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### **New manager named for South Slough Reserve**

#### ***Longtime federal employee Gary Cooper to start Feb. 3***

Charleston – After more than 30 years working for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Gary Cooper will take the reins in February as the third manager of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Cooper's wide-ranging experience with the BLM includes stints in Oregon, Idaho and Washington, D.C., in positions ranging from district manager to range conservationist.

"I am absolutely thrilled to take this job, and start working with the dedicated South Slough staff," said Cooper. "The Reserve is truly a gem in the NOAA estuarine reserve system, and I'm looking forward to helping facilitate a deeper public understanding of this very special place."

Cooper has a bachelor's degree in rangeland science from Oregon State University, and also attended Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. His most recent position with the BLM was district manager in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where he managed the agency's staff and programs, and served as the primary liaison with other government agencies, local organizations and Indian tribes. He also served as deputy division chief of the Division of Engineering and Environmental Services in Washington, D.C; and as a natural resource specialist in Vale, Oregon.

The South Slough Reserve is a 5,000-acre natural area established in 1974 as the first of 28 estuarine research reserves throughout the country. It encompasses a mixture of open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested uplands. Reserve staff support and coordinate research, education and stewardship programs which serve to enhance a scientific and public understanding of estuaries and contribute to improved estuarine management. Each national reserve has a state administrative partner – in Oregon, the Department of State Lands (DSL) fills this role.

DSL director Mary Abrams, who serves as the chair of the South Slough Management Commission, said Cooper has the management and partnership development experience, coupled with a broad understanding of natural resources, to lead the South Slough in its research and public outreach efforts. "We are very excited to have Gary on board, and believe his impressive background will help propel the South Slough even further as a leader in estuarine research, management and conservation," Abrams said.

Cooper replaces longtime Reserve manager Mike Graybill, who retired in March 2013, after serving for almost 30 years. After Graybill's retirement, former DSL director Louise Solliday served as acting

manager from April through November. Current DSL internal auditor Vena McCoy and Reserve operations manager Robin Elledge are leading the organization until Cooper arrives.

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More information:

South Slough Reserve: <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/SSNERR/Pages/index.aspx>

NOAA Estuarine Reserves: <http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov/>

Department of State Lands: <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/Pages/index.aspx>