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Area Wildlife Chief May Lead U.S. Agency

Journal Staff Report

Dale Hall, the man who has overseen silvery minnow recovery and Mexican gray wolf reintroduction for almost four years, is President Bush's choice to head the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Hall, southwest regional director for the agency in Albuquerque, must be confirmed by the Senate.

"I'm looking forward to this position and to using my experience to lead our outstanding employees in finding science-based, cooperative solutions," he said in statement.

Hall isn't permitted to give interviews, pending his confirmation, but has said in the past that he favors working cooperatively with ranchers, farmers and developers over imposing restrictions on land use to protect rare species.

The announcement drew praise and criticism Friday.

"Dale is a leader in trying to find reasonable approaches to the Endangered Species Act ... while protecting water users in New Mexico," Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said in a statement.

Kieran Suckling, policy director for the Center for Biological Diversity, disagreed.

"He has routinely sided with extraction interests, refused to meet with or include environmentalists in decision making, and has undermined scientific standards at every turn," he said in a news release.