

# The AFWA Strategist

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

Fall 2021

## 2021-2022 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee

The membership of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies elected Tony Wasley, Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife, as its new president during its 111th Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island.

### 2021-2022 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee

#### Officers:

President: Tony Wasley (NV)  
Vice President: Curt Melcher (OR)  
Secretary/Treasurer: J.D. Strong (OK)  
Past President: Sara Parker Pauley (MO)

#### Members:

Judy Camuso (ME)  
Chuck Sykes (AL)  
Rick Jacobson (CT)  
Carter Smith (TX)  
Eric Sutton (FL)  
Brad Loveless (KS)

#### Executive Committee:

Chair: Colleen Callahan (IL)  
Vice Chair: Dan Eichinger (MI)

#### Ex Officio Voting Members:

Canada: Travis Ripley (AB)  
Midwest: Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)  
Northeast: Mark Tisa (MA)  
Southeast: Paul Johansen (WV)  
Western: Jennifer Psyllakis (BC)



## Save the Date

112th AFWA Annual Meeting  
Omni Hotel  
Fort Worth, Texas  
September 18-21, 2022

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



## Legislative Updates & Administrative Policies

**Senate Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Reconciliation, and CR Update:** The approximately \$1 trillion *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (BIF) that passed the Senate, did not receive a vote in the House in September as anticipated. Similarly, the \$3.5 trillion Reconciliation Bill has not been brought forward for a vote. In addition to important conservation programs like hydro connectivity, wildlife crossings and Sport Fish reauthorization in the BIF, the Reconciliation Bill also includes \$28 billion in conservation programs and \$40 billion in forestry programs. Moderate Democrats have indicated that they will not support a \$3.5 trillion package, so the topline figure will likely be closer to \$2 trillion. It is unclear whether the cuts will be uniform across programs, or whether Committees prioritize certain programs over others. Congress passed three separate measures to avoid a government shutdown, extending funding for federal agencies and suspending the debt limit to December 3, and extending transportation programs including SFRBTF through October 31.

**CEQ - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - Implementing Regulations Revisions:** On October 7 CEQ announced its [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) to reverse three changes made to NEPA's implementing regulations during the last administration. The changes would re-prioritize public interest and environmental outcomes when considering reasonable alternatives, make CEQ regulations the minimum required rather than the maximum for specific programs, and restore inclusion of "cumulative impacts" as well as "direct" and "indirect" effects in "effects" or "impacts".

**USDA's Request for Information (RFI) on a Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Program:** USDA is [soliciting recommendations](#) to help design a new Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Program, which will support climate-smart farming practices and aid in the marketing of "climate smart" agricultural commodities. USDA is asking for input on priorities within the program, including options for promoting climate smart ag and forestry; systems for quantification, review, and verification; and methods of reaching out and aggregating groups of producers. After this RFI, we expect USDA to invest \$1 billion into partnership projects through this program.

**Water Resources Development Act:** The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is soliciting input for the upcoming 2022 WRDA reauthorization. AFWA staff are compiling these requests so that we may ensure they are submitted to the committee for consideration. If you have any projects or programs in your state that are in need of authorization/deauthorization or if you are running into barriers working with the ACOE, please let us know.

**USFWS Final Rule to Revoke Regulations Governing Take of Migratory Birds and MBTA IT ANPR:** On September 29, the USFWS issued a [final rule](#) to revoke the January 7, 2021, final regulation that limited the scope of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) as it applies to incidental take. With this final and formal revocation of the January 7 rule, the Service returns to implementing the MBTA as prohibiting incidental take and applying enforcement discretion, consistent with judicial precedent and long-standing agency practice prior to 2017. At the same time, they published an [Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (ANPR) announcing the intent to solicit public comment and information as they consider developing proposed regulations to authorize the incidental take of migratory birds. The comment period is open until December 3.

## 2021 Annual Awards

**Jim Douglas** 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.

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

**Jason Sumners** with the **Missouri Department of Conservation** received AFWA's **Ernest Thompson Seton Award** for leadership in scientific management.

**Arizona Game & Fish Department's Fair Chase Committee** is 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.

**Kelly Adams** with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation received the **Mark Reeff Memorial Award** for the outstanding young wildlife management professional under age 35.

**Arizona Game and Fish Department's Public Affairs and Marketing Teams** 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.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement's Southern Surge Task Force** was selected for the **Conservation Law Enforcement Award**.

This year's recipient of AFWA's **Private Lands Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Award** is **Ian Tomlinson** and the **Vera Earl 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 **Frank Peterson** with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, and **Paul Rauch** with Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration (WSFR) Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Strategic Plan

The Association has engaged with Timmons Group to begin work on phase II of strategic plan operationalization. This second phase will complete the work of develop high level metrics for all six goals with associated visual dashboards. If you have any questions, please contact [jlord@fishwildlife.org](mailto:jlord@fishwildlife.org).

## Recovering America's Wildlife Act- Update

Thank you for all your outreach and support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R.2773/S.2372). The momentum building on the bill is impressive and is creating opportunities to advance the bill in both House and Senate. The current count: [28 bipartisan Senate cosponsors](#)/[125 in the House](#) as of today. We continue to work with state fish and wildlife agencies, the National Wildlife Federation and their state affiliates and other partners to do public "thank you" press releases for all of the Senate cosponsors—if you have not yet done one and are able to, please consider doing so, and Sean is happy to help with templates and media placement. Sens. Heinrich and Blunt sent a letter to Senate Environment and Public Works Committee leadership last week requesting a hearing on the bill, and Chairman Carper's office has already responded to that request with a tentatively scheduled date in December for a hearing in that committee. We are still working with committee staff and the bill sponsors to schedule a markup or vote on the bill in the House Committee on Natural Resources in the next month or so. We are doing all we can to get as many touches in to members of the committee prior to the markup to ensure a successful bipartisan vote for passage out of committee—all outreach to those offices is appreciated. There is a support letter being circulated for signers right now that will be delivered to the Senate next week. This is essentially the same broad coalition letter of support that we sent to the House back in April with 350+ groups and businesses. Feel free to reach out to AFWA's Campaign Manager, Sean Saville at anytime with questions at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org); 202-838-2561.

## International Updates

**Southern Wings Call to Action:** From the sound of a singing meadowlark to shorebirds that migrate thousands of miles a year, migratory birds play an important ecological and cultural role in the United States. Conserving migratory birds in many cases requires international, coordinated efforts across the full annual-cycle. Southern Wings helps facilitate conservation of migratory bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), through the protection and conservation of the SGCN's on their non-breeding grounds in the Western Hemisphere. This work aims to help states achieve the objectives of their SWAPs. The Program can also provide non-federal match. [Learn more.](#)

**AFWA's International Relations Committee: Who We Are and What We Do:** AFWA's International Relations Committee core responsibilities revolve around shaping and implementing an international relations strategy to achieve effective, high-impact engagement, and providing a platform for wildlife agencies and NGOs to discuss international conservation issues that impact management and conservation in the U.S. and Canada. The [Committee Purpose document](#) provides an overview of the work and impact of the Committee. The Co-chairs believe that it is critical that we have a voice in international forums and would encourage Directors to nominate a staff member to the Committee. Reach out to Deb Hahn ([dhahn@fishwildlife.org](mailto:dhahn@fishwildlife.org)) with any questions.

## Business Meeting Resolutions

AFWA's voting membership passed seven resolutions during its September 14th Business Meeting: (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 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 Framework, (7) Appreciation to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for a Successful Hybrid Annual Meeting and Commemoration of a Year Marked by Organizations' Adaptation to a New Normal.

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