



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

BIG IDEAS...

Big Perspectives

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TONY WASLEY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Henry David Thoreau stated, "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." Perspective is everything. Our lives are in a constant state of flux. A global pandemic still shapes our personal and professional interactions. Political unrest complicates the tasks of effectively addressing climate change and ameliorating the threats to our planet's biodiversity. Even absent these influences, each of us experiences constant change in our lives, in our roles, and with our responsibilities and therefore, in our perspectives.

As I think about my perspectives on conservation, I must stop and ponder their accuracy. For each of us, our view defines what we believe to be true and actual. Having never aspired to be anything other than a wildlife biologist, I find the single greatest gift of serving as the Association's President, is the gift of perspective. Through our life's journeys, we sit in a lot of different seats. Our view changes dramatically from where we sit.

What I presently see from the best seat I've had the privilege to occupy, is conservation at an exciting crossroads. Serving as the Association's president I see a great time for us to come together around so many unique and related efforts. Common themes throughout the conservation arena include and are not limited to phrases and terms like; better together, landscape scale, integration, science-based, empathy, partnership, diversity, relevancy, capacity, collaboration, inclusion, and more.

Whether we are seeking to enhance conservation through broader engagement of people through diversity, equity and inclusion, or we are working to better integrate across sectors combining human health, animal health, and ecosystem health into a true One Health approach, the song remains the same, in conservation; we are better together.

We are systematically working to create a national landscape conservation framework to durably capture and reflect the conservation priorities, programs, and partnerships of states and regional associations. At the present moment, we are truly on the cusp of securing much-needed dedicated and sustainable funding for conservation through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) that will forever change the trajectory of species and their habitat.

The biggest mistake we're all guilty of, is believing others see things in the same way we do or given the same facts, will arrive at the same conclusions. I hope from wherever you find yourself sitting in your life's journey and your career path, that you too see the uniqueness of now and the opportunities that exist.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to see the view from here as your president. I welcome any opportunity to hear the insights and perspectives of others especially as it shapes our conservation future.

Regards,

Tony Wasley
President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

2021 was a year of big ideas at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. It was a year of staying the course with our core competencies but exploring ideas for the future of conservation institutions and policy and our organizational values and culture.

The year began with a design workshop hosted by the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard University. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs partnered with the Association in making this discussion a reality. This was step one, if you will, that will lead to continued exploration of how conservation remains relevant to a greatly changing North American populace; work that supports our investment in the Relevancy Roadmap.

On that front, we have continued to look for meaningful ways to lead constructively on diversity, equity, and inclusivity. The Association hosted training for staff in the past year, and it is expecting to secure the formal services of a consultant for an assessment in 2022. We hosted conversations with members and others, through the work of the Education, Outreach and Diversity Committee, we joined new collaboratives to advance welcoming outdoor spaces (e.g., Together Outdoors Coalition), especially in the context of newfound appreciation for nature during the pandemic, and we continued to support R3, with industry partners, at a high level.

The Association advanced options and opportunities for landscape conservation planning and delivery at regional scales. This dialogue and work products ultimately led to the formation of a Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force. There are high hopes and expectations for next generation collaboration, between state fish and wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, among others, in providing a platform for facilitating these discussions.

A commitment was also made in the past year to explore how the Association might bring new value and leadership to One Health planning and policy, resulting in a bundle of human, environmental, and wildlife health considerations as opposed to siloed engagement. Considerable work remains for shaping the Association's work in this arena and thoughtful dialogue will mark that demarcation in the coming year.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act has been a big idea, in one form or another, that being new dedicated funding for the work of state fish and wildlife agencies, for decades. Now, as I write this, we are on the cusp of substantive action in both the United States Senate and House. Let me offer sincere and grateful thanks to the many partner organizations and contributing members that have supported a bi-partisan coalition of support that will work tirelessly to make the Recovering America's Wildlife Act come true.

Less obvious to many readers of this Annual Report is the Association's commitment to learning, to being a learning organization, to creating a culture where adaptive thinking thrives safely. I am personally vested in making that a cornerstone of what defines the Association's organizational brand. The Fireside Chats and Leadership Shares of the past year, hosted by Presidents Parker Pauley and Wasley, during their respective tenures, opened new doors to leading in this space.

Thank you for the continuing privilege and honor to serve as your Executive Director.

Best Regards,

Ronald J. Regan
Executive Director
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



RONALD J. REGAN



ALLIANCE FOR AMERICA'S FISH & WILDLIFE CAMPAIGN



The campaign to pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R.2773/S.2372) had a very good year and closed out 2021 with [140 bipartisan cosponsors](#) in the House and [32 in the Senate](#). Of note, there was a Senate companion bill introduced by Senators Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Roy Blunt (R-MO) in July. So to introduce a conservation bill and then see 32 cosponsors of equal distribution between democrats and republicans come on before the end of the year is a testament to the bipartisan support for the bill, and the dedication by the bill's sponsors to getting this legislation across the finish line in 2022. The bill saw action in both committees of jurisdiction in both chambers, and while the bill didn't get passed out of either this year, it is high on the priority list for committee leadership and at the time of writing this article, the bill has already been marked up and passed out of the House Committee on Natural Resources with a bipartisan vote. And in the Senate, the bill was the sole focus of a hearing in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on December 8. where both Senate champions of the bill, Sens. Heinrich and Blunt were there to testify on behalf of the bill as well as Missouri Department of Conservation Director, Sara Parker Pauley for the Association and Collin O'Mara, President/CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. A special thank you to Director Pauley for delivering excellent testimony and for all her leadership in securing Senator Blunt as the lead cosponsor and continuing to engage Johnny Morris and the Bass Pro Shops team at a high level in advocacy for the bill.

The tone has changed in the last six months in conversations about the chances of passing the bill during this 117th Congress. The words being used have shifted from "if" to "when" and "how," which is largely due to the continued pressure being exerted by the many partners of the [Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife](#), led by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Some of the most recent Alliance members include The Toledo Zoo and Aquarium, the North American Invasive Species Management Association, NatureServe, Mule Deer Foundation, the Archery Trade Association, and several Audubon chapters. Many of these partners and others participated in a virtual "fly-in" in June where organizations and businesses from all over the country over the course of 2-3 days executed over 150 meetings with Members of Congress and their staffs requesting support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. While the pandemic continues to pose some challenges for the campaign, the virtual nature of communications and meetings has really created some substantial opportunities to engage new audiences and partners in advocacy and we're very grateful for all those participating. All the coordinated engagement from these diverse stakeholders and partners and their millions of members is moving the needle and we are well positioned to see this bill enacted in 2022!

We've got some work ahead of us and we're taking nothing for granted. We know how hard it is to keep all the pieces together and pass a bill of this magnitude, but the signs are certainly very encouraging. There is a strong commitment from the bill's sponsors on both House and Senate side as well as the leadership of the committees of jurisdiction in both chambers to get this done and pass this historic bill once and for all. If we all lean in and stay focused on the end goal, we will be successful together. For partners wanting to engage, there are many useful campaign resources available on the [Alliance page](#) of the AFWA website.



LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The continued pandemic forced many international conventions and initiatives to advance decisions without face-to-face meetings and to consider how they can play a role in reducing the risk of future pandemics. Global conversations about One Health, and wildlife trade and future pandemics are two examples of where the Association's voice was influential and supported the work of our members.

The Association engaged in virtual Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meetings and provided guidance on how CITES can reduce the risk of future pandemics. The International Relations Committee (IRC) developed recommendations for the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework. The Association helped shape International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) resolutions in concert with partners across the globe. The IRC provided comments to influence the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services sustainable use assessment and summary for policy makers. As a member of the IUCN-US National Committee Executive Committee, the Association engaged in the Annual Meeting, which included discussions with the IUCN Director General and the IUCN North American Councilor.



GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY

While the start of the 117th Congress and a new Administration brought changes to Washington D.C., conservation of our natural resources continued to provide some of the greatest opportunities for bipartisan collaboration and many of our highest legislative priorities were either enacted or advanced further than ever before. Even with the challenges of the pandemic stretching well beyond what any of us had envisioned, we used the lessons learned to adapt and bring our advocacy efforts to new heights. This year, we built on the historic successes of the 116th Congress by securing generational wins for conservation that will enable state agencies to fulfill their mission as stewards of our fish and wildlife for decades to come.

Securing Historic Funding for Conservation

Much of the Association's efforts were focused on the premier piece of legislation in 2021, the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), which saw years of advocacy culminating with the enactment of historic conservation provisions. Most notably, the IIJA provided for over \$1 billion in funding for hydroconnectivity projects and aquatic organism passage and established a \$350 million directly appropriated competitive grants program for wildlife crossings structures. The Act also included \$200 million to the Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for invasive species detection, prevention, and eradication; \$100 million to restore native vegetation on mined land; and an authorization of \$400 million for DOI to provide grants to states, territories, and tribes for voluntary ecosystem restoration projects on public and private land. Additionally, \$400 million was authorized for WaterSMART grants, with \$100 million dedicated to projects improving natural or nature-based features. These are just a handful of provisions in the massive package, and we will continue working with our federal partners to help ensure implementation makes the best use of these funds for state agencies and the species they manage.

Reauthorizing The Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund

The IIJA reauthorized the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF) into FY2026. A foundational funding source for states, inclusion of the SFRBTF language, led by the Association and the members of the Angling & Boating Alliance, ensures the \$650 million generated annually in excise taxes will be available for aquatic resource conservation, boating access, and safety education. The Act also authorized a study on the increasing number of non-motorized vessels and potential affects on the motorized boating community and provides the opportunity for the Sportfish Boating Partnership Council (Council) to investigate evolving challenges and potential solutions associated with derelict vessels. Additionally, beginning in 2023, the Council will serve as a federal advisory committee to the Department of Commerce as well as DOI.

Reauthorizing the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund

Another critical priority, reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund (AML), was achieved through enactment of the IIJA. In addition to being reauthorized through FY2034, AML received an \$11.3 billion one-time appropriation to increase its balance, estimated to be between \$1-3 billion prior to this legislation. The AML program was a focus in 2021, with efforts not only directed to reauthorization, but also advocacy for enhanced flexibility in the utilization of funds, and management of these abandoned properties. These efforts were supported by testimony given on behalf of the Association by Director Paul Johansen, Wildlife Resources Section Chief for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, who was called upon to testify to the importance of abandoned mine reclamation before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in October.

Priming Increased Funding for Annual Appropriations

While the federal government continues to operate under FY21 funding levels through a continuing resolution, the House passed nine of its appropriations bills including Agriculture, Energy-Water, and Interior-Environment. While the Senate has yet to move their bills, the current versions contain favorable numbers for many of the line items that the Association and regional associations supported in testimony submitted to both the House and Senate. The House included just over \$82 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (\$2M > Senate), \$80 million for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service habitat conservation (\$3M < Senate), \$250 million for Fish and Aquatic Conservation (\$6M < Senate), and \$232 million for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat Management (\$13M > Senate). Funding levels that are equal or minimally different between the House-passed and current Senate versions include \$50 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, \$24 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, and \$27 million for U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Units. While these are all subject to change between Senate passage and enactment, we are optimistic for the finalization of FY22 appropriations.

Guiding Implementation of 30x30 and America the Beautiful

The President's Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad issued in January directed plans from the Cabinet Secretaries to achieve the goal of conserving at least 30% of lands and waters by 2030, with much to be determined on what lands and waters would be included and what would qualify as "conserving". The Association had already addressed these issues in policy recommendations transmitted to the Administration, but further refined its guiding principles from the states and continues to engage with the federal agencies on implementation.





Combating Chronic Wasting Disease

In addition to assisting implementation of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) provisions enacted in 2020, the Association and its partners helped advance the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act through the house by a vote of 393-33. We hope to carry this momentum with introduction of the Senate version of the bill, expected in early 2022. The bill would authorize the most significant funding for CWD in history, with \$70 million split evenly between two newly established research and management programs. Critically, 75% of the management funds are set aside for state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, totaling just over \$26 million annually at the full appropriation. This legislation would further build on the CWD provisions enacted in 2020. The Association continues to assist implementing those provisions, and funding has been secured for the National Academy of Sciences study on CWD transmission and pathways, priming establishment of the new CWD State and Federal Task Force upon its completion.

Enhancing Federal Partnerships and Protecting State Authority

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) all initiated updates to their respective mitigation policies. Both BLM and USFWS formally began the process to update policies for compensatory mitigation, while NOAA released a draft mitigation policy for trust resources. The Association engaged on these opportunities by submitting recommendations to increase cooperation between state and federal agencies and reiterating the need for these policies to align with existing state authorities. In August, USFWS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received petitions to ban the import and export of wild mammals and birds in an attempt to leverage zoonotic disease prevention to undermine state authority and legal, science-based hunting. The Association joined the American Wildlife Conservation Partners in opposing the petitions, as well as submitted individual letters highlighting various legal issues for consideration. As of now, no action has been taken on either petition.

Increasing Recreational Access for Hunting and Angling

The Association’s long-standing priority of expanding opportunities for hunting and angling on federal lands and waters saw more success in 2021 with another historic expansion of recreational opportunities. In August, Department of Interior (DOI) finalized a proposed rule, which was supported in formal comments submitted by the Association, that opened new, or expanded, hunting and fishing opportunities across 2.1 million acres comprising 88 National Wildlife Refuges and one National Fish Hatchery. Finalized in time for the 2021-2022 hunting seasons, the expansion brought the total number of units in the National Wildlife Refuge system where hunting is allowed to 434.

Farm Bill Implementation and Preparation

In 2021, the Agricultural Conservation Committee (ACC) began planning for the reauthorization of the Farm Bill in 2023. It convened an ad-hoc Farm Bill Working Group, composed of ACC Working Group chairs, regional fish and wildlife association representatives, and NGO partners, to draft a consensus policy platform. The ACC will finalize the platform and propose it for adoption by the Association’s voting membership in 2022.

On the 2018 Farm Bill implementation front, U.S. Department of Agriculture, state fish and wildlife agencies, and partners have continued to deliver Farm Bill conservation programs to private landowners despite challenges brought on by COVID-19. The ACC launched its Private Lands Working Group, whose charge is to help states develop and improve their private lands conservation delivery programs.

The Association and its members have remained engaged at the federal, state, and local level to ensure that fish and wildlife habitat needs are incorporated into Farm Bill programs. Notably, as the Biden-Harris administration has prioritized climate-smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF) within existing conservation programs, the Association has provided comments on ways to integrate landscape-scale conservation and habitat management principles into the CSAF strategy to deliver co-benefits for fish and wildlife.





LEGAL STRATEGY PROGRAM

AFWA’s Legal Strategy, having completed its eighth year, is preparing to spearhead a foundational dialogue among stakeholders about the continuing relevance and significance of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation in 2022. While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to shape our collaboration through committees, programs, and partnerships, it did not reduce our focus on educating current and aspiring wildlife professionals about state wildlife law and regulation, and creating opportunities for multi-disciplinary engagement in programs of interest to our member agencies.

AFWA’s attorney network addressed several high-profile issues in state wildlife management in 2021. With the critical input of directors and partner committees, AFWA counsel and the Legal Committee:

- Developed comments on several federal rulemaking proposals for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and other statutes.
- Provided research and coordination support for AFWA committees’ work on topics including state/tribal collaboration, combatting illegal trade in turtles, conservation law enforcement searches (the open fields doctrine), and measures to reduce the ecological impact of feral and free-ranging cats.
- Worked with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s WSFR bureau in responding to state legislation that may have affected state agencies’ ability to receive federal funds.
- Responded to NGO petitions to the Centers for Disease Control and Department of the Interior to create blanket bans on trade in wild birds and mammals, correcting petitioners’ arguments pertaining to state and federal wildlife jurisdiction.

In 2022, AFWA counsel will further support our government affairs team by closely tracking federal legislation and rulemaking pertaining to federal aid in wildlife restoration and education, endangered species and habitat management, and state-federal cooperation. We will also contribute key support to the work of the Legal Strategy Advisory Council (a.k.a. Think Tank), which plans to launch a variety of committee-requested projects in the coming year.

Whether by tracking new court opinions, legislations, or regulations, engaging with other AFWA committees on the work of the Think Tank or AFWA’s Strategic Plan, or keeping members informed of the rapidly changing field of conservation law, we are excited to provide legal and educational support to the Association’s membership.

We will continue to offer general legal services, including intellectual property protection, contract review, and corporate governance, to state fish and wildlife agencies, regional associations, flyway councils, and related organizations.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES



BIRD CONSERVATION

After dedicating six years with the Association and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), Dr. Judith Scarl has moved on to leading the American Ornithological Society as Executive Director. We wish Judith the best and commend her extraordinary leadership and the innovative partnerships she cultivated. We are looking forward to working with our new AFWA Bird Conservation Programs Manager, Susana Mateos.

Continued widespread concern generated by the 2019 publication documenting the loss of 3 billion birds since 1970 inspired professional and public momentum to address the urgency of bird conservation. AFWA Bird Conservation Committee Working Groups are actively working on addressing a myriad of bird conservation issues with a state-oriented focus, ranging from land birds, shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl, addressing issues related to all-bird conservation. The Feral and Free Ranging Cat Working Group developed a [Toolkit to Address Feral and Free-ranging Cat Issues on Agency Lands Managed for Native Wildlife and Ecosystem Health](#). The Grassland Work Group conducted a state-by-state, province-by-province [gap analysis](#) to map tri-national grassland habitat programs and bird conservation efforts across North America. The Bird Conservation Working Groups maintain coordination with state, federal agencies, NGO partners, and partners throughout the western hemisphere to stay relevant and action oriented in the bird conservation field.

North American Bird Conservation Initiative

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) continues to cultivate creative partnerships to advance bird conservation and social goals. [NABCI's Relevancy Toolkit](#), updated in January 2021, provides examples of how bird conservation is linked with a diverse set of social & economic interests. In 2021, NABCI and 23 organizations developed a [Field Guide to Developing Partnerships](#). This project presents guidance for identifying and developing genuine partnerships with the potential to implement lasting, positive change for birds and people. NABCI emphasizes it will be important to engage community partners in the strategic planning process, to help guide a more inclusive strategic plan, which will inform NABCI as we develop broader partnerships.

In partnership with the Diversity Joint Venture for Conservation Careers, NABCI's [Community of Practice](#) has amplified issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, where the bird conservation community can share lessons learned, strategies, and hold each other accountable. Notably, the Community of Practice has implemented [four webinars](#) in 2021 in conjunction with State, Federal, and NGO partners.

Southern Wings: Helping Advance State Wildlife Action Plan Objectives

Southern Wings supports state fish and wildlife agencies priorities to help implement State Wildlife Action Plan objectives for priority birds and connect partners to the work of the agencies across the U.S. and the Western Hemisphere. The state fish and wildlife agencies joined with conservation partners in the U.S., Mexico, and Central and South America to help implement eight projects in 11 countries. They supported the identification of critical stopover sites; the protection of hundreds of acres of riparian corridors, forests, and freshwater habitat in Guatemala; the conservation of and management on tens of thousands of acres of grasslands in northern Mexico; the collection of data to create models that identify high priority areas for shorebird conservation on the Pacific coast of Mexico; reforestation in Ecuador with tens of thousands of native plants; and more. Southern Wings also welcomed the Mississippi Flyway Council as a partner. Since 2009, the state fish and wildlife agencies have contributed over \$3.5 million to annual life-cycle conservation of migratory birds.





Fall Flights and North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)

State fish and wildlife agencies are instrumental partners of the *North American Waterfowl Management Plan* (NAWMP) and leaders in the conservation of waterfowl habitats. The Plan is one of the most important, influential, and ambitious wildlife conservation initiatives in North America and it reached its 35th anniversary in 2021. The NAWMP encourages collaboration between governments and non-government organizations in Canada, the United States, and Mexico and establishes goals for waterfowl populations, habitat, and hunter and wildlife viewer use of these resources. The new 5-year NAWMP goals for the Canadian Habitat Joint Ventures is to conserve 4 million acres at a cost of \$1 billion (Cdn).

The *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA) provides federal funding to implement NAWMP and must be matched by non-federal partners. The goal of the NAWCA program is to guarantee waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species success across the continent—from breeding to wintering grounds. State fish and wildlife agencies are leaders in waterfowl conservation through the Association’s program known as **Fall Flights—Giving Wings to Cross-Border Waterfowl Conservation**. Fall Flights inspires State investments in the waterfowl breeding grounds in Canada to ensure a bountiful annual fall migration.

Forty-three states contributed a total of \$5.27 million (US) to Canadian waterfowl habitat projects in 2020-2021, which is the highest annual commitment since the program began in 1991. The combined investment by all state agencies and funds leveraged from other sources (e.g., NAWCA grants and Canadian partner funds) will result in a total investment in the Canadian breeding grounds of almost \$28 million (Cdn).

In 2021, the Association’s Task Force on Fall Flights **released its report and recommendations**. The Association’s goal for Fall Flights of \$10 million annually is ambitious but it is soundly based on the habitat need in the Canadian breeding grounds. Based on the Task Force recommendations, the Association adopted an interim goal of \$5 million and 100% participation by state agencies by 2026 and established new annual goals for state agencies and Canadian governments and conservation organizations. The Association also endorsed the Task Force’s recommendation to create a Fall Flights Advisory Committee to enhance the strategic management of the Fall Flights program. The Committee will be established in early 2022.



NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

The National Fish Habitat Partnership (www.fishhabitat.org) implemented 85 projects across 34 states in 2021. \$4.3 million was contributed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to fund these projects, with partners contributing \$30.2 million, a nearly 8-to-1 match. Since 2006, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has implemented over 1,115 projects in all 50 states through 20 regional partnerships. Many of these projects have been fostered through state fish and wildlife and natural resource agencies’ coordination efforts. These projects are making a difference in conserving fish habitat and improving angling opportunities across the country.

Anglers, Bass Pro Shops, and Toyota Contribute Nearly \$1.6 Million to National Fish Habitat Partnership Conservation Projects

On November 19-21, 2021, Bass Pro Shops hosted the finals of the first-ever U.S. Open Amateur Bass Fishing Team Championships, benefitting conservation at Table Rock Lake in Ridgedale, Missouri.

The 350-team field that fished the U.S. Open Finals was composed of the top 40 finishers at each of the eight Regional Qualifying Events held nationwide throughout 2021. The winning angling team earned \$1 million for their victory at Table Rock Lake.

This first-of-its-kind tournament also benefitted conservation, as a portion of the entry fees from the eight regional U.S. Open events hosted throughout 2021 was matched by Bass Pro Shops and Toyota, longstanding partners in conservation, to fund a \$1.58 million investment with the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) for conservation projects. This conservation investment is the largest single private donation that the National Fish Habitat Partnership has ever received since the program was formed in 2006. This donation will fund a partnership grant opportunity in 2022. For more information about the Bass Pro Shops U.S. Open Amateur Bass Fishing Team Championships and the conservation impact of the event, [Click HERE](#).



2021 WATERS TO WATCH

These voluntary, locally-driven projects represent some of the top conservation activities completed or in progress by 20 regionally-based Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout the country. These projects are carried out under the goals and objectives of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. These conservation projects conserve freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats essential to many fish and wildlife species. Projects like the ones represented on this list are fundamental to the overall success of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.



The below 10 projects were included in the Waters to Watch list in 2021:

- **Applegate Watershed, Oregon** – Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative
- **Bear Creek, Wisconsin** – Driftless Area Restoration Effort (Retrospective Project - 2012)
- **Beaver Lake, Arkansas** – Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership
- **Buckhorn Ranch Alum Fork River Saline River, Arkansas** – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
- **Cannon River Watershed (Heath, Rice, and Wolf Creeks), Minnesota** – Fishers & Farmers Partnership
- **Eklutna River, Alaska** – Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
- **Holly Creek, Georgia** – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
- **Jordan Creek, Alaska** – Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership
- **Lawrence Creek, California** – California Fish Passage Forum
- **Monatiquot River, Massachusetts** – Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

For more information on project maps and descriptions of the “Waters to Watch” list for 2021, Visit: <https://www.fishhabitat.org/waters-to-watch/archive/2021>.



AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

In July 2021, a new Amphibian, Reptile, and Invasive Species program manager, Kerry Wixted, was hired to provide staff support to the two committees and to serve as the state agencies representative for the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. Kerry Wixted formerly worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Amphibian and reptile diseases continue to be a major conservation concern. In response, the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Disease Task Team (PARC-DTT) in conjunction with the Association hosted their first webinar on herpetofaunal diseases for over 170 participants. A series of informational webinars is being planned for 2022.

In addition, the salamander fungal pathogen, *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal), still has not been detected in the United States. The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Committee voted to form the Bsal Working Group at the annual meeting in September 2021. The group will begin meeting in 2022 to work on initiatives to prepare states for early detection and rapid response relating to Bsal using the Bsal strategic plan as a guidance document.



PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

The heavily anticipated [Timber Rattlesnake Conservation Action Plan](#) was recently published. The plan can serve as a reference for landowners, land managers, and government agencies at all levels to enable them to develop science-based management and conservation plans for Timber Rattlesnake populations and protect habitats for which they have responsibility.

In February 2021, Southeast PARC (SEPARC) and the PARC Turtle Networking Team (PARC-TNT) partnered together to host a two-day workshop on “Enhancing Cross-jurisdictional Partnerships to Confront the Illicit Turtle Trade in the Southeastern United States.” This virtual workshop brought together over 90 participants from state and federal agencies to discuss challenges, opportunities, and strategies for dealing with the illegal trade in turtles.

Following the workshop’s success, a second one is being planned for February 2022 with the Association, PARC Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) and Turtle Networking Team (TNT), and Northeast PARC (NEPARC).

The highly engaged Diversity Equity and Inclusion Task Team (DEITT) has been working on improving the PIPA Award (PARC Increasing Participation Award) and created Inclusive Best Meeting Practices guidance document to help meeting planners consider multiple aspects of inclusion. The team also has a newly formed steering committee that is assessing goals into the future.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The AFWA Invasive Species Committee continues to pursue interstate and interjurisdictional partnerships to improve invasive species management. The Committee worked with AFWA Government Affairs staff to follow S.626 - Lacey Act Amendments of 2021 and expressed support for the Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act (H.R. 5692). In addition, Committee members reviewed and endorsed a proposal for the National Sea Grant Law Center to conduct a Comparative Analysis of State Legal Authority to Prohibit, Seize, and Quarantine Aquatic Plant Sales and Shipments in 2022.

Currently, the Committee is working to strengthen state-level coordination between departments of agriculture and fish & wildlife agencies as well as with other partners.

Feral Swine Working Group

At the request of both State and Federal fish and wildlife agencies, the Association created a Feral Swine Working Group in 2020. This group is serving as a liaison between the various regional associations, federal agencies and NGOs involved in feral swine management. The working group facilitates opportunities to further national feral swine management objectives.

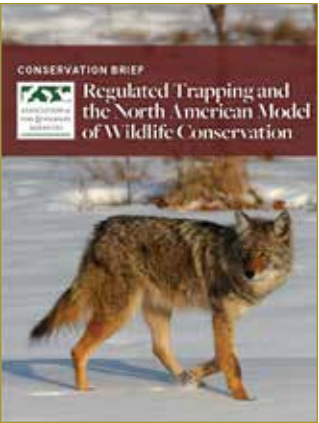
The group is currently working to produce a pamphlet to inform hunters about how feral swine can have negative impacts on game species like wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, and many others. For more information about this new group contact Bryant White (bwhite@fishwildlife.org) or check out the [new webpage](#).



FURBEARER RESOURCES

The AFWA Furbearer Conservation Working Group continues to develop Best Management Practices for Trapping with our partners at the Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center. Through Multistate Conservation Grants, the furbearer management program has produced some other products to help agencies with issues related to trapping. During 2021, we were able to deliver professional development training to agency staff via Trapping Matters Workshops and Wild Fur Schools in several states despite setbacks related to COVID. We also made the North American Trapper Education Course even better by creating 16 educational videos on trapping for the course with hunter/trapper Randy Newberg. In addition, we conducted national focus groups to evaluate public perception and approval of trapping and other issues involving the sustainable use of wildlife. A report from the focus groups will be released soon.

The furbearer program also developed a new Conservation Brief to help agencies grapple with some of the tougher issues about trapping. The new Conservation Brief covers Trapping and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Two additional briefs on Safety and Trapping, and the negative effects of Trapping Bans based on the disastrous Massachusetts beaver trapping ban are coming soon. For more information contact AFWA staff Bryant White bwhite@fishwildlife.org.



STATE AND TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS

The Association held a virtual Fly-in and led two Dear Colleague Letters supporting funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. A total of 171 members in the U.S. House of Representatives and 45 members in the U.S. Senate signed on to the letters. The House of Representatives approved a \$10 million (14%) increase for the program and the Senate an \$8 million increase for the program. Congress did not pass a final budget before the end of 2021 so the FY22 funding level for the program is uncertain.



LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

The Association approved a framework on State Wildlife Action Plans and landscape conservation to improve range-wide conservation of species of greatest conservation need through regional collaboration. The Association hired a contractor to assist and support regional fish and wildlife association landscape collaboratives. An agreement was signed between the Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish the Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force to facilitate open dialog and problem-solving on landscape conservation issues. The task force is co-chaired by AFWA’s President and the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



FISH AND WILDLIFE RELEVANCY ROADMAP

The Association partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs to host a design sprint workshop to explore how design frameworks and methods can be used to enhance conservation efforts in a rapidly changing world. Faculty from the Harvard Chan School of Public Health led the workshop that included 35 representatives, half from within the conservation institution and half outside. The workshop led to an insight that a ‘learning ecology’ where the institution ‘listens more and tells less’ would help engage broader constituencies and lead to a better future for conservation.

AFWA’s Relevancy Coordinating Team collaborated on a series of articles focused on implementation of the Relevancy Roadmap for the November/December 2021 issue of the Wildlife Professional. The multi-state conservation grant program provided funding for several projects to help states implement the roadmap and to support a community of practice on relevancy.



FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH

The Association partnered with the Environmental Protection, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and the Environmental Council of the States on two informational webinars and a workshop to identify potential collaborations on One Health at state and national scales. The Association assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the design of a new Zoonotic Disease Grant program that will launch in early 2022. It was discovered that white-tailed deer are susceptible to SARS COV-2 which led to the development of voluntary guidance.

RECOVERING AMERICA’S WILDLIFE ACT MATCH REPORT

The Association conducted a survey and held a two-day workshop for state wildlife diversity program managers to identify potential sources of match for the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. A report was produced that included recommendations and a compilation of match sources. The report will be updated periodically as new match sources are identified.



ENERGY AND WILDLIFE

AFWA’s Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee continued to convene state members and their partners around issues related to energy development and wildlife. In March, the committee formed a new working group on solar and wildlife, which will address the explosion of development ramping up across the country. The work group administered a survey to the Association’s state members to better understand the challenges and opportunities faced on solar development. The results of the survey will be available in 2022 and will assist the committee in defining their priorities around solar energy. Additionally, the Association convened a listening session with the Department of Energy’s Solar Energy Technologies Office to better raise the role of state agencies at the federal level.

The committee’s wind wildlife work group also built on their work of the previous years by publishing a [report](#) entitled “State Mechanisms for Supporting Low-Impact Wind Siting and Operation.” This report compiles state policies that either require, allow for, or encourage consultation with state wildlife agencies during decision-making related to wind projects.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION

This year the Association made significant strides forward in its climate adaptation program. Under the leadership and direction of the Climate Adaptation Committee, the Connectivity and Climate Change Toolkit was [published](#). This resource provides state managers with a how-to on building climate-smart strategies into terrestrial and aquatic connectivity initiatives. The committee also formed a new working

group to begin updating the 2009 *Voluntary Guidance on Incorporating Climate Change into State Wildlife Action Plans*. The updated guidance will be available in 2022. And continuing the tradition since 2012, the Association also [published](#) the results of the 2020 State Climate Adaptation Survey which is a biennial review of what state members need on issues related to climate change. The next survey will go out in 2022.

The Association continued to coordinate the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Network, a collaborative of federal, state, tribal, and nongovernmental partners. This year the Network [published](#) a white paper which provides insight and recommendations on how the conservation community can best advance the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy in the future. This white paper will form that basis of the Strategy revision slated to begin in 2022.

The Association also continued to be a core sponsor of the Climate Adaptation Leadership Awards for Natural Resources. This annual award recognizes people and organizations for their outstanding work in raising awareness and addressing the impacts of climate change on the nation’s living natural resources. Four were honored this year at the AFWA Virtual Annual Meeting.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Project WILD

As the impact of the pandemic continued to be felt in 2021, Project WILD staff and state coordinators moved forward with big ideas and lessons learned in 2020. While we still witnessed less demand for educator professional development than in pre-pandemic times, 2021 training numbers increased by 58% compared to 2020 numbers. Facilitators and participants alike became increasingly comfortable with virtual training, and in-person workshops resumed in many places at various times of the year. AFWA’s Project WILD staff continued supporting coordinators across the country as they manage facilitators, train educators, and provide conservation education to young people in their respective states and areas. Below are some program highlights from 2021:

- Over 9,200 educators across the country participated in WILD [professional development training](#), through a total of over 625 workshops.
- 511 educators took advantage of one of our [online courses](#) (Project WILD or Growing Up WILD).
- Project WILD began work on an [EPA-funded grant program](#), ee360+, to advance environmental education through a national collaborative led by the North American Association for Environmental Education.
- Project WILD staff hosted the 38th annual [Project WILD Coordinators’ Conference](#) (virtually), with over 100 participants registered, 36 states represented along with Japan and the District of Columbia.
- Project WILD staff welcomed a new [coordinator liaison](#), Jen Dennison from Ohio DNR-Division of Wildlife, who took the reins from Tanya Poole of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.
- Project WILD staff helped plan and implement the first [Conservation Education Conference on Virtual Learning](#), attended by 315 participants from 43 states (including 38 AFWA member state agencies—189 of the 315 participants work for one of these organizations), two Canadian provinces, and 139 total organizations.



- The Association signed four new **Letters of Agreement** with state partners to implement Project WILD:
 - New Mexico Wildlife Federation
 - South Carolina Wildlife Federation
 - Conestee Nature Preserve (South Carolina)
 - North Carolina State University (NC State Extension)
- The Association sold a total of 18,007 **WILD guides**, most of which are distributed through professional development training.
- Project WILD staff co-hosted 20 **webinars** and online training for various audiences, including Project WILD coordinators, facilitators, and conservation educators.
- Project WILD produced four **promotional videos** to highlight the value and impact of Project WILD educational materials and training.
- The Association honored recipients of our **annual Project WILD awards**:
 - Outstanding Coordinator: Tanya Poole, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
 - Oregon Facilitator of the Year: Carrie Caselton Lowe
 - Florida Facilitator of the Year: Yesenia DeJesus
 - Texas Facilitator of the Year: Wendy Drezek

In 2022 we look forward to continuing the work of the ee360+ grant collaborative with training for coordinators in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and the development of two additional online courses. We are also excited to host the 39th annual Project WILD Coordinators’ Conference in North Carolina. Thank you to all state coordinators, AFWA members, and partners for helping make 2021 another WILD year in support of conservation education.



North American Conservation Education Toolkit

The Conservation Education Strategy Toolkit, originally developed in 2004, contains resources developed by the Association to support conservation educators who offer fish and wildlife-based programs. The North American Conservation Education (CE) Strategy is just that – a strategy. It is a strategy to elevate the value of conservation education, advance the Association’s conservation education agenda, achieve excellence in conservation education, maximize partnerships, and secure funding for conservation education.

While many tools and resources have been developed as a part of the CE Strategy, it is through implementation that strategies become reality. To keep the CE Strategy relevant and useful to our conservation educators the toolkit was updated and align to meet today’s education standards, including but not limited to the National Standards and STEM. The CE Strategy Toolkit is available for free and can be [downloaded from the AFWA website](#).



Responsible Recreation Campaign

In March 2021, the Association concluded its Responsible Recreation Campaign. In May 2020, the Association and partners spearheaded #ResponsibleRecreation, a media campaign encouraging Americans to enjoy outdoor recreation while adhering to proper COVID-19 safety protocol. In addition to advocating safe outdoor etiquette, the campaign encourages people to take advantage of the numerous opportunities our nation offers to recreate on public lands, waters and parks. This campaign is a great reminder of how we can all help to keep our public lands open for the public to enjoy responsibly during this stressful time. During this campaign, the Association created numerous digital media assets, webinars,

signage, conducted a Safegraph project documenting changes in natural area use during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the Project WILD program conducting two projects- a social media campaign, professional development training for educators, and enhanced online conservation education content. Learn more at www.fishwildlife.org/responsible-recreation.

National Conservation Leadership Institute

Established in 2005, The National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) was created to help conservation professionals increase their capacity to address the daunting challenges facing our ever-changing world. Through intense and empowering learning experiences facilitated by top-ranked faculty and peer coaches, this premier leadership program strives to provide participants with the skills and knowledge needed to address conservation’s most pressing needs. In 2021, the 15th cohort of the NCLI began its journey and is made up of individuals from 19 state agencies, six federal agencies, five NGOs, and one publicly traded company, for a total of 31 fellows. This robust group of professionals completed their first virtual residency in October 2021 and their second virtual residency in January 2022. Plans are in place for their third, and final, in-person residency at the National Conservation Training Center in May 2022. This past May 2021, NCLI hosted the NCLI Alumni Virtual Conference with 148 alumni in attendance – representing 13 out of 14 cohorts. Sessions included keynotes, breakout sessions, reflection groups, and social opportunities. The Cohort 14 Diversity Working Group started a Diversity Scholarship Fund, whose goal is to provide two full-tuition scholarships for tribal agencies per cohort. For more information on the NCLI, please visit <http://www.conservationleadership.org>.

Management Assistance Team

The Management Assistance Team (MAT) work is funded by a Multistate Conservation Grant. MAT is charged with increasing the leadership capacity and agency effectiveness within state fish and wildlife agencies and the conservation community through leadership and organizational development initiatives, training, consulting, and support of the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI). In the summer of 2021, MAT launched a needs assessment to AFWA members to ascertain any changing needs and priorities since the pandemic. The data received helped identify states interested in (1) developing their internal leadership development program, (2) developing an Adaptive Leadership program for their state agencies, and/or (3) participating in a Regional Adaptive Leadership Program. Additionally, agency-specific training contacts to whom the MAT can promote their products and services were acquired. In 2021, the MAT delivered 55 webinars for 966 students. Of the 21 different webinar topics that were offered, 13 were new for 2021. The MAT also conducted 12 online courses for 196 students covering seven different topics. Additionally, MAT provided consulting services to Alaska, Arkansas, Maine, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, the National Fish Habitat Partnership, and the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program (WSFR). In total, MAT served 39 state agencies in 2021. For more information on MAT’s products and services visit <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/mat-team>.

PROJECT WILD
WORKSHOP LEADS
TO NEW STATE
SPIDER FOR NEW
HAMPSHIRE

“I started out with a class yelling ‘Ewww’ and by the end of the week ... they were literally waiting in line to hold a little black spider with their bare hands.”

-Tara Happy, Growing Up WILD trained educator

The journey to the daring jumping spider’s official status as the state spider of New Hampshire began on a fall day in October 2020 when Lindsay Webb, Wildlife Educator at New Hampshire Fish and Game, held a virtual workshop for a group of teachers that included the Project WILD activity, “Spider Web Wonders.” One of the third-grade teachers, Tara Happy with Hollis Primary School, used this Project WILD activity as part of a weeklong unit designed to reduce students’ fear of spiders. Later, Happy worked with her students and school to vote for their favorite spider and then drafted legislation to have an official state spider. On June 11, 2021, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed HB 318, proclaiming the daring jumping spider to be the state spider of New Hampshire, into law at the Hollis Primary School.



OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES



MULTISTATE CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM

Since 2000, the Multistate Conservation Grant Program has dedicated more than \$100 million to national and regional level conservation priorities.

The Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act was signed into law on December 20, 2019 adding up to \$5 million annually beginning with 2020 for Wildlife Restoration eligible grants as defined by the legislation.

Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCG) projects implemented in 2021 include:

- **An Agency Path Forward: Designing Effective Engagement and Building Capacity for Relevancy**
Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). Under this 2021 MSCG, Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) partnered with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) and the Metropolitan Group to identify how a natural resource management agency can best identify and instigate system-wide engagement strategies for under-served constituencies. Given the risks, expenses, complexities, and expertise requirements needed to engage under-served constituencies, this project will serve as a substantial proof-of-concept project to help agencies feel comfortable initiating such a transformative process themselves. This project builds on WMI's foundational work with the Association to develop the Relevancy Roadmap in 2019 and integrates lessons learned from a 2020 MSCG that piloted implementation of the roadmap in Iowa, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. The pilot projects led to deeper understanding of birders in Iowa; better understanding of volunteers on Indiana's wildlife management areas; identified the needs, interests and concerns of urban anglers in Philadelphia; and increasing understanding of roles and responsibilities under the public trust doctrine in North Carolina. The 2021 project with VDWR also builds on – and benefits from – two other WMI MSCGs that provided **tools** to identify and improve the habits and practices that make state agencies more effective and ways for state agencies to assess their culture and capacity to apply **Wildlife Governance Principles**. These MSCG also resulted in publications in the Wildlife Professional, Journal of Wildlife Management and the Wildlife Society Bulletin and creation of a robust online **Community of Practice** that provides a space for conservation professionals to collaborate and learn from each other about engaging and serving broader constituencies.



2021 ANNUAL MEETING

The Association held its 111th Annual Meeting, September 8-14, 2021 as a hybrid meeting. Leading off the conference, the 2021 plenary “Conservation in the Time of Coronavirus: Social Pandemics. Cultural Pandemics” which focused on the social and cultural pandemics of our day against the backdrop of a coronavirus.

The Association thanks our plenary speakers Heather E. McGowan, Speaker, Writer, Advisor, and Crystal Egli, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity consultant, and our Emcee Tony Wasley, Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife and President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, for their insights.

2021 Annual Meeting Resolutions

The voting membership of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed seven resolutions during its Business Meeting held on September 14, 2021. Resolutions are developed within AFWA Committees to express formal opinion for adoption by the Association.

1. Support for the cooperative fish and wildlife research unit program
2. Enhancing the Fall Flights Program and increasing state agency investments in Canadian waterfowl breeding grounds
3. Control and management of free-ranging domestic cats
4. Strengthening state involvement in the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and recognition of the codification of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan through the passage of the America’s Conservation Enhancement Act
5. State Wildlife Action Plans and landscape conservation
6. In support of a national wildlife disease surveillance network
7. Appreciation of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for a successful hybrid Annual Meeting and commemoration of a year marked by organizations’ adaption to a new normal

[You can view the full text of the resolutions online.](#)

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORS

The Association extends its appreciation to the 111th Annual Meeting Sponsors and exhibitors.

Sustaining Partner Level: Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Platinum Level Sponsors: Bass Pro Shops, U.S. Department of Agriculture- Wildlife Services, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Kalkomey, National Wild Turkey Federation

Gold Level Sponsors: U.S. Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Brandt, Ducks Unlimited, National Shooting Sports Foundation, USDA Forest Service

Silver Level Sponsors: Archery Trade Association, Aspira, ESRI, Biomark, U.S. Geological Survey, Terra Technology Group, Visual Labs Smartphone Body Cameras

Bronze Level Sponsors: DJ Case & Associates, The Wildlife Society, National Archery in the Schools Program, Wildlife Management Institute, Boone and Crockett Club, The Nature Conservancy, Voss Signs, National Rifle Association of America, Airgun Sporting Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Refreshment Break Sponsor: Interior Federal Credit Union

Exhibitor Level Supporter- Virtual Only: Mark Damian Duda & Assoc., Inc. (Responsive Management), Southwick Associates, SWYM Consulting, Wildlife Drones

2021 ANNUAL AWARDS

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies recognized seven individuals, two state agencies, one federal agency, one committee and one private landowner for their dedication to advancing fish and wildlife conservation at the Association’s Annual Awards Ceremony held virtually on September 13, 2021.

Recipients include:

Seth Gordon Award

Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

John L. Morris Award

John Tomke, Ducks Unlimited

Ernest Thompson Seton Award

Jason Sumners, Missouri Department of Conservation

Boone and Crockett Award

Arizona Game & Fish Department’s Fair Chase Committee

Mark Reeff Award

Kelly Adams, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Private Lands Fish & Wildlife Stewardship Award

Vera Earl Ranch, Inc., Ian Tomlinson

Stephen Kellert Award

Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Public Affairs and Marketing Teams

Gary Taylor Award

Jim Odenkirk (Arizona Game and Fish Department)

Conservation Law Enforcement Award

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement’s Southern Surge Task Force

Special Recognition Awards

Frank Peterson, Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation

Paul Rauch, Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Association would like to pay tribute to the wildlife professionals, Fallen Heroes, who have lost their lives while carrying out their duties to enforce conservation laws and regulations and manage fish and wildlife resources within the past year. These deceased professionals are Officer Steven Reighard with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Markus Guido Dyck, polar bear biologist for the Government of Nunavut (Canada), and Dana Katz, a freshwater fisheries biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The Association also presented posthumously the President’s Award to Dr. Valerius Geist (1938-2021) for exceptional leadership on international conservation issues, including the seminal articulation of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.



JIM DOUGLAS

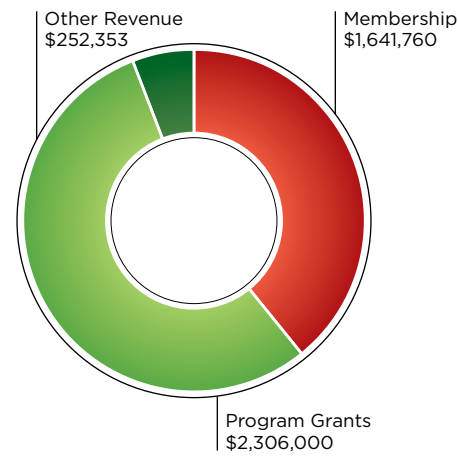
2021 FINANCIALS



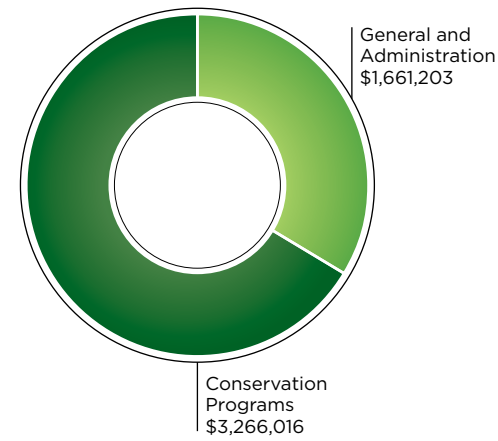
2021 FINANCIALS

The funds entrusted to the Association enable us to provide coordinated services; support for international programs, projects and coalitions; promote wildlife-associated recreation; and help members continue to address the most pressing conservation challenges of the day.

2021 Revenue



2021 Expenses



The Association's independently audited financial statements and IRS 990 are available upon request.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

State	33%
Provincial/Territorial	<1%
Associate	<1%
Contributing	<1%

GRANT REVENUE

Federal	20%
Multistate	26%

OTHER REVENUE

Annual Meeting	8%
Overhead	7%
Miscellaneous	5%

TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,960,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,779,000

Photographers:
Cover Photo: Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Inside Cover: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Back Cover: Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Additional Featured Photos: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (pg. 4, 21); Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (pg. 5, 8); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (pg. 7, 9, 12, 14, 32, 33); Brian Kachejian (pg. 10); Maryland Department of Natural Resources (pg. 10, 20, 22); Ohio Department of Natural Resources (pg. 13, 22); California Department of Fish and Wildlife (pg. 16); Mimi Damwyk (pg. 17); Bass Pro Shops (pg. 19); Trout Unlimited (pg. 19); Georgia Wildlife Resources Division (pg. 20); North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (pg. 21, 30); New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (pg. 25); Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (pg. 26); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (pg. 27).

INDUSTRY RELATIONS



In 2021 the Association redoubled its efforts to collaborate with our important industry partners, whose contributions are vital to our conservation work. Past-President Sara Parker Pauley affirmed this commitment at the Annual Meeting by convening a meeting between industry leaders (primarily from the industry trade associations) and the AFWA Executive Committee to discuss ways we can continue to add value to our partnerships. Here are a few highlights from the year:

Trade Shows

AFWA Leadership and staff attended and participated in all of the major trade association shows and related meetings including those of the Archery Trade Association T(ATA), the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the American Sportfishing (ASA). Interacting with our partners at these events allows for critical communications, discussion of shared priorities, and identification of areas for increased collaboration.



Partner with a Payer

The Association and its members are active and enthusiastic supporters of the Partner with a Payer Program led by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). The program offers opportunities for state fish and wildlife agencies to share the work they do using excise taxes with the companies that pay those taxes, creating 'line of sight' between individual agencies and how they directly impact conservation. There was a special Partner with a Payer event, for directors, at the Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island and the Association will work with our members and the USFWS to expand this program in the coming years.

Other Areas of Shared Concern

The Association continues to support the development of programs that encourage the appropriate sharing of information with industry, encouraging mutually beneficial data-sharing that ultimately helps to increase funding for conservation. We also work with industry to support shared concerns, such as excise tax slippage, wherever possible. Finally, we are looking for ways to reinvigorate an industry-agency summit to make it more effective.

THE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES,
SUBCOMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

Almost without exception, the accomplishments of which the Association are most proud started within our 70+ committees, subcommittees and working groups, and our 1,000+ committee members. Without a doubt, the Association’s success in advancing positions that further our collective capacity to manage resources will only continue thanks to the enduring personal contributions of the greater Association membership.

Agricultural Conservation Committee
Bioenergy Working Group

Conservation Reserve Program Working Group

Environmental Quality Incentives Program / Conservation Stewardship Program Joint Working Group

Farm Bill Easements Working Group

Forestry Working Group

Private Lands Working Group

Public Access Working Group

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Working Group

Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Committee

Angler & Boater R3 Committee

Annual Meeting/Awards Committee

Audit Committee

Bird Conservation Committee
Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group

Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Working Group

Grassland Working Group

Harvest Information Program (HIP) Working Group

Incidental Take Working Group

Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group

Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group

Resident Game Bird Working Group

Waterfowl Working Group

Climate Adaptation Committee

Education, Outreach & Diversity Committee
Diversity & Inclusion Working Group

Education Working Group

Outreach Working Group

Project WILD Subcommittee

Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group

Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee

Executive Committee

Federal and Tribal Relations Committee

Finance Committee

Fish & Wildlife Health Committee
Lead and Fish and Wildlife Health Working Group

Aquatic Animal Health Working Group

Fish and Wildlife Trust Funds Committee
Federal Assistance Coordinators Subcommittee

Trust Fund Collection Working Group

Fisheries & Water Resources Policy Committee
Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group

Drug Approval Working Group

Subcommittee on Water

Hunting/Shooting Sports Participation Committee

International Relations Committee
CITES Technical Working Group

Invasive Species Committee
Feral Swine Working Group

Law Enforcement Committee
Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Leadership/Professional Development Committee
Adaptive Leadership Working Group

Legal Committee

Legislative and Federal Budget Committee

National Grants Committee
Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Nominating Committee

Ocean Resources Policy Committee

Resolutions Committee

Science and Research Committee
Human Dimensions and Social Science Subcommittee

Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee
Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

Technology & Data Committee

Threatened and Endangered Species Policy Committee
ESA and Climate Change Working Group

Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee

Wildlife Resource Policy Committee
Bat Working Group

Human/Wildlife Conflict Working Group

Task Forces
Joint Federal/State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy

National Survey Technical Workgroup

President’s Task Force on the Multistate Conservation Grants Program

President’s Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities

STAFF

Ron Regan, Executive Director

Patricia Allen, Director of Communications

Devin DeMario, Government Affairs Manager, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Policy

Bettina Fiery, MAT Program Manager, Professional Development

Estelle Green, Administrative Assistant

Deb Hahn, Director of International Programs

Mark Humpert, Director of Conservation Initiatives

Gina Jackson, Program Manager, Development, Communications and Learning

Maggie Ernest Johnson, Program Manager, Climate Adaptation

Lane Kisonak, Chief Legal Officer

Marc LeFebre, Program Manager, Project WILD

David Lind, Coordinator, Government Affairs

John Lord, Chief Operating Officer

Susana Mateos, Program Manager, Bird Conservation, U.S. NABCI Coordinator

Amanda Myers, Program Manager, Training & Information Services

Angela Rivas Nelson, Executive Assistant

Gregory Pilchak, Program Coordinator, Agriculture Policy

Kelly Reynolds, Program Manager, Project WILD & Management Assistance Team

Ryan Roberts, Program Manager, National Fish Habitat Partnership

Sean Saville, Campaign Manager, Alliance for America’s Fish & Wildlife

Dean Smith, NAWMP Director/Wildlife Liaison

Elena Takaki, Director, Professional Development and Conservation Education

Kurt Thiede, Director of Government Affairs

Bryant White, Program Manager, Trapping Policy

Kerry Wixted, Program Manager, Reptile & Amphibian/Invasive Species

Silvana Yaroschuk, Program Manager, Multistate Conservation Grants/Accounting Asst.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE

President:
Tony Wasley, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Vice President:
Curt Melcher, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Secretary/Treasurer:
J.D. Strong, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Past President:
Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri Department of Conservation

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair:
Colleen Callahan, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Vice Chair:
Dan Eichinger, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Members:
Judy Camuso, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Rick Jacobson, Connecticut Bureau of Natural Resources

Brad Loveless, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks

Carter Smith, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Eric Sutton, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Chuck Sykes, Alabama Division of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries

EX OFFICIO VOTING MEMBERS

Canada:
Travis Ripley, Alberta Environment & Parks

REGIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

Midwest:
Keith Warnke, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Northeast:
Mark Tisa, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Southeast:
Paul Johansen, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Western:
Jennifer Psyllakis, British Columbia Ministry of Forestry, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

*Current slate 2021-2022 Officers & Executive Committee Members – January 2022

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Why is the Association relevant? It's because of the active involvement of a great assembly of member agencies and organizations to achieve a great vision of sound fish and wildlife resource management throughout North America for long-term public benefit, use and support.

U.S. State & Territorial Agency Members

Alabama Division of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries
Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
Arizona Game & Fish Dept.
Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife
Connecticut Bureau of Natural Resources
Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife
DC Department of the Environment, Fisheries and Wildlife Division
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division
Hawaii Dept. of Land & Natural Resources
Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game
Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources
Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife
Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks
Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources
Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Maryland Wildlife & Heritage Service
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
Minnesota Division of Fish & Wildlife
Mississippi Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks
Missouri Dept. of Conservation
Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Nevada Dept. of Wildlife
New Hampshire Fish & Game Dept.
New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife
New Mexico Game & Fish Dept.
New York Division of Fish and Wildlife
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
North Dakota Game & Fish Dept.
Ohio Division of Wildlife
Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation
Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management
South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources
South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Dept.

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Vermont Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
Wyoming Game & Fish Dept.

U.S. Federal Agency Members

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries Service
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Forest Service
USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
US Geological Survey

Canadian Government Members

Alberta Environment and Parks
British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations
Canadian Wildlife Service
Manitoba Department of Sustainable Development
New Brunswick Dept. of Natural Resources
Northwest Territories Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources
Nova Scotia Dept. of Natural Resources
Nunavut Department of Environment
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Prince Edward Island Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division
Quebec - Direction générale de la gestion de la faune et des habitats, Secteur de la faune et des parcs, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs
Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment
Yukon Department of Environment

Affiliate Members

Aquatic Resources Education Association
Association for Conservation Information
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
International Hunter Education Association-USA
National Association of University Fisheries and Wildlife Programs
Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
Wildlife Disease Association

Contributing Members

American Bird Conservancy
American Clean Power Association (ACP)
American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
American Wind Wildlife Institute
Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bat Conservation International
Boone & Crockett Club
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Fur Takers of America, Inc.
Island Conservation
Jack H. Berryman Institute
Manomet, Inc.
Mule Deer Foundation
National Audubon Society
National Bowhunter Education Foundation
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.
National Trappers Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Outdoor Tomorrow Foundation
Pheasants Forever
Property and Environment Research Center (PERC)
Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation
Resource Management Service, LLC
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
The Peregrine Fund
The Ruffed Grouse Society
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Management Institute

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