



Project WILD Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes (Draft)

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Denver, CO - March 7, 2019

Rusty Garrison called the meeting to order and requested that everyone sign in. Participants went around the room and introduced themselves:

Rusty Garrison, Chair of Subcommittee, Director in Georgia, 3rd and 7th Project WILD Coordinator for the state of Georgia. He was involved in the acquisition of Project WILD by AFWA.

Kelly Reynolds, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – Project WILD

Heather Hubbard, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Shelley Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Mandy Harling, National Wild Turkey Federation

Elena Takaki, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – Project WILD

John Lord, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Ross Robbins, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Kellie Tharp, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Josh Gold, Archery Trade Association

Grant Sizemore, American Bird Conservancy

Tabbi Kinion, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Rusty encouraged participants to review the minutes from the last subcommittee meeting and entertained a motion to approve them. Tabbi made a motion to accept the minutes. Ross seconded the motion. All in favor – the minutes were approved.

Report from Project WILD Staff. Kelly shared slides of guide sales. In 2018 AFWA sold approximately 11,000 Project WILD guides, 7,000 Growing Up WILD guides, and 5,000 Aquatic WILD guides, plus other publications.

Elena shared about the Growing Up WILD pilot online course that the national office is working on. We are working with a contractor on this self-paced module to help us make it interactive. We will be piloting the course in California. Coordinators are a little bit leery to have an online course: why would

anyone want to go to an in-person workshop if they can do it online? The online course will be a supplement and represents a different offering. In-person workshops are a lot of fun and cannot be replaced by an online course! The online course will require approximately 20 hours of coursework and thus should be eligible for continuing education units (CEUs).

Project WILD staff is excited for the upcoming Project WILD Conference June 23-27 in Montana! We will have guest presentations from the Safari Club International Foundation, Boone and Crocket Club, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundations, plus others. We will spend a day in the field at Yellowstone National Park with park staff.

The national office is putting together a committee to re-do Flying WILD. We will not re-write the activities, which are sound activities. We do need to make other updates, including connections to the Next Generation Science Standards. Guide sales for Flying WILD are relatively low. Do we want to keep printing the guide? We are going to work with coordinators to see what we want to do with it. We might change how the information is presented to not be festival-oriented. Marc LeFebre is working on that. He is currently attending the SXSW EDU conference.

We are working with Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow on the activity "Oh Deer!" to make it more in line with how deer are managed in the US.

Tabbi: She included "Oh Deer!" in Colorado's updated hunter education manual – she will send us a link.

On occasion we do webinars (for the public). It offers a great way for us to partner with different groups. The first webinar was about wildlife and climate. About 100 people registered and about 65 people attended. Our next webinar is about bats and takes place next week. Register, and you may win a bat monitor from Wildlife Acoustics! We have a guest presenter who just came back from Peru who will be presenting.

In April we will host another public webinar with AFWA's own Jonathan Mawdsley. The topic will be insects and the creation of habitat for insects, inspired by an insect hotel competition that the Wildlife Habitat Council put on.

Kelly is working on updating the coordinator handbook, which was last updated in 2009. We are putting a team of coordinators together to help review the content.

Questions or comments?

John: One of the things we do at the Association is look at the metrics of the website. For most of AFWA's web presence, we are seeing incremental engagements. However, Project WILD visitation is ten-fold that of other areas! It is great that the Association is engaging a whole new group with Project WILD.

Elena: Being part of AFWA (including having a combined web presence) allows Project WILD to further emphasize state agency messages.

Rusty: When AFWA took Project WILD over, Rusty and the AFWA staff working on the transition told the directors that AFWA would be \$100K in the hole for two years, but the first year we balanced, and the second year with are \$20K in the black. Rusty commended staff for their success and management on this front.

Discussion on R3/Relevancy. Rusty: R3 (Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation of hunters and anglers) has been a big conversation – where does Project WILD fit in? There is also the discussion about relevancy. How is Project WILD relevant to agencies and R3? We need to make sure we are not “silo-ed.” We cannot just be doing our own thing and ignoring the states’ objectives. We know that Project WILD is relevant. What is needed from Project WILD to highlight that?

Tabbi: It is something she thinks about a lot right now because it is part of her job. She always feels like Project WILD is the information people need to understanding hunting and angling and the impacts. At her agency they are discussing the importance of educating the public – who often hammers the agency on Facebook about certain wildlife issues – so that they better understand those issues.

It is hard sometimes for leadership to see how “WILD About Bats” and those sort of things relate to issues that the agency has to face – like feral hogs.

How do we make agencies more internally aware of the resources that Project WILD coordinators represent in terms of educating the public?

Josh: Where does the Project WILD Coordinator sit within an agency?

Rusty: It varies.

Josh: In Florida, the Project WILD Coordinator was moved to the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network to help highlight the program as a resource in the agency and integrate it with their education and outreach overall.

We had the same conversation in the Education Working Group about visibility and the need to communicate the relevancy of education for agency issues.

Mandy: One of the things that has been discussed is how can we serve as a resource repository for agencies.

Josh: One option could be to highlight which activities work really well with fishing and hunting and having those ready to go for folks.

Kellie: The Natural Pathways project incorporated R3 concepts and looked at where conservation education programs fit along the pathway of engagement with the agency. Usually people do not just jump right into hunting. What are they engaging with beforehand? The final report is available on the AFWA website. The project targeted audiences that had not participated in certain outdoor recreation activities and gauged their willingness to explore hunting and shooting sports. For example, after starting out with a kayaking course, would participants be interested in fishing while kayaking? The report helps assess the timeline of where education can fit in to support R3 efforts. Matt Dunfee’s webinar on the project is available online. The biggest struggle was collecting the data.

Tabbi: The takeaways of the report are not surprising. Working with partners is important.

Kellie: There is some internal work to be done. In education we can be our worst enemies. Sometimes we lose the fun in the way. People do not want to learn how to kayak for eight hours when they only get to kayak for 20 minutes. You have to couple the information and education with the experiential portion. That is a big challenge to be relevant in R3.

Mandy: Have you worked with NWTF R3 coordinators? (They are a resource as well.)

Kellie indicated they have. She encouraged folks to take a look at the Natural Pathways project, as there is valuable data in there. The report highlights ways to approach partnering to provide alternative ways for people to engage.

Elena: We could help our Project WILD Coordinators incorporate themselves into the R3 path. Participants in conservation education programs might not buy a license right now, but we are helping build a constituency.

Kellie: For example, when taking families out on camping programs, folks could use WILD activities alongside outdoor recreation. Project WILD might be something on the R3 side that might be more appealing.

Josh: Could Project WILD develop a toolkit that would be provided to coordinators to highlight which activities fit well in R3 outreach?

Tabbi: There has been lots of discussion facilitated at the conference about relevancy. Project WILD has been saying and doing that (reaching a broader constituency) for the population that won't ever hunt and fish since the beginning. That is an important piece.

Project WILD Colorado. Heather indicated she was glad to be here. Heather had spoken with Elena and agreed to present at this meeting but then realized she had only been in the job for a week! She has been learning about the different CPW education programs. In doing that she has been thinking about the programs in terms of her passion for and background in formal education. She was a classroom teacher for many years and spent the last six years at district levels. The education staff are spending a lot of time talking about professional development and how they are supporting educators for meaningful experiences for students.

Heather highlighted some of the work of CPW's regional education coordinators. Some of their programs extend and build on the Project WILD activities. The regional coordinators are doing tremendous work with educators across the state. All four regional coordinators have different plates in terms of how they support the state. The common thread is passion and excitement for supporting educators and communities.

Heather shared about the TEN/OUT Teacher Workshops (Teaching Environmentally Science Naturally and Outdoor Understanding for Teachers). These workshops go a step further than a typical workshop by immersing educators in conservation issues in Colorado with site-based learning. In order to achieve the goal of getting kids outside, these workshops give teachers more experiences outside themselves to support that. TEN/OUT connects teachers to CPW staff and other partners so they can learn from experts in the field.

Heather attended "WILD About Cats" in the southwest region. The regional coordinator brought in biologists who had worked on the reintroduction of lynx in Colorado. The workshop provided resources educators can take back to the classroom, including Project WILD, as well as resource kits that teachers can check out. The agency has developed all these things to complement each other and ensure the usefulness of the resources and programs for the teachers and to help with the transfer of learning with students.

The “WILD About Bears” workshop took educators outside and focused on bear ecology, safety, human/bear conflicts, and management to provide a well-rounded learning experience. In the northeast region, where a main focal point is wildlife conflict, the regional coordinator offered a “WILD About Elk” workshop. Golden, CO, has a very large elk population. Agency staff worked with teachers in Golden to better understand elk and the wildlife management aspects. As part of the workshop, they connected educators with local wildlife managers.

“WILD About Fish” is another TEN/OUT workshop, which includes Aquatic WILD as well as fishing clinics so that educators experience the recreational side as well. An upcoming workshop titled “Our Changing Land” will include a full day on a private ranch learning about wildlife management on the ranch.

One of the great things about these programs is the excitement teachers have about these workshops and how it helps them think about immersing kids in the environment. The content encourages student collaboration and engagement. Educators love experiencing how passionate the regional educators and other CPW staff are. Educators report that they feel more confident afterwards in getting kids outdoors. As a former teacher, Heather attested that it can be hard to get out of your comfort zone (like taking kids outdoors, if that is something an educator is not accustomed to). Building this confidence is huge! Ten TEN/OUT workshops are scheduled across the state for 2019.

Rusty and the Project WILD staff thanked Heather for sharing about Project WILD in Colorado.

Rusty: Any other comments, next steps?

Tabbi said to let her know how she can help.

Meeting adjourned.