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Chad Karges Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award at Department of the Interior

Washington, D.C. - Today, the National Wildlife Refuge Association presented its Theodore Roosevelt Lifetime Achievement Award to Chad Karges, Project Leader at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Oregon in recognition of his steadfast leadership and his commitment to building partnerships. "There is no one more deserving of this award than Chad," said President of the Refuge Association, David Houghton. The ceremony began with an escort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Honor Guard, and included remarks by Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell and Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Dan Ashe.

Throughout his 30-year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chad Karges has looked for every opportunity to foster community relationships and integrate Refuge management into the local area at large. Chad's engagement of refuge neighbors at all levels has resulted in collaborative solutions that represent robust paths forward for the Refuge and the overarching conservation mission. By extending his efforts beyond Malheur NWR's boundaries, Chad has guided conservation on a 4.6-million-acre multijurisdictional landscape by collaborating directly with many diverse partners.

Karges also played a critical leadership role during the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's response to the illegal occupation of Malheur NWR by members of an armed militia. His progressive approach to managing issues with input from partners, consideration of foreseen and unforeseen factors, and accurate evaluation of important components was crucial for the National Refuge System during the occupation.

"Chad has had a profound, lasting impact not only on wildlife conservation during his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but also on the people he has worked with over these past 30 years," said David Houghton, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "His composure, leadership, and decision-making kept his employees safe throughout the Malheur takeover, preventing the tense occupation from devolving into violence."

Chad Karges is an exemplary leader within both Malheur NWR and within the community of Southeast Oregon. When the community showed their support for the Refuge during the occupation, it was evident that Mr. Karges and his staff have been tireless in their pursuit and development of community partnerships and engagement in Refuge activities for many years – when militants took out a fence between ranch land and refuge land during the illegal occupation, the rancher put the fence back up. Karges is a caring individual who has become a visionary force for Malheur NWR and in turn for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.

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