



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/AWSR-FA: 030301

MAR 29 2007

To: State Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Governor of Guam
Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands
Governor of American Samoa
Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Mayor of the District of Columbia

PURPOSE

The purpose of this letter is to ensure that your agency is maintaining a complete inventory of lands acquired with:

- (a) Federal financial assistance or non-Federal cost-share under programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Divisions of Federal Assistance (FA), or
- (b) State hunting and fishing license revenue.

In asking you to do this, I am following up on a recommendation made by the Joint Federal/State Task Force on FA Policy (JTF) in November 2006.

LANDS ACQUIRED THROUGH FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

State fish and wildlife agencies have acquired almost 5 million acres of habitat with funds authorized by the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act in 1937 and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act in 1950. States have acquired an additional 300,000 acres under more recently established FA-administered grant programs. These lands are unquestionably among the most valuable assets owned by these agencies. They not only provide important fish and wildlife habitat and diverse recreational opportunities, but they are also economic assets that have significantly increased in value since acquisition.

The FA-administered grant programs through which a State may have acquired lands or less-than full-fee-interests in lands are below with their Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance numbers:

- 15.605 Sport Fish Restoration
- 15.611 Wildlife Restoration
- 15.614 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act [National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant program]
- 15.615 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund [Endangered Species Act, Sec.6]
- 15.616 Clean Vessel Act

TAKE PRIDE
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- 15.622 Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act [Boating Infrastructure Grants]
- 15.626 Hunter Education and Safety
- 15.633 Landowner Incentive
- 15.634 State Wildlife Grants

NEED

The lands purchased in these programs are a continuing legacy for both the Service and the States. It is crucial that together we ensure their use and management in accordance with approved acquisition objectives and program requirements.

Unfortunately, within the past few years, we have encountered situations where use and management of real property acquired under these grant programs has not conformed to the approved acquisition purposes or other requirements. We have also recently determined, in part through Inspector General audits, that real property management systems in some States do not sufficiently ensure management control of real property. Management control is a critical FA requirement.

REQUEST

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the JTF recognize that it is the responsibility of each State to maintain a real property management system that includes a comprehensive inventory of lands. Therefore, we are asking you to ensure that you have such an inventory and that it is accurate and complete. We are also asking you to assess whether your staff and management systems have the following knowledge or capabilities in compliance with regulations:

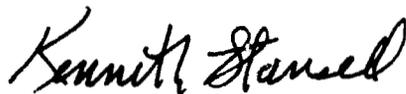
- Can your real property management system adequately determine the funding source of land under the jurisdiction of the fish and wildlife agency? [Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, part 80.19 (50 CFR 80.19)]
- Are your field managers and realty staff aware that your agency must continue to use (a) FA-acquired land for its approved acquisition purpose [50 CFR 80.14(b)], and (b) land acquired with hunting and fishing license revenue for administration of the State fish and wildlife agency? [50 CFR 80.4]
- Do your field managers have a mechanism to identify such land under their supervision and are they implementing a monitoring process to inspect these lands regularly for compliance with FA requirements? [50 CFR 80.18(c)]
- Do your procedures for disposal of real property conform with FA requirements? [43 CFR 12.71]

If you are not in compliance, then you need to resolve these issues in order to avoid future adverse audit findings. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional FA Divisions are compiling and entering land data from all their land acquisition grant records into the Federal Aid Information Management System (FAIMS). Several Regions have completed this task while other Regions are still entering land data in FAIMS from their files.

In the spirit of cooperation and partnership in administering these important assets, we ask that you provide this information to the State's real property officer and to those persons in your agency who have responsibility for these matters. We appreciate your support of this effort.

This action will enable the States and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect an invaluable network of lands stretching across the country and ensure that these lands continue to serve the purpose for which they were acquired. Please feel free to contact Rowan Gould, the Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, at (202) 208-7337 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Stansell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Acting

DIRECTOR