



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 28 2022

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society  
Attn: Dr. Julie Thorstenson, Executive Director  
10465 Melody Dr., Ste.307  
Northglenn, CO 80134

Dear Dr. Julie Thorstenson,

Relationships, knowledge-sharing, and co-stewardship with Federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), Alaska Native Organizations (ANO), and the Native Hawaiian Community are essential to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) mission.

The Service recognizes that we have an obligation to safeguard cultural, trust, and treaty resources of Federally recognized Tribes, ANCs, ANOs, and the Native Hawaiian Community that may be affected by the Service's activities regarding lands, waters, and wildlife within the Service's jurisdiction. Developing and building strong and healthy relationships with Tribal governments and communities is integral to how the Service implements policies and practices so that we can work together in support of Tribal sovereignty, Tribal self-determination, and our shared conservation goals. Empowering Tribes, ANCs, ANOs and the Native Hawaiian Community in the co-stewardship of public lands and waters enables the Service to fulfill our trust responsibility to our sovereign partners. Equally important, by inviting our fellow stewards to the table, and hearing these perspectives related to values, context, place, generational or long-term approach, and story, we better serve our mission.

On September 8, 2022, I signed [Director's Order 227](#) (*Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community, and Other Obligations to Alaska Native Corporations and Alaska Native Organizations, in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters*) which establishes a consistent national framework for implementing the Service's unique trust responsibilities to Tribes and the Native Hawaiian community in the stewardship of Federal lands and waters and where subsistence or other rights or interests exist. The framework provides us flexibility to respond to regional and local variations in history, knowledge systems, ways of knowing, applicable laws, treaties, and local Indigenous community relationships.

Director's Order 227 also steps down the requirements in [Secretarial Order No. 3403](#) (Joint Secretarial Order with Interior and Agriculture on *Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters*) and supplements existing Service policy at 510 FW 1, the [Service's Native American Policy](#); and 510 FW 2, the Alaska Native Relations Policy (forthcoming), which detail Service requirements for implementing government-to-government relationships, communications, resource management, cultural and religious considerations, law enforcement, Tribal capacity building, and implementation and monitoring.

Additionally, Director's Order 227 sets the expectation for coordination at the earliest phases of planning and working together. It also directs Service staff to coordinate in a timely manner with affected Tribes, ANCs, ANOs and the Native Hawaiian Community when revising or developing policies, programs, plans, or actions that may affect a Tribe and to apply a Tribal consultation process that goes beyond the requirements of a public comment period. It also affirms that we will collaborate with Tribes, ANCs, ANOs, and the Native Hawaiian Community in a manner that recognizes that they may need additional resources to succeed in the co-stewarding of species and their habitats.

To improve our ability to create conditions and practices for Tribes, ANCs, ANOs and the Native Hawaiian Community to be fully interwoven in the planning and management of Federal resources, and incorporate their expertise and Indigenous Knowledge into Service activities, Director's Order 227 also sets forth that the Service will build capacity and staff cultural competencies.

When the Service and Indigenous peoples work together on stewarding our lands and waters, along with the fish and wildlife that inhabit them, our long-standing relationships are strengthened, and resources are better stewarded for now and future generations.

Finally, we are kindly asking that the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, please share this letter with your respective member Tribal Nations.

If you have any additional questions or would like more information regarding stewardship of our federal lands and water, please feel free to contact Karen Cogswell, Special Assistant-Native Affairs at [karen\\_cogswell@fws.gov](mailto:karen_cogswell@fws.gov) and/or Scott Aikin, National Native American Programs Coordinator at [scott\\_aikin@fws.gov](mailto:scott_aikin@fws.gov).

Sincerely,



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MARTHA WILLIAMS  
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Director