

November 12, 2003

Steve Williams, Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, Room 3012  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Steve:

First of all, let me offer congratulations on behalf of the Midwest Association on your appointment. I'm quite confident I can tell you that those of us working for the state fish and wildlife agencies around the country couldn't be more pleased with your selection as Director. Please consider this to be an open invitation to call on the Association or any of our members for assistance at any time.

I am specifically writing to address two of the action items that came out of our last Association meeting. The first is to bring to your attention the fact that many of the Association's members believe a number of national wildlife refuges throughout the Midwest can provide additional hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities without compromising the mission of the refuges. This is particularly true for resident game and furbearer species which fall under the statutory authority of the respective state wildlife agencies. We ask that you direct your refuge staff to work in collaboration with our member state agencies to identify and incorporate additional opportunities for consumptive users on national wildlife refuges. This is particularly important and could provide significant benefits for several of our member states in which publicly-owned lands open to hunting and trapping are at a minimum.

The second item pertains to the tactics used by several individuals and groups who are abusing the NEPA process to obstruct legitimate management activities on federal lands and state lands acquired with Pittman-Robertson funding. Specifically, we ask that you direct your staff to take the lead to collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service and, if necessary, the Department of Justice to establish a process that federal and state land managers can follow which reduces the likelihood of NEPA-based lawsuits that are obstructionist in nature. I have also sent letters to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and the Attorney General requesting their assistance with this issue. I further requested that this Attorney General direct his 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 recognize that you undoubtedly have an overwhelming number of issues facing you during the initial portion of your administration. We also recognize that it has been many years since the Steve Williams

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Service has had a Director with your experience and perspective. We need to work together to

get as much accomplished as we possibly can while we have this opportunity. Don't hesitate to call on us if we can be of assistance. Again, congratulations on your appointment. We appreciate your consideration on these issues. Hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

Kirk Nelson, President  
Midwest Association of  
Fish and Wildlife Agencies