

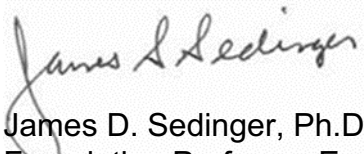
Stand Up for Our Federal Employees

Unless you have not followed the news for the last two months, the world has been informed that thousands of USA federal employees have been fired, adding to those that took early retirement. Many of these employees worked for National Wildlife Refuges, national or regional research labs, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), the Forest Service, and other national conservation units, ALL critical to waterfowl and other wildlife. Leases are being terminated on numerous federal buildings including the physical home of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team in Bismarck, ND. These folks conduct the Four-Square Mile Survey, which links annual breeding abundance of waterfowl to habitat characteristics, with clear implications for waterfowl and landscape conservation. Moreover, the U S Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, and certain states and provinces have partnered since the 1950s to survey breeding waterfowl and habitats to monitor population and habitat dynamics central to guiding habitat conservation of through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan—the grandest example of a continental ecosystem plan worldwide.

While the future may be uncertain, eliminating the physical space where these folks work and the services they provide is a clear indication of how seemingly unimportant their mission is to the current Administration. Firings are being commanded by the Administration that does not know the natural resource vitalness of these employees and functions, as evidenced by the frequent rehiring of people they fired. Firings are haphazard with no clear rationale other than gutting the federal government. Additionally, plans that seem to be guiding the Administration call for the elimination of US Geological Survey where federal research on waterfowl and other wildlife resides. It is unlikely that firing of federal employees critical to waterfowl management will elicit the same public outcry as some other areas, such as Education, unless it comes from folks like the subscribers to this listserv and the major NGOs that represent waterfowl hunters.

We all have observed the decline of the importance of waterfowl and the shift of resources away from waterfowl in the federal agencies, as well as universities and many states. Some might view the recent cuts as mere deserts for reducing the priority of waterfowl within the federal government. No thinking person can believe that elimination of the foundations for science-based management will improve the world for those who love waterfowl and wetlands and understand their earthly and human values. The same can be said for the firing of employees of NRCS who deliver private lands conservation programs. One of our mothers would have called this cutting off your nose to spite your face. Loss of staff that oversee and dispense conservation funding will be a negative for waterfowl and will be compounded by the impacts on private partners in conservation. Loss of annual waterfowl breeding data will mean the FWS will be flying blind when establishing harvest regulations. Lacking routine survey data for population modeling likely will yield more conservative seasons and bag limits. Neither is good for hunters and other waterfowl enthusiasts.

We encourage all of those with a love for waterfowl and the habitats they depend on to let your congressional representatives know that you support waterfowl and oppose the indiscriminate firing of federal employees that have been major players in one of the most successful conservation programs in history. Feel free to share this missive with partners for the cause of waterfowl and wildlife conservation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Seding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

James D. Seding, Ph.D.
Foundation Professor Emeritus, University of Nevada Reno

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard M. Kaminski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Richard M. Kaminski, Ph.D.
Retired Professor/Director, James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Centers
Mississippi State and Clemson Universities