



Wildlife Management Institute

4426 VT Route 215 N • Cabot, VT 05647

STEVEN A. WILLIAMS

President

SCOT J. WILLIAMSON

Vice President

October 4, 2021

Dr. Judith Swift
Director, North Atlantic Coast CESU
124 Coastal Institute I URI Bay Campus
Narragansett, RI 02882

Dear Dr. Swift,

Please accept this letter as the Wildlife Management Institute's (WMI) formal application for membership in the North Atlantic Coast CESU. WMI has a long history of working collaboratively with federal and state agencies, academic institutions and non-government organizations to promote conservation of North America's natural resources. Our mission is aligned with that of the CESUs as outlined in the CESU Agreement and WMI is prepared to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a nonfederal partner.

WMI was established in 1911 in response to the dramatic declines of many wildlife populations. Its founders saw a need for a small, independent and aggressive cadre of people dedicated to restoring and ensuring the well-being of wild populations and their habitats.

Although methods of operation have changed since the Institute's inception, the wildlife conservation objectives remain essentially the same. WMI remains a small, mobile, private, nonprofit 501(c)(3), scientific and educational organization. WMI operates efficiently and effectively from five field offices across the country. Its personnel are highly trained and experienced wildlife science and management professionals, typically working away from the public limelight to catalyze and facilitate strategies, actions, decisions and programs to benefit wildlife.

WMI works primarily on request with federal, state, and provincial agencies, college and university researchers and educators, other private conservation organizations, and professional associations. WMI is involved in a wide range of research, educational, and policy arenas. For example, WMI:

- is the sole non-government cooperator in the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit Program at more than 40 land-grant colleges and universities;

- cooperates with other conservation interests on matters such as endangered species, conservation provisions of the Farm Bill, national wildlife refuge issues, water resources, public land grazing, forest management, appropriations, etc.;
- conducts in-depth reviews of state, federal and provincial wildlife agencies' organizations, authorities and programs;
- sponsors and administers the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference-the premiere annual gathering of natural resource scientists, managers, administrators and educators;
- chairs or coordinates the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Alliance, the Hunting Heritage Program, the National Cooperators' Coalition of the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) Program, and the Young Forest Initiative.

WMI was an early supporter of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), including the Atlantic Coast and Appalachian LCC, the Great Plains LCC, Gulf Coast and Prairies LCCs and all five LCCs in Alaska. Through cooperative agreements with the Northeast, Southwest, and Alaska Regional offices of the USFWS, WMI administered over 120 research grants, totaling over \$9,300,000 in funding between 2011 and 2020. For each of these projects, WMI worked with the steering committees and science teams of the LCCs to identify and prioritize research needs and questions, administered requests for proposals, evaluated proposals, participated in selection of principal investigators, entered into funding agreements, monitored progress and expenditures for each grant on a quarterly basis, provided quality control on research products, and assisted with communication of research results.

Since the administrative decision to evolve LCCs, WMI has partnered with the Science Application program in advancing landscape level conservation in the Northeast US. WMI is currently partnering with the Science Applications program of Northeast Region of the USFWS to advance the collaborative conservation of at-risk species. The partnership provides support for non-regulatory, collaborative approaches with states, forest landowners, and the Department of Defense to help preclude the need for species to be listed under the ESA and to down-list or delist species already listed. Objectives to accomplish these goals include:

- Science Coordination and Communication - work with partners to manage spatial data on at-risk species, habitats, and threats and communicate about at-risk species conservation in a landscape-scale context.
- Conservation Program Administration - oversee and administer sub-agreements to meet critical science needs for at-risk species conservation in areas such as landscape conservation design and aquatic connectivity. This objective will involve the development or enhancement of science-based decision support tools for conservation.

WMI is a non-federal partner organization in the Alaska CESU.

WMI is in the sixth year of assisting the USFWS by administering the White-nosed Syndrome (WNS) Small Grants program. The WNS small grants program offers grants to support research and communications needs outlined in the White-Nose Syndrome National Plan. To date, WMI has assisted the USFWS with 4 Request for Proposals cycles and administration of thirty-seven projects to promote conservation efforts to manage WNS.

WMI focuses on regional and national wildlife conservation priorities through the Multi-State Conservation Program (MSCG), a competitive grant program managed and administered by the USFWS and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. WMI uses these funding opportunities to increase national hunting and fishing engagement and interest and to help agencies and conservation organizations remain relevant to society's changing relationship with wildlife and natural resources. These projects also allow WMI to better understand the diversity, equity and inclusion needs of our own organization and partner conservation organizations.

WMI is coordinating the restoration efforts centered on New England Cottontail by providing personnel, funding, financial assistance and communication support. Partners in the effort include the 7 states within the range of New England Cottontail, the USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and countless private landowners and public land managers. Specific support comes from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), NRCs Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant, state Pittman-Robertson Regional New England Cottontail Conservation grants and USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife. Our core function is implementation, and WMI is assisting with conservation strategies for frosted elfin, new England Cottontail, and a diverse array of projects involving Northeast turtles.

An offshoot of the New England Cottontail has been WMI's evolving role in promoting Dynamic Forest Block management within the geography of coverage of the CESU. Many forest landscapes of the east reflect the legacy of little to no management and as a consequence they are frequently of little value to endemic wildlife. As an example, states have identified >60 species of greatest conservation need that are declining due to loss of young age class forests. Of more immediate impact, many forest landscapes are fragmented by development and conversion of forest to non-forest, trends that jeopardize strategies to combat global climate change. Dynamic Forest Block management expands traditional forest management approaches to guide the development of a landscape that reflects outcomes of higher habitat quality, increased resiliency to climate change, and forest productivity enhancements. The components to management include a balanced age class distribution, controls against insect pests and diseases, control of invasive plants, and riparian management and protection.

Also within the boundary of the CESU, WMI is assisting the USFWS in the implementation of the conservation strategy for Saltmarsh Sparrow (SALS). WMI is a member of the SALS Executive Committee and is assisting the SALS conservation strategy by seeking research and management funds. Other Federal agencies on the executive committee include Department of Defense, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and Army Corps of Engineers,

WMI administers the Northeast Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) grant program and is currently administering projects on Northeast turtles, pollinators and development of regional tools to facilitate development of state wildlife action plans. Future projects planned under RCN include invertebrate conservation; conservation strategies for Tiger

Beetle, Stoneflies, and Diamondback Terrapin; and renewable energy best management practices.

WMI is assisting the US Geological Survey by supporting a Nationwide Biodiversity Data Management System coordinator in a new partnership to integrate state conservation data on a national scale.

WMI is a lean, efficient organization able to operate with minimal overhead costs. WMI will commit to charging an indirect rate not to exceed 17.5%. WMI's current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is 24.44%.

Descriptions of all WMI personnel are available on the WMI [website](#). WMI's technical and administrative representative to the North Atlantic Coast CESU will be the WMI Vice President:

Scot J. Williamson
Vice President
Wildlife Management Institute
4426 VT Route 215 N
Cabot, VT 05647

swilliamson@wildlifemgt.org
Phone: 802.563.2087
Cell: 603.770.4494

As required, enclosed with this letter is a letter of support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, one of the current federal partners in the North Atlantic Coast CESU. Additional letters from the Natural Resources Conservation Service will be provided within the next week.

WMI is familiar with the CESU Multi-partner agreement and agrees to support the CESU mission and goals and fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a non-federal partner.

In closing, let me reiterate that for over a century, WMI has been a leader among non-government organizations in enhancing the conservation and professional management of North America's wildlife and natural resources. We operate efficiently and effectively, typically "behind the scenes," in support of our federal, state, academic, and non-government partners. WMI believes we have the capacity to provide a range of services to the North Atlantic CESU, including grant administration and science support.

We look forward to working with the partners in the North Atlantic Coast CESU. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Scot Williamson, Vice President
Wildlife Management Institute

Cc Dr Steve Williams, President WMI



United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



October 2, 2021

Dr. Judith Swift
Director, North Atlantic Coast CESU
124 Coastal Institute I URI Bay Campus
Narragansett, RI 02882

Dear Dr. Swift,

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's Science Applications Program is a non-regulatory unit established for the dual purpose of addressing complex conservation challenges using a landscape conservation approach, and of achieving the organization's science and data management needs. Our program brings people together to identify shared priorities and to provide the tools and science needed to achieve collaborative conservation outcomes that transcend boundaries.

I am writing to express our support for the Wildlife Management Institute's (WMI) application to join the North Atlantic Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU). We rely on WMI for science support, transfer of knowledge and technology, and access to technical expertise. We have been partnering with WMI for the entirety of our Program's existence – well over ten years now, and they have also been a valued partner to the larger Fish and Wildlife Service bureau for many years beyond that. Examples of successful engagements are too numerous to list here, however just a small fraction of WMI most recent contributions include:

- strategic habitat conservation technical support
- synthesizing and delivering coastal resilience information
- providing at-risk species conservation fellowships that support youth engagement goals
- securing data management, analytic, and information expertise
- supporting illegal turtle confiscation through animal care and disease research
- determining regional connectivity to inform climate refugia networks
- updating models of the risk of development and species habitat response

I fully endorse the membership of WMI in the CESU. The inclusion of WMI in this network would expand our ability to support our regional and national science priorities, increase our capacity to address landscape-scale and at-risk species conservation, and allow us to access technical expertise, tools, resources, and networks necessary to successfully advance the state of the science to tackle our most important conservation challenges.

Sincerely,

Valerie Hipkins
Assistant Regional Director – Science Applications
North Atlantic-Appalachian Region
valerie_hipkins@fws.gov
530-748-8566