

230 FW 7



Leadership Development for the National Wildlife Refuge System

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7.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes policy, procedures, and responsibility for leadership development within the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) and implements the recommendations on leadership contained in the System's long-term vision document, *Fulfilling the Promise*. For individual employees, the chapter provides guidance and tools for development of leadership skills and career planning.

7.2 What are the objectives of this chapter? We have established the following objectives for leadership development, assessment, and review programs within the System:

A. At an organizational level, we designed this policy to make leadership excellence and development an integral and natural part of the System's culture. It establishes the Leadership Development Program, which will give direction to and support the development of effective leaders throughout the System. Further, it will direct supervisors at all levels to identify and nurture those with leadership abilities, putting their career development on a structured path toward higher levels of skill and responsibility.

B. For individual employees, this chapter provides guidance to those interested in assuming leadership positions or improving their effectiveness and competency in their current position.

7.3 What are the goals of the Leadership Development Program?

A. To foster continuous learning through self-assessment and development of leadership skills.

B. To define critical leadership skills for the System.

C. To establish a formal process for review of the leadership skills of current and future supervisors, managers, and executives within the System.

D. To encourage the candid discussion of leadership issues as common practice within the System.

E. To elevate the value we place on leadership skills and competencies to the same level as the value we place on biological and technical competencies in the System.

F. To instill a sense of urgency about leadership issues and encourage leaders at all levels to make time to be good leaders.

G. To prepare a cadre of effective leaders to assume the increasingly challenging responsibilities of leading the System in its second century.

7.4 Who is responsible for this program?

- A. The Assistant Director - National Wildlife Refuge System** is responsible for national direction, coordination, and the overall effective operation of the Leadership Development Program.
- B. Regional Directors** are responsible for Regional direction and ensuring that leadership development is a priority.
- C. Regional Chiefs** are responsible for implementing an effective program in their areas of responsibility and ensuring that opportunities for leadership development are available to all employees.
- D. Refuge Supervisors** are responsible for ensuring that assessments and reviews are conducted in a sound, fair, and objective way and that coaching, guidance, training, developmental opportunities, and career counseling are available to all employees under their supervision.
- E. Refuge Managers** are responsible for ensuring that assessments and reviews are conducted in a sound, fair, and objective way and that coaching, guidance, training, developmental opportunities, and career counseling are available to all employees under their supervision.
- F. Supervisors** are responsible for ensuring that assessments and reviews are conducted in a sound, fair, and objective way and that coaching, guidance, training, developmental opportunities, and career counseling are available to all employees under their supervision.
- G. Employees** are responsible for taking the initiative in their own development.

7.5 What are the definitions for terms used in this chapter?

- A. 360-degree Assessment.** A tool used to evaluate an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities using feedback from a variety of sources, but primarily from self, supervisor, peers, and subordinates.
- B. Coaching.** The process of one person, the coach, helping another to perform a specific task or achieve a goal by observing, providing direct and honest feedback, and counseling.
- C. Leadership Assessment.** Using questionnaires and other instruments, as well as personal observations to evaluate leadership effectiveness and promote self-awareness of employees. Leadership assessment is a career-long process to help the individual become more aware of their leadership strengths and developmental needs.
- D. Leadership Competencies.** Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are observable and measurable. Leadership competencies define leadership success. The Service has adopted the Office of Personnel Management's Core Leadership Qualifications and Competencies as defined for the Federal workforce. See Director's [memorandum](#), January 5, 1999, subject: Leadership Development Guidance.
- E. Leadership Development.** Actions associated with gaining leadership competencies to enhance readiness for positions of greater leadership responsibility. These competencies complement and enhance the technical and natural resources management skills that are critical to accomplishment of the System mission, and refuge purposes, goals, and objectives.

F. Leadership Development Portfolio. An individual's personal collection of guidance, assessments, evaluations, notes, references, records of training, and other items that chronicle the individual's leadership development over the course of their career.

G. Leadership Review. A formal evaluation process conducted by the supervisor, that provides feedback to an individual on their leadership effectiveness, developmental needs for positions of greater responsibility, and leadership characteristics such as personal character, ethics, professionalism, credibility, and integrity. Additionally, the employee would benefit by receiving feedback from a wider audience, such as peers and co-workers, prior to discussions of leadership skill development with the supervisor. The employee would be responsible for distributing [FWS Form 3-2295](#) (Leadership Effectiveness Checklist) to three to five people that he/she interacts with on a regular basis, and collecting the completed form.

H. Mentoring. A one-on-one relationship that focuses on the needs of the mentoree. It fosters a respectful, caring, trusting relationship that guides, encourages, and supports the mentoree to develop skills to their fullest potential by sharing information and life experiences. This partnership focuses on helping individuals develop their vision for the future and develop strategies to interact positively within the workplace.

7.6 What is the difference between "leadership" and "management"? Both management and leadership skills are important and are often difficult to separate. However, leadership and management are not the same thing. Employees who are not managers can often perform important leadership functions. Developing management skills alone may not result in effective leadership.

A. Management is the process of setting objectives and coordinating resources (e.g., personnel, funding, equipment) in order to attain them. The manager supervises, assigns work, plans, prepares budgets, and evaluates results.

B. Leadership determines the direction of an organization, provides vision for the future, and motivates or leads people to enthusiastically direct their efforts toward the achievement of goals and objectives.

7.7 Why is leadership development important? Effective leadership in any agency contributes to accomplishment of its mission. Good leaders provide vision and direction, which helps maintain the health and vitality of the organization and ultimately may determine its very survival. Effective leadership is also essential in maintaining a diverse and highly motivated workforce and creating the synergy needed for the effective use of funding and staff resources. Often the integrity and credibility of an organization is directly attributable to the quality of its leadership.

7.8 If I want to develop my leadership skills, when and where do I begin? It is never too early to begin working on your leadership skills. We encourage employees to make leadership development a career-long learning process. Begin with your supervisor by requesting a leadership review. Then work with your supervisor to develop an individual development plan ([FWS Form 3-2020B](#)) that may include courses and assessment tools through the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) or other training providers. Finally, assume responsibility for your own leadership development. Develop the habit of reflecting on all of your work experiences and identifying what you have learned. You may want to keep a journal to document the things you learn.

7.9 What are the components of the Leadership Development Program?

A. The Leadership Development Portfolio. This portfolio is a tool that you can use to maintain a record of guidance and information pertaining to leadership. You should keep copies of various

policies, lists of available resources, assessments, evaluations, journal entries, and records pertaining to training, developmental experiences, and accomplishments. You should start a portfolio upon attainment of your career or career-conditional status. It will then be up to you to add to your portfolio over the course of your career.

(1) Who sees the contents of my portfolio? Sharing the contents or information contained in the portfolio with others is at the individual's discretion. However, we encourage employees to share and discuss their portfolios with their supervisor, their mentor(s), and others.

(2) How do I use the portfolio? You have an important responsibility in planning your own career and should use the portfolio as a tool to examine your leadership strengths and developmental needs throughout your career. For example, information in the portfolio can assist you with identifying training needs and potential developmental assignments; preparing job applications and statements addressing ranking factors; and comparing your own knowledge, skills, and abilities with those required for higher level positions. When faced with "crossroads" in your career, such as changing programs, job series, or moving from a nonsupervisory to a supervisory position, a review of your portfolio contents can help you make the right decision.

B. Leadership Assessments. Leadership assessments can provide you with insight on leadership strengths and developmental needs (see [FWS Form 3-2295](#)). Knowing oneself is the critical first step in becoming a successful leader. We should explain to and train employees early in their careers. We should evaluate them as part of these assessments.

(1) What are some of the tools for leadership assessment? Tools for leadership assessment are continually evolving. NCTC offers a variety of courses that include assessments. NCTC staff can also provide information and assistance to help employees individually assess and develop their leadership skills. Check with the Leadership and Employee Development Branch at NCTC or go to the NCTC [home page](#).

(2) What kinds of assessments should I take and when? We have grouped assessments into three categories: (a) awareness of self; (b) interpersonal or team awareness; and (c) organizational awareness. We recommend that you begin with awareness of self as a baseline. As your career evolves, you will need to be increasingly aware of how your work style and interpersonal skills affect the performance and morale of others. Feedback from others is critical in gaining a comprehensive awareness of the impacts of your behaviors and actions in the workplace. As your job/career involves you more with others in a team environment, you will want to take additional assessments in the interpersonal and team awareness category. As you move into management, your leadership strengths and weaknesses have profound impacts on the vitality, morale, and mission accomplishment of your organization. Assessments in the organizational awareness category build on your prior assessments and expand in scope to focus on organizational issues.

C. Leadership Review.

(1) Why is leadership review important? The formal leadership review discussion between you and your supervisor can provide you with feedback on your current leadership skills and effectiveness and identify any developmental needs you might have. We intend for the review process to provide an avenue to continuous learning. The overall goal of the leadership review process is to help you attain your maximum potential as a leader.

(2) What is the difference between the performance appraisal and the leadership review? Performance appraisals traditionally focus on topics such as duties, tasks, techniques, and time frames. We orient these appraisals towards the past and compare the results of your actual job performance against the desired results described in your performance plan. The leadership

review is future oriented and focuses on the leadership competencies identified in the Director's [memorandum](#) of January 5, 1999, and your potential to contribute to the organization in a leadership role.

(3) How should supervisors approach their role in the leadership review? In the review, supervisors should give employees feedback that emphasizes what the employees do best and encourage them to do more things where they excel. While identifying developmental needs is critical, counseling too often dwells on a person's perceived weaknesses. The leadership review is not conducted for the purpose of emphasizing shortcomings, but should encourage the employee to develop skills that are challenging, promote growth, and stretch the employee's "comfort zone." The review process will help employees become aware of their own skills, behaviors, and attributes.

(4) What is the relationship between the leadership review and an individual development plan (IDP)? The information gained in the leadership review, along with data from your performance appraisal, lays the groundwork for the development of an IDP ([FWS Form 3-2020B](#)). The information and self-awareness gained in the review will help you identify important or critical training, developmental assignments or details, relevant reading, and other actions you may want to include in your IDP. Design your IDP to improve current performance, to prepare yourself for positions of changing or greater responsibility, and to provide ongoing technical training to enhance your professional competencies. See [231 FW 2](#) for additional IDP guidance.

(5) Who participates in the leadership review and is it required? The review process involves at a minimum two people, you and your supervisor. We require all System personnel, including those assigned to field stations, and Regional and Headquarters Offices, who are in supervisory positions to have a review annually. Nonsupervisory employees may request an evaluation from their supervisor; however, we do not require this.

(6) What does the review involve? First, both you and your supervisor will complete the Leadership Effectiveness Checklist ([FWS Form 3-2295](#)). The checklist will then be the focus of a one-on-one discussion of your leadership skills and effectiveness. Following the discussion, we recommend that you prepare an IDP to document the recommended actions resulting from the discussion.

(7) What happens to the checklist? The completed checklist belongs to you for inclusion in your leadership portfolio. Supervisors may want to retain the checklist for his/her records, although it does not become part of your official record, nor do supervisors use it in the performance appraisal process.

(8) How will we implement the leadership review process in the System? Successful implementation of the review program may require additional training of supervisors on how to conduct better counseling sessions and provide good feedback. The initial pilot program will involve a leadership review of all refuge supervisors in each Region by their Regional Chief. Following evaluation of the pilot program and any indicated refinements, the Assistant Director will send out an implementation memo to initiate the leadership review program throughout the System. All supervisory employees will have an initial review within 1 year of the approval of this policy and subsequent evaluations not less than once every year thereafter.

D. Coaching and Mentoring.

(1) What is the difference between coaching and mentoring? Coaching involves application of a set of objective skills that the coach can learn and use to assist any other person. Coaching is task or goal oriented. Coaching does not rely on personal "chemistry" between the people involved, and, so long as the participants are well meaning, any person with acquired coaching

skills can coach anyone else. Coaching skills are important for all supervisors. Successful application of those skills is a requirement for leaders. We can successfully assign coaches to assist another person with any task. Within the System, coaching has three basic components: (a) skill in observing and objectively assessing the performance and progress of the person being coached; (b) skill in providing meaningful feedback that is honest, direct, and candid, including constructive criticism on tough issues; and (c) skill in creating meaningful experiential opportunities (e.g., assignments, details, etc.) that provide the coached person the opportunity to learn and practice new skills. Mentoring includes coaching but is a larger and more personal relationship. Mentoring requires a "chemistry" and a special level of trust between the mentor and the mentoree. Beyond task-oriented coaching and training, mentoring often involves career-long advice on goal setting and career planning. Mentoring is not reactive or situational but is proactive and may involve assistance in a variety of personal life issues throughout the course of a career. Mentors open doors of opportunities for mentorees by advising on career decisions and opportunities and by encouraging the mentoree to contact others who can advise on specific issues.

(2) Are there any differences between mentoring in the System and mentoring in other organizations? Yes. In the private sector, mentoring can and often does include the use of a mentor's positional power or influence to create opportunities and advantages for the mentoree in the pursuit of career goals. Under the merit staffing system, such use of power and influence is both inappropriate and unlawful in Federal agencies. In the System, we expect mentors to provide career development advice and create awareness of opportunities, but they do not "pull strings" or use their personal influence to create unfair advantages for their mentorees.

(3) Is there a formal mentoring program in the System? No. Because mentoring requires voluntary participation by and a personal trust relationship between the mentor and the mentoree, we prescribe no formal mentoring program throughout the System. Prior attempts to mandate mentoring have failed because they were not voluntary and did not account for the personal "chemistry" aspects of successful mentoring. Within the System and the Service, there are and have been a number of programs referred to as "mentoring programs." In fact, these programs have included sponsorship programs for new employees at a duty station and the assignment of coaches to assist employees in training programs. There is a mentoring program within the Service's Fire Management Program, and several Regions have established "mentoring" programs. This policy strongly encourages the concept of mentoring within the System and the establishment of formal mentoring programs within the geographic and programmatic components of the System. By System definition, mentoring is a voluntary relationship, entered into through a mutual and personal agreement between two people. Hence, this policy does not encourage formal programs wherein we assign or require mentors. We should refer to programs that require or assign employees to have a counselor, other than the supervisor, as "coaching" or "sponsoring" programs. This policy encourages these relationships where they develop and thrive naturally and endorses activities associated with coaching.

(4) If there is no formal program, what is the role of mentoring in the System's Leadership Development Program? We highly value mentoring within the System. We encourage employees, whether they are supervisors or nonsupervisors, who have extensive experience, knowledge, and skills to be available and open to serve as mentors, in voluntary relationships, to more junior and less experienced employees. We encourage less experienced and skilled employees to seek mentors within the organization to help them in developing skills and in establishing and achieving their career goals. The willingness and ability to mentor, coach, and otherwise develop the skills and careers of subordinates is an important part of the leadership review process. Because of the increasing recognition of the value of mentoring in the System, it will become increasingly difficult for employees to rise to senior leadership positions if they do not possess and apply mentoring and coaching skills to develop their staffs.

7.10 How does this policy relate to achievement of my career goals?

A. If an employee follows this leadership development policy, does that ensure she or he will achieve all their career goals, including attainment of senior management and executive positions in the System? All employees of integrity and good will can enhance their leadership skills and provide leadership in the workplace. Leadership is important at all levels, from leading volunteers and seasonal employees to leading field stations, staff divisions, Regions, and programs. There are no guarantees: the Leadership Development Program is not a "punch list" of items for employees to check off in pursuit of particular positions. It is what you learn and apply as a result of the program that helps you be more competitive. Merit selections to senior positions consider many factors, including competencies related to leadership, management, supervision, and technical expertise. Some employees will find through leadership assessment review and mentoring that they are best suited, most productive, and happiest in nonsupervisory roles. We will challenge others to pursue and accept responsibilities and leadership roles that they once avoided. Following this policy will not ensure any employee that they will achieve any particular status or position in the System. In contrast, employees who fail to continually assess their own leadership attributes, cannot or will not accept candid feedback through review of their leadership strengths and weaknesses, and who discount the benefits of participating in mentoring relationships will be unlikely to rise to top leadership positions.

B. What other factors, besides leadership development are important if I want to achieve senior leadership positions in the Service?

(1) Mobility. We recognize that System employees, as stewards of a national system of lands, gain valuable experience through an array of diverse experiences and assignments throughout their careers gained through personal mobility. We encourage employees who seek to develop their leadership skills and positions of greater responsibility to acquire experience through assignments in multiple geographic locations, in different Regions, at different levels (field, Region, Headquarters) and across the various programs of the Service. Each of these experiences are distinct and somewhat progressive. Mobility helps employees appreciate the ecological, cultural, and political diversity of the Nation.

(2) Continuous Learning. The Service is not the sole source of leadership development opportunities for employees. Beyond the various courses offered through NCTC, and the benefits derived from the tools presented in this policy (leadership portfolio, leadership assessment tools, leadership review, individual development plans, mentoring, coaching, etc.) employees should also seek opportunities for continuous learning outside the agency. See [231 FW 1](#) for more information. Employees seeking upper level management and leadership positions should also consider opportunities to pursue additional formal higher education. Those opportunities include graduate degrees designed to complement rather than to reinforce their undergraduate studies. For example, numerous universities offer the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree with programs designed for working professionals, including correspondence courses and courses offered on nights and weekends.

(3) Details and other assignments. Leadership in the System, along with many private companies and other government agencies, has moved toward a more collaborative style that relies increasingly on cooperation, inspiration, motivation, and persuasion. People talented in those skills will be increasingly successful in leading the System. As a result, there are more opportunities for leadership development through participation in details or other temporary work assignments, such as teams, work groups, or committees. Those opportunities exist within the Service, across Regions and programs, at a national level, and among the Service and our cooperators, locally, regionally, and nationally. In these types of assignments, employees address issues on a larger scale than they experience in their work unit and develop networking opportunities with other leadership candidates.

7.11 What is the role of NCTC in leadership development and assessment? NCTC is one source for training and leadership assessments. NCTC is also responsible for developing and

implementing Servicewide leadership development programs. NCTC staff can provide information and resources on leadership development and assessment available through NCTC, other Federal agencies, learning institutions, and commercial vendors. Contact the Leadership and Employee Development Branch.

7.12 How are the Guiding Principles of the System related to leadership development? The [Guiding Principles](#) of the System are the "glue" that binds System employees together. They are the shared tenets that focus the energy and ideas of a diverse workforce to accomplish the mission of the System. The Guiding Principles provide common ground, a jointly understood framework, for the way we approach our work and our service to the resource, the American people, and each other. Because acceptance of these Guiding Principles is essential to a happy and successful System career, leaders must articulate the [Guiding Principles](#), model them in action, and teach them. They should be a part of all counseling, coaching, mentoring, and reviews conducted in the Leadership Development Program.

For information on the specific content of this chapter, contact the Division of Conservation Planning and Policy. For more information about this Web page, contact [Krista Holloway](#), in the Division of Policy and Directives Management.

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