



OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grants
Awarded to the State of Mississippi,
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks,
From July 1, 2019, Through June 30, 2021,
Under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
Program**



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

JUN 30 2022

Memorandum

To: Martha Williams
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Stephen Gregoire
Acting Regional Manager, Eastern Region

STEPHEN GREGOIRE

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GREGOIRE
Date: 2022.06.30 14:48:37 -04'00'

Subject: Final Audit Report – *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grants Awarded to the State of Mississippi, Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, From July 1, 2019, Through June 30, 2021, Under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program*
Report No. 2022–ER–002

We audited the expenditures made by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (Department), under grants awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. We found that the Department ensured that grant funds and license revenue were used for allowable activities and complied with applicable laws and regulations, FWS guidelines, and grant agreements. We did not identify any reportable conditions. Background information and the objective, scope, and methodology for this audit can be found in Attachment 1. A list of the sites reviewed during this audit is provided in Attachment 2.

Because we are not offering recommendations, we do not require a response to this report. We will notify Congress about our findings, and we will summarize this work in our next *Semiannual Report to Congress*, as required by law. We will also post a public version of this report on our website.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 202–208–5745.

Attachments (2)

Attachment 1: Background, Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) provides grants to States¹ through its Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) for the conservation, restoration, and management of wildlife and sport fish resources, as well as educational and recreational activities. WSFR was established by the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.² The Acts and related Federal regulations allow the FWS to reimburse grantees a portion of eligible costs incurred under WSFR grants—up to 75 percent for the 50 States and up to 100 percent for the Commonwealths, territories, and the District of Columbia.³ The reimbursement amount is called the Federal share. The Acts require that hunting and fishing license revenue be used only for the administration of participating fish and wildlife agencies. In addition, Federal regulations require participants to account for any income earned from grant-funded activities and to spend this income before requesting grant reimbursements.

Objectives

In March 2021, we entered into an intra-agency agreement with the FWS to conduct audits of State agencies receiving grant funds under WSFR. These audits assist the FWS in fulfilling its statutory responsibility to oversee State agencies' use of these grant funds.

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (Department) used grant funds and State hunting and fishing license revenue for allowable fish and wildlife activities and complied with applicable laws and regulations, FWS guidelines, and grant agreements.

Scope

We audited the Department's use of grants awarded by the FWS under WSFR. We reviewed 41 grants that were open during the State fiscal years (SFYs) that ended June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2021. We also reviewed license revenue during the same period. The audit included expenditures of \$92.8 million and related transactions. In addition, we reviewed historical records for the acquisition, condition, management, and disposal of real property and equipment purchased with either license revenue or WSFR grant funds.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we could not complete our audit onsite. We gathered data remotely and communicated with Department personnel via email and telephone. As a result, we could not perform normal audit procedures for (1) determining adherence to policies and

¹ Federal regulations define the term "State" as the 50 States; the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands; the territories of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa; and the District of Columbia (Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act only).

² Formally known, respectively, as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, 16 U.S.C. § 669, as amended, and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, 16 U.S.C. § 777, as amended.

³ The District of Columbia does not receive funding under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act.

procedures for license revenues, (2) equipment verification, (3) observing grant projects specific to construction and restoration work, and (4) subawards to subrecipients. Therefore, the audit team relied on alternative evidence provided by Department personnel that was determined to be sufficient and appropriate to support our conclusions.

Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We assessed whether internal control was significant to the audit objectives. We determined that the State's control activities and the following related principles were significant to the audit objectives.

- Management should design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks.
- Management should design the entity's information system and related control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks.
- Management should implement control activities through policies.

We tested the operation and reliability of internal control over activities related to our audit objective. Our tests and procedures included:

- Examining the evidence that supports selected expenditures charged to the grants by the Department.
- Reviewing transactions related to purchases, direct costs, drawdowns of reimbursements, in-kind contributions, and program income.
- Interviewing Department employees.
- Inspecting equipment and other property remotely.
- Determining whether the Department used hunting and fishing license revenue for the administration of fish and wildlife program activities.
- Determining whether the State passed required legislation assenting to the provisions of the Acts.
- Evaluating State policies and procedures for assessing risk and monitoring subawards.

- Reviewing sites throughout the State remotely (see Attachment 2 for a list of sites reviewed).

We conducted an exit conference on May 11, 2022, with the FWS and the Department. During the conference, responsible officials were given the opportunity to provide their views on our results.

Based on the results of our initial assessments, we assigned a level of risk and selected a judgmental sample of transactions for testing. We used auditor judgement and considered risk levels relative to other audit work performed to determine the degree of testing performed in each area. Our sample selections were not generated using statistical sampling, and therefore we did not project the results of our tests to the total population of transactions. We did not find deficiencies in internal controls.

This audit supplements, but does not replace, the audits required by the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996. Single audit reports address controls over Statewide financial reporting, with emphasis on major programs. Our report focuses on the administration of the Mississippi fish and wildlife agency, and that agency's management of WSFR resources and license revenue.

The Department provided computer-generated data from its official accounting system and from informal management information and reporting systems. We tested the data by sampling expenditures and verifying them against WSFR reports and source documents such as purchase orders, invoices, and payroll documentation. While we assessed the accuracy of the transactions tested, we did not assess the reliability of the accounting system as a whole.

Prior Audit Coverage

OIG Audit Reports

We reviewed our last two audits of costs claimed by the Department on WSFR grants.⁴ We followed up on nine recommendations from these reports and considered them all resolved and implemented. For resolved and implemented recommendations, we verified the State has taken the appropriate corrective actions to resolve these recommendations.

State Audit Reports

We reviewed the single audit reports for SFYs 2019 and 2020 to identify control deficiencies or other reportable conditions that affect WSFR. In those reports, the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards indicated \$28 million (combined) in Federal expenditures related to WSFR but did not include any findings directly related to WSFR, which was not deemed a major program for Statewide audit purposes. Neither of these reports contained any findings that would directly affect the program grants.

⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, From July 1, 2014, Through June 30, 2016 (Report No. 2017-EXT-004), dated July 2017.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, From July 1, 2009, Through June 30, 2011 (Report No. R-GR-FWS-0005-2012), dated May 2012.

Attachment 2: Sites Reviewed

Headquarters	Jackson
Boat Landing	Terrene
Wildlife Management Area	Steele Bayou
Shooting Ranges	McIvor McHenry
Subrecipient	Bolivar County



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