

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

Effective Date: 5/16/2022

Series: Organization

Part 142: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chapter 1: Creation, Authority, Objectives, and Functions

Originating Office: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

142 DM 1

1.1 Purpose and Mission. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with others, is responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

1.2 Creation and Authorities. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the oldest Federal conservation agency, tracing its lineage back to the 1871 U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the Department of Commerce and the 1886 Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy in the Department of Agriculture. A 1940 reorganization plan (54 Stat. 1232) in the Department of the Interior consolidated the Bureau of Fisheries and the Bureau of Biological Survey into one agency to be known as the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife was created as a part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior on November 6, 1956, by the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (70 Stat. 1119). That act was amended on July 1, 1974, by Public Law 93-271 (88 Stat. 92) to, among other purposes, abolish the position of Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife and designate the Bureau as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Authorities that were forerunners of the present U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are provided in the Table in the Appendix.

1.3 Objectives. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has three basic objectives that support its mission:

A. Assisting in the development and application of an environmental stewardship ethic for our society, based on ecological principles, scientific knowledge of fish and wildlife, and a sense of moral responsibility.

B. Guiding the conservation, development, and management of the Nation's fish and wildlife resources.

C. Administering a national program to provide the public opportunities to understand, appreciate, and wisely use fish and wildlife resources.

1.4 **Functions.** To fulfill its mission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service performs the following:

- A. Enforces Federal wildlife laws.
- B. Protects endangered species.
- C. Manages migratory birds.
- D. Restores nationally significant fisheries.
- E. Conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands.
- F. Helps foreign governments with their international conservation efforts.
- G. Distributes hundreds of millions of dollars, through our Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program, in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

Appendix

Table 1

Statutes that Were Forerunners for the Present U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- (1) The Act of February 9, 1871 (16 Stat. 593) - Provided for the appointment of a Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries to:
 - a) Prosecute investigations and perform inquiries on the food fishes of the coast and the lakes of the United States;
 - b) Determine what protective, prohibitory, or precautionary measures should be adopted; and
 - c) Report on these activities to Congress.
- (2) The Act of March 3, 1885 (23 Stat. 353) - Appropriated funds for the Entomological Division in the Department of Agriculture for the:
 - a) Promotion of economic ornithology, the study of the interrelation of birds and agriculture;
 - b) Investigation of the food, habitats, and migration of birds in relation to both insects and plants; and
 - c) Publication of a report about these topics.
- (3) The Act of June 30, 1886 (24 Stat. 100) - Appropriated funds to the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy in the Department of Agriculture for:
 - a) The promotion of economic ornithology and mammalogy, and
 - b) Investigations of the food, habitats, distribution, and migrations of North American birds and mammals in relation to agriculture, horticulture, and forestry.
- (4) The Act of April 23, 1896 (29 Stat. 99) - Appropriated funds to the Division of Biological Survey in the Department of Agriculture for:
 - a) Biological investigations including the geographic distribution and migration of animals, birds, and plants;
 - b) The promotion of economic ornithology and mammalogy; and
 - c) Investigation of the food and habitats of North American birds and mammals in relation to agriculture, horticulture, and forestry.
- (5) Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1939 (53 Stat. 1433) - Transferred the Bureau of Fisheries in the Department of Commerce and its functions, and the Bureau of Biological Survey in the Department of Agriculture and its functions to the Department of the Interior.
- (6) Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1940 (54 Stat. 1232) - Consolidated the Bureau of Fisheries and the Bureau of Biological Survey into one agency in the Department of the Interior to be known as the Fish and Wildlife Service.
- (7) Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1970 –
 - a) Transferred to the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency:
 1. Functions relating to studies on the effects of insecticides, herbicides, fungicides,

- and pesticides on the fish and wildlife resources of the United States; and
 - 2. Functions administered by the Gulf Breeze Biological Laboratory of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries at Gulf Breeze, Florida.
 - b) Between October 2, 1970, the effective date of Reorganization Plan No. 3, and December 2, 1970, the effective date of Reorganization Plan No. 4, the Gulf Breeze Biological Laboratory was under the administration of the Secretary of the Interior.
- (8) Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970 –
- a) Transferred to the Secretary of Commerce all functions vested in the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries exclusive of functions with respect to:
 - 1. Great Lakes fishery research and activities related to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission;
 - 2. Missouri River Reservoir research;
 - 3. Gulf Breeze Biological Laboratory; and
 - 4. Trans-Alaska pipeline investigations.
 - b) The functions vested in the Secretary of the Interior by the Act of September 22, 1959 (Public Law 86-359, 73 Stat. 642, 16 U.S.C. 760e-760g), relating to migratory marine species of game fish also were transferred to the Commerce Department.