



Native American Fish and Wildlife Society

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Resolution on the USFWS Native American Policy as Revised

It's of great importance to have a Native American Policy (Policy) that will benefit the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Tribes and Alaska Natives. Such a policy should ensure a healthy way of managing fish and wildlife resources on Indian lands and traditional use areas.

The working draft document, that revises the existing policy that was approved on June 28, 1994, covers many critical topics, such as the understanding of Tribal sovereignty and the need to maintain government-to-government relationships, improving communication, working together to manage resources, understanding that culture and religion interests cannot be compromised, enhancing law enforcement through training and education, and building sustainable management capacity within tribes.

Any such policy should take into account all comments as received by Tribes and Indian organizations such as the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS), and

Whereas, the NAFWS's mission is to assist Native American and Alaska Native Tribes with the conservation, protection and enhancement of their fish and wildlife resources; and

Whereas, the NAFWS's purpose, in part, is to protect, preserve and conserve the wise use of tribal fish, wildlife and recreational resources and to assist in the facilitation and coordination of intertribal communication in regards to fish and wildlife matters; and to improve the general welfare of tribal people through educational, charitable as well as fish and wildlife enhancement activities; and

Whereas, the Southwest Region of the NAFWS is looking forward to having this new Policy finalized and approved so that Tribes/Tribal Organizations and the Service can get to work for the betterment of fish and wildlife resources. We are hopeful that as the Policy continues to be revised, that the inclusion of stronger language, emphasizing the Service's commitments is included and utilized. Ultimately, the degree to which the Policy is actionable and the resulting effectiveness of implementation at national, regional, and field office level will be the true measure of its success; and

Whereas, we, members of the Southwest Region, encourage the Service to continue to work with Tribal representatives after the Policy is finalized to ensure policy objectives are integrated

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into Service handbooks and training materials. It is also critical that a joint team of Service and Tribal representatives be tasked with reviewing the effectiveness of this Policy and recommending adaptive implementation strategies; and

Whereas, that in order for such a Policy to be implemented, funding is needed. Historically, Tribes have had limited funding provided to them to deal with fish, wildlife and natural resources. Many Tribes have depended on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to fund these types of programs, but due to the fact that these programs are ranked low on the BIA's budget, very few tribes receive funding to enhance their natural resources. It is our hope that this revised Policy may serve as an avenue for funding to be added or identified within the Services budget; and

Be it Further Resolved, the Southwest Region is requesting that the USFWS actively assist tribal governments to secure funding through the USFWS budget process. The USFWS must understand the great financial need in Indian country to protect fish, wildlife and natural resources. Currently the Tribal Wildlife Grant (TWG) allows Tribes to compete for limited funds, but requires Tribes to adhere to USFWS needs and not what is required or requested by Tribes. There are a great number of proposals submitted each year, but only 25%-35% of them get funded. The Service should use this type of data to request additional funding for Indian country; and

Be it Finally Resolved, that the Southwest Region of the NAFWS is requesting that the USFWS continues to work with Tribes and Tribal organizations to improve the working relationships, communication and Policies to better manage natural resources, fish and wildlife related issues for future generations.

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2015 SW Region NAFWS Conference Business Meeting, held in Reno, Nevada on August 11, 2015 by a vote of 30 FOR, 0, AGAINST and 0 ABSTENTIONS.


Darren Talayumtewa, SW Region Director


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