

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE POLICY PLANNED; DRAFT SECTION ON FEDERAL-STATE RESPONSIBILITIES PUBLISHED

The first step toward development of a National policy to assure effective protection of U.S. fish and wildlife has been announced by the Department of the Interior, which published a draft section to clarify Federal-State responsibilities for these resources in the May 2, 1980 Federal Register.

The Federal-State Jurisdiction section is an effort to clarify management responsibilities for fish and wildlife resources on public lands. It recognizes the critical role played by State agencies in the conservation of resident fish and wildlife. The draft section is a first step toward forming a policy that will eventually encompass a number of fish and wildlife issues. Strategies for additional specific areas of wildlife management will be addressed in later proposals.

A National Fish and Wildlife Policy would provide one document to guide management of resources. However, such a policy would be complemented by more explicit policies developed by Federal agencies for their own management activities. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has already undertaken the task of drafting a policy for its activities affecting fish and wildlife. It is anticipated that as the National policy matures, more agencies will develop internal policies reflecting the guidance of a strong National policy.

The Department of the Interior plans to develop the policy by addressing one major issue at a time, producing a draft section for consultation and public review on each issue. Eventually, a series of sections will be completed which will comprise the body of the policy.

"Reaching the goal of a national, not a Federal, policy to which all interested parties can contribute depends on the cooperation of Federal and State officials, as well as conservation advocates." Assistant Secretary of the Interior Robert Herbst emphasized. "A spirit of mutual cooperation and shared expertise is essential to develop realistic fish and wildlife management programs."

The National Fish and Wildlife Policy will address a wide range of topics, including ecological, economic, esthetic, and other values that affect fish and wildlife. Considerations which may be addressed include human attitudes toward wildlife which have an impact on its management; subsistence uses and Native claims; and management strategies for maintaining natural ecosystems and their biological diversity.

Other important considerations are: law enforcement to protect fish and wildlife; protection of endangered species; positive and negative aspects of non-native (exotic) species introductions; animal damage management; and international programs relating to species that migrate or move across national borders.

The Department is seeking comments by interested parties on the proposed content of a National Fish and Wildlife Policy (including topics listed above) and the order in which they should be addressed. In addition, the public is invited to comment on the draft section on Federal-State Jurisdiction by June 30, 1980. Comments should be addressed to: Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Program Plans, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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"Year of the Coast"