



MEMORANDUM

To: State Fish and Wildlife Directors
Forest Service Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area and IITF Directors

Date: MAY 6 2004

Re: Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies: Opportunities for Partnerships
between State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Forest Service

State fish and wildlife agencies and the Forest Service share an important mission as stewards of our nation's natural resources. The development of Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, required by Congress under the State Wildlife Grants program, presents a historic opportunity for the state agencies and the Forest Service to work together to advance their shared resource management goals.

The State Wildlife Grants program was created by Congress in 2001, to provide expanded federal support for wildlife conservation. The program builds on a history of very successful federal-state wildlife conservation partnerships, including the 1937 Wildlife Restoration Act (the Pittman-Robertson Act), and the 1950 Sport Fish Restoration Act (the Dingell-Johnson Act). Like these successful laws, the State Wildlife Grants program provides funding to state agencies to support on-the-ground conservation projects. The overarching goal of the program is to prevent wildlife from declining to the point of becoming threatened or endangered.

In many ways, the State Wildlife Grants program is ushering in a new era of fish and wildlife management. Under this program, states now have a better opportunity to fulfill their mission to conserve all wildlife species while optimizing wildlife-related recreation and education. In only a few years, states have already made great strides in restoring and conserving the diversity of fish and wildlife by investing in a wide variety of on-the-ground projects to study and conserve previously overlooked species.

In order to receive the State Wildlife Grants funds, each state is required to submit a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by October 2005. Each state's strategy will identify priority wildlife species and habitat, assess threats to their survival, and identify long-term conservation actions. While state fish and wildlife agencies are leading the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy development process, the aim is to create a strategic program for conserving wildlife, not just a plan for a state agency. Once completed, the strategies will provide an essential foundation for the future of wildlife conservation, and a stimulus to engage the states, federal agencies and other conservation



foundation for the future of wildlife conservation, and a stimulus to engage the states, federal agencies and other conservation partners to strategically think about their individual and coordinated roles in prioritizing conservation efforts in each state.

Both the states and the Forest Service stand to benefit from the exchange of information about wildlife and habitat resources, as well as management goals and priorities. Specific areas for potential cooperation include, but are not limited to the following:

- *Data and information on fish and wildlife, and habitat occurrence and condition.* Information gaps are a constant challenge to both state agencies and the Forest Service. The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy process gives the states and the Forest Service the opportunity to share data and improve the information they rely on for effective management decisions.
- *Data and information on wildlife population processes and cause-effect linkages between fish and wildlife and their habitats.* Managing populations depends on understanding the key processes that link them with habitat condition. Forest Service and state agency wildlife research elucidates these linkages so we can predict the effects of habitat management and other changes and disturbances on wildlife populations.
- *Management objectives and priorities.* Increasingly, we are learning that effective resource management needs to work across jurisdictional and political boundaries. An effective statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy will need to draw on and integrate the management goals and priorities of other resource managers, including the Forest Service. When completed, the strategies will also be a useful source of information for Forest Service planning and management decisions.
- *Expertise and experience in implementation and monitoring.* States and the Forest Service are learning that effective monitoring programs are essential to the long-term success of conservation actions. Monitoring must be cost-effective and designed to collect statistically valid information and analyses that can be used by resource agencies to make management decisions. The strategy development process presents an opportunity for states and the Forest Service to share ideas about monitoring and develop common approaches that will facilitate the exchange of information on both sides.
- *Public outreach and involvement.* Effective engagement of diverse stakeholders is critical to the development and implementation of conservation and management actions. By sharing their experience and resources in public involvement, the states and the Forest Service can discover new approaches to stakeholder engagement and benefit from each other's existing relationships with key constituencies.

Additional information on the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies is available on the Teaming With Wildlife web site <http://www.teaming.com>. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact Dave Chadwick on the IAFWA staff at (202) 624-5429 or by email at chadwick@ssso.org.

We urge state fish and wildlife agency and Forest Service personnel to work together in the completion and implementation of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies. Working together, we can make a difference for America's fish and wildlife resources.



JOHN BAUGHMAN
Executive Vice President, IAFWA



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Chief, Forest Service



Enclosures

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies State Contact List
Forest Service Wildlife, Fish, and Threatened and Endangered Species Contact List
Forest Service Research Station Assistant Directors Contact List
Wildlife Research Unit List