

March 5, 2007

Laurie Larson-Jackson  
FOIA Officer  
Office of the Inspector General  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

**RE: FOIA REQUEST**

Dear Ms. Larson-Jackson:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, as amended, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) requests the following records held by the Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General (OIG) relative to its February 2007 report entitled "Assessment of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement."

Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Copies of correspondence, documentary materials letters or other communications submitted to the OIG by members of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) law enforcement program in preparation of this report;
2. Interview notes by OIG staff from interviews with members of the FWS law enforcement program in preparation of this report;
3. Documents relating to the removal of Kevin Adams as the head of the FWS Office of Law Enforcement; and
4. Information concerning interactions of the Safari Club affecting investigations or other activities of the FWS law enforcement program.

PEER does not seek information identifying any individual FWS employee, nor do we seek information that compromises an ongoing law enforcement investigation.

For any documents or portions of documents that you block release of due to specific exemption(s) from the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, please provide an index itemizing and describing the documents or portions of documents withheld. The index should,

pursuant to the holding of Vaughn v. Rosen (484 F.2d 820 [D.C. Cir. 1973] cert. denied, 415 U.S. 977 [1974]), provide a detailed justification for claiming a particular exemption that explains why each such exemption applies to the document or portion of a document withheld.

PEER requests that all fees be waived because “disclosure of the information is in the public interest . . . and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requestor” (5 U.S.C. 552 (a) (4)(A)). We are seeking this information in order to understand and to help the public understand the effectiveness and integrity of the FWS law enforcement program. Release of the requested information is in the interest of the general public, in order for the public to know if public land management decisions are made strictly according to the best available information and in conformance with applicable laws and regulations.

*1. The records concern the operations or activities of the Government.*

The FOIA request is, by its terms, limited to identifiable activities of FWS law enforcement program.

*2. The disclosure of the requested records is likely to contribute to public of these operations or activities.*

The requested material concerns the basis on which OIG produced an assessment of the FWS law enforcement program. As the thrust of our FOIA request is to document the basis for OIG’s conclusions, the requested documents are precisely on point of the subject matter of the request.

*3. The release of requested records will contribute significantly to public understanding of the governmental activities*

While it is difficult to warrant in advance to seeing it just how significant the information will be to the general public, the nature of the information should shed some direct light on the problems facing the FWS law enforcement program, as perceived by its employees.

While a certain segment of the population has a keen interest in wildlife protection, the broader public interest served by this request concerns faithful enforcement of environmental laws.

PEER believes that the disclosure of specific examples of the integrity and related problems identified by OIG will offer the general public a textbook example of influence peddling by a special interest. The general public also has a keen interest in any factor bearing on the effectiveness of federal law enforcement.

PEER intends to provide the requested information to the general public through —

- Release to the news media;
- Posting on the PEER web page which draws between 1,000 and 10,000 viewers per day; and
- Publication in PEER’s newsletter that has a circulation of approximately 20,000, including 1,500 environmental journalists.

Through these methods, PEER generates an average of 1.5 mainstream news articles per day.

Moreover, PEER has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to generate nationwide news coverage concerning activities occurring within FWS and the Interior Department.

*4. Disclosure would not serve a commercial interest of the requestor.*

Disclosure is in no way connected with any commercial interest of the requestors in that PEER is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest organization concerned with upholding the public trust through responsible management of our nation's resources and with supporting professional integrity within public land management and pollution control agencies. To that end, PEER is designated as a tax-exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code.

If you have any questions about this FOIA request, please contact me at (202) 265-PEER. I look forward to receiving the agency's final response within 20 working days.

Cordially,

Jeff Ruch  
Executive Director