wildlife biologists for available positions and enough regional coverage in the unit program to provide research into fish-and-wildlife related problems."

Historically, this stance either reflected the opinions of Service decision makers or was offered as a standard answer because of resource-allocation problems. Funds for the congressional line-item appropriation of units may be spent only in the cooperative unit program. Because of the inflexibility of this appropriation, the Service has been unwilling to transfer funds to the unit program from other program areas.

In response to the Service’s position, states request new units through congressional delegations. A sympathetic congressional delegation usually requests a budget increase for authorizing and funding a unit through the congressional appropriations process. In general, a unit that was implemented through congressional authorization and appropriations increases the unit program budget to pay for personnel and basic equipment. A few units, however, have been authorized by the Congress, but with no added appropriation to cover the cost. Consequently, the program budget does not cover salary costs for all unit positions, and positions may remain vacant for a long time.

After a congressional mandate and an increase in appropriations to begin a new unit, a cooperative agreement is developed by the potential cooperators: the host university, the state wildlife and fisheries agency, the Service, and the Wildlife Management Institute. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides a prototype agreement for deliberations and discussion by the cooperators. Personnel with legal backgrounds examine the proposed agreement from the viewpoint of each agency and adjust what is necessary to conform to the laws and regulations that govern each cooperator. An agreement for a unit is a unique document. Representatives of the cooperating organizations, usually the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Director for Research and Development, a vice president or president of the host university, the director or secretary of the state fish and wildlife agency, and the president of the Wildlife Management Institute, sign the cooperative agreement.

Coordinating Committees: Structure and Function

The coordinating committee is responsible to guide the functioning of a unit as outlined in each cooperative agreement. The coordinating committee is composed of an official representative from each organization who signed the cooperative agreement that established the unit. Combined fish and wildlife research units and wildlife research units have at least four signatories, and therefore at least four members of the coordinating committee who represent the Service, the host university, the state agency(ies), and the Wildlife Management Institute. Cooperative fishery research units have only three signatories—the Wildlife Management Institute is not a cooperator in these units.