

**Association of Midwest Fish & Wildlife Agencies Resolution
Regarding
Conflict Resolution of Federal Aid Issues**

Resolution:

That the IAFWA adopt the following strategies to resolve the ever increasing conflicts occurring between State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and USFWS Federal Aid Program.

- Seek USFWS commitment to implement the recommendations in the Federal Aid Review Team Report including the creation of a "Steering Committee" of Senior Managers at both the State and FWS level;
- USFWS reaffirm that federal aid program managers control decision making, not auditors;
- Adopt the problem-solving model used to develop the animal damage policy clarification (i.e., federal and state personnel working collaborative on problem solving rather than states having to react) as the standard for resolving ongoing issues.

Justification:

The PROCESS for resolving significant policy issues within the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration program needs attention. We are headed for "breakdown". Some of these "issues" are the direct result of state audits, and some have been lingering for MANY years. This fact alone ought to be a clue that indicates the complexity and significance of the issues and thus the importance of designing a problem solving process that can insure appropriate solutions. Simply put...the states are part of the problem, we ought to be part of developing the solution.

It appears FWS Division of Federal Aid is about to reinstitute the "policy clarification" process for addressing federal aid "issues". Said process has the FWS developing solutions and then providing the states an opportunity to comment. Based on the real-life experiences under the old process, this one-sided approach does not work well. These are significant issues that ought to be addressed jointly by the FWS and states.

The federal government declaration that the FWS Federal Aid Program was a "material weakness" appears to have resulted in a FWS response to try and assume CONTROL of the program. It is obvious the FWS does not want to include the states in the development of solutions because that minimizes their ability to simply reject our input (to illustrate they are in CONTROL). Keep in mind when the policy clarification process started producing products the FWS didn't like, they abandoned the process. When the joint state\FWS Region 3 discussions on field trials did not produce the results the FWS wanted, they terminated those discussions as well.

We should not accept the premise that FWS is in "control" of the P-R\SFR programs. These are unique federal "grant" programs unlike most (if not ALL) other federal grant programs-- (trust funds are involved; program addresses state, not federal priorities; funds are apportioned, not appropriated by Congress; they have withstood challenge for over 60 years).

Regional Division of Federal Aid chiefs have made it clear (at least to state personnel) that they intend to develop solutions to these issues and then give us an opportunity to comment. Like the timber revenue issue, we are likely to end up in additional, lengthy conflicts reaching all the way to Congress. This does not seem like an effective way to run a business!

Finally, if we do nothing we are headed for gridlock with the FWS, if CARA passes; States will be forced to expand the use of federal aid funds for "mundane" activities due to excessive, unnecessary federal bureaucracy. Customers will correctly ask what they are getting for "their" money.

Adopted: July 17, 2001
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Signed: _____
Timothy P. Bremicker, President