if they did case studies about what to do when somebody does this, this or this, that would have been really helpful to a supervisor, any supervisor, I would think.

MR. FEFER

I agree. I agree.

MR. GOETTEL

The GSA – here I go again - but the GSA training courses were – when you are a GS-5 or 7 you have to take these GSA, back then, back in the day, you had to take these GSA supervisory courses and they were pretty close to worthless because they didn't use case studies, and they didn't say, "Okay, Mr. Supervisor, this is going to happen to you. It might not happen to you today, but it might happen to you tomorrow and you better be ready for it because there's all kinds of people out there. We're all human beings, and we all make mistakes." Anyway, I'm sorry to interject.

MR. FEFER

No, no. I think that's exactly where I was going. I mean there needs to be some kind of communication for supervisors because I know that I was not facing unique problems that only occurred once in my office. These were things that were occurring throughout all the offices. So why is this? Where's my help? I need help. I'm a biologist. I didn't get trained in interpersonal skills as a wildlife biologist. I didn't go into this field because of my natural leadership qualities.

MR. GOETTEL

And that's what everybody said. Everybody right across the line, everybody says that.

MR. FEFER

So, when you ask me to do this stuff, or I ask myself to do this stuff, the system should recognize that we all need some mode of assistance and support. I actually didn't necessarily think that the processes that I would have to go through for dealing with, let's say, problem personnel, was doable for me. So maybe I shouldn't have been a supervisor because I couldn't devote my time to documenting everything all my

employees were doing or not doing, which if I had problem employees, that was the first thing that I was asked to do. Well start documenting everything that they're doing right or wrong or whatever.

And again, I'm a biologist, as you've heard through this interview. I have a passion for conservation. So, if there were problem employees, they probably weren't going to do that conservation work the way I was going to do it. But in order to deal with that, I'd have to document their lives for the next two or three years before the system could take any action. And I wasn't willing to do that.

MR. GOETTEL

But if you had had some support, you would have been better prepared and better able to cope with that.

MR. FEFER

Well, I didn't even know what it was that I was supposed to be documenting. I mean you did come in at 8:30 that morning? That's what I'm documenting? So, there were things I think that I needed more support is really what I'm saying. And the person who took my place at that job committed suicide after a year in that job. Not necessarily do we know that the job was part or all or some of the reason. But I was working with this person. I would talk to him every two or three weeks. He needed support. So, it wasn't only me.

MR. GOETTEL

I would do the same thing. I would call up when I had a personnel problem, I would call up a fellow refuge manager who I knew was not afraid of dealing with personnel problems. So many times, so many people in Refuges anyways try to sweep things under the rug and pretend they don't exist, which of course just makes things worse. So, I sought out people I could trust that I knew were not afraid and that would take appropriate action. And I appreciated their help. It's really interesting that you say that though because I never thought of it, but now that you bring it up, it's very clear to me that we did need support. Every refuge manager, every supervisor, needs that type of support because we're all human beings and the people you supervise are human beings and they make mistakes.

MR. FEFER

So, the hardest part of my job was the supervision. And at one point early in my career, I was told that I was holding people to too high a standard.

MR. GOETTEL

Same here. I was told that too.

MR. FEFER

So that confused me. So, then what am I supposed to do? If I can't hold them to a standard, I have to lower my standards. How low do they go? So, things like that were tough on me. I mean, I didn't know what to do. I don't know the right word, but I would work really hard for days on performance plans to make them clear the way I thought they were supposed to be. But then they tell me I couldn't do that in Personnel. "No, you can't hold them to that."

MR. GOETTEL

Were you ever given a genuine personnel evaluation? You're supposed to be given one every year. Were you ever, did any of your supervisors ever give you one?

MR. FEFER

Performance review?

MR. GOETTEL

Performance review. Yeah, I'm sorry.

MR. FEFER

A lot of the performance reviews, yeah, I had performance reviews, but a lot of the performance reviews was me documenting what we did for all my elements. And then I'd have a conversation with my supervisors, and then they'd come up with a rating. I can't say it happened every year. And in fact, towards the end of my career, it rarely happened.

MR. GOETTEL

But did anyone ever say, "Stewart, do this? Stewart, don't do that?" The reason I ask is because I don't think anybody ever said to me, "Tom, do this. Tom, don't do that." You know what I mean? When you needed genuine feedback, nobody ever said, they might say, well, you did a good job on this thing, or you did a good job on that thing, but nobody ever said, well, geez, you really should. I don't know what a good example is, but you know what I'm saying.

MR. FEFER

I do.

MR. GOETTEL

I think that was a real disappointment in my career, not to have an honest performance review evaluation.

MR. FEFER

Yeah, there was very little real discussion. Yeah. So, I can't say that I really had memorable reviews that would set future direction for me. I don't think that really happened.

MR. GOETTEL

So where do you see yourself going from here? You're, what'd you say, 67? And you've been retired four years. And where do you see yourself? What do you see yourself doing now? Continuing ITAP work?

MR. FEFER

I don't think that the ITAP work is likely to continue because I don't think our State Department is likely funding the kinds of things that we do. You know, the last couple of years I learned that it was still under the former administration's budgets. So, I don't think that, for example, that the new administration doesn't want to have anything to do with Oman. So, I don't really think that there's much that I'm gonna be doing with ITAP.

But I'll continue working with the National Wildlife Refuge Association in Texas, as long as Kelly McDowell, M -C -D -O -W -E -L -L, who is the Texas Refuge Supervisor, is there. Because he's a very visionary guy, and he's trying to do a lot of this landscape-level conservation. And they really don't have the help they need out there in refuges in any, either in the field or at the region. You know, they just don't have the staff. And that's where the Refuge Association is really being so helpful to them in providing some support so that they can get their work done.

MR. GOETTEL

And it's good to hear that the Refuge Association is doing a good job there.

MR. FEFER

Yeah, I think it's really good. And so as long as that's going on, I'll be willing to help them because they have great relations with the state. The refuge people are great. Everybody is friendly, wants to help, provides information, does it when they say they're gonna, I mean, it's great. So, and for me, I realize that I have a lot of knowledge and experience on how to get things done. But I really don't want to be doing all the background work.

So, I've been really lucky in that the Refuge Association is letting me lead the projects. But what I do is I try to find someone locally who's probably a retired state biologist. And I get them to work with me because they know the issues and they know the area and they know the species and they know what's needed. But they don't necessarily know that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation only cares about wetlands. They don't care about ocelots, for example, because the money they have is from the Deepwater Horizon spill and they gotta show that they're restoring species that were lost from the spill and ocelots weren't lost from the spill.

So therefore, saying you're gonna protect ocelots isn't gonna help you. So I have to take their stuff that says ocelots and say, no, wetlands. No, redhead ducks. So it's basically, I'm helping them, which I like to do. And the best success for me working in Texas is when I went down there last year, and I worked with a couple of NGOs and the Fish and Wildlife Service and I helped them through a proposal. And I drafted quite a bit of it. And then I said, "Okay, now you see this? This is what you need to do for this parcel, for this parcel and for this parcel." A year later, I see that they actually wrote the proposals, and they were successful.

So, it's great when I can go to a place like this and say, okay, here's what you need to do, and then they learn and then they do it. 'Cause I don't really want to do it. And I don't need to do it. I like it because it keeps my brain active, I'm still involved somewhat. But I don't really need to work very long writing and sweating over that kind of stuff. So, I'm really thankful to have the opportunity, and I'll continue doing that for maybe another year or two.

MR. GOETTEL

So, you split, now you split your time between Maine and Florida.

MR. FEFER

I do, I stay in Maine. I'm here from June through November and then in Florida from November first until the middle of June. And that's worked out real well. It's a little disconcerting when I'm looking for something, and I can't find it, and I think it's in Florida if I'm in Maine. And then two weeks later I find it

in Maine. I had tools all over the place. I need my saw. Where's my saw? Oh, I can't find it. It must be in Florida. No, it's here. But I don't know where it is. So, you know your age, your memory starts going and then you're living in three or four places. You can't figure out where you are. But I feel really lucky. I had a great career. I'm still active. My health is good.

MR. GOETTEL

I know you really helped me out getting started on the Maine islands. You gave me your Zodiac boat, your 18-foot Zodiac and trailer. I bumped around a lot of the islands after you left, and you really helped me out. I really appreciate it. I sincerely appreciate it. All you did for me and Maine, the Maine coast.

MR. FEFER

Well, it's funny. I remember coming back from Hawaii and you were the refuge manager of Petit Manan. And I saw - I was the supervisor for all the refuges from New Jersey north. So, I got to see budgets, personnel, and resources and all the refuges. And it was always such a question in my mind? "Why is this refuge up in Maine, this island refuge - why don't they have anything? No vehicles, no buildings, no staff, nothing." So, when I was assistant refuge supervisor, I would try to get as much money in staff and vehicles - whatever I could - up to Petit Manan. But there was always such resistance. And that wasn't a great time in my career, thinking back on that. You know they did start funding the refuge after you left.

MR. GOETTEL

Right. Yeah. I won't get into that.

MR. FEFER

It's crazy. It's crazy.

MR. GOETTEL

And part of it was the personalities involved at the time - the project leader and the ARD and everything. There were some problems there - the refuge supervisor - but anyways, things worked out, not the way we all wanted them to, but things worked out. If we didn't have people like you, though, that really appreciated it. Every refuge needs an advocate. Every refuge is special, every refuge has their strengths and their weaknesses. And they're not all created equally, and they need advocates that are going to push them forward.

MR. FEFER

So, one of the things that, just one of those things to me - when did the name "Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge" actually come to be in the field?

MR. GOETTEL

Right. It's not a legal name.

MR. FEFER

Right. It's a complex.

MR. GOETTEL

'Cause, it's a complex. So, what happened was, as you know, there's Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, Franklin Island National Wildlife Refuge, Cross Island National Wildlife Refuge, and Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge. Every time they get an island – Franklin they got from the Coast Guard, Seal they got from the Navy, they just slapped, they'd give it a separate number and give it its own name. So that as you're getting additional islands that was pretty cumbersome, was becoming cumbersome very rapidly. So, what they did, any islands that they acquire now are part of Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge. But for the simplicity for the sake of the public and everybody involved they call it the "Maine Coastal Islands Complex" which was in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan. I think that's when they actually rolled it out. I was involved in that a little bit and there was all kinds of discussion about what to call it and and all that. You know nothing is ever simple but it's a lot easier now to say that you're with the Maine Coastal Islands.

MR. FEFER

I think it's great that they finally did that. When I was an assistant refuge supervisor, I remember proposing that. And that was in I think maybe '92 or '93. And nobody was happy. I never understood why everyone was so opposed to it. Don Young, Don Frickie. Everyone was opposed to it. Now I knew, having been in my realty background, that the islands were individual refuges. But that didn't, to me, stop you from calling it the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Just like it's the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. It's not – there's no Hawaiian Islands. It's Laysan Island, Tern Island and Midway Island Refuge. So, when Region Five said, "No, we can't possibly do that," I would say, "What do you mean? Hawaii."

MR. GOETTEL

Right. Well, I think part of the problem is that I think there was some jealousy on people's parts. I think there's so many guys, the people in the regional office as they retired, they moved to Maine. Not all of them, but some of them did, Maine or New Hampshire. And I think they thought that it was just, there's nothing on the islands, right? There's nothing there. There's just a bunch of islands. And so you just go out and you drive around in a boat and look at the islands and then go home.

Of course, anybody who's ever worked here knows it's not quite that simple. And the islands are really valuable. They have nesting populations of everything from, and that's a good point too, because back then it was, everything was waterfowl. So much was waterfowl. And they thought that the islands didn't have anything to do with waterfowl. But they do. They've got eiders. And surrounding the islands are the marshes – they are a great place for black ducks. So, there was a huge misconception of what was going on, on the refuges.

I know a fellow who worked for the National Audubon Society. His name was Carl Buchheister. You probably met him. He actually built a camp on Matinicus Rock, which is now part of the refuge. It was a lighthouse island. And so, every couple of years they'd get a new lightkeeper in, and they'd have dogs. The dogs would be running around and disturbing the terns and the puffins. And so, Carl Buchheister went out there every single summer for, I think, 40 or 50 years. He spent the nesting season there to protect the nesting terns and puffins. And if he hadn't done that, it wouldn't be the successful island that it is today.

Well, I've heard the comment more than once that, "Yeah, he goes up there for his annual vacation on an island in Maine." And again, if you've ever been to Matinicus Rock, you'll know that it's anything but a

vacation in May and June. And maybe you'll get some decent days in July. It's remote. It's hard to get there. Everything has to be imported, food, etc. So, there was this real misconception of how valuable this was and what was going on.

And the other thing was nobody ever thought - everybody thought that you could buy an island for a thousand bucks. Now, there's always islands for sale. I don't care how small they are. They're anywhere from \$200,000 up - for a rock. A decent island is going to be millions. And people never thought that that was going to happen.

I was talking to Tim Glidden [president of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust at the time of this interview] the other day and he was saying, "Yeah, back in the 1960 was when the prices, the late 60s, the prices just started creeping up." And many people thought they were never going to go anywhere what they are today.

MR. FEFER

Well, I remember when we were working with some of the large easements in the Maine north woods, and these were basically timber companies that were wanting to continue their work in those areas but couldn't. Because of changes in the tax laws, a lot of the companies were divesting of their land. So, they thought that because of the number of wetlands on these properties and the number of birds on these properties and things like that, it would be worth investigating conservation easements. So, they would be willing to put conservation easements, "no development easements", and write a forest management plan and a wildlife management plan. Then they would apply for conservation easements to protect - especially the lakefronts - from development.

And I was supporting that, and I was helping them with NAWCA grants, and they were very successful with NAWCA grants, and then we had people in the Fish and Wildlife Service who would be writing letters saying that there's no way in the world we should be providing these grants. Nobody would ever develop up there. Nobody's ever going to develop up there. So, what we're doing is giving the paper companies money. This was our Maine field office, writing letters opposing what the coastal program was doing.

And then you look at what's happened with Plum Creek, and now everyone says, "Yeah, we've got to protect those forests." So, vision is really important. And I think what you just said about people didn't think that nobody would want to go to these islands, nobody's going to buy these islands for any money, they just leave them alone. It'll be fine. Now, if there's an island for sale, someone wants to build a house on it immediately, and a boat house, and a dock, and everything else. And all the lakefronts up north are going. Anyone who still has any lake front is selling lots. So, we live within what, eight hours of 20 million people? So, of course, it's going to feel the pressure of that at any rate. So, vision is really important, really important.

MR. GOETTEL

One of the things that we couldn't foresee back then, most of us I think is fair to say couldn't foresee, was the climate change.

MR. FEFER

Yeah, that's what I said. It's a bugaboo, climate change.

MR. GOETTEL

And now what's happening, of course, is that you've got so many people that don't want to be south of Maine. Massachusetts - the temperatures in Boston where one of our kids lives were insane this year. I mean, they were really high. New Jersey, Connecticut, wherever, and everybody's getting summer (unintelligible), and plus the Baby Boomers are retiring. I remember in the regional office, we used to get a really cool magazine for a couple of years called "American Demographics," published in Ithaca, New York. And it lays all this stuff out for you. It's a tremendous resource. You could foresee the Baby Boomer retirement wave that's coming on right now, and how everybody wants to buy land up here, buy homes up here. You could, if you had been reading "American Demographics," you could have seen that coming.

MR. FEFER

Well, what was interesting, because when I was in college at Bard, I studied human ecology. And there was a book that I remember well by a guy named Paul Ehrlich called *The Population Bomb*. This was in the 1960s. So, anybody who studied that kind of thing knew that the population was growing exponentially and that we'd be here now. Just where we are. So that's why the landscape conservation is so important, because growth is going to occur all over.

Unless it's planned, we're going to lose our populations of wildlife. So that's what it's about. It is going to happen. Now everyone recognizes it's going to happen all over the United States. And it is happening all over the United States. So, the work that we've done and the people who follow us will continue to do is even more critical. Even more critical now. And I think people are starting to understand, but I'm not sure yet that people quite understand or that anyone understands exactly where we're going.

Living in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu, especially, and I did that in the 1980s - Oahu had to import everything. Water was contaminated from the chemicals they used in [growing] pineapples. So half of the island, you couldn't even drink the water. But people go to Hawaii, the first thing they see are all these colorful parrots flying around the airport. And all these plants, they're not native Hawaiian plants, they're not native birds. So, people used to say that Oahu was a microcosm of where the planet's going, because everything had to be imported. But where are we going to import things from? From Earth? We haven't figured that one out. So, science is going to take care of all that.

MR. GOETTEL

Well, it used to be that the hunters were responsible for populations going down. And they were. I mean, to a certain extent they were, especially market hunting and some sport hunting. It's certainly responsible. But, meanwhile, hunting in the United States has gone down. There are fewer hunters, fewer anglers every year. And although I'll take that back about the anglers, I don't know if that's true. But there's definitely fewer hunters every year. And they're not the cause of wildlife going down. And now it's the population explosion, it's development.

MR. GOETTEL

Let's leave on a high note here. Do you have any final thoughts? Final words?

MR. FEFER

Well, I would encourage anybody who is interested in conservation to continue to focus on that. And I would also say that working for the Fish and Wildlife Service, look at the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service, look at its purposes. And you couldn't find a better purpose and a better mission if you're a conservationist than with the Fish and Wildlife Service. So, jump on board; help the Fish and Wildlife Service. Make the Fish and Wildlife Service better and do yeoman's work for conservation.

MR. GOETTEL

Thanks Stewart, this has been great. Appreciate it.

MR. FEFER

Thanks, Tom.

MR. GOETTEL

Take care.

KEY WORDS: climate change, coastal environments, conservation, dams, Deepwater Horizon oil spill, endangered species, GIS, international conservation, islands, landscape conservation, mapping, marine birds, marine environments, partnerships, personnel, realty, supervision, wildlife refuges

