



## MEMORANDUM

To: State Government Members of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, USDA Forest Service Regional Foresters, and Bureau of Land Management State Directors

Date: August 9, 2002

Subject: Fish and Wildlife Management in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Administered Wilderness

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The purpose of this letter is to once again reaffirm our mutual commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the "Policies and Guidelines for Fish and Wildlife Management in National Forest and Bureau of Land Management Wilderness." Consistent with this mutual commitment, the state and federal agencies will continue to work to improve cooperative management of fish and wildlife resources in BLM and Forest Service managed wilderness.

These Policies and Guidelines, first promulgated in 1976, and revised through intensive coordination between the agencies in 1986, contain specific direction for fisheries and wildlife management activities in wilderness. They are designed to serve as a framework for cooperation among the agencies in the coordination of fish and wildlife population and habitat management in wilderness. The Policies and Guidelines serve to supplement existing Forest Service (FSM 2323.32) and BLM (H-8560-1) wilderness management policies and direction. Developed in 1976, and reaffirmed in 1986 and 1995, the Policies and Guidelines remain relevant in the management of wilderness resources today. The policies and guidelines accurately reflect the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the state and federal agencies charged with management of these resources.

In several cases, the guidelines are referenced or incorporated into the legislative language that established wilderness areas. For example, the guidelines were specifically referenced and supported by the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act. Title I, Sec. 101(h) of the Act says:

"(h) Wildlife Management.—In furtherance of the purposes and principles of the Wilderness Act, management activities to maintain or restore fish and wildlife populations and the habitats to support such populations may be carried out within wilderness areas designated by this title, where consistent with relevant wilderness management plans, in accordance with appropriate policies and guidelines such as

those set forth in Appendix B of the Report of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs to accompany HR 2570 of the One Hundred First Congress (H. Rept. 101-405)."

Appendix B includes the 1986 Wilderness Guidelines.

There are situations where differences in agencies' perspectives as to the appropriateness of certain fish and wildlife management actions in wilderness have led to problems. In 2001, some Forest Service research and management staff expressed concerns regarding fish and wildlife activities permitted within wilderness. These include ongoing transplants of fish and wildlife to sustain recreational activities; the effects of active fish and wildlife management actions on wilderness character; and potential conflicts between the Policies and Guidelines and wilderness management objectives. An Interagency Review Team was assigned to evaluate documented problems that have occurred in implementation of the Policies and Guidelines, and is working on a number of recommendations to resolve these problems. The review of case studies suggests that where problems occur on some Forest Service and BLM management units, the substantive issues lie in philosophical differences and lack of recognition of the fish and wildlife management role state agencies have in wilderness. This has caused significant delays in (or elimination of) implementation of some necessary fish and wildlife projects.

Based on this review, we have agreed on the following actions:

- 1) Reinstatement of the "Policies and Guidelines" into agency directives, manuals, and handbooks;
- 2) Immediate initiation of annual coordination meetings between the federal and state agencies to discuss both short- and long-term wilderness management needs;
- 3) Expedited development of wilderness management plans consistent with ongoing Land Use Planning efforts (i.e., USDA Forest Plans, BLM Resource Management Plans). Wilderness plans need to include fish and wildlife management objectives cooperatively developed with the state agencies;
- 4) Cooperative development and implementation by the states (through IAFWA) and federal agencies of training and orientation for staff and decision makers about the Policies and Guidelines;
- 5) Completed clarification of the existing Policies and Guidelines to be provided to agency leadership for consideration. Clarification will be in the nature of a supplement or letter and not in changes to the guidelines due to the statutory endorsement of the existing guidelines by the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act.

We expect all management units to begin implementing recommendations 1 through 3 immediately. Recommendation 4 will be developed through the national offices of the federal agencies and IAFWA. We recognize the importance of recommendation 5 and

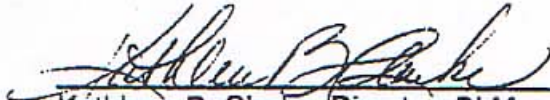
direct the Interagency Review Team to complete clarification of the existing Policies and Guidelines and to provide a report to state and federal agency leadership for consideration by September 15, 2002.

*suggested to be 2002.*

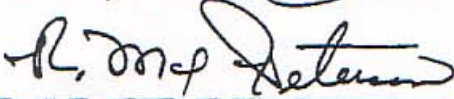
It is clear that the Policies and Guidelines have been an effective tool for cooperative management of fish and wildlife in wilderness in most areas. It is our expectation that this will continue. Proper stewardship of the wilderness resources, including fish and wildlife, depends upon our effective communication and consultation with one another. With this letter, we reaffirm our commitment to the conservation of these resources through implementation of the Policies and Guidelines.



Dale N. Bosworth, Chief, USDA Forest Service



Kathleen B. Clarke, Director, BLM



R. Max Peterson, Executive Vice President, IAFWA