



June 24, 2013

Honorable Daniel M. Ashe
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3358
Washington, DC 20240-0001

RE: Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and State Wildlife Action Plans

Dear Director Ashe:

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA), represents thirteen state and three provincial Midwest fish and wildlife agencies. We greatly appreciate your continued commitment to coordination with state partners. Together with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) championed the development of the State Wildlife Action Plans.

As the FWS has increased its science capacity with the advent of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), the opportunities for collaboration have expanded. The State Wildlife Action Plans provide information on priority for species, habitats, conservation actions, and identify collaborations that should be integral for the LCCs, as outlined in the 2011 white paper "Working Together for Wildlife." The Plans are foundational to the work of the LCCs, providing building blocks for conservation delivery at a landscape-level.

The next two years serve as a window of opportunity for collaborating on joint priorities, because 2015 is the deadline for comprehensive review and revision of State Wildlife Action Plans. It is in the best interest of the LCCs to provide support to states to ensure that this next iteration of the Plans prioritizes conservation actions at the statewide scale while considering regional needs and priorities. At the present the Plans are a priority of some LCCs and not others. For example, in their 2013 call for proposals, the Great Lakes LCC identified five funding themes including one directly relevant to the update of State Wildlife Action Plans (i.e., identifying regional themes and needs across State Wildlife Action Plans in the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes region). This targeted approach to funding not only provides needed resources to develop regional tools that can be used immediately by the states, it also recognizes that a regional framework may need to include states or parts of states outside of a defined LCC boundary.

We respectfully request that all the LCCs in the region make the revision, implementation, and support of State Wildlife Action Plans a priority.

A consistent focus across geographies on State Wildlife Action Plans and the priorities outlined within them will be beneficial for both the States and FWS. The Plans have demonstrated their ability to convene partners around common fish and wildlife conservation priorities and to deliver results, and also have a track record of attracting the interest of funding organizations and policy makers.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Gassett, Ph.D
President

Enclosure
Working Together for Wildlife

CC:
MAFWA Board of Directors
MAFWA State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Committee
Tom Melius, Director, Midwest Region, US Fish and Wildlife Service

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June 26, 2013

Dr. Suzette Kimball, Acting Director
United States Geological Survey
USGS National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Dr. Kimball:

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) was formed in 1934 to provide a common forum for state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies to share ideas, information, pool resources, and form action initiatives to better the management and conservation of fish and wildlife resources in the Midwest. MAFWA represents 13 state and 3 provincial Midwest fish and wildlife agencies.

The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of the deep concern MAFWA Directors have with the USGS decision to divert \$50,000 from the current cooperative agreement with the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS), as well as the plan to divert \$100,000 (40%) next year. We urge you to reconsider making these disproportionate cuts to a highly productive, 56-year old program that benefits your agency, our agencies, and many other conservation programs across North America.

The SCWDS program began in 1957, became phenomenally successful, and has long enjoyed an enviable national and international reputation. It is looked to for its wildlife disease expertise and serves as a model for cooperative organizations involved in natural resource conservation. Although SCWDS membership currently includes the wildlife management agencies of 19 states in the Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast, it provides assistance across the country. Other supporters include The University of Georgia, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Institutes of Health, and other organizations. SCWDS leverages every dollar administered by USGS with more than ten dollars from other supporters, providing a huge return on investment. Using this cooperative approach, SCWDS provides each supporter with much more than they would have been able to obtain individually and it is essential that each cooperator continue to bear its part of the load.

Funding for SCWDS through the U.S. Department of the Interior first was directed by Congress in 1963 at the urging of several southeastern states. Since then, Congress has reiterated in appropriations committee report language in 1982, 1986, and 1987 that full funding be directed to SCWDS, and has increased the appropriation twice in response to past attempts to divert SCWDS funding. The intent of Congress is abundantly clear.

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies strongly urges USGS to reconsider its decision to make disproportionate cuts to SCWDS funding. The cuts will jeopardize the ability of SCWDS to continue to provide the high quality of service that we all have come to expect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Gassett", is written on a light pink rectangular background.

Jon Gassett
President

cc: MAFWA Board of Directors
Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee
Sheila Kemmis