

# The AFWA Strategist

Update for Members and Partners of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Fall 2019

## 2019-2020 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee

The membership of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies elected Kelly Hepler, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, as its new president during its 109th Annual Meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

### 2019-2020 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee

#### Officers:

President: Kelly Hepler (SD)  
Vice President: Sara Parker Pauley (MO)  
Secretary/Treasurer: Gordon Myers (NC)  
Past President: Ed Carter (TN)

#### Members:

Jim Douglas (NE)  
Chuck Sykes (AL)  
Curt Melcher (OR)  
Carter Smith (TX)  
Eric Sutton (FL)

#### Executive Committee:

Chair: Tony Wasley (NV)  
Vice Chair: Cathy Sparks (RI)

#### Ex Officio Voting Members:

Canada: Travis Ripley (AB)  
Midwest: Terry Steinwand (ND)  
Northeast: Paul Johansen (VW)  
Southeast: Rusty Garrison (GA)  
Western: Mike Fowlks (UT)



*Save the date...*

110th AFWA Annual Meeting  
Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel  
Sacramento, California  
September 13-16, 2020

[www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)



## Legislative Updates & Administrative Policies

**Wallop-Breaux Reauthorization** – Reps. Cunningham and Graves will introduce the bipartisan Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Safety Act, extending the SFRB Trust Fund into 2024. The Angling & Boating Alliance reached consensus on the bill which would increase funds for WSFR administration; eliminate the FTE and part-time limitations for WSFR administrative allocations; require a study on boat recycling opportunities; and require a GAO report examining non-motorized vessel uses and impacts, waterway access conflicts, and the use of SFRP funds for creating non-motorized waterway access points.

**Chronic Wasting Disease Hearing** – The House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee held an oversight hearing on CWD on October 17, during which WV Director Paul Johansen testified on behalf of AFWA. Representatives realized there is a needed and necessary role for improved federal assistance to states with surveillance, monitoring, research, laboratory infrastructure, and state-federal coordination.

**USDA NRCS accepting applications for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)** – NRCS will accept applications until November 27. VPA-HIP offers 3-year, \$100,000 to \$3 million block grants to states and tribes opening or expanding public access on private lands. States may request no more than 10% of the funds for staff and technical assistance and no more than 25% for habitat improvements to private lands and waters.

**USDA NRCS accepting proposals for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** – NRCS will accept proposals until December 3. The program, which requires a 1:1 match for each 5-year, \$250,000 to \$10 million partnership, allows partners to work with NRCS on targeted working lands management, land rental, easements, and watershed structures. Costs are limited to 30% for technical assistance.

**USDA interim final rules for CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and RCPP** – USDA will release these program rules from Nov-Jan. AFWA is concerned with USDA's implementation of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), as recent signups have not included important wildlife practices, such as the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) and have slashed incentive payments. Seventeen Senators wrote to USDA asking them to reopen these practices for enrollment, and AFWA signed on to a similar letter from the American Wildlife Conservation Partners. USDA will hold a CRP general signup in December 2019.

**AFWA Submits Comments on Proposal to Modify State Certification under Sec. 401 of the Clean Water Act:** In response to the Director's approval at the Annual Meeting, on October 21 AFWA submitted comments on the EPA's proposal to amend the regulations for section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which discusses the proposal's potential effects on states' ability to collect information and make certification decisions as well as uncertainty as to the scope of allowable conditions. Section 401 authorizes states to certify applications for project licenses or permits that may affect water quality, and attach conditions to certifications. The Fisheries & Water Resources Policy, Legal, and Executive Committees collaborated on this letter.

Founded in 1902, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance science-based management and conservation of species and their habitats for the public's long-term benefit and use.

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## 2019 Annual Awards

**Ed Carter** received AFWA's top honor, the **Seth Gordon Award** for lifetime achievement in conserving North America's natural resources in the public trust and contributing to the programs of the Association.

**Pete Cimellaro** received AFWA's **John L. Morris Award** which recognizes a lifetime commitment to fish and wildlife stewardship by citizen conservationists.

**Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Air Exposure Research and Outreach (AERO)** received AFWA's **Ernest Thompson Seton Award** for leadership in scientific management.

**Doug Burt and the Arizona Game & Fish Department** are the recipient of this year's **Boone and Crockett Club Award**, which honors an agency and team leader for outstanding achievement in promoting and encouraging outdoor ethics.

**Samantha Pedder** with the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports received the **Mark Reeff Memorial Award** for the outstanding young wildlife management professional under age 35.

**Crystal Egli** with Colorado Parks and Wildlife received the **Stephen Kellert Award** for outstanding service in advancing connections between humans and the natural world to all peoples in a diverse and inclusive manner

**Anna Seidman** with Safari Club International received the **Gary Taylor Award** for outstanding achievement in the field of public conservation policy, specifically related to state fish and wildlife agency jurisdiction over fish and wildlife management.

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement Port Investigations Team** was selected for the **Conservation Law Enforcement Award**.

This year's recipient of AFWA's **Private Lands Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Award** is **Nelson J. Roach** and the **Couch Mountain Ranch** for their proactive conservation and environmental practices and exhibiting outstanding stewardship of fish and wildlife resources.

Finally, the Association presented two **Special Recognition Awards** for outstanding commitment to the work of AFWA to **Stephanie Hussey** with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, and **Chris Parish** with The Peregrine Fund.

## Recovering America's Wildlife Act- Update

As of October 22, 2019, there are 145 bipartisan cosponsors (109 Ds; 36 Rs) on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA; H.R.3742). We continue to add cosponsors weekly and appreciate all the help you can lend to add more! The Waters, Oceans and Wildlife subcommittee of the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the bill on October 17th. The hearing produced mostly praise for the bill from both sides of the aisle, and importantly support from the administration going on record saying "The USFWS supports the intent of the bill," although the Administration is still examining budget implications. The next step for the RAWA will be a full committee markup in the House Committee on Natural Resources, timing TBD, but hopefully before Thanksgiving.

Several letters supporting RAWA were circulated on Capitol Hill before the recent hearing, including a [letter from six Great Lakes Governors](#)—the latest offices to weigh in on the bill. There are also two separate sign-on letters for business partners and scientists, respectively, to demonstrate their support for the legislation and to send a strong signal to Congress that this proactive, non-regulatory approach to preventative fish and wildlife conservation funding is urgently needed. The scientists' letter has over 1000 signatures and was sent to Congress last week. We could use your support to secure more support from the business and scientific communities. The [business support letter can be found HERE](#) and the [scientist letter can be found HERE](#). Updated resolutions in support of the campaign were passed by AFWA and MAFWA, and additional updated resolutions by regional associations are appreciated.

All updated campaign materials including fact sheets, resolutions, talking points, media materials, sample letters, etc. are housed on the [Alliance toolkit](#). Thank you for everything you are doing to leverage congressional support for the bill and for activating your staff and partners to garner support for this important legislation.

## International Updates

### Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of the Parties Technical Work Group Report Available

The CITES Technical Work Group represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the Provinces and Territories at the 18th Conference of the Parties in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition, AFWA International Relations Committee Co-chair Rick Jacobson (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) served as the state representative on the U.S. Delegation. Details about decisions from the meeting are in the [Technical Work Group report](#).

### AFWA Becomes a Partner of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments

At the Association's Annual Meeting the Directors approved the recommendation that the Association request partner status in the Convention on Biological Diversity's Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments (AC SNG). The Association received confirmation that it was accepted as a partner on October 16, 2019. The AC SNG is a permanent structure officially recognized by the Convention that aims to bring the voice of subnational governments into the agenda of the Convention. The Province of Quebec is a member and currently helps coordinate the AC SNG in cooperation with Regions 4, a network of subnational governments.

## Business Meeting Resolutions

AFWA's voting membership passed seven resolutions during its September 25th Business Meeting:

- **Promoting a Coordinated Response to the Pervasive Loss of North American Birds**
- **Recognizing the 30th Anniversary of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act**
- **Promoting the American System of Conservation Funding**
- **Demonstrating Support and Need for the Passage of the Modernizing the Pittman-Roberson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act**
- **Addressing the Long-Term Decline in Small Game Hunter Participation in the United States and Mitigating Its Effects on Habitat Conservation Delivery**
- **Reaffirming Support for Sustainable Use and Regulated Trade**
- **Western Invasive Plant Management: An Action Plan for the Sagebrush Biome**
- **Support for the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program Funding and the Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife Campaign**
- **Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap**
- **Appreciation to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources** the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies convened its 109th Annual Meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

[Full resolution text can be found on our website.](#)