

**COMPILATION OF RESOLUTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE 111TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES (PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, WITH  
VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION)**

- 2021-01-07 Support for the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program
- 2021-02-07 Enhancing the Fall Flights Program and Increasing State Agency Investments in Canadian Waterfowl Breeding Grounds
- 2021-03-07 Control and Management of Free-Ranging Domestic Cats
- 2021-04-07 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
- 2021-05-07 State Wildlife Action Plans and Landscape Conservation
- 2021-06-07 In Support of a National Wildlife Disease Surveillance Framework
- 2021-07-07 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



## **RESOLUTION 2021-01-07**

### **SUPPORT FOR THE COOPERATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT PROGRAM**

**WHEREAS**, the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program (CRU) was established in 1935 to enhance graduate education in fisheries and wildlife sciences, facilitate applied research between natural resource agencies and universities to address current and emerging management-oriented science needs, and provide training and technical assistance to state and federal cooperators; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU provides much-needed applied scientific research to the state fish and wildlife agencies, delivering on average over 300 scientific reports and over 700 scientific presentations annually; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU is the most important federal fish and wildlife research program providing essential information to state fish and wildlife agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU provides much-needed graduate and postdoctoral training for future fisheries and wildlife management professionals, training some 600 students per year; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU only recently received sufficient funding to fully staff 40 Units in 38 states for the first time in several decades based on demand from states; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU has initiated or is considering modest expansions to the Unit program for the first time in decades; and

**WHEREAS**, the CRU covers the salary and benefit costs of Unit scientists; and

**WHEREAS**, state and federal fish and wildlife agencies and other Unit partnerships typically provide full funding to support direct research costs; and

**WHEREAS**, CRU Units have traditionally negotiated overhead rates with cooperating universities of 15% or less for all federal and state-funded projects, consistent with rates with universities negotiated by other entities of the U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and

**WHEREAS**, any increase in overhead rates charged to CRU Units would subtract from available research funding; and

**WHEREAS**, any increase in overhead rates would compromise Unit functions and purposes; and

**WHEREAS**, any increase in overhead could cause some Units to close or relocate;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) opposes any increase in overhead rates charged to existing CRU Units; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association opposes any overhead rate greater than 15% to be charged against new CRU Units organized in partnership by federal and state fish and wildlife agencies to address emerging critical management needs; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association encourages the Secretary of the Interior to identify strategic opportunities for the creation of additional Units within the CRU, including a determination regarding the desirability of having at least one Unit in every state, and a determination regarding the creation of additional Units and greater capacity within existing units to enhance engagement of the CRU with diverse audiences; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association encourages the Secretary of the Interior and the U.S. Congress to authorize, fund, and staff additional Units in the CRU, in such cases where any such new Unit is closely aligned with the priorities of the relevant state fish and wildlife agencies and a suitable state-federal-private sector partnership is already in place to support the work of the Units; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association opposes any decrease to the base budget for the CRU; and

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Association supports such increases to the base budget of the CRU as may be necessary for the creation of new Units, the full staffing of existing Units, and the support of research functions and CRU programs.

*Resolution submitted by the Science and Research Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*



## RESOLUTION 2021-02-07

### ENHANCING THE FALL FLIGHTS PROGRAM AND INCREASING STATE AGENCY INVESTMENTS IN CANADIAN WATERFOWL BREEDING GROUNDS

**WHEREAS**, 2021 marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) which has contributed to the protection, restoration and enhancement of wetlands and associated habitats in Canada, the United States and Mexico; and

**WHEREAS**, the NAWMP has been the most successful continental wildlife conservation effort in history, providing recreational, environmental, and economic benefits by conserving habitat for important waterfowl and other wetland-related species throughout North America; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2018 update of the NAWMP acknowledged these habitat accomplishments while also pointing to the increasing threats to critical waterfowl habitat across North America and the need to increase our conservation efforts, grow the number of hunters, and engage other members of society who could contribute to and benefit from wetland and waterfowl conservation; and

**WHEREAS**, hunters and anglers in the United States historically spend \$76 billion per year, and hunting and fishing activities support more than 1.33 million jobs and generate more than \$25 billion a year in federal, state, and local taxes, and

**WHEREAS**, Canadian breeding grounds provide over 70% of North American waterfowl production (ducks, geese, and swans), without which there would not be a fall flight that results in US waterfowl hunters generating an economic output of over \$3 billion per year, including state tax revenues of more than \$202 million, and generating approximately \$40 million per year for wetland conservation on National Wildlife Refuges through the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, and

**WHEREAS**, the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) was signed into law in December 1989, reauthorized at \$60 million in 2020, and provides a significant source of funding for wetland and waterfowl projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico; and

**WHEREAS**, the NAWCA has provided \$1.83 billion in federal grants and facilitated the conservation of over 30 million acres of wetlands and associated habitats in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands by more than 6,350 partners that have invested over \$3.75 billion in matching funds; and

**WHEREAS**, NAWCA requires that a minimum of 30 percent of appropriated funds be used outside the U.S., and further requires that U.S. federal funds sent to Canada through NAWCA be matched at least

1:1 by non-federal funds, of which at least 50 percent of the matching funds must originate from within the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1991, 2005 and again in 2011 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed resolutions that affirmed a goal for the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to contribute up to \$10 million annually through the Fall Flights program for waterfowl habitat projects in Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association's \$10 million annual goal for the Fall Flights program has not yet been attained, there is a shared interest in working to improve the effectiveness of the program and to increase the collective investments of states and make progress toward the Fall Flights goal, recognizing that states differ in their capacity to attain individual goals;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies reaffirm the original \$10 million annual goal for the Fall Flights program and for states to strive to maximize their investments to at least achieve an interim \$5 million annual goal by 2026 as U.S. matching funds for NAWCA projects in Canada; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies commit to making progress toward achieving the interim \$5 million goal and the long-term \$10 million goal by encouraging each state to make an annual investment, based on the state's proportion of waterfowl hunters and duck harvests averaged over the period from 2000 through 2019; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies work with Canadian government agencies to establish goals for increased investments in wetland conservation and NAWCA match for state monies provided through the Fall Flights program; and

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies create a standing "Fall Flights Advisory Committee" to oversee the implementation of the Fall Flights program, to report annually to the Association's membership, and to provide recommendations to the Association's President and Executive Director.

*Submitted by the Bird Conservation Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*



## RESOLUTION 2021-03-07

### CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF FREE-RANGING DOMESTIC CATS

**WHEREAS**, free-ranging (including feral, stray, and owned) domestic cats (*Felis catus*) are a non-native species in wildlife habitats in the United States, Canada, and Mexico and considered invasive and harmful on state and other public lands managed and conserved for native wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, free-ranging domestic cats exist in significant numbers in many rural and urban terrestrial wildlife habitats with reliable estimates in the tens of millions of free-ranging domestic cats in the United States, particularly in areas near human populations; and

**WHEREAS**, free-ranging domestic cats are skillful and instinctive predators of wildlife, including many species of small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, and are estimated to kill billions of native wild animals, including some threatened and endangered species, annually in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, free-ranging domestic cats are one of the predominant causes of direct mortality to many migratory bird species, human tolerance and acceptance of cats on the landscape have contributed to population declines of many songbird and water-related species; and

**WHEREAS**, free-ranging domestic cats pose significant health risks by transmitting harmful pathogens, such as rabies virus and *Toxoplasma gondii*, to native wildlife and people; and

**WHEREAS**, state wildlife agencies and federal natural resource management agencies are implementing significant efforts to reverse wildlife population declines and to protect all native wildlife from introduced species and emerging infectious pathogens;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes predation on wildlife and pathogen transmission by free-ranging domestic cats as important and detrimental factors affecting wildlife that resource agencies are charged to manage and conserve; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies supports efforts to increase awareness of these problems and provide solutions and best practices for member agencies, as outlined in the AFWA Toolkit to Address Free-ranging Domestic Cats (*Felis catus*) on Agency Lands Managed for Native Wildlife and Ecosystem Health.

*Submitted by the Bird Conservation Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*



## RESOLUTION 2021-04-07

### 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

**WHEREAS**, impediments to conserving quality fish habitat still exist across the country, and fisheries resources remain at risk; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) is a state-led, action-oriented, and science-based partnership effort that is strategic and priority-driven, is focused on achieving measurable habitat conservation outcomes, is collaborative in its science-based conservation efforts, targets resources and funding where they will make a measurable difference, facilitates public-private partnerships, and promotes monitoring and dissemination of conservation results; and

**WHEREAS**, State-led conservation partnerships are non-regulatory and voluntary, therefore creating significant goodwill from the public; and

**WHEREAS**, from the beginning, states have been essential to making NFHP an effective program for protecting, restoring, and enhancing aquatic habitats across all 50 states through 1,115 projects since 2006. Additionally, states had significant input in developing the framework for NFHP, including the development of the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2006)* and the *2nd Edition of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (2012)*, as well as National Fish Habitat Assessment Reports (2010 & 2015), highlighting important scientific data regarding fish habitats valuable to state, federal and local fisheries management agencies as a decision-making tool; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) celebrates the upcoming first anniversary of the codification of this state-led effort through passage by The America's Conservation Enhancement Act (ACE Act, S.3051) on October 30th, and hence provides an opportunity for its members to reaffirm their individual and collective commitments and support to further shepherd and implement the unified, coordinated guidance and objectives of the *National Fish Habitat Action Plan* that led to unprecedented cooperation and collaboration among federal, state, tribal, and conservation partners at a landscape-scale level to address threats to fish habitats and fisheries resources; and

**WHEREAS**, recognizing the importance of 1:1 match funding required for NFHP projects under the ACE Act, state agency involvement is now more critical than ever to support the activities of the National Fish Habitat Board and the twenty (20) recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) and their critical conservation actions striving to conserve fish habitats across the country; and

**WHEREAS**, in recognition of this public-private partnership, we also recognize Bass Pro Shops as the largest single sustaining corporate donor to NFHP, with a focus on improving fish habitat to benefit anglers in the U.S. through proceeds from the Bass Pro Shops U.S. Open National Bass Fishing Team Championships culminating with a championship event aired on NBC from Table Rock Lake in Missouri in November, all benefitting the National Fish Habitat Partnership;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes and encourages state fish and wildlife agencies to continue to support and participate in National Fish Habitat Partnership and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan implementation as codified through the passage of The America's Conservation Enhancement Act.

*Resolution submitted by the Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and Ocean Resources Policy Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*





## RESOLUTION 2021-05-07

### STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

**WHEREAS**, twenty years ago the creation of the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program initiated the historic development of comprehensive fish and wildlife conservation strategies, known as State Wildlife Action Plans (hereafter called SWAPs), in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia; and

**WHEREAS**, SWAPs identified over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need, their key habitats, threats, and conservation actions; and

**WHEREAS**, SWAPs have forestalled the need to list and aided in the recovery and delisting of dozens of federally threatened and endangered species; and

**WHEREAS**, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources recommended \$1.3 billion in federal funding to implement SWAPs and the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have introduced the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to fulfill that recommendation to help stem the loss of the nation's biodiversity; and

**WHEREAS**, the AFWA resolution, *Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Landscape Scales-2018-06-07*, recognizes the importance of collaborating across geographical scales and jurisdictions to assure that fish and wildlife agencies successfully accomplish their statutory responsibilities to conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats through mutually shared priorities and coordination; and

**WHEREAS**, at-risk fish and wildlife populations and the natural processes and landscapes that sustain them often span multiple political boundaries requiring coordinated conservation and science to address threats and prevent endangerment; and

**WHEREAS**, the *AFWA President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities* recommended that the eight required elements and best practices for SWAPs be reviewed and recommendations be made to improve the ability of SWAPs to take on regional and landscape conservation challenges; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) recognizes the important role and unique responsibility of state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies in conserving fish and wildlife and their habitats; and

**WHEREAS**, state fish and wildlife agencies recognize the importance of using the best available science and collaborative approaches by working with partners, including, but not limited to, federal and other state agencies, NGOs, academia, private landowners, and private industry to advance the conservation priorities of their state; and

**WHEREAS**, multi-jurisdictional coordination, sharing of tools, data, and resources for SWAP development and implementation can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of at-risk

species conservation and serve as a basis for identifying shared priorities and coordinated conservation actions across jurisdictions and broad partnerships; and

**WHEREAS,** increased support and incentives are needed to help build the capacity of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and their partners to advance regional SWAP coordination and cross-jurisdictional and landscape conservation efforts;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** the Association reaffirms the importance of SWAPs and the need to collaborate at regional and landscape scales to help fish and wildlife agencies meet their statutory and regulatory responsibilities to conserve fish and wildlife, their habitats, and associated biodiversity; and,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** the Association adopts the following guiding principles to strengthen the ability of SWAPs to guide and/or contribute to regional and/or national landscape conservation priorities to help ensure the next generation of SWAPs are even more effective, accessible, and relevant to agencies, partners, and other stakeholders:

1. Identify and apply regional and shared approaches for SWAP development, implementation, and measuring progress to improve effectiveness, efficiency, cost-savings, and consistency.
2. Increase consistency and alignment of SWAPs across jurisdictions so conservation can be implemented more readily at biologically relevant scales.
3. Provide support and incentives to leverage and build capacity for cross-jurisdictional and landscape conservation.
4. Ensure SWAPs are developed and implemented collaboratively and in partnership with a diverse set of partners.
5. Make SWAPs more accessible and relevant to broader constituencies.

and

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED,** the Association adopts the recommendations of the SWAP and Landscape Conservation Work Group, *Leading At-Risk Fish and Wildlife Conservation: A framework to enhance landscape-scale and cross-boundary conservation through coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans* and acknowledges the importance of working with the Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other partners to implement said recommendations.

*Resolution submitted by the Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*



## RESOLUTION 2021-06-07

### IN SUPPORT OF A NATIONAL WILDLIFE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

**WHEREAS**, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) recognizes the important roles and unique responsibilities of state, federal, tribal, provincial, territorial and regional fish and wildlife agencies in coordinating and implementing effective fish and wildlife disease surveillance efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, more than 60 percent of emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonoses and over 70 percent of these originate from wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, the economic burden of suppressing zoonotic diseases can be enormous once they become established; and

**WHEREAS**, there is no coordinated national fish and wildlife disease surveillance network to flag emerging concerns to human health, animal health, agriculture, biosecurity, and wildlife conservation; and

**WHEREAS**, current fish and wildlife disease surveillance and response efforts are typically driven by crises and often lack consistent funding and logistical support; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association has long promoted a National Wildlife Health Initiative to establish and adequately fund a coordinated network of federal, state, regional, and university laboratories; and

**WHEREAS**, an adequately funded network would provide timely, economical, and landscape scale coordinated fish and wildlife disease surveillance; and

**WHEREAS**, an adequately funded national fish and wildlife disease surveillance network would leverage the diversity of existing resources and expertise to build sustainable resilience and capacity;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Association reaffirms its long-standing commitment to improve coordination of measures that ensure fish and wildlife health, while recognizing and respecting the missions, jurisdictions, and abilities of state and federal fish and wildlife managers and their agencies; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Association reaffirms its long-standing commitment to the establishment of a coordinated national fish and wildlife disease surveillance network; and

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** that the Association supports the following programs and initiatives designed to build capacities, detect and manage emerging and increasingly varied fish and wildlife disease challenges, and effectively mitigate and suppress the significant economic, social, and cultural impacts associated with fish and wildlife diseases:

1. Increase and sustain funding for existing federal, state, tribal, and regional fish and wildlife disease laboratories; and

2. Encourage Congress to provide new and sustained federal funding to establish and/or enhance fish and wildlife disease surveillance capacities in those regions of the United States lacking such resources; and
3. Encourage Congress to provide increased and sustained federal funding for state, federal, regional, and tribal fish and wildlife agencies to train and coordinate their operational workforces to deliver effective fish and wildlife health programs; and
4. Encourage Congress to provide increased and sustained federal funding for aligned university research and training programs to assure that their enormous capacities are harnessed in support of targeted fish and wildlife disease surveillance and management efforts.

*Resolution submitted by the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee and the Science and Research Committee.*

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*



## RESOLUTION 2021-07-07

### 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

**WHEREAS**, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies convened its 111<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting virtually on September 8-10 and in Providence, Rhode Island with virtual participation on September 11-14, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, state fish and wildlife agency and associated natural resource professionals have continued to advance the vital work of conservation amid the ever-changing economic and public health landscape of a nation still combatting the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of life-saving vaccines and continued use of COVID-19 safety measures have allowed agencies and organizations, in many cases, to resume in-person operations, public functions and events, and to adapt to a "new normal" with greater safety than the earliest phase of the pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association has worked through its committees and partnerships to develop resources and support increased capabilities for zoonotic disease prevention including through the One Health framework and the National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative; and

**WHEREAS**, the importance of the great outdoors and wildlife to the country's physical and mental health was reflected in increases in revenue under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937, the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950, and through state hunting and fishing licenses; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plenary Session of the 111<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting ("The Learning Organization") addressed the upheaval and change distinguishing this period while encouraging leaders to embrace adaptive thinking, create inclusive organizational cultures, and challenge our own assumptions;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Association extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for hosting the Association's first in-person meeting since March 2020, and to the Association's members for a successful and productive 2021 Annual Meeting and for demonstrating a deep capacity to adapt and respond this year's many intersecting challenges.

*Adopted by the Association on September 14, 2021 in Providence, RI.*