



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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#### CITING PUBLIC SATISFACTION, SERVICE PROPOSES NO CHANGE IN FEDERAL AID PROGRAM

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has officially recommended making no changes in the direction or administration of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration program after evaluating public comments on a draft supplemental programmatic environmental impact statement.

"The numerous comments we received from the state wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, sportsmen, and other citizens overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with the way the program is currently administered," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "As a result, we have determined no changes are in order for the program."

The recommendation is included in a final environmental impact statement published in the December 13, 1994, Federal Register. The document will be reviewed by Interior Department officials during a mandatory 30-day waiting period before a record of decision is signed.

The draft EIS proposed changing the program by establishing national or regional priorities cooperatively identified by the states and the Service in conjunction with the public.

However, the majority of comments received from 49 state and Federal agencies, 25 non-government organizations, and 37 private parties were highly supportive of the program's accomplishments over the years and overwhelmingly favored the "No Change" alternative, which would continue a long-standing relationship of cooperative projects.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (Pittman-Robertson Act) and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 (Dingell-Johnson Act) currently raise more than \$400 million a year from excise taxes paid on hunting and fishing equipment and supplies.

(over)

The money is apportioned to the states for projects proposed by the states and approved by the Service. These projects may range from fish and wildlife habitat improvement to hunter and aquatic resource education and construction of recreational hunting and fishing facilities. Federal Aid funds pay for up to 75 percent of the cost of each project while the states contribute at least 25 percent of the cost.

The five alternatives examined in the draft EIS were:

Alternative 1--No change to existing program direction.

Alternative 2--Emphasis on national and regional priorities and encouraging states to consider funding projects contributing to regional or national priorities.

Alternative 3--Emphasis on additional funding for biodiversity and watchable wildlife programs and projects.

Alternative 4--Emphasis on providing more flexibility to allow states to meet their needs, such as aquatic education expansion and adult education in wildlife programs.

Alternative 5--Emphasis on eliminating most Service overview of state projects, including project approval.

For more information, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Aid, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240; telephone: 703-358-2156.