



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



Mr. William Hyatt
Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-5127

AUG 06 2012

Dear Mr. Hyatt:

State fish and wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) share the privilege and responsibility of protecting and conserving the Nations' fish, wildlife, and plants. In that tradition, I want you to know about existing work we are undertaking to improve our abilities to conserve landscapes capable of supporting sustainable populations of fish and wildlife. I also want to invite your participation in this endeavor as our valued conservation partner. This approach is built upon our collective legacy of success in waterfowl conservation and other efforts, like Atlantic Striped Bass, where we forged success with our partners upon common biological goals.

These are tough times for fish and wildlife conservation. Many state agencies have had to deal with drastically reduced budgets. At the federal level, we, too, face the prospect of significant cuts to essential conservation programs – including those benefiting state conservation efforts. To consistently meet the challenges and uncertainty of the 21st century, we know that we can no longer base our actions solely on past experience or ways of doing things. The fish and wildlife resources we manage transcend federal and state roles and boundaries, and so should our conservation efforts. Now, more than ever, our work must be driven by science to help ensure the activities we undertake for fish and wildlife have a lasting impact and strategically support common conservation goals across broad landscapes.

As conservation colleagues, we have a long history of collaborating on common conservation goals, including the work of the Flyway Councils, Joint Ventures, and Fish Habitat Partnerships. More recently, we have begun collectively addressing landscape scale issues through the national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) – 22 self-directed partnerships supporting conservation planning and science at landscape scales. Through the efforts of in-house staff and science-oriented partners, LCCs are generating the tools, methods, and data managers need to more efficiently design and deliver conservation using an adaptive management framework. They also promote collaboration among their members in defining shared conservation goals.

To ensure the Service is targeting its resources and science in the right places for the greatest conservation benefit, our agency is now beginning a process of selecting species and establishing biological targets that will drive our landscape conservation efforts. This work is intended to help define our contributions to community-based conservation strategies that can address multiple, often diverse, and sometimes conflicting conservation challenges. As a practical next

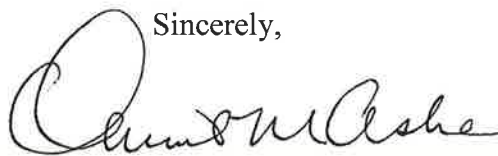
step, the Service developed draft technical guidance outlining a process to define landscape-scale conservation goals using a surrogate species approach (i.e., species used to represent other species or aspects of the environment). It is intended to help our agency better address its responsibilities by using surrogate species to identify conservation actions that best support ecological function and sustainability and benefit multiple species across broad spatial scales. When selecting these species, the Service will focus on federal trust resources. However, we believe we need to work together. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to identify and develop processes to consider any species as a surrogate.

We are asking for your input on the draft guidance to ensure it appropriately considers state interests, reflects a vibrant state-federal partnership, and can serve as a useful approach toward future collaborative conservation efforts. To this end, we are planning regional workshops that will be held across the nation beginning this September, to engage Service employees in contributing their ideas, creativity, and innovation to help improve the draft technical guidance and species selection process. Because your involvement in this step is critical to our success, we encourage you and/or representatives of your agency to participate in these workshops so we can make certain the conservation actions we undertake to conserve fish and wildlife are not simply compatible, but are complementary, coordinated and united in the pursuit of our common cause.

We will be contacting you later this summer regarding the details of workshops being planned in your area. We will also provide state agencies with opportunities for review and comment on the draft guidance outside of the planned workshops. In the meantime, you can review and learn more about the draft technical guidance, surrogate species selection process and broader Service landscape conservation efforts by visiting our web site at www.fws.gov/landscape-conservation. Please contact me or Ms. Wendi Weber, Regional Director, Northeast Region at (413) 253-8300 with any immediate questions or concerns and we'll do our best to address them.

As conservationists, we want to work with you on this effort for one key reason – to secure a future for the fish and wildlife we cherish so that our children and grandchildren have an opportunity to forge connections to the natural world and be enriched and rejuvenated by it. We know that we cannot succeed without your help and believe that by working together we can continue our conservation legacy and ensure it is built to last for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cameron M. Ashe". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

DIRECTOR