

PEER 1998 FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Survey of Ecological Services Field Supervisors concerning new ecosystem reorganization

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

{based upon the responses from 31% of all Ecological Services Field Supervisors}

Reorganization--Only 17% of supervisors think that the reorganization will improve the management of USFWS while 62% feel it will hurt the agency. Merely 13% of supervisors say the reorganization responds to employee concerns registered in previous surveys and focus groups while nearly two-thirds (74%) of supervisors say it does not reflect their concerns.

Effect on Conservation in the Field--Just 8% of supervisors think the reorganization will improve their field office's ability to fulfill its core conservation mission while 67% disagree (with 38% in strong disagreement). Only 4% think that the creation of a new programmatic staff structure in the Regional offices will produce benefits outweighing the costs.

Effect on Resource Protection--Only 4% of supervisors believe the reorganization will enhance the agency's ability to make proper biological considerations (while 62% disagree). Nearly two-thirds (71%) think that reorganization will not improve Endangered Species Act compliance, and therefore not prevent further lawsuits against the agency.

Ecosystem Management--While nearly all (96%) of supervisors believe that the philosophy behind ecosystem management is sound, only half (50%) think that the Fish & Wildlife Service's actions have been consistent with that philosophy. Approximately 54% of the supervisors even understand the objectives that the Directorate is trying to achieve while only 8% think the reorganization is needed to implement the Ecosystem Approach.

Effect on Communication--Only 8% of supervisors believe that communication between the field and the Regional and Washington offices will improve as a result of reorganization (while 62% disagree). Approximately 62% also do not think that the changes will foster accountability in their Regional Office.

Effect on Morale--As a result of perceived threats, more than half (54%) of supervisors are now more reluctant to express concerns about these issues within their agency. Meanwhile, 67% say the Directorate Decision has not boosted their confidence in agency leadership.

1998 PEER SURVEY

FWS ECOLOGICAL SERVICES FIELD SUPERVISORS SPEAK OUT

Responses to Question 15:

"Please indicate, in your opinion, the primary benefits and/or problems of the Directorate's actions in response to the Ohio State University study."

PROBLEMS

"Top loading the FWS with a plethora of GS-14's/15's at the Regional Offices won't solve the problem. We can do ecosystem approach to management without reorganizing and adding another layer of high-level administration."

"How the OSU [Ohio State University] report determined that additional ARD's [Assistant Regional Directors] are necessary is a mystery to everyone involved. If any additions are needed in the Regional Offices, it is at the GS 12 and 13 staff level. No one with whom I have spoken, among the Directorate, can pass the 'Red Face' test on their decision. There are NO BENEFITS to the resource, only to the people who get the high paying jobs which will apparently be determined by 'diversity' and the applicants degree of sycophancy to the reorganization. No one has ever been able to explain how this nonsense will help the field offices do their jobs. Disgust with the 'reorganization' is an issue on which all programs agree a sure sign that something is very wrong with mgmt."

"The Directorate Decision will result in more bureaucracy and costs and do little to enhance conservation."

"Putting our resources in management in the Regional office precludes or takes away from putting people in the field where they are needed."

"The decision to increase the RO [Regional Office] staffs seems to, at least temporarily, detract from the 'on-the-ground' actions that are taking place in the field."

"Limited future resources will be sucked up by large highly paid 'supervisors' and their 'support' staffs instead of going on the ground."

"There continues to be a disconnect between hierarchic organization to achieve ecosystem goals and on-the-ground delivery of biology/resource management that is ecosystem-based."

"Decisions not clearly related to data but seemed contrived from data (e.g. dissatisfaction of employees with RO [and] WO [Washington Office] support) was not meant to indicate that this problem was due to the [existing] organization or number of employees but due to actions that could be corrected without changing [the] organization or adding people to regional offices."

"Builds Regional Office (GS-14&15) staff at the expense of field need."

"Implementing EA on-the-ground is still not backed up with sufficient staffing and funding of field stations. But we're going to increase the size of Regional Offices!"

"EM's [Ecosystem Approach] core is the field not Regions or D.C."

"EM is not an organizational model-its an approach to how we do our jobs."

"Because most of our top management lacks field or ecosystem team experience, they missed the point. We don't [need] to reorganize to implement the EA. The EA is a philosophy or mind-set don't need a structure to implement it. As an ecosystem team leader for the service since 1995, I have observed few accomplishments attributable to the teams most team 'accomplishments' would have occurred without the teams. While I think teams improve communications and should be kept, the previous program structure was a better organization."

"FWS career development should be gained through protecting resource, not, as stated by the decision, to salute EA. GARD's [Geographic Assistant Regional Directors] have been inefficient in comprehending new programs and providing leadership. The FWS lost external credibility through the confusion surrounding EA. The Directorate lost internal credibility by ,what many employees believe, ignoring many concerns expressed though the Ohio State study. The Directorate needs to connect with the field, the bulk of the agency."

"Biggest problem before was lack of buy-in by ARD's. ARD's were responsible for the previous organization they ultimately said they didn't like it. New organization will not, in my view, increase buy-in from Program advocates. I would have created a single ARD for technical policy support with program division underneath. Less expensive, same result."

"Real on-the-ground benefits would be achieved through adequate staffing and funding of field stations."

"Creates a matrix of upper management—no matter what they say, field managers like me will have to satisfy a geographic and a program ARD— waste of time. Misses the point. We want leadership -- make decisions, set positions. 'Stabilization' won't help with leadership problems."

"The decision will result in a duplicative management scheme with both programs and ecosystems in place. Just about everybody in the FWS that I have discussed this with has said that the ecosystem teams are OK and productive; go back to programmatic administration, leave teams in place, put team involvement in our job performance standards, and make teams work. Having a dual administrative system in place obviously is contrary to GPRA goals and objectives. I have worked for the FWS for [several] years and I have never seen any decision by the Directorate result in more waste of manpower and funds that the Directorate caused by its unprofessional attempts to implement ecosystems without thinking it through."

"[Another] issue is the influence of political pressure on the decisions that should be biologically based. The changes made do nothing in my view to alter or solve these major issues."

BENEFITS

"Maintains line management over ecosystem teams which is absolutely necessary to implement the approach."

"Reaffirms ecosystem management."

"Major benefits of the EA relate to increased cross-programmatic coordination and cooperation. We work together more and know what different offices do."

"Benefit centers on consensus for ecosystem approach while uncertainty centers on efficient 'sea change' from traditional thinking to ecosystem-driven plans, decisions, actions."

"The primary problem lies not so much in the Directorate's actions but in an incredible level of resistance to change on the part of employees. It's time to get with the program and move ahead to fulfill our mission. The primary benefit of the Directorate's decision is that it clarifies and implements decisions that were made under Director Beattie, but which were delayed in implementation due to her illness. The current reorganization is far better than the confusing organization that existed previously."

"The Directorate's actions will focus this agency on the resources we are entrusted to protect. An agency cannot be led by surveys of employees."