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>> A presentation of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Conservation Training Center, providing leadership in learning to conserve, fish, wildlife and natural resources.

>> J. Slack: Welcome to this conversation with Fish and Wildlife Service director Sam Hamilton.

We're coming to you live today from National Conservation Training Center Studios in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

We have here today our new director, Sam Hamilton.

He's going to be sharing his thoughts with you and then just as importantly, he wants to hear what's on your mind as well.

So we are going to have a wonderful conversation and have an opportunity to open up some questions and really get the thoughts of the Fish and Wildlife Service out on the table today.

We are coming to you live from the studio in several ways.

Three exactly, and you can either view us over the satellite link or you can view over a webcast today, or we have a phone bridge for those of you who can only listen by phone.

So each of those technologies is one way that we can get to you.

We're interested always in doing a better job of getting that mix of technologies out.

So at the end of the broadcast today, I will be asking for those of you who are viewing to come back with us to -- with some data so we can understand better how to come to you in the future with those technologies.

So I will explain at the end how you can get us that information.

Basically, we'll be asking for where you are located, how many people are viewing and what technology you are using.

During the course of the broadcast, obviously, we will be taking questions that Sam will answer, and you can get those questions to us in several ways.

You can either email those in to broadcast@fws.gov or you can call in your questions to us and join us here in the studio and that number is 888-212-0803.

Or you can fax your questions in to our fax here in the studio and the fax number is 877-884-6282.

I will repeat those options throughout our broadcast as we go along today.

So don't feel like you need to write them down right now.

I appreciate everyone being here and with no further delay, let me turn it over to Sam Hamilton, our new director.

Welcome, Sam.

Congratulations.

>> Director Hamilton: Well, thank you.

Good morning, good afternoon, depends on, I guess, where you are in the country.

It is truly an honor and privilege to be here today.

I really appreciate the confidence that secretary Salazar, the president and his team have entrusted in me.

It's pretty overwhelming, as you can imagine.

I also have -- the support that I have gotten from our conservation partners has been overwhelming, it has helped me get through the approval process which has been overwhelming.

I appreciate the encouragement, the letters that I have gotten.

I tried to respond to just about every email and it's been quite the challenge itself.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about me because some of you know me over 30 years, and some of you may not have had the chance to meet me yet.

But I have been working for the Fish and Wildlife Service for 30 years, right out of college, and I would even back up before that.

As a young 15-year-old, I was a YCC-er on a national wildlife refuge and then I migrated up to a YECC position.

And so those days in Mississippi, really formed a lot of what I think about this agency and started me down this path.

Half of my time in the service has been in the field, and I have been in the regional office in Washington, D.C., and there I got to really get to see all three levels of this organization.

And I truly believe we all have unique roles and very critical roles, whether you are in the field, in the region or you are in Washington.

I have had the privilege of working on large and small conservation issues, some of the biggest in the country and some very small ones.

I've spent a lot of time working on FERC for hydropower, corps of engineer projects, the endangered species act has dominated a lot of our time, working on so many refuge issues, natural fish hatcheries and getting to know and understand and at one point overseeing our law enforcement program in the southeast.

And joint ventures with our migratory bird program.

I chaired the lower Mississippi valley migratory birds for a while.

All of those opportunities pales in comparison to who I got to do it with, the very best employees that anybody could ever hope to work for and work with.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is blessed to have such professional and dedicated employees.

I will give you a few examples.

When I was in the southeast, when I got to the southeast I really

didn't know a lot about our wage grade community and I got to see them in action and the many, many hurricanes that we've had. I know most of you have heard about what went on, but to see them in action to see the commitment and the dedication and the can-do attitude amazing.

Our biologists, to see our biologists hold our feet to the fire for good science, to insist that we use the best science.

Our administrative support keeping us all straight, who is an administrative assistant that doesn't do that for you.

Our I.T. folks and engineering folks and the list goes on and on, just incredible people.

Not only do we have good people.

We have a great mission.

I think we make a lot of people jealous of our mission.

You could not ask for a better mission.

So it's second to none.

Now, this is an exciting time in conservation.

This is an exciting time to be part of the leadership team of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

I don't think I would have taken this job had it not been for that kind of support.

Secretary Salazar, his whole leadership team, the administration is 110% behind our mission.

In fact, they are pushing me instead of I'm pushing them to get out there.

I'm hanging on sometimes.

The leadership team that secretary Salazar has assembled, I think is probably the strongest team that he's ever -- that anybody has ever seen in the Department of the Interior.

He has an amazing faith in all of you.

We've had long conversations.

I wish I could tell you some of the things we talked about, but his support and his interest and his faith in the career people, I think you can see it in the fact that he appointed me, a career employee as head of the Fish and Wildlife Service and he's done that for most of the bureaus in the Department of the Interior.

That's never been done.

He's also supported me as I move forward in the first few weeks to get a second deputy that is a career person.

For those of you who didn't know it, we had a career deputy position and a political deputy position.

I felt it was important at this point in time, of where we are, that we needed career leadership in this agency.

And so Dan Ashe has stepped up and he will be a great deputy.

And Roland Goulet who has seen us through this transition period,

the things he has done carrying the load is also going to be a deputy.

We will divide those responsibilities up.

Brian Arroyo has stepped up to be an assistant director and I have a feeling, he will be the best that you have ever seen.

And of course, Gary Fraser.

You know Gary and he's stepping back into the spotlight on endangered species and he's going to be working with a high-powered team in the department to make sure that we are doing the best we can do on the endangered species act.

We will look for ways to improve our processes, streamline what we can, look for innovation, creativity, clean up policies that have been, let's say, adjusted over time.

We are going to do our best and we will step out quickly on that.

So there's great leadership in the department and this administration.

And there are high expectations and there's a little pressure to get things done and get out and move quickly.

And that's what I intend to do.

I think you will agree that we are at a crossroads in American conservation history.

We've got challenges.

We've got huge conservation challenges, stressors on our wildlife.

And I think you know them all well, but just a few like habitat fragmentation, genetic isolations invasives, water, too much water, not enough water, droughts, the illegal trade of wildlife, which is growing because there's money involved.

And we're seeing extinctions worldwide and in this country, we are starting to see the effects of all of these stressors on our endangered -- threatened and endangered species.

When you add climate change to the mix, some have described it as a game changer, something that really accelerates all of those stressors.

And I'm proud to say that we are well on the road to having a good focus and a plan to deal with what we believe are the pressing challenges related to climate change and I will talk a little bit about that in a minute.

And lastly, we've lost a generation of youth.

And hopefully not another one, but we have got to do better reaching out to the youth of this country, creative ways to communicate with them, and to get them out on the land, outside.

And this is a priority for the secretary and it's one that all of you have had for sometime and we will continue to press that.

So all of these stressors, you know, it can be overwhelming.

And, in fact, when I was out here speaking to an advanced leadership

development program a year ago, we were talking about climate change.

We had one of the ALDP students raise their hands and throw their hands up and say, you know with climate change, why bother?

You know we might as well just pack it up and go home.

And, you know, in a way you could see why somebody would think that. They are overwhelming challenges, but personally I don't buy that for a minute.

I don't buy that approach.

I don't think many of you do.

Hopefully not many at all.

As we look back over the history of the Fish and Wildlife Service, we've got a rich history.

If you want to get totally engrossed in the history of this agency, come here and look at the pictures.

Look at the stories.

You look back in the 1920s, and when you look at the 1920s, wetlands were disappearing all over this country.

The nation's waterfowl populations were crashing and folks believed back then that they would never see ducks fly again.

And the forecast for this year is that we are going to have one of the banner years of all years of waterfowl, certainly in recent times because of the hard work of Fish and Wildlife Service and partners, state people working, dedicated on the ground, restoring wetlands, conserving wetlands, highlighting the importance of it. We rose to the challenge of it.

What do you think Rachel Carson would have done if folks had said, you know, the industry is too powerful.

Too much controversy.

DDT is really not that bad.

The agency backed her.

She stood up and the rest is history and we have bald eagles and other raptors flying across this country.

And I think about teddy Roosevelt.

You know, he's a big, big conservation player, a hunter, a fisherman, an outdoorsman but nobody had ever set land aside in this country, really anywhere in the world, on a big scale for wildlife conservation, solely for that purpose.

In fact, his staff had told him it couldn't be done.

No one had ever done it.

And his answer back was, why not?

Why shouldn't I do this?

So pelican island was created in 1903, a small little island in Florida, in south Florida.

The plume industry for birds was huge.

Millions of dollars involved.
He set that land aside for birds.
Today we've got 150 million acres of refugists, scattered all over this globe.
The biggest and greatest assemblage of lands ever set aside for wildlife, all because one man said I think I can get it done.
I don't doubt that we can get it done.
When you look at climate, the scale of what we are dealing with, we can't do it alone.
And one of the things that's really important to me and it's been that way my whole career, has been that we have to partner with others to get our job done.
And it doesn't matter where I go in this country.
I'm always amazed.
I was out at the Blackfoot challenge in Montana not long something. To hear the ranchers with an arm around a Fish and Wildlife Service employee, smiling and talking about grizzly bears on their land, partnerships and innovation just an amazing thing to see.
And we have come a long ways in my career.
I would have never seen that when I started.
Our partnerships with the states are second to none.
And for those of you in the southeast, you know my mantra well. I always believed we should have no daylight between us and our state wildlife agencies and I intend to do my part and I hope you do your part, from the field level, all the way up.
We have different laws, different authorities, but we have the same goals in mind.
And we need to go the extra mile to work with our state counterparts.
It is that important.
And I will do my part and I intend to build relations and build upon great relations with the states and others like that.
Internally one of the goals I've got and had my whole career and I think we made some progress, is working across program lines.
And that's a challenge.
We all have full plates, busy jobs, but more and more I think we are going to need to cross across program lines, blur those lines, and work together.
We don't need to reorganization to do it, but we certainly need to work together because I think the bottom line is we need a unified approach to conservation between the NGO community, Fish and Wildlife Service and our state partners.
We need to step up our communication on that and we need to speak with one voice.
It is that important.

Now, let me talk a little bit about some of the overarching priorities.

I won't dwell on this a whole lot because you will hear a lot about it over the months to come.

You will hear about strategic habitat conservation, landscape conservation.

You will hear a lot about that from me.

Science.

You are going to hear a lot about climate.

The secretary is talking about treasured landscapes, and I will talk a little bit about what that means.

Alternative energy, I think is going to be big for us all, and youth.

I mentioned that earlier.

Let me talk a little bit about S.H.C.

You know, as regional director and certainly a career guy and I have always had my network of people.

It doesn't matter if you are out on the ground or in the regional office, folks will come to you and tell you the truth, and that's good.

I hear a lot about S.H.C. and a lot of people stepping out and doing some wonderful things.

And I hear sometimes people say, well, this is an initiative.

This too will pass.

Well, it's not going to pass while I'm here.

So I wanted to make sure that it's very clear for everybody, I want to ramp up our efforts on landscape conservation and strategic habitat conservation as if there was no tomorrow.

It is that important.

I do not believe that we will be successful in our objectives, our goals, if we don't approach conservation on a big scale and it's playing out in a number of arenas, whether it's climate, or OMB or our partners or the hill, people are recognizing that we need to broaden the playing field.

And to do that, I think we have the best model in town and it's being recognized all over the place.

It's the way we are going to conduct business.

We're talking about strategically putting conservation in the right places and doing it in our best goals, putting them right in the right place.

And it's a science-based approach.

And it's being replicated all over the country and being able to replicate the work that we do is extremely important.

The foundation of S.H.C., as you well know, I hope, is conservation planning and design, conservation delivery, monitoring and research.

Now where did it all come from and why is it so important that we do this?

Well, it did have its origins and folks that have been thinking about this for sometime in bird conservation.

Whether, it's the prairie potholes in the lower Mississippi valley, the migratory bird program recognized that you cannot protect birds only in your backyard, only on one refuge.

We have to look at goals that are continental in scale.

Our landscape approach to conservation does just that.

We talk about population goals, stepping them down from a continental scale to a site scale so that we know where to do the work on the ground and the right place.

The other part of it is we can't do it alone and I mentioned the partnerships.

When you look at the work that's been going on in the migratory bird program, you will see tremendous state support, ngos.

You will see all kinds of folks working together.

Science is the foundation of it all.

We have new resources coming in to support the work that we are going to be doing.

And, in fact, the fiscal year '10 budget that we can talk about is really exciting.

For the first time that we will have a line item for science, as we start to rebuild our science program.

And LCCs, and I know there are a lot of questions out there right now, a new concept.

The landscape conservation cooperatives, a name you will hear a lot about.

We've gotten strong support at OMB.

We have gotten strong support on the hill.

And I'm proud to say that we have led the Department of the Interior in thinking on this and I will talk a little bit about LCCs because of some of the interests and certainly some of the confusion that's gone on across the country.

Now, we have recently come out with a geographic framework.

The intent of that is to show the world that we have an idea and a plan of how we can put landscape conservation on the ground across North America, and that we can have the pieces of what we are doing all hang together in a nice framework so that when we get in these climate discussions and we can say that species need to migrate and we need to provide connectivity and habitat across the country, that we are all pulling in the same direction.

We are setting population goals at a high state, carrying them down to the ground at a site scale.

We need geography and so we came up with a map that working with

USGS, that was based off the bird work that was done because this is a big part of what this agency is all about.

And then we merged with that with some of the fisheries folk to see if we could come up with some geography.

We don't need to be bound from that map from the standpoint of being constrained but what we do need to do is continue to focus on how to -- how to build landscape conservation across the United States.

Now, not only do we get money in the fiscal year '10 process, but in fiscal year '11, we are building upon the geography that we and the landscape conservation cooperatives that we were planning to put on the ground in fiscal year '10.

These LCCs are the fundamental units, the planning and the science for this agency for how we will do conservation planning on the ground.

And it will truly, I believe, carry out adaptive resource management of the landscape scale.

Our team and USGS have worked hard to put these concepts together. We're going to be talking a lot about it.

We are going to be adjusting as time goes on.

So I don't want anybody to think that we are locked in concrete, but we are serious about landscape conservation.

We are serious about our work through LCCs.

We've got support on the hill.

We've got money coming and we're going to rebuild the science that we once had in this agency and we are going to start right there.

LCCs are the place where we need to apply that science and then working with all of you putting it on the ground in the delivery mode.

Now, at LCCs, we will be recruiting the best people we can get.

We will have modelers and folks enfacing with the U.S. geological service and their climate centers.

This is where we are actually going to be doing the design work to help us put our work on the ground in the best place.

It's got to be supported by partners and we have a great example through the joint ventures where we have good models out there that do bird work.

But our objective is to go way beyond birds, looking at all species whether they are highly endangered or the highest trust species that we believe are important.

Working with our partners, working with the states, working with the co-op units and certainly working with the universities.

Let me talk a little bit about climate.

You've heard a lot about it.

You will continue to hear a lot about it.

There's intense debate on the hill about climate.

But what is interesting is that there's less and less disagreement on the science.

The IPCC has done a lot of work out there.

There was a lot of debate about the science and, you know, until they came out with their report, there was a lot of question about whether or not climate change was actually real or not.

That pretty well dispelled everything.

The on-the-ground effects we see, whether it's on the coastal parts of this country, whether it's the arctic, where we've got sea ice melting and polar bear issues and walruses, other species, we've got huge issues along the coast.

It may not be as noticeable inland.

The forecasting is getting better and the picture does not look good.

We have a strategic plan.

We have worked long and hard.

We are the first bureau in the Department of the Interior to develop one.

It has been well received from those who have seen it internally.

We have taken your comments and we have revised that plan, and we are within a week of getting that plan out on the street.

We have gotten broad support in the department, and I think it's going to put the Fish and Wildlife Service squarely out in front, in terms of landscape conservation, how to deal with climate change and the things that are important.

I also want to point out that next week the secretary of interior is going to send out a new directive on climate.

So I ask you to stay tuned to.

That and when you look at what's in that directive, I think you are going to see a lot of the Fish and Wildlife Service, because there's been a lot of heavy lifting and a lot of long hours and a lot of work going on behind the scenes to make sure that the work that you are doing, the work that we've done in our strategic plan is reflected and not only reflected but embraced and even leading many of what you are going to see in that directive.

So I'm very, very proud of the work that's been going on there.

Out here at NCTC and Jay was out here and hosted it, we had the conservation leaders across the United States here to talk about climate.

And they are hungry for the Fish and Wildlife Service and the department to step up and to help lead this effort.

They like our landscape approach.

They are embracing the idea of LCCs.

And so we have a golden moment, I think, where we can really step out and we are going to work very, very closely with the USGS

through this.

Now the Department of the Interior, and I believe this and I know secretary Salazar believes this, ought to be the leader in wildlife adaptation.

Nobody else can look across state boundaries, across international boundaries, but the Fish and Wildlife Service can do it and the department can do it.

That's where we intend to go.

They will push us out in front to be the leader in wildlife adaptation.

That climate strategy is so critical and the fact that we are going to get it out in the next week or so is going to make a world of difference.

For those of you that have not seen it, we built it on the foundation of what the IPCC uses as a nomenclature.

We built it on mitigation, which is reducing your carbon footprint which we need to do in a big way.

We need to lead by example.

Adaptation which I just talked about, we need to be the world's leader in adaptation on wildlife.

And communication and education, which is so important.

Let me talk a little bit about science, because we -- we lost a huge amount of science over the last 15 years.

In USGS, we have access to it, but we need some of our own and we are reinvesting in that and we are having conversations in the main interior building about how to do that.

And starting in fiscal year '10, we will have \$10 million, new money in the science area for the first time in a decade.

And so that's exciting, putting science back in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

We have science, but we're going to build on that.

We had a biologist conference.

I'm ashamed to say it was our first biologist conference ever in the southeast region.

When we talked about putting science back in the Fish and Wildlife, I don't know that I saw a more positive reaction, than the standing ovation.

The secretary wants to make sure that the work that we are doing is professional, we have access to the best science and that he is committed to make sure that we have that.

We are going to invest in LCCs, and we are going to put our people there, the best we can find.

We're also going to encourage you all to join professional societies.

I support that.

I always have.

I know this agency's ebbed and flowed on things like that, but we need to invest in those societies, those professional societies.

We support that.

We want to encourage you to do that.

I think finally on science, transparency and integrity, they go hand in hand and we have suffered greatly over the last few years and our credibility started to get tarnished a bit.

We want to be transparent.

We want our integrity to be there.

And we want to be a science-based agency and we need to do our part to make sure that we are true to the science.

You are going to hear a little bit about treasured landscapes, maybe a lot from secretary Salazar.

It's an initiative on his part and our part that is just starting to take shape.

He is thinking big.

He looked at Doug Brinkley's book on Theodore Roosevelt that just came out and showed the map of Roosevelt in the early 1900s, what he did for the national wildlife refuge system and what he did for national parks.

And he wondered and he said out loud, why can't I do that?

He's thinking so big that it even scares me sometimes when I hear him talk.

He is really pushing us to think about how we can expand conservation across the United States, fill in the gaps in a major way.

So he's looking at fully funding for the first time in the history of the land and the water conservation fund, fully funding, the LWCF.

It's a heavy left in this economy.

It's tough to do.

He's committed to doing that and I have all the confidence he's going to pull it off because he's got the fire in the eye.

And what could you do with 450 new million dollars in landscape conservation, land acquisition and easements and those kinds of things.

It's exciting.

He even has bigger goals and they are longer range.

I won't go into that but they are impressive.

We need to figure out where to put that conservation on the ground and I think we have an approach to do that.

One of the president's highest priorities as you well know is alternative energy.

We have wind and solar and biofuels.

Unbelievably important.

The secretary has made this his highest priority.

The president has made it a high priority but what has become abundantly clear is that when you put these out on the ground, whether it's big solar panels in fields, wind farms, or get into biofuels in a big way, there can be significant wildlife effects. And we're seeing that.

So we've got a lot of people scrambling fast looking at the science, developing new science, and engaging the community on how best to put these new alternative energy sources on the ground in a way that doesn't adversely affect wildlife.

But I think what I heard the other day, there are no free rides, whether it's oil and gas, petrochemical or even alternative energy. Endangered species act, the migratory bird treaty act, NEPA, they all apply.

We will continue to work on, that but I believe alternative energy will be a big part of what we have to do.

And I mentioned youth.

We have to reinvest in youth.

It is just that important.

You know, we all have young kids, many of us, and, you know, how are we going to communicate with them?

What are they listening to?

How do we get them out on our refuges.

And how do we get them out and caring about the things that some of us go to bed worrying about?

We need to invest in that and I know there's a lot of great thinking in programs and the secretary Salazar has said that it's a high priority of his.

And he's named Bob Stanton, I think, to head that effort up in the department.

We will all be spending a lot of time working on that and I know Jay and folks at NCTC are deeply immersed in that.

So I thank you for that and we will have to really ramp it up.

Now, you know, I talked a lot about these goals, but programmatically, I'm not kidding myself.

I know our programs and I know them well.

I know our national wildlife refuges.

I know what goes on out there.

We have the biggest system of lands in the world.

We are bigger than the park service.

We have 150 million acres.

We go from the marianis trench, all the way to the northeast up in Maine and everything in between.

We have tremendous landscapes and we don't have the funding to do

what we need to do.

We have support on the hill.

We have support in this administration.

We are dealing with a tough fiscal climate but let me say that there's no lack of interest and recognition that we need to continue to build on refuges, not only because we need to take care of what we have, but I think we need to look across and see where we need to continue to connect these refuges up in a strategic way.

So our land acquisition program is going to take a new look at how to strategically do that, connectivity, climate change, they will all be factors in how we do it.

But it's going to be, you know, a heavy lift in today's climate, budget climate to get where we need to get but we will get there.

Our fisheries program has always suffered.

I don't know why.

It's a wonderful program.

We do incredible things.

We can take a penny and turn it into -- or we can take a dollar and turn it into \$1 million.

We can make things happen on the ground that I don't know that anybody believes can happen, most resourceful people in the world.

We will take a good look at our hatchery program and make sure that we are doing the priority work out there, but we need to support our hatcheries.

We cannot give up as we have in the past, what I think are great assets that can help us, not only with recreational fishing but certainly threatened endangered species and the aquatics.

The critters that we need to worry about are the aquatics.

The national fish habitat plan, the work we are doing there and in the southeast we had SARP.

I know it well.

And I think that's the future for aquatics and fisheries.

The work we are doing in the endangered species act is going to be on the cutting edge.

You may not know it but you need to know.

I think we have the best minds that anyone could assemble on the endangered species program assembled right now in the program.

We have people like Michael Bean who is recognized worldwide as one of the conservation leaders, he knows the endangered species act.

And Mr. Sobeck who just came over from the Department of Justice.

One of the top E.S. lawyers there is.

And Gary Frazier, a super individual.

We will be looking at how to streamline the program, look at policies, how can we make the act work better?

And we are going to not only deal with the issues we got to but look

way out into the future.

The partners program, the coastal program, you know, what an exciting program.

We saw it out in Montana, I've seen it all over the country, hugely popular.

Hugely successful.

Senator Enhoff, I never seen anybody so excited about a program than he was with the partners for the fish and wildlife program.

We are going to continue to build that one.

Our migratory bird program is a flagship of this agency, one of the programs that, you know, we cut our teeth on when teddy Roosevelt set aside that refuge for the bird.

The state of the bird report that came out not long ago.

We have 800 species in the United States approximately and the birds that are in Hawaii and the oceans and the grasslands, they are taking a turn for the worse.

They are on a nose spin.

It showed that we have done an extremely good job with waterfowl.

It shows that if you use the landscape approach, you put your elbow to the ground and you work hard, you connect the dots, the pieces, you get them working from nesting grounds to wintering grounds you can do good for birds.

We need to do that for all species but migratory birds is going to be first and foremost when we are talking about landscape approach and the work that we do in joint ventures.

Our external affairs program and legislative affairs, the work you guys do out here at NCTC, on the cutting edge of conservation, I think.

I was on the hill yesterday.

My first visit up there and I intend to be up there as often as I can get, because I think we need to be there.

And our legislative affairs folks had me armed and I was ready and felt good.

I think we did a lot of good just right out of the gate and we will do a lot more of it.

And then communicating.

We can't communicate enough and I'm always open to the best ways to do it.

I think we've done a great job in the southeast, putting communication people out in our field offices and reaching out to new media and how to do it.

We're going to continue to invest in external affairs.

And what can I say about NCTC, it is the premier training center in the world for wildlife.

And it isn't going to change.

We will keep it right, there you know, as the best.
Our law enforcement folks understaffed.
The job is getting bigger, more complex, where you are special agents or refuge officers.
It's a dangerous job to have.
Our ports of entry, if you have ever been -- if you have not been to a port of entry, you need to go.
You need to go see it and see what comes into this country, and you need to see what goes out.
And you will be a believer in our law enforcement program and certainly our ports.
And we need to continue to emphasize that.
But in the end, all of these things, all of the great priorities, you know, that you know, that's good to talk about.
I just gave you just a few.
I have a list that's probably a notebook thick of things I would like to get done in a week and I have been trying.
I'm not getting very far but I've been trying.
But all that pales in comparison to who you do it with.
And I had one of the most moving conversations with a secretary of the interior one evening when we were sitting together and he said -- he said to me.
He says, you know, we all have big priorities.
I've got priorities.
You will have priorities.
He said at the end of the day, if we have a dozen priorities, if we want to get three done at the end of eight years, if that's all we get done, that's okay.
Because he said to me and I believe it true and true, it's who you do it with.
Who you do it with is what you will remember and how you got it done.
So there may be many, many things that we don't get done.
It's not because we didn't try, but it's who we do it with and we've got the best work force in the world, all of you.
It's an honor and a privilege.
Hard for me to believe I'm sitting here, but it is truly amazing.
I think we will advance conservation like we've never seen it.
We will make up some ground and we will plow some new turf and I'm excited about it.
So let's get it done.
And I think maybe we have one or two questions.

>> J. Slack: I think we have quite a few.

>> Director Hamilton: I'm a little out of breath.

>> J. Slack: Thank you, Sam.

We have a bunch of questions here already that have come in. Obviously we've probably got a lot more questions that are going to come in after that list of things that you have challenged us with. So thank you for that.

Let me, as I'm talking to folks, first, before we start questions, let me just reiterate those numbers to get your questions into.

Again, you can call in and join us in the studio at 888-212-0803.

Fax your questions in to us at 877-884-6282.

Or just send us an email at broadcast@fws.gov.

So with that, get those questions in.

Don't be shy!

I'm sure Sam wants to hear.

And let me start on the list that I have here.

We have quite a few already.

Let me start this one I think would be a good one to start with.

You talked about some of the recent staffing changes.

So why don't I start with a couple of questions along those lines.

You recently named two deputy directors.

You talked about this a little bit, Roland Gould and Dan Ashe.

Can you elaborate on why you selected them and how you will divide their responsibilities up some.

>> Director Hamilton: Yeah, that's a good question.

You know, Jay, I mentioned the fact that I wanted two career deputies.

I just thought it was important.

I mean, we've had a lot of political involvement in our work over the last few years and I thought that having career people and line staff was the way to go.

If you have been in the Washington office and if you know what goes on there, and I know you were in there acting, there is no way one deputy could get the job done.

>> J. Slack: Exactly.

>> Director Hamilton: We have stepped up and said, look we want Roland to really work in one part of the organization and Dan in the other.

I think Roland is going to head up looking at a lot of the operational work that we are doing but certainly be over the regional directors.

Dan is going to be focused on bigger policy issues, looking out like

climate change and keeping his eye on the things that are headed our way on a big scale but also looking at the policies and policy development and budget, things that are going on with our A.D.s there in the main interior building.

So it's really an R.D. and A.D. kind of breakout.

But I think both of those guys have probably 50, 60 years worth of experience and we'll be interchanging and you'll see a lot of blending going on.

One over A.D.s and one over R.D.s.

>> J. Slack: Okay.

Excellent.

Another question.

I know you touched on this one some too but here's a question that has come from out there.

I understand that the director had discussed communications at the last directorate meeting.

Can you tell us your expectations for where the service ought to go in incorporating new media technology and strategies, those new media things, into our communication efforts and how can we get there?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, that's a good question.

You know, I'm one of those old dogs trying to learn.

You though, when you get twitter and blogs and things like that, I'm not sure I totally understand it, but sooner or later I will figure it out.

I have been convinced that if we don't adapt, if we don't change the way that we are communicating, you know, with this generation of folks, we are not going to be very relevant to anybody.

You know, if we can't get our message on an iPod and we can't do it very quickly, you know, folks aren't going to pay attention.

They are not going to tune into a press release and they are not going to tune into a web site that often anymore.

We will have to get very, very creative.

We have some real internal challenges that we created for ourselves in the department.

And people are aware of that and we are going to do our very best to knock those walls down and hurdles that we have all been struggling with.

I know that we had a good discussion at the director meeting.

I think there was wide spread support that we need to invest in our communications, otherwise we won't be relevant at all.

So, yeah, I think some exciting things are going to happen.

>> J. Slack: Good deal.
Yeah.

Another question, the services emphasized landscape conservation, climate change -- and climate change in relation to everything we do, but we still have existing mandates and responsibilities. What kind of funding will be available to help us incorporate climate change and landscape conservation into our daily activities or will we -- will we be expected to drop these mandates, these other mandates?

>> Director Hamilton: That's a great question!
You know, oftentimes -- I know when we did the ecosystem approach, people were just saying, well, this is just an added responsibility. This is something more I have to do in my inbox.

The whole idea of strategic habitat conservation and the whole idea of doing business this way is to help us improve and be more efficient about what we do.

How do we know when we are working on a section 404 permit or a corps of engineer project that has mitigation or a highway project, or buying new land that we are putting it at the right place for some big conservation objective?

If you don't know what you are managing for, how do you know if you are ever going to get there?

So we need to be more systemic about what we are doing.

We need to identify those groups of species that we want to manage for, those trust resources and step those continental population goals down to the ground.

And then when you are doing that 404 permit program, you can put and direct that mitigation right where you want to have it done on the ground.

I think it when it comes to added work, I think this should help us, really.

We have new money.

We made the pitch that we can't ask our folks to do that modeling, do that design work, do that heavy lifting to try to do that landscape work.

We have \$10 million in the budget.

You know, we can get off to a good start in the fiscal year '11 budget that we are working on this week.

It's looking promising.

I don't see it as additive work.

I think it is -- there will hopefully be new tools to get our work done in a more efficient way and accomplish something much bigger than we have ever done in the past.

>> J. Slack: How do you see partners playing as far as finding new resources together and how do we communicate with the partners on getting, you know, the word out about new resources and funding?

>> Director Hamilton: I tell you what, last night we had my reception, and the NGO groups that were there in Washington, D.C., coming up and talking about landscape conservation and the work that we are doing and what they are hearing about, I don't think we are going to have any lack of partners.

You look in the bird work that we are doing, we have huge partners lined up.

I think the biggest limitation right now, both for the NGOs and certainly with the states is money right now.

This is a very, very tough time.

Yeah, we may have to kind of shoulder most of this right out of the gate, but my experience like in the lower Mississippi valley joint venture, we have states giving money to higher employees to work in the joint venture office.

We have NGOs contributing money for those same positions.

So I think we are on to something very exciting and I think partners are going to step up.

I'm not doubting that at all.

>> J. Slack: Excellent.

Excellent.

We have a caller.

Caller.

>> Participant: Yes.

Hi, Sam.

Wilson Laney here.

>> Director Hamilton: Hey, Wilson.

>> Participant: How are you doing?

>> Director Hamilton: I'm just doing wonderful.

Very relaxing job.

>> Participant: Great.

Great.

You know my question already.

And that is whether or not you've had a chance to talk to Dr. Jane Luchinko yet and invite us to participate in the recreational fishing summit that she indicated that she's planning to hold.

>> Director Hamilton: Well, that's a good question, Wilson. I have met Jane Luchinko and we were sitting together recently but we were not talking about that and I will make note that we need to follow up with her on that. We were in a room together talking about bay Delta and California water. So all of our attention was focused there, but she -- she's doing a great job over at NOAA fisheries no doubt, and I know that talking to Tom Strickland, great assistant secretary we've got and chief of staff. You know, his goal is to work closely with outside agencies and NOAA is, like, right at the top because our missions are so closely aligned, yet oftentimes we find ourselves either in conflict or, you know, struggling to work with each other. I think he wants to really emphasize working with Jane and NOAA fisheries. So that's on my list. I've got a long list, but working with them is certainly a high priority and we will follow up on that summit that you are talking about.

>> Participant: That's great. That's good to hear. I was tickled to hear you note that you are a fisheries biologist. It's great. I'm glad that we have a fisheries biologist sitting in the director's seat. You know you can always call on me. One last question is, are you working on the design of a director's coin yet?
[LAUGHTER]

>> Director Hamilton: We may already have one. That's an interesting question. Yes, we've got one. We are ready to go with it and if you do a good job, Wilson, you might get one.

>> Participant: Okay. I look forward to it. Thanks, Sam.

>> Director Hamilton: Thanks.

>> J. Slack: That's great.

Let's go to another question that we have here.

How about this one, the secretary's emphasis on alternative energy, will have direct impact on fish and wildlife resources across the nation.

Will the service have a significant role in the process of designing and citing these facilities to make sure that the impacts are minimized?

>> Director Hamilton: You know, that's an excellent question.

You know, I talked a little bit about alternative energy.

I think early on folks believed, that you know, if we got into alternative energy, you know, we were on the road to good things happening.

Well, we may be with certainly carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions, but the footprint of some of these are huge and you can put a wind farm in the middle of sage grouse habitat and guess what happens... you know some of the best.

And we are dealing with that in Wyoming.

And you can play that out all across the country, where there's actually wind farms, solar power but the transmission corridors and lines are huge.

So the service has been a very, very active player back in the department.

Steve Black is heading it up for the secretary and we've got Brian Arroyo and we had have Gary Fraser and Dave Stout is doing a great job with wind energy.

We are doing all we can do and I know that Tom Strickland is very, very much aware and on top of the fact that there really are -- in his words, there are no free rides, that, you know, you can't just go plop down alternative energy in prime wildlife habitat and not expect to have some challenges and issues.

So I think, you know, this next year is going to be a real pivotal year on how we deal with alternative energy.

I say that because the president has said this is right at the top of priorities.

So there's a little pressure on all of us to try to work this issue hard, but, you know, we will do that.

>> J. Slack: Great.

Great.

Let me -- we have another phone call that's just come in.

Excellent!

Next caller?

>> Participant: David from Georgia.

>> J. Slack: Hi, David.
Welcome.

>> Participant: Thank you.
We understand that the department is coming out within a week with an overarching strategy to address carbon changing impacts and landscape scale conservation.
Could you comment on the relationship between that plan and the progress within the service to date and also standing up LCCs.

>> Director Hamilton: Well, that sounds like David Viker and good to hear your voice.
The -- as would you imagine, there's several of us that have spent a huge amount of time over the last few weeks working on this issue. We have invested so much service effort and such a clear vision on climate that we want to make sure that the secretary and his leadership team [feedback]

>> J. Slack: A little bit of feedback.

>> Director Hamilton: Reflected the good work that's coming out of the secretary's office.
I'm really tickled with how much progress we have made. We really influenced that document.
LCCs are going to be prominently talked about and displayed. They are well received in the document and not only, that I like the name.
The whole idea of partnerships, working on landscapes, concentrating science, providing that science to people on the ground that are actually delivering the work, taking those LCCs and interfacing them with USGS climate centers are going to be an integral part of what's in this order that is going to come out and it's an integral part of our strategic plan.
You are going to hear a lot about how to use data, you know, monitoring, networking all of our work together.
The reason one of the driving forces of this secretarial order that will come out is that OMB and certainly on the hill right now in a tough budget climate, they are looking very, very hard at the Department of the Interior as to whether or not these different bureaus that oftentimes done necessarily mesh very well, our missions are not in sync, are all out doing different things and they are challenging the secretary saying, is this the Department of the Interior?

Is this a collection of bureaus?
Are you all kind of pulling in the same direction?
So you are going to see an overarching leadership team in the department focused on climate that's going to kind of guide a lot of our work.
And I think it's going to work well.
So we've had great influence.
We've had great effect in the shaping of this and I think we will continue to do this.
Our S.H.C. work and the landscape cooperatives, they have sold big in the department.
So that's a good thing.

>> J. Slack: Good.
Good.

Here's a question that's come in from Arizona.
What are your thoughts on improving government-to-government consultation with native American tribes?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, we have to do that.
You know, talking to secretary Salazar the other day, you know, that's one of his big priorities.
We have to do better at it.
You know, in some places in the country, I think we do better than others but we do need to be mindful of the fact that we are dealing nation to nation, that we've got a lot of work to do in certain parts of the country where we have to respect the consultation early on and we work through these very, very difficult issues.
We will see an alternative energy that's playing out in Indian country and we are seeing it all over the country.
So I think, you know, secretary Salazar has already challenged all of the bureau directors to do better than we have done in the past and I think you will see that emphasized and reemphasized in the future.

>> J. Slack: Good.
Good.

Question on invasive species.
Invasive species continue to affect all programs and all regions of Fish and Wildlife Service, yet the severity of the problem is orders of magnitude above the service's level of commitment and our resources are paying the price.
As a director do you have a plan to expand the invasive species efforts?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, you know, having spent 30 years with the agency, I think -- I mean, I don't disagree.

We pale in comparison to the problem that's out there on the ground. You've got U.S. Department of Agriculture, every bureau, every agency, private landowners struggling with invasive exotics.

We got to see that in Montana where they have just a tremendous effort underway out there with the service employees, with private landowners carrying a heavy load.

But there's so much more we need to do.

I saw it personally down in south Florida with all the exotics we are having to deal with.

You know that area well, Waxahachie refuge, what we are doing down there.

It's enormous to stay ahead of the invasive plants.

So I don't think we, I don't think the country has come to grips with the magnitude of that problem.

To some degree, I think people say it's so big, how can we ever get our arms around it?

But, you know, I think, you know, what we need to do and maybe we have to go through our climate change approach to conservation because, you know, there's real money hopefully in a cap and trade bill if it ever passes on the hill, that we can put to work on the ground for climate work.

Now, climate is not just a thing on its own.

It accelerates invasive exotics.

So I'm hopeful, that you know, the kind of funding that we have been talking about on the hill actually plays out, that we will begin to have some real money that we can put on the ground.

So I think that's probably our best hope right now.

>> J. Slack: Great.

Here's a question that's come in from region one.

What role can wildlife sport fish restoration play in helping fish and wildlife partner with the states?

>> Director Hamilton: Oh!

That is how we do it.

That's one of the big ways of how we do it.

You know, the work we do with the states sport fish programs, restoration programs that we are working there, whether it's wildlife or fisheries, you know, we have amazing number of grants certainly, the dingle Johnson, and pitman Robinson money that goes to the state that are fueling many of the programs that are the bread and the butter of those organizations.

I think they are a great place where we can talk about what we think

are priorities and hear from states about what they think.

I think they are very, very similar.

We recently had, I know a coordinator's meeting, I think it was a national meeting.

We talked about landscape conservation there and we talked about climate change.

I think there's probably as good an opportunity there to communicate back and forth about agency priorities and where we want to go and how they mesh with where the states want to go.

So, yeah, we need to do more.

>> J. Slack: Okay.

Well, at the actually had two questions that were along the same lines.

I think you answered most of the other one and this one said, additionally what's your vision for the state wildlife grants to the -- it says the states but then also the tribes.

>> Director Hamilton: Well, you know, obviously we would like to say more, more, more.

I think we will be dealing in a constrained budget over the next few years.

We are going to try to do our part to get as big a piece of the pie as we can but I know that states are extremely strapped.

I know that the grant programs that we've -- that we've been able to fund over the years have put some incredible conservation work on the ground, not only with the states but the tribes too.

I know in our region, you know, those grants were well received.

We did great things on the ground.

So, you know, I think to the extent that our budget holds together over time, we are going to continue to see those pots there and emphasized.

>> J. Slack: Great.

Let me, for a second, why don't I just reiterate those numbers.

We still got quite a few questions here, but for those of you who might have questions, let me just say you can -- you can call in.

It's nice to have you call in and join us here in the studio.

So pick up the phone and call us at 888-212-0803.

Or again fax those in to 877-884-6282.

Or email them in at broadcast@fws.gov.

I have some more questions here, Sam.

Let me start with this one.

It's a refuge question from a representative at the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center.

>> Director Hamilton: Really?
Been there.

>> J. Slack: Okay.

How do you feel about how you will support refuges as they struggle with stewarding our wilderness resources, both designated and proposed wilderness.

Also, are you supportive of refuges as they complete their CCPS and work to complete those through a meaningful wilderness review process?

>> Director Hamilton: Yeah.

Well, I was convinced as a regional director that I needed to take the wilderness training center out at the Carthart Center.

Folks didn't believe I would do it.

I did it.

It became one of my best training programs in 30 years.

I learned a lot, as I do every day, but the experience I got there, you know, there's a place in this country for wilderness.

There is truly a place and I think we ought not shy away from it.

You know, I know that -- that it is controversial sometimes with user groups, those kinds of things but I do believe that there are places that need to be wilderness.

So I think that, you know, we need to use it judiciously.

I think we need to have good science behind it, and a good rationale, but whether you are out in a scapegoat, the Bob marshal or if you are along the cape in Maine, there are some critically sensitive places that need to be protected and gain the recognition of wilderness.

And so one, I think, you know, you are not going to see us shy away from wilderness and I think everybody should take that training because it will really open your eyes and they do a wonderful job.

>> J. Slack: I hear it's fantastic.

>> Director Hamilton: I'm ready to go for a refresher.

>> J. Slack: They will probably have you out there.

So we have another caller.

Caller, welcome.

>> Participant: Hi.

This is rose out of region 4.

Good to talk to you, Sam.

>> Director Hamilton: Hey, rose.

>> Participant: The reason I'm calling. I'm sure most of the regions, like ourselves, we are working, desperately trying to expand our land acquisition planning program to catch up with the last eight years of not being able to really go forward with major expansions and establishments. One of the factors as you had stated in your talk, that we're really going to be focusing on S.H.C. and climate change. And currently lapse does not include these aspects in it. And I understand, you know, that we need more science in order for them to develop that into our lapse. But it's going to be really critical for us not only to do the planning but then for the projects to rank so that we can actually, you know, see it through fruition.

>> Director Hamilton: What a great question!
What a great question!
I was talking to Greg Secanic yesterday about. That he's assistant director of refugists and the other person I was talking to was Congressman Norm Dicks up on the appropriations committee yesterday afternoon, and that very question came up about, you know, how much land do you need?
Where do you need it?
You are going to ramp up acquisition.
How do you know that you are buying the best land and why are you buying it there?
Are you just going to be opportunistic and be across the landscape?
We do have the L.A.P.S. system and you know that system well.
What I was talking to Greg about yesterday is we do need to put in there climate.
We do need to put in there strategically how it ranks out from a landscape perspective.
I don't know exactly how to do that yet, but we are going to do that.
You know, I was talking to Congressman Dicks and we were talking about our coastal refuges and I gave him the example, of course, one that I was familiar with at St. Marks refuge and said, you know, we have 160,000-acre refuge, one of the best that we could possibly assemble over time on the Gulf of Mexico.
Unbelievable place.
Just unbelievable!
You have to go to St. Marks refuge, but as sea level rises and species need to migrate, if they move inland any, we have an

opportunity there with St. Joe's paper as they sold out their holdings and an opportunity to add tens of thousands of acres at a reasonable price to that refuge inland so they can migrate inland. That is a climate change issue.

It is a qualitative one.

It's not quantitative.

I think we need to be strategic.

We need to be mindful of climate and we need to find a process where we can factor that into our ranking system.

I think the hill expects it and I'm going to certainly push for that and I know Greg likes that idea too.

>> J. Slack: Great.
Thanks for the call.

>> Director Hamilton: Yes, thanks, rose.

>> J. Slack: Okay.

Here's one about you.

Secretary Salazar has emphasized youth careers as a major priority for the new administration.

Does this fit with our prior focus on children in nature, or do you think that we are working on a different priority?

Or should we be working on a different priority?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, I think -- I think children and nature fit very well in terms of when we are talking about youth.

I think it will be even much bigger than that when it's all said and done, Jay.

I think -- I think that we are going to have to look for all kinds of opportunities to engage our youth.

You know, I mentioned early on I was a YCC-er, you've got to know that I love the YCC program.

If anybody is having any doubts, the fact that you can take young kids at the age of -- at that time, 15.

I don't know what it is today -- and put them to work.

Put a post hole digger in their hand in the summertime, you will make something of them!

You know, they will either quit and go home or they will try to muscle it up and make something of themselves.

So I think programs like the YCC program, children in nature, we've done some work with the medical industry, talking about obesity and youth and trying to get them out.

I think the department and all of us are going to roll our sleeves up and build on that and see if we can emphasize it.

>> J. Slack: Great.

You talked a lot about the states and basically budgets.

Here's a question along those lines.

How many state wildlife agencies are experiencing significant budget shortfalls in your mind?

And I will go on here, much of what we're stressing with landscape conservation approach, climate change, involves expanded partnerships with states.

Is that realistic given their budgets and the climate that's out there?

And how should we look to work with them given all of those constraints?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, that's a good question again.

Again, it's dead on with the time that we are having to deal with, you know, tougher and tougher budgets.

Ours is not going to be that great either in the future.

You know, I think we are going to have to be creative.

I think we are going to have to be sensitive to the fact that our state partners, you know, don't have the money, don't have the resources.

How many states?

I would say 50.

I would start right there and I would be surprised if any state would say that they are flush with money right now.

Even states that have alternative sources of funding, I know, are struggling.

I mean you think about what's going on in California.

The state of Florida has always been flush with money and now, you know, they are struggling.

These are big states with big programs and they are suffering.

So, yeah, we've got a big vision.

We've got a lot of work we want to get done but we are doing it at a time when budgets are tough.

So if we've got the resources we may have to shoulder that burden right now.

If it's a great vision, if it's a shared vision and that's the key.

If it's a shared vision.

If we have done our homework and if they share in this vision, and I think they do, then when budgets swing around -- and they will swing around -- they will invest in them.

They will put it in the right place and they will do it for the right reasons.

So I think we have a great vision.

We need to reach out to them and not say you can't play if you don't pay.

That just is wrong, as it is tough.

Our NGO partners are suffering too.

>> J. Slack: The same way.

Yeah.

Here's a question that has come in about technology.

When people travel from location to location, they use a road map.

Could you summarize how the service will be using GIS and GPS mapping to develop biological road maps for conservation success?

>> Director Hamilton: Of course when I get on the road, I always stop and ask for directions?

>> J. Slack: You don't use a GPS?

>> Director Hamilton: I don't know how to use one.

I'm always good at stopping and asking for directions.

I get lost a lot.

I think no doubt GIS and if you go to prairie potholes or Lower Mississippi valley joint venture, you will see how we are using technology and landscape conservation and downscaling it using incredible maps and using GIS technology and state-of-the-art downscaling modeling population and habitat modeling. That is the future.

I mean, it's been with us for a long time.

We were slow out of the gate, but we need to continue and invest in it.

We need to train our people, have access to the best technology, make it available to folks out on the ground.

I mean, it is -- we are not going to succeed if we don't do that.

So...

>> J. Slack: Okay.

Another question about LCCs.

It's kind of a long one, so bear with me.

>> Director Hamilton: I will sit back.

>> J. Slack: One question I'm hearing quite a bit relates to LCCs and existing partnerships like joint ventures.

People are struggling to understand whether the concept of an LCC is duplicative and intended to replace joint ventures.

If they are not used to replace JVs.

They want to put the 2010 increase in budget to the JVs instead of creating another organization.
Can you share your thoughts?

>> Director Hamilton: Yeah, yeah, that sounds like a Doreen Walsh question.

>> J. Slack: Oh, you might be right.

>> Director Hamilton: I understand that there is confusion and a lot of -- a lot of folks very interested in LCCs, what they mean and what they don't mean.

I touched a little bit in my opening remarks.

When we started talking about how to -- how to approach landscape conservation, we did go to the joint venture offices.

We went to the prairie potholes.

We went to the lower miss.

We wanted to understand how they did work with birds because it's gotten wide support across internationally from Canada to Mexico and worldwide, that, you know, we've demonstrated success.

We know how to do it with birds and we are continuing to improve on.

That how can we do it for all species.

So my first reaction was, okay, let's take joint ventures.

Let's take those -- that geography.

You know, this is something I thought we could do and just turn them into all species joint ventures and I think that in an ideal world, that might be the thing to do.

But it doesn't always work that way and we understand that and not every bird joint venture is -- is staffed up to deal with all species.

And the other thing is joint ventures, like cooperatives, are partnership driven.

With err not in charge of a lot of -- we are not in charge of a lot of joint ventures.

You know, they are driven by our conservation partners.

We are a very active player and we fund a fair amount of them, and there are some joint ventures who have said we want to be all species.

We want to -- we want to broaden to all species.

And I think -- I think there's a real golden opportunity for something like that to be an LCC.

On the other hand, if you've got a joint venture, a bird joint venture that has a management board of stakeholders and NGO partners and states and they are principally focused on birds and that's all they want to do, then it doesn't make sense to say, okay, well, you

have to do all species.

We couldn't make that happen.

But in the geography that we after laid out, you know, we will have an LCC in one of those geographies and then what we might do is tap into that joint venture for the bird work, we won't duplicate it, but the LCC will network into it and integrate the planning and the design work coming out of that joint venture office for birds into something bigger that deals with all species to help us all understand that if we are making choices on the ground about reptiles, mammals, amphibians or whatever, you know, what effect does that land management action going to have on migratory birds. So sometimes it may be a joint venture where we actually perfectly overlay.

That would be my dream where we actually have, you know, these joint ventures do all species but I'm a realist and know that it's hard enough to get many of these joint ventures to move off just waterfowl and start dealing with tropical birds and all birds. That was -- that's a challenge.

>> J. Slack: Mm-hmm.

>> Director Hamilton: So it's a work in progress.

>> J. Slack: Let's take one more question and then maybe you will have some closing remarks.

And let's see here.

This one basically says it's no secret amongst conservationists that human population growth and environmental degradation are closely tied to one another.

Our society has yet to learn how to live in a sustainable way, therefore our carbon footprint is collectively very large and damaging to the planet, although this phenomenon has been recognized by the environmental community to decades, to my knowledge, the Fish and Wildlife Service has yet to speak out on this issue.

It's a hard truth that must be accepted before we can learn to live in balance with nature.

Will policies under your leadership address impacts to wildlife conservation caused by human population growth?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, that -- I mean, that is certainly a big question and one that is at the root of many of the conservation issues that we have to deal with.

I mean, human population growth, people live places, they need to be fed, they drink water.

The demands on our natural resources are growing every day.

And so whether they are migrating off the coast because sea level is rising or fragmenting habitat, that's in everything we do.

When it comes to the carbon footprint, the United States wins the challenge.

I mean, wins the prize there.

We have the biggest carbon footprint per capita in the world.

It's not one of those proud awards, I think, that we should wear.

And I think that, you know, just other countries like China, maybe even India are going to surpass us, but that doesn't stand in the way of the fact that we need to do our part.

And I really believe over the next decade, and certainly over the next eight years, you are going to see this country make a great turn around in the amount of carbon that we are putting in the atmosphere and I think our carbon footprint is going to be reduced. To lead by example, yeah, I think our agency -- we need to do our part.

Our climate strategy that you are going to see come out in the next week or so has a big section on mitigation.

Mitigation in the world of climate change discussions deals strictly with reducing your carbon footprint, and that we have set some very lofty goals to get there in very short order.

I think the secretary is going to challenge us to get there quicker.

So we will be looking at travel, telecommuting and looking at alternative fuel vehicles.

We will be looking at a lot of different things.

We will look at that and reduce our carbon footprint.

We will be proud to do it and we will lead by example.

We are a small agency in the bigger scheme of things.

And so I think through our communication and education part of our climate strategy, yeah we need to toot our horn and we need to certainly talk about reduce.

Everybody should do that.

That's a big part of society today.

>> J. Slack: Yeah, well, those are certainly some important remarks certainly closing but do you have any other closing remarks for everyone?

>> Director Hamilton: Well, I hope you found this useful.

It's certainly interesting sitting on this side.

I didn't know what to expect.

I will tell you that the first week and a half of this job has been one of the most exciting 10 days, eight days that I have ever experienced in my life.

I have a great appreciation for my predecessors.

I had no idea of the speed, the breadth, the scope, the hours, the intensity of what goes on.

I thought after 30 years I understood what this agency did.

I'm learning quickly that we have, you know, one, an amazing work force.

You know, the issues are huge.

We're dealing with some big conservation issues all over the United States and all over the world.

Very, very rewarding.

My hope is that I can escape the main interior building one day and then get out to see folks on the ground.

I know the southeast.

I will not forget the southeast.

I will be back in the southeast.

But I want to come across the country and visit with you because that's how I think we all stay grounded in what's important.

85% of our work force is in the field.

You know, we need to challenge each other at the regional level and at the Washington office, what have you done for the field today?

We have important jobs, all of us do, whether you are a wage grade or an administrative assistant, if you are working in a region or if you are working in the Washington office.

They all have their own kind of rewards, but we have the best employees.

We have the best work force, the best mission, and I'm excited -- I am really excited to get to work within an administration that's 100% behind us.

What a refreshing, refreshing piece of news that is.

So thanks, Jay.

I look forward to it again.

Thanks.

>> J. Slack: Yep.

Thank you, Sam.

Thanks to all of you out there.

We appreciate the opportunity to visit with you today.

Obviously we have some information that we were trying to gather from you.

Again, if you at your viewing areas could just send us an email to broadcast@fws.gov, and just let us know which of the three types of broadcast you have viewed, whether it was a webcast, whether it was the satellite downlink, or if it was the phone bridge, and then how many people at your location were viewing or participating today, that will help us get a handle on how to do this better in the future.

Again, coming to you from the studio here at the National Conservation Training Center.

We're signing off, however, right at the end of this broadcast, if you will stick with us, we are going to provide to you an opportunity via the viewing media that you have right now, the opportunity to see the service's climate change video.

So if you are there viewing it in person, you can watch this video. If you are on the phone bridge, all you really need to do is get on the computer and go to the service's main home page and click on this video.

But we figured since everybody was assembled here today, it would be a good opportunity for you to see the service's message on climate change.

So thanks again for being with us.

We appreciate it and we're signing off from NCTC.

Have a good afternoon.

¶ [MUSIC] ¶

>> Nature astounds and inspires us with its diversity of oceans and wetlands, forests and grasslands.

These special places play a vital role in the production of the planet's oxygen, drinking water, and rainfall.

They also produce a rich abundance of fish, wildlife and plant species that sustain our lives and nurture our spirits.

Our nation's culture, health, and economic well-being are tied to this interconnected web of life.

But accelerated global climate change is changing the natural world as we know it.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conserves our nation's heritage of wild things and wild places.

This task is made more difficult by challenges, such as habitat destruction and fragmentation, invasive species and water scarcity.

Now, worldwide scientific consensus tells us that human activity is changing the climate system itself.

As climate changes, the abundance and distribution of wildlife and fish will also change.

Some species will adapt successfully to an abruptly warming world; Many will struggle;

And others will disappear.

Endangered and threatened species now living at the limits of survival are vulnerable, as are those living within confined geographic ranges with limited abilities to move rapidly in response to changing climate.

Barriers to migration, increased competition for habitat and the

Lack of suitable or available food could make things difficult for species moving to new locations.

>> In the Florida Keys, we have more than 20 federally listed threatened and endangered species from The Schaus swallowtail butterfly, to a number of plant species, up to the more well-known key deer. And all of these species are for the most part restricted to being here in the Florida Keys. So as we lose habitat, we may literally lose species that are found nowhere else.

>> In addition to terrestrial species, aquatic resources are declining at alarming rates due to habitat loss, contaminants, invasive species, over-exploitation, and most recently, diseases, stresses that are exacerbated by climate change. Increasing human population will intensify the competing needs of cities, agricultural areas and wildlife. In a changing climate, effective management of vital natural resources, such as clean water, will be of even greater importance in sustaining habitats that support plants, animals and people.

>> Our freshwater species are disproportionately imperiled as compared to other plants and animal species in the U.S. Of about 800 native freshwater fish species, 37% are in need of conservation action. 70% of our freshwater mussels are seriously imperiled, and many are already listed as threatened or endangered. Climate change is likely to impact fish habitats. As fish habitats decline, so do the numerous values they provide for natural resources, human health and a sound economy. Recreational fisheries help generate hundreds of millions of dollars in local economies throughout this country. If climate change diminishes the quality and quantity of our aquatic habitats, that will have a profound impact on these special places and the people and wildlife that depend on them.

>> As the nation's principal federal conservation agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is dedicated to helping species adapt to a rapidly warming climate. Our 8,000 employees specialize in wildlife management and ecosystem dynamics, and have an extensive network of partners who work alongside us to protect our nation's fish and wildlife. Dealing with climate change is not a solitary endeavor. Close collaboration with partners is critical to this process.

It requires a landscape conservation approach, emphasizing large areas with interconnected and ecologically functional habitats capable of sustaining many species.

>> The Service and the public are going to have to help plants and animals move across the landscape to keep pace with climate change. In many cases, this means establishing or maintaining a corridor of habitat across the landscape in the direction that the plants and animals are going to be moving in order for them to have a place to go.

In many cases, we've actually severed these connections with roads, development, which these plants and animals can't cross. So where these corridors still exist and are intact, we want to try and maintain them.

And where they've been severed, we want to try and re-connect them.

>> One expected effect of climate change is sea-level rise. At Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland, resource managers are monitoring climate change impacts using a special climate model that measures the effects of sea level rise on marshes.

>> The loss of 8,000 acres of brackish marsh habitat has a significant impact on what's going on out here. These marshes are important to more than just wildlife. These marshes are critical to not only the local economy, because these marshes support the local fin and shellfish industries. They are important to the health of the bay. They also provide wildlife viewing opportunities for ecotourism, as well as help buffer storm effects to the local community. We will continue to lose marsh habitat as a result of sea level rise as well. The model will help us to identify those places where we will be able to maintain marshes in the long run and help plan future management activities.

>> Climate modeling is also being used in the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex, where wildlife viewing is a major tourism activity.

>> Our highest priorities right now for assessing and adapting to the impacts of climate change would be to take some of the large and complicated scientific models that tend to be global and regional in scale and bring them down to the local level so that we can better predict what the impacts might be, the timeframe in which we can

expect those impacts, and what types of strategies we should implement in order to prepare for the changes we might see.

>> The impacts of climate change reach far beyond coastal areas. From melting sea ice in the Arctic, to water scarcity in the Southwest.

In the upper Midwest, thousands of shallow wetlands, known as "Prairie Potholes," are remnants of retreating glaciers from the last major ice age.

Thousands of waterfowl and other grassland birds rely upon these lands and waters to continue self-sustaining populations.

>> The area is home to more than 50% of North American migratory waterfowl, with many species dependent on the potholes for breeding and feeding.

And thousands of duck hunters and communities rely upon the seasonal activity of waterfowl hunting.

>> As the climate warms, farmers in the region will be able to plant crops farther north, converting native prairie and wetlands to agriculture fields.

The conversion of virgin prairie where cattle graze to planting of row crops will mean more carbon in the atmosphere and loss of wetlands for waterfowl breeding.

>> If we see a continued conversion of the grassland, loss of the wetlands, there's going to be a reduction in the migratory bird production on the North American continent.

And that's going to have a huge impact on those that are interested in hunting, those that are interested in bird watching.

There's a tremendous industry associated with tourism and visitation to refuges and other wildlife areas.

And the interest, obviously, is going to go down if there isn't the production there, if there isn't the number of birds there that people are going to be able to enjoy.

>> Understanding the impacts of climate change on wildlife is critical to developing an effective course of action.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey, along with key conservation partners, have held regional forums to collect information for a variety of landscapes and inform the Service's Strategic and action plans for climate change.

The plan provides flexibility for managers to be responsive to evolving science and technology.

It also calls for training our workforce on the basics of climate

change science and adaptive landscape conservation approaches that will help us succeed in the face of a changing and uncertain future.

>> If we're going to be successful in conserving the nature of America, then we simply have to understand the causes and the effects of a changing climate system, and what that means for fish and wildlife populations.

The Service has a good beginning with our draft Strategic and Action plans, but we need to recognize that we can't address something as large and encompassing as climate change from within the footprint of our own organization.

So we're really dependent on building relationships with partners as we try to address this challenge, much like we do in conservation day-to-day, but on an even larger scale.

We need to look to new partnerships with the scientific community and with the conservation community.

We need to look for new ways to speak to the public and inform the public about what we're doing and why.

And why responding to changing climate is an important aspect of wildlife conservation.

>> America has faced adversity in the past, from the severe droughts of the 1930s, to the environmental effects of chemical pesticides, to the ongoing challenges of recovering threatened and endangered species.

The warming of the earth could potentially have more far-reaching impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat than any challenge that has come before.

This is why the women and men of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have chosen a career of public service, to deal with issues of consequence and make a difference for our nation.

Together with our partners, we will face the challenges of our time and change the future for the better.

>> Our mission is not only protecting the wildlife and the habitats for present generations but for future generations.

And that's really what I feel that I have a responsibility and a stewardship is looking out for the future.

And it would be easy for me to put on the blinders and think I'll be here for the next 5 or 10 years, and that's what I will focus on.

But it's difficult for me to do that when I read about climate change and I have concerns about these species, and what kind of a legacy we can leave for our children and grandchildren.

And so I think it's really important for us to be addressing these issues.

