



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

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### WATT PRAISES STATE-FEDERAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PACT IN ALASKA

Interior Secretary James Watt's "good neighbor" policy has taken root in Alaska where neighbors are often miles apart.

Watt said today that Keith Schreiner, Regional Director for Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage, and Ron Skoog, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, jointly signed a March 13 agreement that clarified Federal and State wildlife management responsibilities and roles in the 49th State.

Watt has urged all Interior agencies to lay out the welcome mat in support of his good neighbor policy. Calling the Alaskan document a "breath of fresh air," he said the joint Memorandum of Understanding "signals a new era of cooperation that will have far-reaching benefits for Alaska's fish and wildlife.

"Managing fish and wildlife on the last frontier takes special men and women," Watt said. "Alaskans are innovative, proud, and awesomely independent people who are not afraid to take the bull by the horn. Regional Director Schreiner and Commissioner Skoog have set a new standard for resource management. This Administration has great respect for the competence and commitment of State wildlife agencies and will continue to encourage cooperative endeavors of this kind. Working together--in Alaska and elsewhere--we will accomplish much more for wildlife than we will going our separate ways."

The agreement recognizes the Fish and Wildlife Service's responsibility for managing migratory birds, endangered species, and other species mandated by Federal law and for conserving fish and wildlife on refuge lands. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game further agreed to comply with applicable Federal laws and regulations before embarking on enhancement or construction activities on Service lands. The agreement identifies the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as the agency with "primary responsibility" for managing fish and resident wildlife within the State of Alaska. Both agencies agree to consult when developing policy and legislation affecting the other agency.

Proposed treaties and international agreements "which could diminish the jurisdictional authority of the State" will also be subject to consultation between the two agencies.

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In addition, the Service recognizes the Department's right to conduct routine management activities on Service areas which don't disturb or alter ecosystems. It also agrees to adopt refuge management plans, including provisions for animal damage control, that are in accord with State management plans unless the State plans are incompatible with the purposes for which the respective refuges were established.

Both agencies agree to coordinate management plans for fish and wildlife on Service lands so that conflicts arising from differing legal mandates and objectives can be avoided. Both agencies also agree that hunting, trapping, and fishing on Service lands will be conducted in accordance with applicable State and Federal law unless State regulations are found to be incompatible with refuge purposes.

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