

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service And the U.S. Geological Survey

FOR STRENGTHENING THE SCIENCE/MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP IN LANDSCAPE-LEVEL CONSERVATION OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITATS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to promote collaborative working relationships within a landscape framework to advance both the scientific basis for conservation actions and the effectiveness of their applications. This purpose requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (hereafter FWS) and the U.S. Geological Survey (hereafter USGS) to strengthen and expand their science/management relationship.

Authorities

The authorities for the FWS to enter into the MOU are: the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 661); and the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742 f(a)(4)).

The authorities for the USGS to enter into the MOU are: the USGS Organic Act of March 3, 1879, as amended, 43 United States Code § 31 et seq. and 43 United States Code 36 § c.

BACKGROUND

The FWS and USGS have each made significant contributions to conservation and, alongside States and other conservation partners, have proudly met many of the 20th century's conservation needs. Already the 21st century presents challenges at an unprecedented scale, pace, and level of complexity, including:

- Conflicting and intensifying pressures on habitat use;
- Changes in climate – globally, regionally and locally – with corresponding changes in range, forage, migration, and other wildlife impacts;
- Biological invasions that displace native trust populations and alter habitats;
- The need to expend conservation planning and management decision-making on a landscape scale rather than limited to political or organizational jurisdictions;
- New and increased demands for alternative sources for energy.

Advances in science theory, conservation practice, information management technologies, and organizational capabilities have increased the joint capacity of the FWS and USGS to address these and other 21st century challenges to conservation effectiveness. Both the problems and potential solutions for natural resource management need to be addressed using spatially explicit, multi-disciplinary, multi-scaled approaches that focus science and management actions in an adaptive and outcome-driven manner.

This changing nature of conservation requires a more complex and robust relationship between science and management. An interagency team of FWS and USGS biologists worked for 2 years assessing better ways to integrate and address science and management in fish and wildlife conservation, and their product outlined a unifying framework for working together better. The framework is termed *strategic habitat conservation* (SHC) and consists of the following elements in a circular continuum:

- Biological planning
- Conservation design
- Conservation delivery
- Decision-based monitoring
- Assumption-driven research

The FWS and USGS leaders agree to use the SHC conservation framework in developing their partnership.

The functional elements of the SHC demand that both bureaus work collaboratively to create a more operationally effective relationship, working less like customer/client and more like long-term partners with common goals, a shared sense of purpose, and a defined operational framework. This MOU formalizes the intention of both bureaus to advance that collaboration.

INTENT OF THE PARTIES

By entering into this MOU, the FWS and USGS both commit their respective leadership teams to adopt procedures and protocols to support the SHC framework's elements, and to develop shared capacity at the landscape level. The two bureaus agree that they will engage additional partners to grow SHC expertise, involvement and contribution. The FWS and USGS will:

- Engage partners and the public in development of fish and wildlife population objectives;
- Develop and share scientific information to assess and forecast the functional landscapes needed to support fish and wildlife populations;
- Align programs and conservation efforts to contribute to population and landscape habitat conservation;
- Engage the best science along with management to design actions, measure outcomes and continually refine and improve conservation results;
- Communicate shared efforts to implement science-based landscape conservation at a national scale.

To successfully advance the intent of this MOU and support the SHC framework, both FWS and USGS must address integration of efforts and expansion of capability. The FWS will expand its capabilities for application of population and habitat modeling, landscape characterization and assessment, integrated monitoring, and biological information management at eco-regional scales, and the USGS will increase its growing capacity in ecological systems modeling and forecasting, in science for adaptive management and modeling at the landscape scale. The FWS will explicitly link monitoring to decisionmaking, and the USGS will develop and evaluate monitoring schemes at varying spatial and temporal scales to address management needs and biological outcomes. Both bureaus will modify existing processes for identifying research priorities to incorporate the documented assumptions and uncertainties that emanate from Biological Planning and Conservation Design.

Non-Binding Document

Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate either the FWS or the USGS to any current or future expenditure of resources either in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress or when funds are available. Should the FWS and the USGS mutually agree to an expenditure of resources, an Interagency Agreement would be executed in accordance with applicable Federal statutes and regulations.

Renewal/Amendment

This MOU may be renewed, amended or extended through by written mutual agreement of the FWS and the USGS.

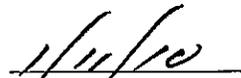
PERIOD OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Progress in achieving the intent and purpose of the MOU will be reviewed annually. This MOU is effective upon the date of last signature and will remain in effect for 5 years. Either the FWS or the USGS may terminate their participation in the MOU by providing 60 days advance written notice.

SIGNATURES:



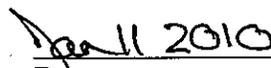
Director,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Date



Director,
U.S. Geological Survey



Date