

Mr. Robert McDowell, President
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Director New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
Post Office Box 400
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Mr. McDowell:

The Conservation Title of the Farm Bill has some of the greatest impact on fish and wildlife resources of any Federal conservation initiative. IAFWA, along with others of the conservation community, helped shape the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Swampbuster and Sodbuster in the 1985 Farm Bill. These programs have continued in subsequent Farm Bills with the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) added in 1990 and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program added in 1996.

Leadership provided by IAFWA and its member states has resulted in much conservation since 1985. Past IAFWA efforts were usually supplemented by detailing staff from member states, for various periods of time, to Washington DC to assist with added workloads associated with the cyclic Farm Bill. Without exception, IAFWA and member state staff rose admirably to the challenges and opportunities.

Still, the 2002 Farm Bill process, with the addition of a full-time staff person (Dave Walker, Agriculture Conservation Policy Analyst), illuminated what could be done with focused attention to the evolution of the Farm Bill. The collective actions of IAFWA, member states and conservation partners is that the 2002 Farm Bill is one of the most wildlife friendly bills ever passed by Congress. In fact, the funding level for conservation represents the single-largest increase ever authorized.

State Fish and Wildlife Agencies were so effective in shaping conservation elements of the 2002 Farm Bill because IAFWA staffed a full-time position to consolidate state views, keep states informed, advised regarding need for Congressional contacts and coordinated with other conservation partners. In addition, it proved invaluable to have a point-person that could spend time in developing the trust and respect of key legislators and staff of the House and Senate

Agriculture Committees.

Dave Walker is to be commended for his excellent liaison work with IAFWA member states and his excellent execution of the conservation vision that the states collectively provided.

However, the need for an IAFWA Agriculture Conservation Policy Analyst does not end with passage of the 2002 Farm Bill. Progress can be lost or gained as the USDA rulemaking process unfolds as well as when programs are implemented and periodically adjusted. There is also a need for the states to be more involved in appropriation processes to insure adequate funding for implementation of the programs we have all worked so hard to get passed.

The Directors of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies believe that, given the billions of dollars that Farm Bill conservation programs can annually direct toward conservation, Farm Bill legislation and implementation provide some of the greatest opportunity for achieving sustainability of fish and wildlife resources. **Therefore, we propose that the position of Agriculture Conservation Policy Analyst be made permanent and are willing to work with the other Associations to secure the needed funding.**

Your consideration of this important recommendation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

cc: R. Max Peterson