



National Grants Committee Meeting

Sara Parker Pauley - Chair
Tony Wasley - Vice Chair

March 9, 2021
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM EST (CST)

Meeting convened at 9:00 AM by Tony Wasley. 72 participants attended, including 6 (out of 8) current Committee members:

- Tony Wasley (Chair)
- Curt Melcher (Vice-Chair)
- J.D Strong (members)
- Bryan Burhans (Member)
- Paul Johansen (Member)
- Keith Warnke (Member)

Scheduled Discussion Items

- Call to Order, Introductions, Announcements, and Agenda Review – *Tony Wasley*

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM (CST). The Chair welcomed attendees.

- Sponsor Remarks – Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, *Land Tawney*

BHA was established in 2004 when most organizations focused on other issues rather than specifically on public waters and lands. In the southern Cascade foothills outside Eagle Point, Oregon, seven visionaries saw many problems with managing our nation's wild places and public lands. But they also conceived a means to address these problems. Seventeen years forward, today we have 40,000+ members, 300,000+ people following us in social media and other communication means, we have chapters in 48 states now, and Canada. In total, we have over 700 chapter leaders. That doesn't include state chapters, but we also have branches in colleges and Armed Forces clubs.

What do we do with all these chapters? Here are two examples.

- Great American Outdoors Act – we started educating our members ten years ago. Also, we educated our elected leaders through fly-ins and support of projects on the ground. We got to the last part of the act's passage, a month away, and we turned on our grassroots. We ended up generating about 6,000 phone calls in one month.

This was a collective effort from entire conservation communities, but this was the role we played. We will be playing the same role in special places like The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, etc.

- Right now, we are involved in state legislative sessions all around the country. Lately, we started doing much more on the ground. One of the examples is the work of one of our chapters in Northern Louisiana. They started a program called "Trashy Squirrel," hunters during squirrel hunting pick trash. We elevated this, and this September, we picked 6000 bags of trash, and now "trashy Squirrel" is renamed "Trash and Trout," where we are working with Trout Unlimited. "Turkeys and Trash," we are working with National Wild Turkey Federation.

Tim Brass gave an update on the grants on the ground. They have been working with MAFWA on an R3 marketing effort through which they are looking to leverage some funds available through Google. This is a grant program available to nonprofits working in R3, up to \$10,000 /month in 3 advertising. We leverage these resources to develop a list of prospective small game hunters in the Midwest region. We are in the process of creating the landing pages for a set of ads. We then will develop a list of prospective hunters in cooperation with MAFWA, deliver some R3 curriculum, and do a follow-up survey with the prospective hunters from the list to better understand those barriers/ motivations and how we can better serve them address the barriers. The end product of this grant will be a report and some best practices and maybe a cookbook, which has worked well in terms of messaging.

- Approval of the September 2020 (AFWA Annual Meeting) Meeting Minutes – ***Tony Wasley***

The Committee approved the meeting minutes from September 2020.

- Presentation and Discussion of Strategic Priorities for 2022 MultiState Conservation Grant Funding - ***Tony Wasley, Chair / John Lord, AFWA Staff***

Tony pointed out that one of the questions was the priority 2/B Relevancy & Inclusion and Diversity – Social Scenarios. The National Grant Committee members agreed to omit the Social Scenarios since the other three priorities under Priority 2 address it.

- WSFR Update – ***Paul Rauch, WSFR***

Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program (T-MSCGP):

- After sequestration for FY 2021, sequestration return from FY 2020, and recoveries, there was approximately \$3.2 M available from WR and \$3.3 M available from SFR.
- FY 2021: 23 grants totaling \$6.5M were recommended by AFWA approved by the Director; they are in the process of being awarded.

R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program (R3-MSCGP):

- Up to \$5M available annually

- Grant funds are to be used exclusively for making hunter recruitment and recreational shooter recruitment grants that promote a national hunting and shooting sports recruitment program, including related communication and outreach activities.
- FY 2020 was the first year of funding; 25 grants totaling \$4,705,000 were approved by the Director and awarded by WSFR staff.
- FY 2021: 15 grants totaling \$3.1M were approved by Director's Office on February 2, 2021; WSFR staff are in the process of completing the awards.

Proposed MSCGP Deadlines for the FY 2022 Cycle

- Notices of Funding Opportunity will be posted around March 19, 2021.
- Initial Proposals due to AFWA by May 17, 2021.
- Full Proposals submitted through GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov are due by July 20, 2021.

AFWA and WSFR jointly hosted an R3-MSCGP webinar on February 24. The purpose of the webinar was to increase awareness by Non-Traditional Audiences of Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation grant opportunities. There were over 70 participants in the webinar.

Question: Do the Multistate Grants have to go through an extra review process as they did in the previous administration?

No, the process changed. The new administration supported the request to remove the extra layers of reviews from the DOI.

- Relevancy, DEI, and the MSCGP - *Tony Wasley*

I can speak to this from three different perspectives that affect this program.

The first is committee-wide - We talk about some challenges and opportunities in this area. So often, we create a position or a Committee, and it is difficult to elevate some of the challenging discussions without simultaneously creating the impression that someone got that because we have a committee for that. The AFWA President Sara Parker Pauley recently sent a memo to all committees Chairs, challenging all AFWA committees to view their roles and responsibilities through DEI lens and try to achieve awareness of those challenges and opportunities through the Committees.

Second, how do we try to address it through committee work? There are different ways in which we can achieve it through the National Grant Committee. One way is through the Strategic Priorities; we have a specific priority (Strategic Priority 2) addressing DEI.

The third is where that money goes or how that money is spent and looking for greater diversity and interest in applicants.

Committee Member Comment: In Illinois, we have added Accessibility to DEI. Not just physical accessibility, but access in proximity to sites, DEAI.

Paul Rauch: For WSFR and certainly new administration, one of the four priorities is making sure that we are reaching a broader audience and we all know and don't have to restate it here the challenges in R3, more in hunting than fishing, of recruiting across all demographics, and that was the goal behind trying to expand the participation in this grant program. Some communities we struggle to reach might have some insights or avenues on messaging and reaching participants that we are not even aware of.

Paul Johansen: MSCGP must be addressing DEI through Strategic Priorities. It's important to know that it references as internal and external. It's recruiting from a diverse pool of applicants. Hence, there are some really great opportunities here for state fish and wildlife agencies, NGOs, federal agencies, and other partners to take a good look at what they are doing internally in their organization to make sure it's a welcoming organization.

- R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program Clearinghouse – *Samantha Pedder, CAHSS*

This platform is a result of the R3 Implementation Working Group. This group has been working to identify the top barriers halting progress in regional and national levels on R3 efforts. It complements the 2016 National Hunting and Shooting action plan and utilizes the collective consensus of R3 best practices through the volunteers in the Committee. Through that effort, one of the high priority needs established on the hunting and shooting side was finding relevant R3 content like best practices, snapshots, reports, case studies, toolkits, etc. We built a place for that, the National R3 Clearinghouse. Coincidentally, through the anglers Task Force that President Arway established, there were five priorities on the angling and boating side, and one of them was a clearinghouse. Recognizing that we have two means addressed with one resource, the Council, the implementation working group members, and RBFF staff created this resource. The clearinghouse has space for R3 grants funded through MSCGP as well as other resources.

We realize that organizations are replicating efforts and the need to streamline communication and understand what has already been done. We want to focus on and update these resources to answer these questions.

So please be aware we have a resource to house the results of projects, increase communication efforts and opportunities and hopefully streamline the type of applications.

There is also a DEI section in the clearinghouse. The Council is working with partners to collect resources and update the information. One great example of how the MSCGP funds were applied to address the DEI was the leadership of the MAFWA region, developing a small game toolkit to market participation to diverse audiences. The clearinghouse was used to facilitate the collection of those resources to test and pilot focus groups.

John Lord: We invited Sam to present for two reasons: First, the National Grants Committee should be aware of this work and understand. Second, one of the main subjects that the Grants Committee has been talking about for the last few years is trying something similar on the Traditional grants. This might be the year that we might start thinking about it. So, having this presentation today might help stimulate thinking in the Committee on how we might replicate this at AFWA.

- Presentation on Prior Year Grant: Advancing k-12 conservation education through improved tools for educators to explore the public trust doctrine, North American Model, and related examples of wildlife management scenarios - **Zach Lowe, Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, and Project WILD**

Not too long after Project Wild came under the AFWA umbrella, we had an opportunity to work with Project Wild on some early curriculum on the North American Model.

The Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program is a professional development program dedicated to bringing a better professional awareness about the consumptive use of wildlife and its role in conservation. It has been going on for 20 years. We had some time-tested messages, curriculum, and core principles that we know to be effective in the conservation world. The question became, is there a way we can better translate those through k-12 education.

The reality was Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, although we have mini education programs, we were not likely to go out independently. So, we could take some of our information that is germane to the consumptive uses of the wildlife and the primary role in conservation and work to present that in the material that was free and publicly available to the educators k - 12. As a result, it was this natural partnership that developed between the Project Wild and CLfT program.

So, what that boiled down to, was first, the application for the MSCGP to get the funding to do this, and then we assembled an expert team not only from the CLfT program but we also thought it's important to reach out and try to work through the language of k-12 education. We were able to secure some top educators. The three primary subjects that we landed on were: first, the North American Model of Conservation. Second, deeper drilling into the Public Trust Doctrine and what that means for wildlife conservation in America. This was probably the newest and novel curriculum we developed, and the actual asset this offers is that it touches on a wide variety of topics. It is as much a civics lesson as a history lesson as it is a conservation biology lesson. And the third and final was the User - Pay Public Benefit model.

All this is free. It will be hosted on the Project Wild website, McGraw's website as well. They are easy to print of curriculum tools.

In the day's theme, I would also offer to keep track of where the MSCGP makes a difference, things we do, President's Sara Parker Pauley reaching out to include more diversity within AFWA, point to some previous work. A few years ago, we did Hispanic Recruitment, Retention Report. We did case studies with five different state agencies that had successfully recruited and retained Hispanic hunters and we documented what that journey looked like. That report is still available, and it has received new interest. The Trapping Matters grant and the communications grant we got last year went back to the American public and specifically sought out non-hunters and talked to them what they found encouraging about hunting in modern society and what they found discouraging about that. All of those and CLfT itself have their roots in MSCGP. The very two first funding we had over 20 years ago for CLfT came from the MSGP. We have built from one grant to the other and tried to give back to the profession.

These MSCGP grants are the true opportunities to move the needle of conservation and add some energy to everybody's efforts.

- Presentation of Prior Year Grant: Gray Literature Clearinghouse - **Douglas Austen, American Fisheries Society**

AFS is new to the MSCGP. It is our third year receiving grants from MSCGP. AFS is involved in literature. We publish journals starting 100 years ago. We also publish books on fisheries and aquatic science. The AFS Books Program continues to expand. We have new titles, new e-reader formats,

and DOI's assigned so that authors can be assured that chapters and entire books are easily discoverable through web searches of their work.

A new program is the Agency Books Subscription Program, where your agency can purchase full electronic access to the entire library of AFS books, including those to be published in the next five years. This is a fantastic deal and keeps staff current on the most recent literature. Already, states such as Idaho and Connecticut are subscribers, as are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the library system of Michigan State University.

So we are using our collective expertise and scientific reputation to try to educate policymakers. Some AFS members have expressed concern that we should not be involved in advocacy as a professional society.

But as I wrote in my December column in Fisheries about advocacy, our Mission Statement on which AFS is based obligates us to be advocates for the best available science.

We developed this tool and established this Advisory panel to guide the development. The regional associations had their staff involved, NGOs, and other partners.

In 2019, we received our first grant through MSCGP to get this started. This was tested out with several partners like Alaska, Colorado, Utah. We briefed TWS and others on the opportunity to partner. In 2021, we received the 2nd grant, so this expanded to 25 states.

Fisheries Gray Literature Database is now fully functioning. Thousands of state and other agency reports stored for easy access, powerful and quick search engine makes for easy research, easy to upload documents as a batch or individually, free to use, pdf downloads

You can get involved with this project by contacting AFS Project Manager Aaron Lerner at: alerner@fisheries.org. Documents can be uploaded as batches (exported from the existing system) or individually. This system is easily expandable to wildlife or other gray literature sources. The Gray Lit Database is being linked to other MSCG projects such as the Research Web Tool (2020 MSCG funded project)

AFS is working on many major conferences to bring fisheries professionals together, including this year's meeting in Baltimore.

In 2022, we have two fantastic events planned. In May, AFS will participate in the second Joint Aquatic Sciences Meeting (JASM2022). This gathering of the nine partner societies in the Consortium of Aquatic Science Societies (CASS).

In August 2022, AFS will host its annual meeting with the Washington-British Columbia Chapter and the Western Division in Spokane, Washington.

- New Business – Multi-year Funding for MSCGP Grants

The MSCGP supports grants annually for one-year funding. But some grants last multiple years thatand the applicants apply every year. In the past, we had discussions about supporting multiple years grants and what that would look like. The most recent request for multiple-year funding came from CAHSS. I am not sure if we are prepared to take any actions today, but I would like to ask John Lord to share any thoughts he might have on that so we can think about it and decide during the AFWA Annual meeting.

John Lord: When I first started working with the Association, it was confusing because it was the year we were phasing out the multi-year grants. There were so many multi-year grants that one year that there was no money available for other applicants. Since then, in fairness to the applicants and fairness to the administrative side, we try to keep the grants to one year. Suppose an entity would like to indicate that it's a multiple year grant, and they will be applying again the following year for continuity. In that case, they are welcome to indicate that in their application, but there is no guarantee that they will get funded, and we want to be clear about that. The only big exception to that is the National Survey, a 5-year project, and that money is already obligated for 5 years. I have been discussing this with J.D, related to the Council, now that we have the R3 MSCGP. The distinction that the Council wants to make to the NGC when they submit future applications is that while we are funding projects 99% of the time, this is an example (and if the NGC agrees) of supporting an organization that is designed to promote R3. So the difference is that organizations have an easier time when they know they have funding over a couple of years instead of one year at the time. So the request for NGC was that when they are considering funding for organizations to consider multiple years.

Tony: Thank you John. So, we will be looking at the Committee for some general guidelines, for example, a certain percentage that could be prioritized for organizational multi-year vs. yearly distribution.

Dave Chanda: I have been through all that John described, times that we committed money for multi-year and Committee has adjusted. There are certain exceptions that you need to consider, just like the National Survey. The Directors stood up the Council to take on a challenge that everybody was facing. As a director, I committed hundreds of thousands of dollars to stand it up and firmly believe in what they are doing. I am no longer a director, but I think that merits really strong consideration. But one of the things I struggle with the Committee is that there usually are 6 or 7 directors. With the issues like this, you should probably take a step back and get the pulse of all the directors, and a strong consideration must be given to award them a multi-year grant because they know where they stand and can plan long year what they will do for R3 on behalf of states.

And since I am talking now, I was glad to see the Strategic Priorities. It was great to hear from organizations that are implementing MSCGP. Still, I would like to see stronger accountability from the organizations that implement the grants and not just the reports to the feds. Everyone that receives funding should come back and report on how they spent the money was it wise, and assure us the money wasn't spent because they had to spend it.

Steve Leath: I just wanted to echo what John and Dave said. It is unusual and not best for the organizations to try and implement a long-term strategy, like R3, with year-to-year funding. When you don't know what's going to happen next year and you are forced to use your money very conservatively, and you can't reach out on something like R3 effort not knowing if you will be funded next year. I think the R3 community in general and the Directors will be better served if we can function a little bit more like an organization.

Zach Lowe: I would like to give a little different perspective on that as someone who has navigated these often in partnership with multiple organizations. The one-year funding has a limitation as described, and it is tough to do long-term planning, and there is certainly a benefit to have that opened up, maybe occasionally, like every 3rd year. That would keep the workload reasonable and planned. As someone trying to figure out how to navigate these, including other regional associations, don't limit it to only one organization type or other. It's great for the Council to do long-term planning as it is for the CLfT when we work with the state agencies. The other thing I will say, just for what it's worth, the one-year funding had me focused on how we provide match and making sure you get the best return on the investment. I am more likely to bring something to the table in that one-year funding because I know I have to get the job done. So, maybe give some consideration to those organizations who bring in the match in a meaningful way, which might help you as Committee prioritize one year versus multi-year.

Tony: These are the discussions we were hoping for today. In the end, the question is, where is that balance point that we can still direct funding for the emerging opportunities and needs and realize the benefits from longer terms funding. So, we hope to take those discussions to the business meeting and have more conversations and guidance from more directors and not just a minority of directors in the National Grants Committee.

Action Item:

Approve 2022 (R3 and Traditional) MultiState Conservation Grant Program Strategic Priorities

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM