



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240



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## Memorandum

To: Regional Refuge Chiefs, Regions 1-8

From: Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System *Cynthia T. Martz*

Subject: Adoption of a Fulltime Refuge Law Enforcement Workforce

Conservation law enforcement has been the first step in effective refuge management since Paul Kroegel patrolled the nesting bird colonies at Pelican Island more than a century ago. As our first Refuge Manager and first Federal Game Warden, he was the example by which the National Wildlife Refuge System protected its visitors, wildlife and habitat. The passion to protect and serve National Wildlife Refuges and their communities has remained the core of Refuge Law Enforcement for 115 years and will continue to be our driver into the future.

The foundation of the work on our National Wildlife Refuges has been rooted in the dedication of these early pioneers. Our dual function officers were an integral aspect of refuge management during a time that allowed for multiple functions within a single position. However, over the past several years, six regions have either reduced the dependency on dual function officers to one or two individuals or none at all.

In the 21st Century the threats facing visitors and wildlife are more complex than ever. Protection of the National Wildlife Refuge System now requires a full-time officer corps that combines a concentrated effort on conservation protection, traditional policing, and emergency first response to protect, serve, and educate the public and Service staff. Our vision, Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation, called upon us to measure progress and prioritize refuge law enforcement with an eye to the future of conservation law enforcement and a focused dedication to protection of people and resources.

The Service will be decommissioning the dual function officer program in two stages. On October 1, 2018, GS-13s and Wage Grade employees will cease their law enforcement duties. All other current dual function officers will cease carrying out law enforcement duties on January 1, 2019. The Division of Refuge Law Enforcement Headquarters Office will coordinate with the Regional Chiefs of Refuge Law Enforcement on this transition.

We extend our sincerest gratitude, appreciation, and thank you to all of the men and women of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service that have ever held or currently hold a commission of law enforcement as a dual function officer. Each person has contributed to our proud heritage of service and protection, and will forever be remembered as rising to the call at a time when it was needed.