

Considerations for Developing Resident Game Bird Translocation Guidelines and Projects

Resident Game Bird Working Group
Bird Conservation Committee
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Purpose

The considerations contained herein are meant to foster the successful translocation of resident game birds, protect the public trust, and generate reliable knowledge that increases the likelihood of future success. They are provided as a resource for multi-state agency-led organizations (e.g., working groups, technical committees, regional associations) contemplating the development of species-specific translocation guidelines (Section I), or individual agencies contemplating translocation of species for which specific guidelines do not exist (Section II). As voluntary considerations, they are not meant to supersede any existing species-specific guidelines or policies already approved by a state agency or agency-led organizations (see Appendix A), nor to endorse or disqualify any specific translocation project.

I. Development of Species-specific Translocation Guidelines

Agency-led organizations constructing single-species translocation guidelines (see Appendix A for finished examples) should consider including the following components:

A. Literature Review

Prior to promulgation of a translocation position statement and guidelines, an extensive literature review should be considered the first action. A peer-reviewed publication synthesizing the preponderance of prior work would be ideal (e.g., Martin et al 2017). The effort will establish the history, efficacy, and best management practices that are vital towards the establishment of science-based, national guidance for a species-specific translocation.

B. Position Statement

- a. Recognize translocations as a suitable conservation tool in the appropriate habitat and climate. Establish the purpose and need for species-specific translocation guidance and support the position, to the extent possible, with scientific literature.
- b. Establish the definition of “success” including an evaluation timeline when measured success will be determined. Success can be defined in the short-term (e.g., the life span of the translocated individuals) or long-term (e.g., maintenance of the population through time from translocated individual’s offspring). Furthermore, success can be defined in terms of

biological (minimum viable population) or social (harvestable surplus or other recreational density) constructs.

- c. Institute the public trust doctrine as guiding tenet for the translocation of the wildlife resource (Organ et al. 2012).

C. Recommended Components for a Resident Game Bird Translocation Guideline

- a. Statement of Authorities – Address the legal framework governing the management of public trust resources through the interjurisdictional movement of wildlife for conservation purposes.
- b. Standardization of Request Process – Establish a standardized process for the request and consideration for species-specific translocations among states, provinces, nations, and partners. Standardization will foster consistent decision making, improved efficiency, transparency, and a platform for accelerated scientific learning from translocations.
- c. Components of Proposals – Establish the content and minimum requirements for a proposal to another state or province for species-specific translocations. The creation of a standard proposal outline or form will maximize efficiency and learning. Consider the following as critical attributes of a proposal.
 - i. Statement of Purpose – Define and establish the aim of interjurisdictional translocations. Restoration (extirpations) and restocking (low density) are the primary aims, but others could be defined (e.g., genetic rescue).
 - ii. Determination of Population Status – Quantification of the target site's local population status justifies the statement of purpose and establishes a scientific baseline for the project. Rationale for population declines should be explored and addressed as appropriate. Scientifically rigorous sampling should be conducted before, during, and post-translocation for the determination of success and to advance learning.
 - iii. Habitat Assessment – Establish method(s) to consistently quantify the condition and extent of the habitat targeted for translocation. Unsuccessful gamebird translocations have been linked to insufficient habitat initially, during, and post-translocation efforts. Ideally, a species-specific translocation guideline will set a minimum habitat standard based on the best available science. Maintaining a habitat monitoring program as a component of the translocation project should be strongly considered.
 - iv. Management Plan
 1. Habitat – Maintenance of habitat over long periods is a critical component towards the success of translocations. Establish the need for habitat management plans within a translocation proposal.

2. Translocation Practices – Incorporate the utilization of best management practices (established below) for species-specific translocations as a core component of a translocation proposal. Poor translocation practices squander public trust resources, diminish public confidence towards the translocation tool, and reduces potential for success.
 - v. Partnership Summary – Translocations are often characterized by a fervor of initial enthusiasm with waning commitments for the long-term. Outlining committed parties and funding sources for the project’s future can be an important determination towards a translocation project’s potential for success. Some projects may not include this segment if there is an independent action by the jurisdictional authority.
- d. Identification of Best Management Practices – To ensure the public trust through science-based management and foster translocation success, these practices are the minimum considerations that should be specified or scientifically referenced as a component of a species-specific translocation guidelines.
 - i. Source Considerations (latitude, ecotype, source population status, among others)
 - ii. Disease and Parasite Management (see “Guidelines for Health Screening and Sampling of Galliformes” (WAFWA – Wildlife Health Committee 2018))
 - iii. Genetic Considerations
 - iv. Temporal Recommendations
 - v. Capture Techniques
 - vi. Holding and Handling Practices (see “Guidelines for Health Screening and Sampling of Galliformes” (WAFWA – Wildlife Health Committee 2018))
 - vii. Transportation Standards
 - viii. Markings
 - ix. Sex Ratios
 - x. Quantity
- e. Establish Monitoring and Reporting Framework – Translocation projects are long-term commitments that should include monitoring and reporting parameters. These guidelines should set range-wide expectations and work towards collection and storage of data that fosters scientific advancement of the translocation tool and provides public transparency.
- f. References – To be founded in science, references should accompany these guidelines.
- g. Define the Process of Formation and Vision for Revision – Translocation guidelines and best management practices should define how they were

created to support future revisions and help inform creation of new species-specific guidelines. Recommendations should evolve through learning from current translocation successes and failures. Each species-specific guideline should set a review interval and identify the group or organization that will address the revision. At a minimum, a 5-year return interval for critical review would be appropriate.

- D. Peer Review – A species-specific translocation guideline should be vetted through an extensive peer review process. National or regional species-specific technical committees should serve as the primary-level of review and are the best suited for the original drafting. The Resident Game Bird Working Group (RGBWG) should serve as an additional review body to encourage drafts to follow the components established herein. In the absence of defined regional or national technical group, the RGBWG should serve as a support body to aid in the identification of prudent outside reviewers to foster appropriate scientific rigor to the process.
- E. Document Approval - Approval of the position statement and guidelines document(s) should be sought from the organization's governing body. If the species' range extends beyond the organization's geography, or the organization's membership does not include some agencies that may potentially participate in translocations of the species, the governing body may choose to seek further approval by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies or one of its regional affiliates. If AFWA approval is sought, the documents should be submitted to the AFWA Bird Conservation Committee and its RGBWG for initial consideration.

II. Common Expectations from Recipient and Donor Agencies for Translocations

States and provinces may contemplate translocations of species for which species-specific translocation guidelines do not exist (see Appendix A for those currently available). In those circumstances, the considerations below may be used as a general reference when developing agreements between recipient and donor agencies. It remains up to the parties involved to mutually decide which, if any, of the considerations are adopted.

Shared Agency Responsibilities

- 1) Review the relevant scientific literature to construct best management practices, and reference translocation guidelines (eg., World Pheasant Association et al. 2009, Appendix A) to familiarize staff with the range of potential considerations.
- 2) Assess local population status to determine need (recipient) and abundance (source) to ensure protection of the public trust and maximize probability of success (defined in Position Statement in Section I).
- 3) Assess current and potential future habitat conditions to determine habitat suitability, potential habitat improvements (cost, probability of success, land

- ownership) and probability of habitat loss to ensure protection of the public trust and maximize probability of success (defined in Position Statement in Section I).
- 4) Evaluate local disease history and risk in donor and recipient locales.

Common Recipient Agency Responsibilities

- 1) Consult with wildlife health, animal health, and law enforcement officials in their jurisdiction(s) to confirm the requirements for wildlife import and release.
- 2) Provide the potential donor agency with a) a formal request letter including contact information for the project lead or liaison; and b) a translocation proposal, including information such as the number and sex of birds requested per year; suitability assessments of release sites; methods and logistics of trapping, disease testing and transporting birds; and plans for post-release monitoring and ongoing assessments.
- 3) Provide interim and final reports to the donor agency summarizing project activities, including information such as numbers of birds released by site, post-release mortalities, and the results of disease tests. Any follow-up reports generated, especially with respect to population sustainability, should also be shared with the donor agency.

Common Donor Agency Responsibilities

- 1) Promptly acknowledge the formal request, and identify a) a target date by which a formal reply should be forthcoming and b) a staff liaison with which to communicate in the interim.
- 2) Provide a timely acceptance or rejection of the request, including any conditions the recipient must meet before, during, or after the translocation process
- 3) Communicate with all affected staff and partners if permission to trap is granted, and work with the recipient agency to assign responsibilities for handling public and media inquiries and outreach.

Literature Cited

- Martin, J. A., R. D. Applegate, T. V. Dailey, M. Downey, B. Emmerich, F. Hernandez, M. M. McConnell, K. S. Reyna, D. Rollins, R. E. Ruzicka, and T. M. Terhune II. 2017. Translocation as a population restoration technique for northern bobwhites: a review and synthesis. National Quail Symposium Proceedings 8:1–16. <http://trace.tennessee.edu/nqsp/vol8/iss1/11/>
- Organ, J. F., V. Geist, S. P. Mahoney, S. Williams, P. R. Krausman, G. R. Batcheller, T., A. Decker, R. Carmichael, P. Nanjappa, R. Regan, R. A. Medellin, R. Cantu, R. E. McCabe, S. Craven, G. M. Vecellio, and D. J. Decker. 2012. The North American model of wildlife conservation. Technical Review 12-04. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2018. Guidelines for health screening and handling of galliforms. WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

World Pheasant Association and IUCN/SSC Re-introduction Specialist Group. 2009. Guidelines for the re-introduction of Galliformes for conservation purposes. Gland, Switzerland (IUCN) and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, United Kingdom (World Pheasant Association). 81pp.

Appendix A. Species-specific translocation guidelines currently available from or in development by agency-led organizations.

Position Statement and Guidelines for Interstate Translocation of Wild Northern Bobwhites

<<https://bringbackbobwhites.org/download/bobwhite-translocation-guidelines/>>

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative and National Bobwhite Technical Committee
Approved March 7, 2019 by the NBCI Management Board

Contact:

Lisa Potter, Chair

National Bobwhite Technical Committee

Inter-state Quail Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Western Quail Working Group

Approved July 16, 2019 by the WAFWA Directors

Contact:

Casey Cardinal, Chair

WAFWA Western Quail Working Group

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Interstate Pheasant Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines

<<http://nationalpheasantplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/NWPTC-Interstate-pheasant-translocation-guidelines-2019.pdf>>

National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Management Board and Technical Committee

Approval pending by the NWPCP Management Board

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Guidelines for Translocations of Grouse (Draft)

Western Agencies Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee

Approval pending by the Western Bird Conservation Committee

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Appendix B. National or regional resident game bird technical groups and their governing body, if any.

- a) Interstate Working Groups for Greater Prairie-chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse (WAFWA, MAFWA)
- b) Lesser Prairie Chicken Interstate Working Group (WAFWA)
- c) Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Group (MAFWA)
- d) National Bobwhite Technical Committee (independent)
- e) National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee (independent)
- f) National Wild Turkey Technical Committee (independent)
- g) Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEAFWA)
- h) Prairie Grouse Technical Council (independent)
- i) Range-wide Interagency Sagebrush Conservation Team (WAFWA)
- j) Resident Game Bird Working Group (AFWA)
- k) Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee (WAFWA)
- l) Southeast Wild Turkey Working Group (SEAFWA)
- m) Western Bird Conservation Committee (WAFWA)
- n) Western Quail Working Group (WAFWA)
- o) Western States Wild Turkey Workshop (WAFWA)