

# Project Abstract Summary

*This Project Abstract Summary form must be submitted or the application will be considered incomplete. Ensure the Project Abstract field succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. Use 4,000 characters or less. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary information. Refer to Agency instructions for any additional Project Abstract field requirements. If the application is funded, your project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available to public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov.*

\* Funding Opportunity Number

F-FWS-WSFR-24-002

CFDA(s)

15.628

\* Applicant Name

MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILD LIFE AGENCIES

\* Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project

The Public's Perceived Importance and View of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies

\* Project Abstract

Effective fish and wildlife management requires meaningful interaction with all segments of society, not just the people who buy hunting and fishing licenses. States' mission statements often reflect their broad responsibilities on behalf of all residents; however, significant segments of the public may not be aware of their state fish and wildlife agency at all, much less its responsibilities, services, and benefits provided. Considering most people believe fish and wildlife agency funding is shared equally between licenses sales and general tax dollars (Manfredo et al., 2018), there is considerable room to improve states agencies' interactions with the broader public. Similarly, state agencies have a limited understanding of how they are perceived by the public, especially non-traditional stakeholders. Together, these issues hinder states' abilities to effectively communicate and engage with the public and make it difficult to deliver programs relevant to the diverse range of communities served. This project will help state fish and wildlife agencies understand the public's awareness of their core functions and perceived effectiveness, the importance of public places on states' missions, responsibilities, funding structures, legal limits, and more. The results will enable states to better engage with their many diverse publics. Eleven of the MAFWA states (1) will be engaged to identify their public programs and responsibilities, along with their current management challenges. For each state, two online surveys will be developed to capture the opinions and perceptions of: 1) residents not engaged in traditional state-managed activities (fishing, hunting, boating and similar), and 2) residents who identify as traditional stakeholders, for comparative purposes. We will target up to 1,000 responses from non-traditional stakeholders to gather insights for unique geographic, demographic, and socio/cultural audiences, and another 1,000 responses from traditional audiences. The methods will replicate and build upon the currently funded MSCG project, "The Public's Perceived Importance and View of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies", currently underway in the SEAFWA states. Project methodology, results, and insights gained will be shared with NEAFWA and WAFWA for replication. (1) MAFWA is comprised of 13 states; however, Missouri and Kentucky participated in the 2023 MSCG-funded SEAFWA Agency perceptions project.