



STRENGTHENING STATE-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS TO SECURE OUR NATION'S FISH AND WILDLIFE FUTURE

FISH & WILDLIFE IN THE PUBLIC TRUST

Founded in 1902, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) supports and advocates for state, provincial, and territorial authority for fish and wildlife conservation and assists its member states and provinces in promoting science-based resource management in collaboration with public and private partners. The Association enhances cooperation between our state fish and wildlife agency and Canadian provincial and territorial members, conservation organizations, industries, academia, private landowner groups, and numerous other state and federal agencies and organizations. All 50 state fish and wildlife agencies (state agencies) are members of the Association.

The **North American Model of Wildlife Conservation** guides how our members manage our nation's fish, wildlife, and habitats. This model is often characterized as the world's most successful conservation system. It is a systematic arrangement of policies and laws designed to conserve, restore, and manage species and habitats. State agencies have principal jurisdiction and authority to manage fish and wildlife within their borders, including on many federal lands, as a public trust resource managed for the benefit of our citizens and future generations. State agencies also share authority with federal agencies for the management of migratory birds, inter-jurisdictional fishes, and species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Utilization of the North American Model described above provides consistency and a common language for our members and partners.

State agencies want to maintain healthy populations of and management responsibility for as many species as possible through voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private lands and through enhanced cooperation with federal agencies that are responsible for managing habitat on federal lands and waters. **Our nation's system of conservation works best for fish and wildlife resources and our people when state and federal agencies work well together.**

Healthy fish, wildlife and habitats contribute significantly to the nation's economic well-being through wildlife-dependent and outdoor recreation activities.

In 2011, anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers spent over \$104 billion to pursue their outdoor passions, and their activities supported over 2 million jobs.

These impressive contributions support businesses and rural communities, grow our nation's economy, improve the health and quality of life for our citizens and provide about \$2.95 billion in direct support of state fish and wildlife agencies' work. These national economic contributions cannot be overlooked.

TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE

State and federal agencies share conservation interests, values, and inspiring ideals. With our many common interests and conservation priorities we need to bring together people and our limited resources to improve our cooperative conservation work for the nation's benefit. **The Trump administration has the opportunity to strengthen our state-federal partnerships across all agencies of the federal family, to secure the future of our nation's fish and wildlife resources, conserve their habitats, advance management of our public lands and waters, provide national food and energy security, deliver clean water, attenuate floods, capture carbon, facilitate economic prosperity for our citizens and promote healthy future generations.**

Our following recommendations and priorities, with a distinctive stateside focus, fall within three major categories of interest:

- appointments,
- partnerships, and
- funding.



Focal Areas

- **Appointments**
- **Strengthen State-Federal Partnerships Across all Federal Agencies**
- **Support Funding for State Fish and Wildlife Conservation Priorities**
- **Priorities for the First 100 Days**



“If we’ve learned any lessons during the past few decades, perhaps the most important is that preservation of our environment is not a partisan challenge; it’s common sense. Our physical health, our social happiness, and our economic well-being will be sustained only by all of us working in partnership as thoughtful, effective stewards of our natural resources.”

~ President Ronald Reagan

NATIONAL PRIORITIES OF STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES FOR A NEW ADMINISTRATION

APPOINTMENTS

With regard to federal leadership positions with natural resource, land management, and fish and wildlife portfolios, we encourage the appointment of professionals with strong natural resource backgrounds, an understanding and respect for the jurisdiction and authorities of state fish and wildlife agencies, and a commitment to working cooperatively with state fish and wildlife agencies.



STRENGTHEN STATE-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES

State and federal agencies both have dedicated conservation professionals. We are best served when we combine our separate jurisdictions into a complementary management system. By understanding each other’s perspectives, building trust, closer coordination and cooperation, and excellent two-way communication we can create strong and steadfast state and federal agency partnerships. Together we can overcome yesterday’s obstacles and forge a brighter future built on mutual commitment, synergy, creativity, determination, and healthy relationships for the betterment of our people and our natural resources.

In general, the state fish and wildlife agencies enjoy a good working relationship with the federal agencies, and we stand ready to work with the Trump Administration to foster an environment of enhanced cooperation and collaboration.

We recommend the Trump Administration issue an Executive policy statement affirming and recognizing state agency authority for management of fish and wildlife within their borders and committing to enhanced cooperation with the states across all federal agencies that impact fish, wildlife, and their habitats. We recommend the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to establish procedures for the aforementioned Executive policy and to advance new constructive, dynamic relationships among all parties.

Here are some areas of high importance to state fish and wildlife agencies for consideration by the Trump Administration.

Improve Implementation of the Endangered Species Act

We recommend the Trump Administration work with state fish and wildlife agencies to improve implementation of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Some policy improvements ripe for action include increasing opportunities for state agencies to more fully participate in implementation, better integrate state-led conservation efforts into improved processes and guidelines for listing decisions, increase utility of Section 6 Cooperative Agreements, and provide greater clarity and consistency for down-listing and delisting protocols. We recommend close federal cooperation with the state agencies to draft legislation that modernizes ESA implementation to ensure fish, wildlife, and natural resource professionals make ESA decisions and original Congressional intent of the ESA is realized.



Federal Land Management for Fish, Wildlife, and Public Access

We recommend cooperatively integrating state agencies' expertise early and often into all land use, recreation, and resource management planning for federal lands managed by the US Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of Defense (DoD), Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Close coordination is vital to successfully integrate the states' fish and wildlife population objectives and needs in concert with federal agencies' habitat management regimes and outcomes.

As recommended above, a national Executive policy statement on state-federal coordination and collaboration – cooperative federalism -- could set an important tone for the management of fish and wildlife resources and habitats on federal lands and public access thereto. In addition, we recommend:

- Evaluating the "natural diversity" policy and regulations of the National Wildlife Refuge System and implications for management of state-trust resources.
- Focusing renewed attention on wilderness policy, especially on the National Forest System and BLM lands, and implications for active management of fish and wildlife resources by state agencies.
- Improving cooperation between the National Park Service and the state agencies on rules, Director's Orders, policies and actions that impact the management of fish, wildlife, and habitat inside and outside national park boundaries. Facilitation of the public access to these public resources is critical.

We recommend enhancing public access to all federal lands and waters for fish and wildlife dependent recreation. In cooperation with the state agencies, draft and implement a policy that recognizes states' management responsibilities and ensures adequate incorporation of state and local stakeholders in the designation process of terrestrial and marine monuments via the Antiquities Act. Utilize this policy to set the stage for cooperative resource management plans that guarantee efficient and effective management of fish and wildlife resources and the habitat on which they depend and optimize federal and state agency expertise, while ensuring that fishing, hunting, and wildlife dependent recreation remain allowable uses of public lands and waters.

State-Federal Fisheries and Water Conservation Efforts

We recommend renewed attention to cooperatively develop organic fisheries legislation and associated policies that appropriately define the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the USFWS's Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program. We also support funding for the National Fish Habitat Partnerships Program which facilitates grassroots-based fisheries conservation as well as the National Fish Hatchery System, Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Program, fish health centers, fish passage program, and aquatic invasive species management efforts to complement the states' work and to cooperatively support the conservation of our nation's fish and fish habitat.

We recommend the collaborative exploration of alternative management regimes for recreational sport fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Act between the state agencies, the sport fishing community, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. In addition, we recommend identification of opportunities to manage marine mammal conflicts with imperiled fish species more efficiently and cooperatively with the states, and to improve collaboration, deploy durable decision-making processes, and garner support by states and councils prior to proposing marine protected areas.

Strengthening Partnerships

- **Coordinate with state fish and wildlife agencies early and often**
- **Integrate state agencies' expertise into all federal land use and management planning efforts**
- **Improve state-federal communication and collaboration**
- **Coalesce respective state and federal jurisdictions to achieve common fish and wildlife conservation goals through cooperative federalism**
- **Optimize limited resources by working together**



"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets, which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired in value."
 ~ **President Theodore Roosevelt**

Legislative Priorities

Recovering America's Wildlife Act

Modernize fish and wildlife conservation by using existing royalties from energy and mineral development on federal lands and waters to expand the funding base to ensure the full array of fish and wildlife can be sustainably managed by the states.



Modernizing the Wildlife Restoration Program

Enhance states' abilities to meet the needs of today's hunters and recreational shooters.

Reauthorizing the 2018 Farm Bill

Advance voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private land.

Modernizing the Endangered Species Act

Increase opportunities for state agencies to more fully participate in ESA implementation.

We recommend enhanced partnerships between states and ACOE, BOR, the US Geological Survey (USGS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase hydro-connectivity and modernize water management infrastructure, data collection and monitoring for real-time and adaptive management of water quantity, quality, temperature and availability for allocation among stakeholders and managers, consistent with state water law. This would include improving our nation's ability to respond to the impacts of drought and severe weather and support the use of resilient infrastructure that benefits both human and natural systems.

We recommend close federal coordination with state fish and wildlife agencies regarding interpretation of a recent Food and Drug Administration Veterinary Feed Directive regulation which could negatively impact the ability of state hatchery managers to treat disease outbreaks.

Enhance Coordination on Energy Development

We recommend improved state-federal coordination on energy development projects including permitting requirements and limitations, mitigation requirements, early consultation with industry, and other considerations to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the potential negative impacts to fish and wildlife from energy projects, including collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies to develop mitigation strategies that support and complement federal efforts.

Direct Enhanced Attention to Fish and Wildlife Health

We recommend renewed attention to manage the introduction and spread of fish and wildlife pathogens, including white nose syndrome and chronic wasting disease, through state-federal cooperation, and to develop improved coordination and response frameworks for emerging threats.

We recommend timely policy interpretation and application of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to state, federal, and tribal fish and wildlife agencies in order to constructively meet the spirit and intent of the CSA and support these agencies as they exercise their jurisdictions and authorities to meet fish and wildlife conservation objectives; manage fish and wildlife health and welfare; conduct species restoration, research, and monitoring; protect the safety of wildlife and the public; and other official duties.

SUPPORT FUNDING FOR STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

We recommend early support from the Trump Administration for funding to implement State Wildlife Action Plans, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, and enactment of new legislation that would dedicate permanently \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenues from energy and mineral development on federal lands and waters to fish and wildlife conservation as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources and proposed in the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (HR 5650). In addition, we recommend support for legislation that modernizes the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program (S 2690, HR 4818) to enhance states' abilities to meet the needs of today's hunters and recreational shooters.





We recommend robust funding for agencies' science, monitoring, and other programs that help state agencies with applied research to inform fish, wildlife, and natural resource management decisions; help states' achieve their conservation goals; meet federal agency energy permitting requirements without sacrificing mutually beneficial monitoring

efforts. Programs of high importance to state fish and wildlife agencies include the USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program, the APHIS-Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center and Wildlife Damages Management, and the Research Centers of the USFS.

We recommend full implementation of the conservation and forestry provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill in support of private lands and working farms, ranches and forests. Secure appropriations at fully authorized levels, and enhance the role of state agencies utilizing their technical expertise in all aspects of program and on-the-ground conservation implementation. We also recommend to maintain and enhance conservation funding and strong policy provisions during reauthorization of the 2018 Farm Bill to advance voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private lands.

We recommend continued strong budget support for successful partnerships that coalesce state, federal, nongovernmental organizations, and private interests such as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, National Fish Habitat Partnerships, Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, and other similar partnership efforts that bring together diverse public-private partnerships, interests, resources, and capacities to leverage limited federal funds and collaboratively address national and international conservation challenges.

We recommend support for permanent authorization and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and include fish and wildlife as a primary purpose of the program, enhance public access for wildlife-dependent recreation, allocate funds for maintenance and habitat stewardship, increase use of easements as a conservation tool, and maintain and enhance stateside programs and benefits.

We recommend enacting laws and implementing policies that fix the fire-borrowing budget problems and facilitate active forest management to ensure adequate funding to manage national forests and grasslands, fish and wildlife habitat thereon, insect infestation and disease, and invasive species.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

State fish and wildlife agencies value a strong partnership with federal partners. Even though a number of the priorities noted above will require time, energy, and commitment over the course of the Trump Administration, a couple of early directives or messages, during the first 100 days, could set an inherently valuable tone for future collaboration.

Priorities for the First 100 Days

1. **Issue a new Executive policy affirming and recognizing state agency authority for management of fish and wildlife within their borders and committing to enhanced cooperation with the states across all federal agencies and federal lands and waters;**
2. **Develop and execute a Memorandum of Agreement between the Departments of the Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture and the Association establishing procedures for developing and implementing agencies' policies with the states that advance new constructive, dynamic relationships among all parties;**
3. **Work with the state fish and wildlife agencies to build upon and modernize 43 CFR Part 24, Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Policy on State-Federal Relationships;**
4. **Issue an Executive Policy affirming the importance of and support of hunters and recreational shooters, demonstrating responsible gun ownership and use, in the restoration and conservation of wildlife and habitat in our country through associated excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment that are apportioned to the Wildlife Restoration Program and to each state;**
5. **Issue an Executive Policy affirming the importance and support of anglers and boaters, demonstrating responsible boating operations, in the restoration and conservation of fish and habitat and boating access, safety, and education in our country through associated excise taxes on fishing equipment and fuel taxes on motor boats and small engines that are apportioned to the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and to each state.**



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