

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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AGENCIES SEEK AGREEMENT: STREAM CHANNELING GUIDELINES TO BE DRAWN

Two Federal agencies, often at odds over the controversial issue of stream channelization, have put their representatives to work to develop joint nationwide guidelines on that subject for their decisionmakers.

A drafting committee has been formed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Agriculture Department's Soil Conservation Service to arrive at a final set of rules by year's end if possible. Assisting the committee are the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council on Environmental Quality.

The group was formed as a result of issues which have developed between the two Federal agencies which have competing interests in streams. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is interested in keeping the modification of streams to a minimum because of the potential damage which may result to fish and wildlife habitat. The Soil Conservation Service uses stream modification as one method to reduce flood damages or to alleviate drainage problems on lands adjacent to streams.

Both agencies recognize the needs and concerns of the other, and they have signed a memorandum obligating themselves to attempt to resolve this issue. Further, they have set a tentative deadline of the end of the year to arrive at a final set of guidelines that can be used nationwide by both agencies.

The basic design of the guidelines will concentrate on the process of reaching a decision to change or not to change a stream channel. The guidelines will necessarily address more than the technical aspects.

The committee will consider all facets of a proposed stream modification situation. This will include such items as: (1) National Economic Development (NED) and Environmental Quality (EQ) objectives; (2) alternative means of accomplishing objectives; (3) agency obligations and responsibilities; (4) systematic interagency involvement and information exchange (including interaction with State agencies); (5) public involvement process and agency interaction with public; (6) sequential steps in the planning process; (7) profile of existing resource conditions; (8) nature of existing watercourses, types of channels, and modifications involved; (9) minimization of adverse impacts; (10) fish and wildlife habitat enhancement opportunities; (11) present, historical, and projected future use of flood prone lands; and (12) reports and review procedures.