

November 8, 1989

James Engel
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Bldg., Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, MN 55111

Dear Jim:

As you set about revitalizing the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team, you might welcome my thoughts on the subject. This is the time to do things that might be awkward at any other time. A new broom sweeps clean, they say.

As you recognize, you ought to have people on the Team who are in a position to do something. We have suffered from the fact that most of our members have not have any institutional backing, and most of the institutional representatives attending our meetings have not had any responsibility for action. Hence, very little happens. Even the minutes, such as they are, do not get out until six months or more after each meeting. Have you ever heard of a company that turned their official minutes over to a girl from the stenographic pool?

An important objective is to get people who are energetic and competent and interested. To some extent, you may be at the mercy of the agencies you hope to balance on the Team, but let's hope you are not stuck with bureaucratic deadheads. This is the kind of assignment that the foresters and game management bosses might pitch to people who are not busy. We want busy people. People who want to do something and get on with it.

I do not want to make a big deal out of businesslike procedures. Orderliness will not save the Kirtland's Warbler. But the conduct of our affairs has been embarrassing to me. I am not comfortable naming myself as a model, but when I headed this group before the Endangered Species people in Washington were involved, I mailed out a meeting agenda well in advance of each session, I did the minutes myself, and mailed them out within a week after each meeting. I did my own typing. I did not leave any loose ends. Now everything, almost, seems to die after the talking. Maybe giving this task to someone who is being paid to do it will help. Maybe if some of the people from various public agencies that attend our meetings as silent spectators were given some responsibility, they might make a contribution. We want ideas and action from members.

Aside from procedure, our problem is a lack of ideas. I said this in the public symposium at Landing in February. Also in one of our Team meetings a year or so ago, I said that our discussions sound like a phonograph record of discussions twenty years ago.. Have we run out of ideas? How can we get some idea people into the process? An incentive: our program has not been a sparkling success.

I write this letter a bit hesitantly, because I am not solving your problem. But at least this is the opportunity for a new look.

Sincerely,

December 18, 1989

Robert Radtke
U.S. Forest Service
633 Wisconsin Avenue, Clark Building
Milwaukee, WI 53203

Dear Bob:

This is just a note to wish you well as you take over the leadership of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team. I hope to stay in touch and attend the meetings as a rule.

There is an old adage that "a new broom sweeps clean," and this is the opportunity a new leader has. With a new man and a new agency at the help, this is your chance to do things better.

With a reconstituted team, I would particularly urge businesslike procedures. For example, before the meeting there should be an agenda in the hands of the participants. If the meeting is worth having, it is worth planning, and every member should be thinking about the items on the agenda. Then after the meeting, we should have minutes promptly. Six months later is too late. Also it is psychologically bad to have no prompt summing up. It implies that the people and agencies involved put a very low priority on these affairs. Maybe some of them do, but we do not want to admit it. The meetings should not be just a bull session.

I think a member of the team should be designated secretary to prepare the official record with judgment and understanding. This is not a job for a girl from the secretarial pool. The minutes do not need to be verbatim, and should not be. They should be discretionary, with the essence extracted and recorded. For this task, I would suggest Mike DeCapita. Also for some meetings at least he may be within easy phone call of his office.

You should not hesitate to delegate responsibility, assigning specific tasks to individual team members and asking for written reports. Our files should comprise a complete historical record of the work of the team.

You know I am writing this in the most friendly spirit and I am applauding your efforts. I have felt for a long time the team needed revitalizations and I am heartily in favor of your bringing a new breath of air to this enterprise.

Sincerely,