



13 December 2022

Stefan Bergmann, Certification Forester
SCS Global Services
2000 Powell Street, Suite 600
Emeryville, CA 94608

Dear Mr. Bergmann,

I am writing on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) about the forest certification meeting you have scheduled this week with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) regarding the field audit you did this past fall that included an Aquatic Management Area (AMA). We do not believe the MN DNR's management of AMAs and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) is compliant with the conditions of the habitat grants they received as authorized under the Dingell-Johnson Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. §777) and the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. §669) (collectively "the Restoration Acts").

Your audit should be thorough enough to make sure all federal laws and regulations are being followed by the agency you are recommending for certification. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has already put the MN DNR on notice that it had significant enough concerns about the MN DNR meeting the requirements of the Restoration Acts that it delayed payment of a large portion of the grant (see the attached Habitat Grant Conditions correspondence between the FWS and MN DNR).

The key provision of Pittman-Robertson (16 U.S.C.,669) states:

Secretary of the Interior and the State fish and game department of each State accepting the benefits of this chapter, shall agree upon the fish restoration and management projects to be aided in such State under the terms of this chapter, and all projects shall conform to the standards fixed by the Secretary of the Interior.



Unfortunately, the MN DNR has demonstrated through its timber cordage mandates on the state's WMAs and AMAs that it has lost control of forested habitat work on these lands and that habitat improvement or preservation is not the sole reason for timber harvest on WMAs and AMAs.

SCS Global has a responsibility to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to provide it with a balanced audit even if it is the DNR that pays SCS's invoice for the audit. The public, PEER, and many other conservation organizations need to be able to trust the certification work done for FSC to assure certified forests are well managed.

If a fully met forest certification is given to the MN DNR without corrective action report or even an observation, PEER will take immediate steps to ensure compliance with these federal requirements. Further, we will bring these concerns to the attention of the FSC to remedy inappropriate management by the MN DNR of AMAs and WMAs.

Sincerely,



Timothy Whitehouse
Executive Director

dc: Brendan Grady, Forestry Technical Director, SCS Global Services
Amy Clark Eagle, Director of Science & Certification FSC US