United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Washington Office | 14th & Independence SW
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

File Code: 2600 Date: September 22, 1997
Route To :

Subject: State and Federal Roles in Fish Stocking

To: Regional Foresters

REPLY DUE NOVEMBER 1

We continue to receive input from partners dissatisfied with progress in the resolution of concerns about State stocking of non-native or diseased fish in native fish habitat on National Forest System lands. A recent letter from Trout Unlimited (TU) clearly describes these concerns. Copies of that letter and our response are enclosed.

While we do not agree with TU's interpretation of our obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act, we do have a responsibility to ensure that Federal interests are not being adversely affected by State stocking activities. When there is the potential for stocking to adversely affect population viability, or other Federal interest, we should be working actively with the States to modify or halt such practices.

Our policy on this is clear. We will use a cooperative approach to resolve such concerns, under the provisions of the State/Forest Service master Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Where disputes cannot be resolved at the local level, they must be elevated. Consistent application of the provisions of existing master MOUs is essential. In addition, I am also committed to examine ways to improve these MOUs. To do so, we will work with the States, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the Bureau of Land Management to evaluate the existing master MOUs, and review the policy outlined in the MOU on wilderness management signed by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Prior to initiating these discussions, I ask that you provide us with a brief description of situations within the last several years where you have effectively used a cooperative approach to resolve fish or wildlife stocking concerns, and where such an approach left concerns unresolved. We will also be contacting members of your fish and wildlife staff by phone to informally discuss the sufficiency of the existing MOU's.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Rick Swanson, National Fisheries Program Leader, at (202) 205-0880.

/s/ Art Bryant
for

ROBERT C. JOSLIN
Deputy Chief
National Forest System

Enclosures