

November 12, 2003

Mr. Dale Bosworth, Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW @  
Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Bosworth:

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 regarding two issues. The first deals with making you aware of the views of many of our member agencies regarding wildlife habitat on national forests throughout the midwest. Most of the state fish and wildlife agencies believe that there has been a long term and steady decline in the diversity of wildlife habitat on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service in the midwest. As a result, many plant and animal communities have been adversely impacted, particularly those associated with the early successional stages of forest communities. We are specifically requesting that high priority be given to proactive management of U.S. Forest Service lands in the midwest for wildlife purposes. Our member agencies stand ready to assist with this task and we would strongly encourage that management plans for these lands be developed in collaboration with the respective state wildlife agency's staff.

The second item is somewhat related and pertains to the tactics used by several individuals and groups who are abusing to NEPA process to obstruct legitimate management activities on federal lands and state lands acquired with federal, Pittman-Robertson funding. In separate letters, we have asked Mr. Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to assign his staff to take the lead, and Attorney General Ashcroft to involve his staff if needed, 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. We are specifically asking that, if requested, you assign your staff to assist Director Williams with this task. We also requested Attorney General Ashcroft to 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.

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We appreciate your consideration of these requests. 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 these issues. Related to that, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you and/or members of your staff, to attend our meetings. Typically, we meet once annually in mid-July for a couple of days. These meetings provide a great opportunity for exchange of information and could set the stage for a strengthened partnership between Association members and the Forest Service in the future. Our next meeting will be held...

I hope you or someone from your staff can attend. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kirk Nelson, President  
Midwest Association of  
Fish and Wildlife Agencies