

FOLLOWING THE MONEY.....Jim Beers

As someone recently called an "ignorant jerk" by a state fish and wildlife employee denying that state fish and wildlife agencies serve the federal fish and wildlife agency more than their own state's residents, I believe it is an opportune time to clear the air about state agencies' priorities.

When I say that state biologists are less and less reliable for truth about big game numbers or wolf numbers or the effects of burning or cutting pheasant winter and nesting cover or the benefits of brown trout, etc., in order to curry favor with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the environmental, animal rights, and anti-gun organizations that are in control of federal agencies and federal policies today, I am merely pointing out the obvious.

The state agencies no longer support hunting, fishing, and trapping just as more and more they enable the dismantling of all renewable natural resource uses and the active management of renewable natural resources from logging to grazing. Like their federal cousins (US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, et al) they have accepted the radical's vision of a future USA wherein hunting, fishing, trapping, grazing, logging, etc. on both public and private property are forbidden. They accept the loss of hunting, fishing, and trapping license revenue as inevitable as has been the gradual elimination of revenue-sharing and payments-in-lieu-of-taxes from federal landholdings to state and local governments. They see growing federal landholdings as no longer subject to state authority. They see private property becoming more and more federally-owned and controlled. They see Lobby Groups like The Nature Conservancy controlling more and more property through easements and ownership as they become more and more powerful due to their "partnership" with federal agencies to whom they sell property at a hefty profit and with whom they cooperate.

State jobs and state programs are believed to be and seen to be becoming increasingly dependent on federal money and thus on the dispensers of that largesse. Angering US Fish and Wildlife Service "Administrators" is the last thing a state fish and wildlife employee would do. Conversely, pleasing such "Administrators" is far more important to careers and agencies than state taxpayer groups concerned with narrow interests like elk or ranchers.

Most readers are familiar with much of the money funneling from the US Congress THROUGH the US Fish and Wildlife Service (for a fee of course) to state agencies. There are the hunting and fishing excise taxes, the grants and projects for states to do research or manage particular species like Endangered Species or all the politically expedient and ephemeral things like global warming justifications, Keystone Species, Desertification, Species of Concern, Environmental Education (i.e. propaganda), "Interpretation", "Cooperative Projects", "Eco-tourism", "Non-Consumptive Wildlife", Bird-watching, "Research" and Reporting" on everything from bats to turtles, etc., etc. Each of these federal remunerations creates pressure on the agency steering wheel to veer it from state priorities toward federal environmental/animal rights/anti-gun priorities. Each federal "gift" is an excuse to hire anti-use and anti-management personnel steeped in antipathy toward the reasons such agencies exist. Would any state undertake such things with state funds if answerable only to state taxpayers and state residents?

Occasionally there is a "gift that keeps on giving" that goes unmentioned in these "laws" and is never even audited. For instance and as but one example, when the sport-fishing excise tax law

was "amended" by US Senators Breaux of Louisiana and Wallop of Wyoming in 1984 to divert a portion of the gasoline tax used for boating to state boating classes, etc. it contained the following chestnut. In addition to their annual share (\$20 to \$30M/year) of the sport fishing taxes, the state of Louisiana received \$100m/year to reverse coastal land subsidence (think about that). The reason coastal Louisiana was subsiding and continues to "subside" is all the flood control and improved farm soil management in the Mississippi and Missouri River watershed that has reduced the annual silt load that used to be deposited regularly all around the Mississippi River Delta. Be that as it may, about 8 years ago I asked an auditor (before he was fired) that had been to Louisiana if they "audited" those funds and his answer was that they were distributed to each (not just coastal) Parish where they were used by County officials however they wanted. Let's see 26 years, \$100K per year, ummm - why that's "real" money!

Even what has been going on right beneath our noses for 4 decades now doesn't tell the whole story. Periodic accumulations of little-noticed "federal" dollars further confirms the determination of state employees to curry favor with federal overseers for possible future jobs or funding. For instance and in addition to what you already see, as of today (June 2010), there are four little-noticed yet BIG pots of federal money slopping around US Fish and Wildlife Service that I am sure have not gone unnoticed by hopeful state "cooperators".

1. "Stimulus" money in the hundreds of millions has been divided up by US Fish and Wildlife Service amongst field stations, Regional Offices, and Washington. As field station "backlogs" are being met and "priority" environmental tasks addressed, the Regional office near me will be physically moved for a couple of years as the entire federal building they now occupy is refurbished. State agency personnel are constantly on the hunt for projects and programs being created by these funds for the possibility that "cooperation" or "joint performance" opportunities may emerge.
2. "Oil Spill" money in almost unlimited amounts has been awarded to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to clean up the Gulf of Mexico and to save wildlife. Retirees are being recalled; overtime, training and per diem costs are enormous, permanent and temporary staff hiring is going on, and the resulting boon to US Fish and Wildlife Service budgets and staff will remain long after any real work like cleanup is needed. Bureaucratic dreams of "research" and "protection" ad infinitum are translated into personnel and dollars that will be more easily obtained from Congress and the White House when there are elements of funding inserted for "state cooperation" and "University research".
3. White House money for the First Lady's "Childhood Obesity" push is flowing into the US Fish and Wildlife Service in large amounts and at a rapid pace. Program descriptions of how getting kids "outdoors" will slim them down are being generated quicker than federal land acquisition justifications. Since this will go on "everywhere", federal field stations will get first crack at funds and state agencies hope to get remaining funds to "do their part" where federal field stations do not exist.
4. Last, but not least, there is the once-a-decade and perennial program for US Fish and Wildlife Service to "educate" munchkins everywhere about "the environment". Such programs for "the children" come and go (but not completely) once or twice a decade as politicians need to

project "concern" as voters think of voting. This latest White House Initiative is sending money directly to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Training Center in West Virginia. This Taj Mahal of Training (one gift of many from WV US Senator Byrd) is becoming increasingly independent (of USFWS) as its bureaucratic and budget power grows. The Center can more and more be relied on to direct some of "its" money to state "cooperators" as the Center builds "its" base of support for future funding, programs, and personnel with state agencies among others.

All 4 of these current "initiatives" have both real and potential funding availability for state fish and wildlife agencies. Additionally, many state politicians love such federal funds (education, roads, etc.) because they get to do some things without raising taxes. So state employees and many state politicians measure success by "getting every available federal nickel" rather than meeting state needs within state budgets. As long as it is not too noticeable, a little "go-along to get-along" is the price they pay: only the cumulative results get harder and harder to hide.

Is it any wonder that state fish and wildlife agencies look to Washington for their future? The Washington future asks only obedience, not accountability or taxpayers with unmet expectations. Think about what the environmental classes, the "outdoor" training, and media releases will say about - hunting/ logging/ fishing/ trapping/ wolves/ grazing/ ranching/ public lands/ private property/ states rights/ rural conflicts/ federal agencies/ state agencies/ the UN/ guns/ etc. Think about what will be said about "non-'native'" species like brown trout, pheasants, and Russian Olive trees. Think about the un-measurable nature of a job "saving the ecosystem" as opposed to a measurable job of providing a statewide elk kill of 15,000 or a 60 day pheasant season (with some left for next year). Think about all that scarce dollar largesse awash in government agencies as the economy tanks, the national debt soars, businesses are brought under union/government ownership and control, and unemployment remains high everywhere.

Yeah, you're right. I don't know what I was thinking to disparage this alliance of state and federal angels doing the work of Druidic priests dancing around some oak tree full of mistletoe. We all owe you even more than we can express and whatever you choose to do or don't do is something the rest of us should simply be grateful for. How lucky we are to have state and federal agencies that know what's best for us and how wonderful it is that it coincides so nicely with what is good for them.

Remember all this as we struggle with wolves, as hunting diminishes, as state employees fail to return calls for the removal of disease-carrying wolves from yards by homes where small children reside. Whether you live in the Upper Midwest where MN, IA, and WI are protecting cougars in hopes that they will expand their numbers or whether you live in CA where protected cougars kill and maim joggers, bikers, and others or whether you raise dogs in any of the states now protecting wolves: you had better consider the role and activities of state fish and wildlife employees and make sure they are working for you and not federal overseers or radical organizations that consider you no different than a pig or a rat or whatever.

Follow the Money.

Jim Beers
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Jim Beers is a retired US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist, Special Agent, Refuge Manager, Wetlands Biologist, and Congressional Fellow. He was stationed in North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York City, and Washington DC. He also served as a US Navy Line Officer in the western Pacific and on Adak, Alaska in the Aleutian Islands. He has worked for the Utah Fish & Game, Minneapolis Police Department, and as a Security Supervisor in Washington, DC. He testified three times before Congress; twice regarding the theft by the US Fish & Wildlife Service of \$45 to 60 Million from State fish and wildlife funds and once in opposition to expanding Federal Invasive Species authority. He resides in Eagan, Minnesota with his wife of many decades.

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