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Environmentalists Oppose Bush Nomination for Director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Associated Press

Some environmentalists are angry over President Bush's selection of H. Dale Hall as director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The nomination was sent to the Senate on Monday.

Hall has been director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest region for the last three years.

"This will be a serious threat that species on the brink of extinction simply don't need," said Nicole Rosmarino, conservation director for the Santa Fe-based Forest Guardians. "Dale Hall adheres to the junk science approach of the Bush administration."

Defenders for Wildlife vice president for conservation litigation Mike Senatore called Hall a "terrible choice."

"We've actually had some dealings with him while he was regional director of the Southwest region and through those dealings, it's been extremely unfavorable," Senatore said. "We've had issues where he's actually overruled his own field biologists on environmental matters."

Senatore said his main concern is that the Bush administration has moved Hall up to administratively "undermine" the Endangered Species Act.

"Given his track record, from our

standpoint, he has been incredibly bad on endangered species matters," Senatore said.

Hall was not immediately available for comment Monday evening. He previously said he was honored to be nominated and looks forward to using his experience to lead the agency toward finding science-based, cooperative solutions to tough issues.

Senator Pete Domenici, R-N.M., recommended Hall to President Bush. Domenici had argued in favor of Hall, especially when it comes to the Endangered Species Act.

"Dale is a leader in trying to find reasonable approaches to the Endangered Species Act, and finding manageable ways to meet the requirements of the act while protecting water users in New Mexico," Domenici said. "The president couldn't have made a better choice based on experiences we have had working on the Rio Grande."

Hall is an Air Force veteran who earned his bachelor's degree from Cumberland College in Kentucky and his master's degree from Louisiana State University. He began his career with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Vicksburg, Miss. in 1978. He has also held positions in Texas, Oregon, Georgia and Washington, D.C.

Hall served as deputy regional director for the agency's southeast region

before coming to Albuquerque. In the five years at that post, he helped with conservation and restoration of ecosystems in the Mississippi River Delta and the Caribbean tropics.