

November 12, 2003

The Honorable John Ashcroft, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft:

I am writing on behalf of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA). The MAFWA is comprised of the fish and wildlife agencies in 13 Midwestern states and 3 Canadian provinces. The MAFWA serves as a clearinghouse to its member agencies for the exchange of ideas concerning wildlife and fisheries management, research, wildlife law enforcement and education to secure protection and proper management of our fish and wildlife resources in the midwestern United States. The MAFWA also provides a forum for its member agencies to address issues that are pertinent throughout the region. This latter function is the reason for this letter.

At our last meeting, the MAFWA directed me to contact you, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service to request assistance with an issue that hampers our ability to properly manage the wildlife resources in our respective states. The issue involves actions taken by various individuals and groups who are abusing the NEPA process to obstruct legitimate management activities on federal lands and state lands acquired with federal Pittman-Robertson funding. I have also sent letters to Mr. Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Mr. Dale Bosworth, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service requesting assistance with this issue. I further requested Mr. Williams to direct his staff to take the lead to collaborate with the Forest Service and, if necessary, your agency to establish a process that federal and state land managers can follow which reduces the likelihood of NEPA-based law suits that are obstructionist in nature. We also ask that you direct your staff to aggressively defend management practices applied on federal and pertinent state lands that are consistent with planned objectives and are based in science when these activities are challenged in court.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information or believe that participation from the MAFWA would be useful in helping to resolve this issued. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kirk Nelson, President
Midwest Association of
Fish and Wildlife Agencies