



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES





In Response Reply To:
FWS/AWSR/070199

MEMORANDUM

To: State and Territorial Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate

From: Margaret E. Everson, Principal Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
Ed Carter, President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)

Subject: Action Items from the FWS – AFWA Joint Session




Thank you all for your active participation at our joint session during the 84th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. These joint sessions are unique and invaluable opportunities to have "safe space" discussions, build rapport and advance our shared purpose of fish and wildlife conservation.

Through participation in the workgroup discussions and review of the notes, several consistent themes emerged. First and foremost, while it is clear we may differ around the edges, as the great Maya Angelou once noted, "We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike." This similarity and the increasing natural resource challenges we face should serve to refocus our attention on the common core of our purpose, and demand a heightened level of synergistic collaboration.

The comments, suggestions and concerns expressed during the workgroup sessions reconfirmed the three interrelated attributes of successful collaboration:

- Communication;
- Personal Relationships; and
- Trust

With this in mind and informed by the workgroup discussions, we considered what actions we could take to enhance opportunities for relationship building and improved communications. The goal is to build trust and enhance collaboration at all levels; to get there requires open communication and strong relationships. Our hope is that by taking the following actions we will enhance both of these requirements.

Communication:

Action 1: The FWS Principal Deputy Director will re-issue to State Directors the request embodied in the September 2018 letter from the Department of the Interior to Governors, requesting input on needed policy adjustments. **Leads:** Margaret Everson and Ed Carter. **Due:** NLT August 1, 2019

Action 2: Re-visit current approach for communicating annual agenda item data call for the Joint Task Force for Financial Assistance Policy. The goal is to increase awareness and improve participation. **Leads:** Paul Rauch, Kelly Hepler, and Ron Regan. **Due:** NLT November 2019 (prior to fall JTF meeting)

Action 3: Explore the potential for an Executive Communications Council to enhance coordination and communication on high-level issues, such as pending legislation, priority setting, reorganizations, or major regulatory changes. Develop draft scope, expectations, and charter for discussion at the AFWA Annual Meeting in September 2019. **Leads:** Paul Rauch and Ron Regan. **Due:** August 2019 (30 days prior to AFWA Annual Meeting).

Action 4: Develop a conceptual proposal for a survey of national and/or regional science/research priorities. **Leads:** Sara Parker-Pauley, Karen Waldrop, and a FWS SA Rep TBD. **Due:** August 2019 (30 days prior to AFWA Annual Meeting)

Relationships:

Action 1: Prepare for Joint FWS – State Director session at the 109th AFWA Meeting on September 22-25, 2019. **Leads:** Paul Rauch and Ron Regan. **Due:** August 2019 (30 days prior to AFWA Annual Meeting).

Action 2: Plan for Joint FWS – State Director sessions at upcoming Regional Association Meetings. Purpose is to provide a discussion opportunity outside of normal committee structure to allow for frank conversations on key issues of shared interest. Attendance and format will be up to Regions and Regional Associations. **Leads:** FWS will assign one RD and one DRD from within the boundaries of each Regional Association to work with Regional Association leadership on planning the sessions. **Due:** Prior to Fiscal Year 2020 Regional Association meetings.

Action 3: Prepare "Key Contacts" lists for FWS Regions and State Agencies. These may already exist in many locations. If so, update as needed and share or re-share as appropriate. Both FWS and State leadership will encourage staff who are new or do not already have strong relationships with their State or Federal counterpart to reach out, make contact and start a dialogue. Office visits are good. **Leads:** State Directors and FWS Regional Directors. **Due:** Prior to Fall AFWA Annual Meeting.

The above action items are next steps in our continuing commitment to build trust and strengthen the Federal – State partnership in support of natural resource conservation. We look forward to your continued participation as we collectively address these action items and prepare for another robust joint session in September.



The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

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June 14, 2019

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600-17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: Proposed Modification of Action Pursuant to Section 301; China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation (Docket Number: USTR-2019-0004)

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

I am submitting comments, with regards to the above-referenced proposed action, on behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association). The Association is a 501(c)(6) and its mission is to support and advocate for the work of state fish and wildlife agencies and to assist those agencies in delivering science-based resource management in collaboration with public and private partners. All 50 states are members.

I am writing to express concern about the potential unintended consequences for conservation funding at the state level because of the new proposed tariffs on recreational angling (e.g., rods, reels, terminal tackle) and archery (e.g., bows, component parts, accessories) equipment manufactured in China. The connection to conservation via the recreational angling and archery industries comes about through an excise tax on a variety of products as noted above. We believe the new tariffs could negatively impact sales of such products and likewise diminish funding for conservation at the state level. Let me elaborate below.

Excise Taxes and Conservation Funding

In 1937, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, or the Pittman-Robertson Act, named after Senator Key Pittman and Representative Absalom Robertson, was passed. This Act repurposed an existing 11% excise tax on firearms and ammunition for distribution to state fish and wildlife agencies based on a formula (numbers of licensed hunters and land area). In the 1970's, this excise tax was also applied to archery equipment. The Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Act, or the Dingell-Johnson Act, named after Representative John Dingell, Sr. and Senator Edwin Johnson, was passed in 1950. It placed a 10% excise tax on most fishing equipment with a similar distribution formula of receipts to state fish and wildlife agencies.

State fish and wildlife agencies use license permit fee dollars to match the federal funds. These combined funds – excise tax apportionments and license dollars – comprise on average 75% of the typical state fish and wildlife agency budget. The importance of this unique funding model for sustaining successful fish and wildlife management, education, and recreational access programs cannot be overstated. The Association, therefore, is concerned that anglers, bow hunters, and archery target shooters will delay or not make new purchases because of the added cost of products from the tariffs. That being the case, the tariffs could, in fact, negatively impact the revenue stream to state fish and wildlife agencies for conservation and recreation programs. The basic proposition is quite simple, the tariffs will increase price points, buyer resistance may surface, especially on larger ticket items (e.g., bows, rods, reels), and excise tax collections decrease, resulting in fewer dollars to apportion to state fish and wildlife agencies.

Further, the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses (permits) is the other primary source of funding state conservation programs. If the price point causes a drop in participation and, thereby, license sales, it has multiple effects on revenue from both the state and federal source.

Conservation and Recreation Benefits

The benefits are real – since 1939 the Wildlife Restoration Act has generated more than \$12 billion total for stateside research, monitoring, education, and habitat acquisition programs. On the Sport Fish Restoration side of the equation, the financial impact is equally compelling, with more than \$9 billion excise tax dollars for stateside fisheries research, management, and public access programs since 1952. These funds have produced a great many conservation success stories across the taxonomic and habitat spectrum ranging from white-tailed deer to brook trout, from wetlands to uplands, from wood ducks to wild turkeys. Here are some nationally significant accomplishments:

- During the last ten years, over 22,000 boating access areas and over 4,000 fishing access areas were reported constructed and/or maintained.
- During the last ten years, over 1,600 hatcheries were reported constructed and/or maintained and more than 2.2 billion fish were reported propagated in hatcheries supported by the Sport Fish Restoration dollars.
- An average of more than 26 million acres of state lands, usually named Wildlife Management Areas, are managed with the support of Wildlife Restoration Program funding.
- State fish and wildlife agencies collectively certify about 500,000 students annually in safe and responsible hunting skills.
- With Wildlife Restoration Program funding, an average of about 40 archery ranges and about 200 shooting ranges are developed, operated, and/or maintained by state fish and wildlife agencies nationally each year.

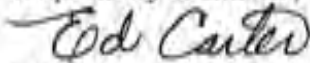
Other Considerations

We suggest that given there is already an existing excise tax on such products, new tariffs, in effect, provide for double taxation. As representatives from the American Sportfishing Association and the Archery Trade Association will likely attest, there will be a disproportionate impact on small business – the drivers of economic growth in rural America – small, independent tackle and archery shops.

Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in with information and perspective that might not be front and center on your radar screens in terms of potential unintended consequences from the proposed tariffs on angling and archery products made in China. We hope this brief outline of considerations will prove helpful in your deliberations, and we stand ready to answer questions that might yet surface on the conservation dimension to the tariffs policy discussion.

Respectfully submitted,



Ed Carter
President

