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The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 18 2013

Dear Secretary Jewell,

The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) is pleased to submit the enclosed recommendations for consideration as you begin implementing priorities and the conservation missions of the Department of the Interior (Department) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Over the years, the SFBPC has fulfilled its mission as a Federal advisory committee by providing insight and recommendations to the Department and the Service on issues of importance within the stakeholder communities it represents: recreational boating, angling and aquatic resource conservation (including states and tribes). These communities have a long history of supporting the fishery management and public use objectives of the Department and Service given that they directly contribute to and benefit from the suite of programs funded through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund managed by the Service.

Attached you will find a brief introduction to the SFBPC and its work, and some facts and figures highlighting boating and angling and the contributions they make to aquatic resource conservation and the outdoor recreation economy. You will also find our recommendations to you for suggested priorities for the Department. In many cases, these build upon the priorities you recently established for the Department. Others relate to on-going efforts that the Department and Service undertake as a part of implementing longer standing policies and programs. We request that you give these your consideration and implement as many as feasible.

The most detailed recommendations are related to your priority of celebrating and enhancing America's Great Outdoors. The SFBPC has been engaged directly in this issue since your predecessor, Secretary Ken Salazar, began holding public listening sessions which led to the creation of the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative. We share your belief and enthusiasm that increasing participation in outdoor recreation is a critical goal that the government and private sector should be partnering to accomplish. The AGO Initiative and the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) have taken some initial steps to focus Federal activities on improving access to public lands and waters. The SFBPC believes that there is still more work to do to create a shared vision for

To help achieve this vision, we recommend that you convene a summit of leaders representing Federal agencies, the outdoor recreation industry, states, the tourism industry, tribes, and web technology companies to craft a single national strategy and vision for increasing participation in outdoor recreation. A unified strategy would provide a more successful platform for all stakeholders to support programs and policies that will get more Americans outdoors to enjoy our nation's natural treasures and to help conserve these resources for future generations. This strategy would also be useful in elevating and broadening key issues that have been assigned to the FICOR.

In closing, we appreciate your efforts to raise awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation, the positive economic and health benefits that it generates for our nation, and how recreation supports our joint conservation objectives. The SFBPC looks forward to meeting with you to discuss these matters and to assist, where appropriate, in achieving our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Dammrich
Chairman

Attachments

Cc: Daniel Ashe, FWS Director
Betsy Hildebrandt, Chief of Staff
Matthew Huggler, Acting AD- External Affiars

SPORT FISHING & BOATING
PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Boating, Angling and Aquatic Resource Conservation:
Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council Reflects Interconnected Stakeholder Base

BACKGROUND:

- The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Council) was established through the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) by the Secretary of the Interior in January 1993.
- It advises the Secretary, through the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), on aquatic conservation endeavors that benefit recreational fishery resources and recreational boating and that encourage partnerships among industry, the public, and government.
- Council members include senior representatives from the boating and fishing industry, associated user groups, conservation organizations, as well as Tribal organizations and State natural resource management agencies. As demonstrated by the accompanying facts and figures, these interests represent a significant economic and conservation driver in the United States.
- The interests represented on the Council either contribute to or manage the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars annually for the conservation and enjoyment of our Nation's aquatic resources through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and other sources of funds.

DISCUSSION:

- The Council is one of the 113 FACA committees at the DOI, and one of 1048 federal government-wide. It is the only FACA committee addressing the issues of recreational angling and boating, and their contribution to aquatic resource conservation.
- **Key contribution:** The Council provides an invaluable exchange of expertise and perspective from stakeholders and partners that offers strategic direction and builds consensus among recreational fishing, boating and conservation interests on issues within the Secretary's and FWS's purview.
- **Past accomplishments:** Advised the FWS on most appropriate role to enhance recreational fisheries; led effort that resulted in a recreational fisheries executive order (Executive Order 12962) signed in 1995; drafted a Recreational Fishery Resources Conservation Plan; convened stakeholders to draft the National Outreach and Communications Plan for the recreational angling, boating and conservation community (led to the creation of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation); led a stakeholder effort that resulted in the creation of the National Fish Habitat Partnership; has conducted reviews of the FWS's Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program and Sport Fish Restoration Program that have led to improved program delivery.
- **Current initiatives/priorities:** AGO Implementation / FICOR activities; FWS Fish and Aquatic Resource Conservation Vision; FWS National Wildlife Refuge System "Vision" implementation; Boating Infrastructure Grant Program / Clean Vessel Act Grant Program regulations and advice to increase program participation; Enhancing implementation of "Idle Iron" policy and Rigs to Reefs in the Gulf of Mexico; Engage National Park Service at strategic level related to access for fishing and boating; Gulf of Mexico oil spill recovery; National Ocean Policy; Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund reauthorization.

Boating and Angling Facts and Figures

Boater Demographics and Economic Impacts of Boating

- Recreational boating has an estimated total economic impact of more than $121 billion annually.
- In 2012, 38% of all Americans went boating.
- An estimated 76% of boat owners earn an annual household income less than $100,000.
- Approximately 80% of the powerboats sold in the U.S. are made in the U.S.
- Of the 12.1 million recreational boats registered in 2012, 95% were less than 26 feet long.
- Taking into account non-registered and documented vessels, there were an estimated 17 million recreational boats in use in the U.S. in 2012.
- In 2012, recreational boating had direct, indirect, and induced impacts on an estimated 964,000 jobs in the U.S., corresponding to approximately $40 billion in labor income.
- In 2011 (the latest data available), direct expenditures on recreational marine products and services totaled $32.3 billion.

- Information provided by the National Marine Manufacturers Association

Angler Demographics and Economic Impacts of Angling

- According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2011 nearly 33 million Americans ages 16 and older went fishing. Approximately 8.5 million American youth between the ages of 6 and 15 also fished in 2011.
- Angling and angling-related purchases have an economic impact of $115 billion to the Nation's economy.
- According to the American Sportfishing Association, in 2011 purchases of angling-related equipment generated $48 billion in retail sales, $6.7 billion in local and state taxes, and $8.2 billion in federal taxes.
- In 2011, expenditures on angling-related equipment helped support approximately 828,000 jobs.

-Information provided by the American Sportfishing Association

Boating and Angling Contribution to Aquatic Resource Conservation

- In fiscal year 2012, an estimated $626 million in revenue from excise taxes, import duties and gas taxes flowed into the Sport Fish Restoration Grant Program (SFR). These revenues are paid by the boating and angling industries, and boaters and anglers. These funds are apportioned to States and territories through the SFR Grant Program to help fund aquatic resource conservation efforts and to help provide public opportunities to use and access aquatic resources. They also fund Louisiana wetland restoration, the FWS Coastal Program, and boater safety programs.

- In 2012, boaters and anglers purchased over $656 million in fishing licenses, stamps and permits. These revenues are used by the states to match federal apportionments through the SFR Program.

Suggested Priority Aquatic Conservation, Sustainable Public Use, and Outdoor Recreation Issues

Support strategic efforts that enhance the link between natural resource conservation and participation in sustainable public use and outdoor recreation, including recreational angling and boating.

America's Great Outdoors National Recreation Strategy

- The Department of the Interior, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and other Federal agencies, should host a "summit" of executives from major outdoor industry and trade associations, retailers, nongovernmental conservation organizations, the tourism industry, states, tribes, "Gateway" communities, and communications and web technology industries to build consensus and new partnerships to agree on a targeted set of goals and objectives on which all parties will agree to advocate over the next 5 years. The attached addendum suggests possible areas for Summit participants to consider as possible goals.

- Leverage the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative and Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) to develop and implement a comprehensive, national outdoor recreation strategy that elevates increased participation in outdoor recreation as a desirable outcome across Federal and State agencies, non-governmental partners, and the private sector.

SFBPC *Vision for Fish and Aquatic Resource Conservation in the FWS*

- Fully consider and work to implement Council recommendations provided in *Strategic Vision for Fish and Aquatic Resource Conservation in the Fish and Wildlife Service: A Partnership Perspective.*

- Based on the recommendations included in the Strategic Vision, engage the Council, stakeholders and partners in a dialog regarding the future activities of and priorities for the FWS Fish and Aquatic Resource Conservation Program.

- Based on recommendation included in the Strategic Vision, the FWS should continue to proactively consult and partner with tribes on agency decisions and activities that may affect tribes or their rights, interests, and responsibilities.

- Use the *Vision* as a basis for engaging partners and stakeholders to build a sustainable, focus Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program within the FWS.

FWS National Wildlife Refuge System "Vision" implementation

- Continue to provide for and increase outdoor recreation opportunities, especially the 6 priority wildlife-dependent uses prescribed in the Refuge Improvement Act, through implement the Refuge System "Vision."

- Enhance collaborative efforts with states, tribes, and other stakeholders and partners to implement the Refuge "Vision."

Leverage Federal/State/Partner efforts to raise awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities

- Support the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation in its work to enhance State and partner efforts to increase participation in angling and boating, while also increasing awareness of the importance of aquatic resource conservation and safe boating practices.

Provide adequate funding for programs that support aquatic resource conservation and which increase outdoor recreation opportunities.

AGO Implementation / FICOR

- Provide funding to help increase outdoor recreation opportunities and access to publicly managed land and water resources: LWCF (especially public lands access provisions), etc.

FWS Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) Program

- Adequately fund all core functions for the FAC Program.

Gulf of Mexico oil spill recovery and restoration

- Assure that all recovery and restoration funds are used to benefit natural resources in the Gulf of Mexico region.

Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund

- Collaborate with States, Industry partners and stakeholders, Tribes and conservation NGOs to support reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (including the transfer of fuel tax revenues).

Implement policies and programs in a manner that increases the opportunities for access to and sustainable utilization of publicly managed resources.

Maintain and build on positive reforms to the "Idle Iron" policy and Rigs to Reefs Program in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Continue to work towards improve efficiency of the Rigs to Reefs permitting process, with a goal of having Federal agencies (BSEE and BOEM) establish a 6 month timeline for completing the process.

- Open more reef planning areas, especially closer to shore, and focus staff from the various agencies with jurisdiction on this common goal.

- Establish more reef sites.

National Park Service & access for fishing and boating

- Direct the National Park Service at the national and regional levels to proactively engage the boating and fishing communities and the public on decisions, including emergency closures and resource planning processes, which may restrict or prohibit boating access and/or recreational fishing within units of the National Park System.

- Direct the National Park Service to create a publicly available tool to track current and future planning efforts. For example, the Park Service could utilize a web-based tool similar to that employed by the National Wildlife Refuge System to make the public aware of the real-time status of required planning activity.

National Ocean Policy implementation

- Because recreational angling and boating contribute directly to funding for the conservation of our Nation's aquatic resources and provide other significant social and economic benefits, the recreational use of public waters is eminently compatible with sound conservation principles and natural resource stewardship. While we fully recognize and support state and tribal management prerogatives, the Council believes that ensuring and promoting access to public waters for sustainable recreational activities should be a priority for the Department in general, and particularly when implementing the National Ocean Policy.

ADDENDUM:

Possible areas for the Recreation Summit to consider as focus areas for a National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

1) Information Availability: More so than at any time in the past, outdoor recreation consumers require and demand comprehensive information to assist in planning and enjoying outdoor recreation activities. Federal agencies should take the lead in identifying mechanisms to partner with the private sector, states, and non-governmental organizations to enhance the availability of information about outdoor recreational opportunities on public and private lands.

- Summit participants should provide recommendations for enhancing and integrating the capabilities, range of information and services available through the Recreation.gov website, and similar information systems to be more responsive to public interests and demands. Participants should also consider new mechanisms for public / private information and promotion to be more closely integrated without violating federal policy.

2) Recreational Access: Access to public lands and waters is critical to maintaining and increasing outdoor recreation opportunities. Federal agencies help manage their lands and waters at levels that support recreational opportunities consistent with their missions and resource management objectives. Private lands also play a critical role in supporting outdoor recreation, and programs that incentivize voluntary access programs should be explored.

- Summit participants should provide recommendations for federal agencies to help them prioritize agency actions that promote access to lands and waters, including the development of infrastructure that promotes and facilitates recreational opportunities. Programs that incentivize increased voluntary recreational access programs on private lands should also be explored.

For example, to make water-based permitting more efficient, permitting agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service could be tasked to regularly meet with states and local partners to discuss project status, explain applicable permit processes and timelines, and address issues that could delay permit review and approval.

Finally, participants should make recommendations on how to improve access for youth and families in nearby communities that capitalizes upon our education, employment and engagement programs.

3) Gateway communities, tourism, and volunteerism: Because of their proximity to public lands and waters, "Gateway" communities are the direct beneficiary of economic activity generated by outdoor recreation and visitation to parks, refuges, and other federal facilities. These communities, and the state in which they reside, have a keen interest in conserving and promoting the natural and cultural

resources that generate economically sustainable programs and opportunities. Gateway communities can also serve as a ready source of volunteers to assist federal staff with management activities and serve as ambassadors within their communities.

- Summit participants should identify strategies and policies to enhance the relationships between federal agencies, Gateway communities, local civic organizations, and state tourism agencies to leverage limited federal resources in increasing awareness of recreational opportunities and volunteer opportunities.

For example, FICOR agencies, could work with Council member groups and key outdoor recreation partnership organizations to identify pilot projects where procedures to improve interagency coordination and project approval and implementation can be tested and perfected before being applied nationally.

4) Funding: The SFBPC believes AGO has suffered because insufficient funding has hampered implementation. Moving forward, providing sustained funding will be critical to increasing outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands and waters.

- Summit participants should identify new opportunities and approaches for building more sustainable funding for federal management programs that provide outdoor recreation opportunities and that support outreach efforts, such as recreation.gov, youth engagement programs, and opportunities for military families to increase participation in outdoor recreation. Funds and incentive programs to increase access to private lands, through public and private foundations, and recreation businesses are also important for increasing overall participation and should be considered as well.