# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 23 2026

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Hageman:

Enclosed are responses to questions for the record submitted to the Department's witness, David Miko, Acting Deputy Director for Operations, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, following his appearance before your Subcommittee at the April 16, 2026, legislative hearing. These responses were prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Barkin
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Val Hoyle
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries

Questions for the Record
House Committee on Natural Resources
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4219, H.R. 6251, H.R. 7288, and H.R. 8195
April 16, 2026

**Questions from Representative Elfreth**

**Question 1: Constituents have reported that the Department of the Interior has instituted a Department-wide rule requiring that all grants over $50,000 must have Secretary-level approval. At the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this would impact approximately 85% of all grants annually. It is our understanding that $190 million in grant and cooperative agreement funding is currently being held up at FWS.**

a. **When was this rule put into place?**
b. **How has this rule impacted grant processing timelines at FWS?**
c. **How much of the $190 million in unreleased funds at FWS are subject to this rule?**
d. **What steps has the Department of Interior taken to address the additional step in approving grants?**
e. **What steps has the Department of Interior taken to remedy the delay in releasing grant funds due to this rule?**

**Response:** Executive Order (E.O.)14332, *Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking*, issued August 7, 2025, directs agencies to review funding announcements and discretionary awards. Under the Department of the Interior's process, review is focused on awards over $50,000. The Department continues to improve the review process through automation and streamlined workflows. The Department is standardizing submissions and review steps, automating routing and status notifications, and reducing manual handoffs to improve visibility and timeliness while maintaining required oversight. Pending actions are tracked to identify bottlenecks and make further improvements.

**Question 2: 2 CFR 200.205 clearly states that agencies must include certain information in Notices of Funding Opportunity, including details of the merit review process and the number of people the agency requires for this review. However, the recent NOFO released by FWS for FY26 NAWCA grants include no reference to this rule or any Secretary-level approval requirements. Further, an extensive search found that this rule does not appear anywhere in FWS publications as a formal rule or informal directive.**

a. **How specifically is the Department of Interior informing applicants of this rule and its implications on grant processing?**
b. **What steps has the Department of Interior taken to address the lack of transparency?**

**Response:** Under 2 C.F.R. § 200.205, agencies must use an objective merit-review process to review applications for discretionary Federal awards and to competitively select recipients most likely to achieve program objectives. The Department is working to ensure future funding opportunity announcements clearly describe that process. Additionally, funding announcements and discretionary awards are reviewed to ensure they are consistent with agency priorities and the national interest.