
letters

To the Editor:

[Here are] Some items of information for you to use as you see fit in your story on Regional Chief Scientists heading back to the field. My areas of professional expertise (if I have any) and interest are seabird ecology and management and coastal (especially barrier island systems) ecology and management. Technically, I left the job of Chief Scientist, North Atlantic Region, with the start of FY 1984, but I remained in Boston while things were getting sorted out, not actually taking up my new duties at Rutgers until mid-January 1984. Thus, I apparently beat out Don Field as the last holdout among the *original* cohort of Regional Chief Scientists – excepting, of course, for Jim Reid, who, I am convinced, is immortal.

I was in my NARO job just six months shy of 10 years . . . too long, most (and I) would say. The Rutgers Cooperative Research Unit (that's what it is known as, to parallel the same concepts in FWS and Forest Service) was established after quite some spirited competition, with which I was mercifully not involved. The three finalist institutions were Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Rutgers, and a SUNY consortium consisting of Stony Brook, Binghamton, Cornell, and CESF-Syracuse. It was established – jointly, by three regions: North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast – to serve the barrier island park needs in those regions. Thus, I deal with Cape Cod, Fire Island, Gateway, Assateague, Hatteras, Lookout, Cumberland, Canaveral, and Gulf Islands. It is a good system that is working well, and is involving much cross-fertilization among the three regions and the nine parks.

I agree with the statement in your story about re-entry, but perhaps I have had an easier time re-entering, as I have tried to maintain a modest program of research and writing over the last 10 years. It was difficult juggling time and responsibilities, and it is something I would not recommend for those not given to taking work home at night or spending long hours on the weekends preparing reports, briefing papers, or manuscripts. The travel demands on all Regional Chief Scientists only exacerbate the difficulty. But I would not have done otherwise. I had the best of both worlds: the satisfaction of establishing and nourishing a Regional science program, seeing direct research results applied to knotty management problems, serving as a principal in the planning for Fire Island and for the Pinelands, learning the intricacies of Regional and Servicewide operations (especially contracting and resource management), getting to know parks and superintendents, and undertaking a research problem, seeing it through to completion and eventual publication, and then gleefully mailing out those reprints.

The Park Service is a very special organization and collection of marvelous people, such that I frankly have difficulty understanding how people can enter and leave the Federal employ as if it were just some sort of train station. It is easy to see why so many people want to get *in*, however, and I am constantly queried by Fish and Wildlife people who want to join us.

I suspect that more than five years as a Regional Chief Scientist in an on-going, thriving program could well result in burn-out. Perhaps maintaining a personal research program helps extend that period, but without it I agree that it would be very difficult to get

back in the mainstream of (especially academic) research. Having had the Regional Office experience has proven invaluable in managing a complex, three-Region program such as I have. The Fish and Wildlife Service has a requirement of WASO experience for certain kinds of managerial positions anywhere; perhaps it might be advantageous for us to phase in a similar kind of Regional Office or WASO experience requirement before assignment to direction of Co-op units.

One last pet peeve: I am sure you are aware, paragon of prose that you are, that "Natural Resources Management" is at best a solecism. The management of natural resources is called *resource (no plural) management*, in parallel with say, the repair of autos being called auto repair. Safire had a column on the topic not long ago, and I howled with delight, as I had long been correcting the error. You are in a singular position to hurl editorial polemics at the Philistines — go for it!

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