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## **Wildlife Forever Meets with Interior Department to Promote the Interests of the Hunting and Fishing Communities**

In the first meeting of its kind, Wildlife Forever and an array of sporting related conservation groups met with the Interior Department's U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams to "discuss opportunities to form new partnerships and to reaffirm others".

The meeting was held this spring at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV. The meeting considered how to best refocus Federal resource dollars into priority areas. Hunter and angler access and youth education were two of the main topics discussed.

The meeting comes amidst President Bush's nearly \$1.3 billion 2004 budget request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One of the key features of the budget request is a \$25.5 million increase in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System, nearly 100 million acres of public lands available for hunting and fishing.

According to Douglas H. Grann, President and CEO of Wildlife Forever, "This meeting represented a return to the Interior Departments roots of working with hunting and fishing related conservation organizations. It recognizes the important contributions made by hunters and anglers to ensuring we will have wildlife forever".

The anticipated result is a coordinated response between the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and conservation organizations like Wildlife Forever, representing hunters and anglers to maximizing the return from conservation investments.

Wildlife Forever is a national nonprofit conservation organization with nearly 70,000 members and the nonprofit conservation arm of the North American Hunting Club and the North American Fishing Club. Wildlife Forever is beginning its 16<sup>th</sup> year of conserving America's wildlife heritage.

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Caption for photo:

President and CEO of Wildlife Forever Douglas H. Grann (second from left) discusses a recent article in North American Hunter with (from left) new Refuge Chief, Bill Hartwig; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Director, Steve Williams and William Horn, Chairman, Centennial Commission, NWRS.