

**International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**  
**Strategic Plan**  
*December 15, 2003*

## **INTRODUCTION**

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The Association was originally founded as the National Association of Game Wardens and Commissioners in 1902 when eight wildlife agents from six states came together in Yellowstone National Park to begin "a system of mutually beneficial interstate cooperation in game and fish management." The Constitution and Bylaws of the Association were enacted in 1947 and amended at subsequent meetings. The current name, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, was adopted in 1976. The Constitution and Bylaws list six objectives for the Association:

- (1) To cultivate more friendly relations and mutual understanding among those officially engaged in the conservation of our natural resources, and especially to coordinate the efforts of public administrative agencies responsible for the protection, preservation and management of the fish, wildlife, forests, waters and soils of North America;
- (2) To distribute literature and, by other available means, to develop a more general public understanding and appreciation of the economic and ethical importance of conserving the forests, waters and soils, and of managing wisely our fish and wildlife as part of natural and managed ecosystems, and as a source of recreation and food for our citizens;
- (3) To promote fish and wildlife management, and to investigate and advise with respect to the introduction of new species and varieties of fish and wildlife;
- (4) To create and foster a healthy public sentiment in favor of better laws for protection of natural resources; to assist in the enactment of laws for the adequate protection and management of said natural resources; to obtain as far as possible uniformity in same; and to correct irregularities and inconsistencies in existing laws;
- (5) To assist the duly constituted authorities in enforcing laws for the protection of natural resources, including fish and wildlife and their habitat; and
- (6) Generally to take all such legal and other proper actions as will further the cause of maintaining an adequate supply of fish and wildlife and other natural resources on this continent.

The success of the Association and its members in meeting these objectives has largely depended on adherence to the principles of the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. The Association formally endorsed the North American Model at its 100 year anniversary meeting September 2002 in Big Sky, Montana. The recommendations adopted by the Association in endorsing the North American Model were as follows:

- 1) Maintain principal authority and control over all wildlife at the state/provincial/territorial levels except in those cases where authority is specifically relegated to the federal government.
- 2) Remain diligent in meeting obligations pertaining to importation, possession and use of wildlife; combat illegal trafficking, market hunting and commercialization of wildlife; and allocate surplus wildlife by law rather than markets or land ownership.
- 3) Maintain wildlife as a public trust.
- 4) Use scientific principles to improve resource management.
- 5) Perpetuate the role of hunting and fishing and trapping in the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation.
- 6) Conduct our activities in a manner that will allow society to be satisfied with our leadership in the moral, ethical and humane nature of our business.

This strategic plan will be used by the Association to pursue our official objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible while adhering to the principles of the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation.

## **MISSION**

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- Protect state authority and support provincial and territorial authority for wildlife conservation; promote sound resource management; and strengthen federal, state, provincial, territorial and private cooperation in conserving fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest.

## **VISION**

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Healthy fish and wildlife resources throughout North America managed by effective, well-funded fish and wildlife agencies supported by informed and involved citizens.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES**

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The critical issues facing the International, its members and the fish and wildlife resources can be summarized into four broad categories: 1) adequate funding to support wildlife conservation, 2) an adequate habitat base to sustain fish and wildlife populations and those physical, chemical, biological and social factors that directly impact wildlife resources, 3) public and political support and coordination necessary to fulfill our mission, and 4) efficient and effective internal operations

and business systems to maximize benefits to the wildlife resources and the public.

## **FIVE-YEAR GOALS AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CRITICAL ISSUES**

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1. Enhance funding that adequately provides for conservation of all species, and provides for expanding and emerging programs as well as traditional fish and wildlife conservation activities.

- Increase stable, long-term funding through federal legislation.
- Seek annual congressional appropriations to help finance fish and wildlife conservation programs.
- Assist with development of additional funding programs at the state and provincial/territorial level.
- Seek to leverage existing funds through partnerships and coalitions and identify sources of matching monies.
- Help states maintain and strengthen traditional funding provided by hunters and anglers.

2. Assist the states, provinces and territories in development of programs, projects, policies and initiatives to address their high priority issues that directly impact the fish and wildlife resources, particularly where interjurisdictional cooperation and coordination are needed.

- Participate in implementation of current legislation (such as Farm Bill, ESA and application of NEPA) through policy development and rulemaking to ensure fish and wildlife issues are being addressed, and recommend improvements to address fish and wildlife priorities during the reauthorization process.
- Monitor, track and inform states, provinces and territories of legislation, treaties, and agreements that affect jurisdictional authorities and fish and wildlife resources including habitats, and provide legal analysis and counsel as necessary.
- Assist the states in development of comprehensive state fish and wildlife conservation plans.
- Identify National Conservation Needs and develop associated multi-state grant proposals that will address high priority issues.

- Take a leadership role in the development of national plans to maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Monitor emerging fish and wildlife health issues and coordinate development of national initiatives to address the highest priorities.
- Proactively engage with other entities to better address invasive species issues.
- Develop programs to encourage and assist landowners in conserving fish and wildlife habitat on private lands.
- Develop trapping Best Management Practices and distribute results to state, provincial and federal members for implementation and outreach.
- Assist, facilitate and coordinate the review of federal public land policy that affects fish, wildlife and habitat conservation to ensure the role of state fish and wildlife agencies is affirmed and maintained.
- Support and assist in national efforts to maintain and enhance public access to public and private lands for wildlife-related recreation.
- Assist, facilitate and coordinate the management of migratory bird species within and across state boundaries to ensure that the states and the bird species receive the greatest benefit from the states' management efforts.

3. Increase communications, cooperation and coordination, and improve relationships with member agencies and organizations and other entities that help the Association fulfill its mission.

- Improve the Association's interaction with all member agencies.
- Implement a better process for reporting the Association's accomplishments to its members.
- Consult with Canadian federal, provincial and territorial, as well as Mexican federal fish and wildlife leaders on how to encourage and strengthen their involvement in the Association and the Association's service to their organizations.
- Initiate direct contact with new directors as soon as possible after they assume their duties.
- Encourage agencies and organizations that support the Association's mission to become contributing and affiliate members.
- Develop and implement an expedited publication of Association proceedings.
- Develop and implement programs and policies that support broader participation in hunting, fishing and other wildlife-based recreation.

- Coordinate, focus and direct the collective state fish and wildlife agencies' efforts in influencing Congressional legislation.
- Improve coordination of research needs and research capabilities between state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies and universities.
- Develop a communications plan for the Association to better serve and inform our members and to help promote regional, national and international issues and programs.
- Develop and expand partnerships between state/provincial/territorial agencies, federal agencies and private organizations in order to address key issues.
- Assist states, provinces/territories, federal agencies and other organizations with coordination and implementation of the various bird conservation programs (such as NAWCA, NABCI, PIF, Joint Ventures).

4. Assess the activities and operations of the Association and constantly strive for improvements in all facets of our organization.

- Evaluate funding of the Association and develop a long-term strategy to address future revenue needs.
- Annually review the Association's strategic plan and work plans to refine priorities and make any necessary changes in organization or operations.
- Improve the Multistate Conservation Grants Program to ensure the effective identification and articulation of highest priority state conservation needs and careful, fair and efficient selection of quality projects to satisfy those needs.
- Review and modify, if necessary, the objectives and methodologies for the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.
- Prepare a guidebook for planning, conducting and improving future meetings.
- Develop a long-range plan for the Management Assistance Team to identify the most important administrative and training needs of member agencies.
- Review and update the Association's administrative and procedures manual.
- Assist states with development, enhancement and utilization of automated fish and wildlife data and licensing systems.
- Develop a system to collect and electronically display key statistics from member agencies and utilize the data to better promote member agencies and their interests.