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Bison manager ends 40-year career with FWP

JULY 01, 2015 BY LAURA LUNDQUIST

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Fish, Wildlife & Parks biologist Arne Dood smiles at a comment during a public forum of potential FWP supervisors in November 2014.

Photo by Laura Lundquist

The Dood abides but no longer within Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Tuesday was the last day of a 40-year career in FWP for threatened and endangered species coordinator Arnie Dood.

Known for his easy-going nature and sense of humor, Dood sent an email to his FWP coworkers saying goodbye and wishing them well.

“I am very proud of the things we were able to accomplish together. While I know we face many challenges in maintaining the resources we all cherish, I know you are up to the task. If you continue to support each other, I know good things will happen,” Dood said in the email.

Dood didn’t get much support at the end of his career, after he took on the difficult role of exploring the possibility of creating a

wild bison herd in Montana in August 2009.

Last year, after applying to be the Region 3 supervisor in Bozeman, he was passed over in favor of Chief Warden Sam Sheppard.

FWP held an open forum in November 2014 to allow the public to hear comments from the three supervisor applicants. Dood gained supporters there, who were then disappointed with the outcome.

In May, Dood was informed that he would no longer be the threatened and endangered species coordinator. Nongame Species Chief Lauri Hanauska-Brown has taken over that role.

Dood was told he could oversee brucellosis management in the Paradise Valley starting in July but would have to take a cut in pay.

The demotion was evident on the FWP website where Dood's title was changed to "Native Species Biologist."

Dood decided to retire instead.

FWP management claimed the elimination of Dood's position was prompted by budget cuts. Some sportsmen have said it looked like a political move and doesn't bode well for bison management in Montana.

Either way, it adds to the brain drain at FWP.

Last year, Region 3 lost its supervisor of 15 years when Pat Flowers retired. Flowers and Dood had worked tirelessly on bison issues in the greater Yellowstone area.

At the same time, Region 1 lost supervisor Jim Satterfield after nine years.

At a Legislative audit committee hearing a few weeks ago, FWP Operations Chief Paul Sihler said the agency has had 50-percent turnover in recent years. That's troubling for an agency that is receiving more pressure to both nurture and control wildlife in a era where science is more maligned.

During every legislative session, administrators have to defend FWP budgets and programs against a slew of bills that seek to manage wildlife through constraining laws.

Bison have often been the focus of political ire, and by association, Dood might have been, too.

Dood will probably remain engaged in wildlife issues, but for now, he's taking a few months off.

"I leave for Alaska tomorrow to go fishing and have the summer and a good portion of the fall already booked with new adventures I am looking forward to," Dood said.