

HO-04_Letter to Mark Musaus_GCPO

Oct 5, 2012

Mark Musaus
Chair, Interim Steering Committee, Gulf Coast Plains and Ozark LCC
c/o US FWS Region 4
1875 Century Blvd., Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Mark,

Thank you again for taking time during the South Carolina meeting to briefly discuss the proposal from the CHJV to the GCPO to modify the boundaries of the Appalachian LCC (AppLCC) and the Gulf Coast Plains and Ozark LCC (GCPO). I am writing to provide you with an update on our current thinking regarding the proposal you have received from the CHJV in which we were copied.

As you know, the AppLCC ISC has discussed the CHJV proposal several times, over the past year and most recently at our December 8th Committee meeting. We have also benefited from a personal briefing on the conservation planning work of the CHJV as presented by Ms. Jane Fitzgerald at our recent July Workshop. Thus we are familiar with the area under consideration and we are most anxious to resolve the issue.

Since our preliminary exchange at AFWA I have had the opportunity to discuss this proposal in greater detail with Paul Johansen, Vice-Chair of the AppLCC and Ken Elowe, ISC Member representing the LCC-sponsoring agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 5. Our thinking now, given the extensive technical review that went into the decision on defining the initial boundaries of each LCC, is to ask the sponsoring agency to take the lead in going back and reviewing the technical criteria (<http://www.fwspubs.org/doi/full/10.3996/052011-JFWM-030>), to confer with relevant subject matter experts and key partners, and to then come back to our ISC with a recommendation on how best to proceed. Thus, as the senior leadership of the AppLCC we have accepted Ken Elowe's offer to discuss this proposal with many of the key partners and states and to report back to the full AppLCC ISC based on this thoughtful consultation.

Our full Interim Steering Committee was briefed on this approach at our Oct 4th meeting. As you know, many of our Members are experts in aquatic systems and expressed their concerns, noting that aquatic ecosystems are physically connected in ways that terrestrial systems are not, and the need to manage aquatic ecosystems as a whole is critical in managing aquatic ecosystems to sustain ecosystem functions and recover endangered fauna. They also reflected on their charge to help safeguard unique and imperiled species, noting that by far the most threatened habitats within the Greater Appalachian region are aquatic systems, as reflected by the fact that there are over 30 species of threatened and endangered species of fish, mussels and snails, and many more that are listed as species of concern. Despite their concerns however the ISC did endorse this review and consultative approach as a next step.

I know we share the same commitment of acting in the best interest of the natural resources we are all charged with safeguarding. We appreciate your willingness to work with us to find the best way forward and hope to have a response back to you and the GCPO Committee soon.

Sincerely,

David K. Whitehurst
Chair, Appalachian Landscape Conservation Cooperative, and
Director, Bureau of Wildlife Resources
c/o Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
4010 West Broad Street, P.O. Box 11104
Richmond, Virginia 23230

Cc (via email).

Mark Musaus, mark_musaus@fws.gov
Jim Herkert, james.herkert@Illinois.gov
Jane Fitzgerald, jfitzgerald@abcbirds.org
Greg Wathen, greg.wathen@tn.gov
Jean Brennan, jean_brennan@fws.gov
Ken Elowe, ken_elowe@fws.gov
Bill Uihlein, bill_uihlein@fws.gov