

## **International Relations Committee - Report**

Meeting of March 7, 2019

Rick Jacobson (Connecticut), Co-Chair

Travis Ripley (Alberta), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 10:00 am to 11:35 am, chaired by Rick Jacobson. Of the 22 participants in attendance, 10 were current Committee members or their proxies.

### **SCHEDULED DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### **2019/2020 Committee Work Plan**

**Deb Hahn**

The International Relations Committee charge is as follows.

- Develop Association positions on all appropriate international matters including agreements, treaties, conventions, regulations and initiatives such as IUCN and its specialists groups and especially on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- Further Canadian and Mexican involvement, develop relations with Central and South American and Caribbean nations, and explore contact with other nations across the globe.
- Monitor and participate as needed in the relevant Conventions, agreements and treaties such as the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, The Convention on Biological Diversity, The Ramsar Convention, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, etc.
- Serves as AFWA's source, sounding board and integrator of information and discussion about international issues.

The Committee discussed some actions taken since September to implement the Work Plan.

#### **Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee**

**Travis Ripley**

The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee has focused recently on species at risk through development of a pan-Canadian approach to address multiple species at an ecosystem level. These efforts link with increased science collaboration with Indigenous peoples and focus on priority species, places and threats. In addition, we continue to collaborate on the protection of land and water to meet one of the 2020 biodiversity goals in Canada. The goal is to expand the systems of federal, provincial and territorial protected and conserved areas and promote greater recognition and support for existing Indigenous rights, responsibilities, and priorities in conservation. Last, our collective work involves increased coordination related to invasive species and wildlife health strategies within a coordinated, national context.

#### **US Forest Service International Programs Update**

**Greg Butcher**

Disaster training in other countries and provide disaster support on the ground. They provide technical support to address illegal logging, invasive species etc. They also work on international conventions. They have a migratory species program is to identify the full lifecycle needs of species that spend time on US Forest lands and grasslands. They work mostly on migratory birds but also

monarchs, bats, and dragonflies. They have been working on monarch conservation for about 10 years including helping create the Monarch Joint Venture. The overwintering number in Mexico is at a 10-year high. The monarch populations west of the Rocky Mountains is down to about 10% of the population from last year. They work on conservation of southwestern bat species shared between the US and Mexico. There are at least a dozen species of migratory dragonflies. They are starting to understand the migration of dragonflies. It is more similar to the monarch migration as opposed to birds. They are working on hummingbird conservation. They are looking to diversify flower diversity after disturbance in the western US. About 15 years ago they started working on shorebirds. In Alaska the national forests have massive river deltas that are important to migratory shorebirds. The grassland initiative looks at supporting conservation of grassland birds in North America and the longer distance migrants that winter in South America. The National Wildlife Federation's annual grasslands conference will be held on August 20-22 in North Dakota. Canada, golden-cheeked, cerulean, and golden-winged warblers are some of the forest species birds they have projects to conserve. The Americas Flyway Task Force met last year and has developed a work plan.

### **CITES Technical Work Group Update**

**Jim deVos, Carolyn Caldwell, Buddy Baker**

Buddy Baker, (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries), Carolyn Caldwell (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative), Jim deVos (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Rick Jacobson (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) and Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the provinces and territories in 2018. Currently, the Technical Work Group is preparing for the Eighteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) in Sri Lanka (May 23 - June 3, 2019). The WG met at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference to review documents and species proposals submitted to COP18 for discussion and decisions. Throughout the year the WG networks and communicates with sustainable use entities to try and ensure the vision of sustainable use is incorporated into CITES decisions and resolutions. Although a record number of documents and species proposals were submitted, it does not contain controversial native species listing proposals for the state fish and wildlife agencies. The focus the WG at COP18 will be on broader issues within CITES and the over 100 documents submitted for approval of decision and resolutions. Also, important at this meeting will be partnership building and networking.

Rick Jacobson is now the US Co-Chair of the IR Committee. The new Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency representative is Mike Bednarski from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

A workshop entitled, "Trinational trade and enforcement workshop to support the legal and sustainable trade in turtles/tortoises" organized by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation was held in Miami October 24-26, 2018 with 18 participants from the US and similar representation from Canada and Mexico. The workshop focused on 12 CITES Appendix II species. Topics covered during the workshop related to conservation, management, and enforcement needs with sessions focusing on turtle life histories, sustainable trade and harvest, captive breeding, law enforcement and a CITES overview. Participants tried to better understand how the three countries addressed trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles in the context of CITES and how to increase cooperation between the countries. A workshop report is currently being prepared.

### **Update on Activities of the USFWS Office of International Affairs**

**Eric Alvarez, USFWS Acting Assistant Director International Affairs**

Ramsar Convention: In October 2018, the US celebrated the designation the 39<sup>th</sup> wetland of international importance in California. They have 3 proposals for new Ramsar sites/wetlands of international importance in 2019.

CITES CoP18: The USFWS has initiated preparations for the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CITES Conference of Parties. They are conducting a public meeting on March 13. They are in the process of forming the US Delegation.

Permits: They are working overtime to get caught up on permit application after the furlough. They are looking to modernize the processes by implementing and developing electronic permitting systems.

Grants: They have about \$30 million in grant opportunities for multinational species, elephants, etc. in 2019.

Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management: The Committee was created by the wildlife agencies of Canada and the United States, and by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT) in 1995 to address priorities of continental significance and enhance concerted efforts towards the conservation and management of the unique biological resources shared by the three countries. This year, the annual meeting of the Trilateral Committee will be in Victoria, British Colombia the week of April 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee Report**

**Bryant White/Dave Kay**

The Joint Management Committee of the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) met on December 14 in Brussels, Belgium. Canada, the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United States (as an observer) met and provided updates on each of their actions to implement both the AIHTS and the Agreed Minute between the United States and the European Union.

### **Cross Border and International Discussion Topics**

**All**

The Committee discussed potential future actions on hemispheric migratory bird conservation and the Americas Flyway Task Force that will meet in September 2019. They will bring forward actions times to the Convention on Migratory Species Conference of the Parties in February 2020.

It was noted that in 2020 numerous meetings and activities will be taking place that the Committee may engage on starting now through 2020. That includes the CMS CoP in February 2020, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in June 2020, the CITES Animals/Plants and Standing Committee meetings, and the Convention of Biological Diversity CoP in October 2020. The Co-Chairs will consider how best to address strategically engaging across these meetings and ensuring communication and collaboration between US and Canadian partners. It was felt that we had an opportunity to bring a strong, unified message of sustainable use and sustainable trade to international forums.

### **Action Items / Resolutions / Motions**

**N/A**

### **THREATS AND EMERGING ISSUES IDENTIFIED:**

**N/A**

### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:**

Submitted by Travis Ripley

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