

**COMPILATION OF RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE 113TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES (CALGARY, ALBERTA)**

- 2023-01-07 Supporting the AFWA-ACP Communications Framework for Wind Energy Project Proponents and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- 2023-02-07 In Support of a Strategic Plan for the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program
- 2023-03-07 Federal Management and Oversight of Wild Horse and Burro Populations
- 2023-04-07 Calling for Amendment of the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act to Include Airguns and Associated Ammunition
- 2023-05-07 In Support of Collaboration Between State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Departments of Transportation to Consider the Potential Impact of Transportation Structures on Bats
- 2023-06-07 Recognizing the Value of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and Supporting Efforts to Address Contemporary Needs and Challenges
- 2023-07-07 Appreciation to Alberta Environment and Protected Areas' Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch for a Successful 113th Annual Meeting



RESOLUTION 2023-01-07

SUPPORTING THE AFWA-ACP COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR WIND ENERGY PROJECT PROPONENTS AND STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

WHEREAS, rapid decarbonization is necessary to minimize the effects of climate change and protect wildlife and ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, wind energy is a critical component of the decarbonization strategy and renewable energy buildout across North America; and

WHEREAS, the siting, operation, and eventual decommissioning of wind energy projects can inadvertently pose negative effects to wildlife species and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, state fish and wildlife agencies and the wind energy industry jointly recognize the need to reduce the impact of wind energy on wildlife and habitat; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) 2012 Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines provide a voluntary process for addressing wildlife conservation concerns at all stages of land-based wind energy development and promote effective communication among wind energy developers and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) recognizes the need to open and maintain lines of communication specifically between state agencies and the wind industry; and

WHEREAS, the American Clean Power Association (ACP), the trade organization for wind energy project proponents in the United States, along with other technologies, recognizes the need to open and maintain lines of communication specifically between state agencies and the wind industry; and

WHEREAS, the Association and ACP assembled a collaborative work group of state agency and industry representatives to listen and learn from each other and better understand the challenges, limitations, and identify common ground for wind energy industry and state wildlife agency communications; and

WHEREAS, the Association and ACP developed a voluntary communications protocol to serve as a guide for early and iterative communications between project proponents and state agencies that establishes expectations for the frequency and style of engagement and the recommended communications triggers; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association endorses and supports the "AFWA-ACP Communications Framework for Wind Energy Proponents and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies" and shall provide guidance to its member agencies in implementing the framework; collaborate with state, provincial, territorial, tribal, federal, private, and international entities in sharing information across sectors and disciplines; and continually evaluate the efficacy of and need for the framework.

Submitted by the Energy & Wildlife Policy Committee.



RESOLUTION 2023-02-07

IN SUPPORT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY'S COOPERATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program (hereafter collectively referred to as the "Cooperative Research Unit Program") provides essential applied scientific research and technical assistance to the state fish and wildlife agencies, and much-needed scientific training for the next generation of fish and wildlife biologists, and is fundamental to the mission of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies ("Association") and its members; and

WHEREAS, the Association resolved in 2015 to urge that Congress fully fund the Cooperative Research Unit Program and address critical staffing vacancies within the program, and

WHEREAS, the Association further resolved in 2021 to support the Cooperative Research Unit Program's leveraging of applied research between natural resource agencies and universities to address current and emerging management-oriented science needs and strengthen the working relationships between state and federal cooperators; and

WHEREAS, the USGS has responded to these requests by filling 38 staff scientist vacancies at 31 Cooperative Research Units in the past three years; and

WHEREAS, the USGS has further responded to these requests by opening new Cooperative Research Units in Nevada, Michigan, and Indiana;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association commends the USGS and the Cooperative Research Unit Program for their success in filling staff vacancies and opening new Units; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association now encourages the Cooperative Research Unit Program to develop a vision and a five-year strategic plan that identifies the financial and logistical requirements necessary to meet the needs of existing Cooperative Research Units and future Cooperative Research Units, as appropriate, and identifies any additional Units that might be needed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cooperative Research Unit Program use a process that engages cooperators as part of the process to develop the strategic plan and that identifies challenges to future implementation of the strategic plan as they emerge; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association and its leadership solicit regular updates from the Cooperative Research Unit Program regarding the development and implementation of the strategic plan.

Resolution submitted by the Science and Research Committee.



RESOLUTION 2023-03-07

FEDERAL MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF WILD HORSE AND BURRO POPULATIONS

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) represents the states, provinces, and territories of the United States and Canada, which are inhabited by over 4,500 wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, a mission of the Association is to advance collaborative, proactive, science-based fish and wildlife conservation and management across North America; and

WHEREAS, the conservation of wildlife resources is entrusted primarily to the state, provincial, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies, and the Association; and

WHEREAS, the States share management authority for species of wildlife listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and

WHEREAS, the Association's state membership encompasses the entirety of the nation's range for wild horses and burros, including Herd Management Areas (HMAs) that are spread across 32.6 million acres of 10 Western States; and

WHEREAS, the Directors of said agencies recognize the impacts that overpopulation of free-ranging wild horses and burros have on wildlife and habitats across the States; and

WHEREAS, wild horses and burros are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) under the Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Act), as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Act requires that the BLM and USFS establish HMAs with appropriate management levels (AMLs), implement effective monitoring protocols that ensure a thriving ecological balance, remove wild horses and burros to maintain this balance, and, upon request, to remove wild horses and burros that stray onto private lands; and

WHEREAS, State fish and wildlife agencies continue to be extremely concerned about excess horses and burros within established herd areas and HMAs, as well as expansion outside of these areas, as populations exceed AMLs across the West and continue to expand at levels unsustainable for maintaining a thriving ecological balance, devastating vital fish and wildlife habitats and, in many cases, undermining states' ESA-related conservation efforts; and

WHEREAS, Federal agencies have increasingly been unable, under existing appropriations and current management practices, to adequately address wild horse and burro populations that exceed AMLs, or to

effectively remove unauthorized, unbranded and unclaimed free roaming horses and burros, exacerbating the impacts to wildlife and habitats;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies requests that the responsible committees of Congress appropriate full and consistent funding levels for wild horse and burro management programs at the appropriate ratio, to enable the BLM and USFS to effectively manage wild horses and burros as intended by the Act, without diversion of funds for management of fish and wildlife resources; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association requests that the BLM and USFS utilize all measures available within their authorities to identify clear thresholds for action, and establish clearly-defined monitoring and response protocols to maintain wild horse and burro populations at or below established AMLs; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that across the United States, the Association requests that the BLM and USFS utilize all measures as authorized by the Act to remove wild horses and burros that exceed established AMLs, and remove animals that exist outside of HMAs, as soon as practicable; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in light of the devastating impacts of wild horse and burro populations and the ongoing drought in the West, the Association requests that BLM and USFS reevaluate established AMLs and reduce AMLs across the West; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association urges that BLM and USFS specifically utilize all measures available within rule or regulation to remove unauthorized, unbranded, and unclaimed free-roaming horses and burros from the landscape.

Resolution submitted by the Federal Public Lands Committee.



RESOLUTION 2023-04-07

CALLING FOR AMENDMENT OF THE PITTMAN-ROBERTSON FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION ACT TO INCLUDE AIRGUNS AND ASSOCIATED AMMUNITION

WHEREAS, in 2019 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies adopted a resolution urging collaboration between state fish and wildlife agencies and the airgun industry in search of opportunities to support the American System of Conservation Funding (Resolution 2019-03-10); and

WHEREAS, this “user pays, public benefits” system is the funding foundation for state fish and wildlife agencies and enables a cycle of sustainable management and investment in wildlife-associated recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, state agencies’ continued ability to perform wildlife management and habitat restoration activities, and to provide access for hunters, trappers, anglers, boaters, and recreational shooters, relies on consistent and permanent funding sources; and

WHEREAS, the essential and multifaceted dialogue between state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and excise-tax-paying industries has allowed state agencies to learn more about the increasingly prominent role of airgun technology in the recreational landscape (inclusive of any pistol or shoulder-held device that propels a projectile (slug, shot, or arrow) using unignited compressed air or gas), including for the hunting of game species; and

WHEREAS, unlike nearly all other methods of take that are capable of ethically harvesting game species (including rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, muzzleloaders, and archery equipment), airguns that propel a variety of projectiles including slugs, shot, or arrows, are not subject to the federal excise tax and do not contribute to the American System of Conservation Funding; and

WHEREAS, in the years since 2019, with increased use of airguns and associated ammunition still occurring outside the excise-tax framework of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, state agencies have pursued permit and tag frameworks to authorize airguns for hunting; and

WHEREAS, this patchwork of state-based efforts has proved insufficient on a nationwide basis to reconcile the rising adoption of airguns for recreational hunting with the lack of excise tax paid into the American System of Conservation Funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies clearly and conclusively recognizes the importance of airguns and associated ammunition contributing to the American System of Conservation Funding with other excise-taxed methods of take; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies encourages Congress to amend the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act to extend the federal excise tax to airguns and associated ammunition.

Resolution submitted by the Executive Committee.



RESOLUTION 2023-05-07

IN SUPPORT OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION TO CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF TRANSPORTATION STRUCTURES ON BATS

WHEREAS, healthy bats and their habitats provide essential pest control, nutrient and seed dispersal, pollination, technological inspiration, and medical innovation; and

WHEREAS, many North American bat populations are increasingly vulnerable to threats that include the effects of climate change, habitat loss or disturbance, wind energy development, and the disease, white-nose syndrome, with 43 species/subspecies designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) nationally as of 2015; and

WHEREAS, life history traits such as delayed maturation, low reproductive rates, extensive maternal care of young, and long lifespans predispose bat populations to significant declines following loss of adults; and

WHEREAS, bats use a variety of habitat types for roosting, foraging, hibernating, and rearing young such as caves and trees, increasingly, they also use man-made structures such as mines, tunnels, bridges, culverts, barns, and attics, which therefore are also considered important habitat resources especially because loss of natural habitats make bats increasingly reliant on them; and

WHEREAS, many North American bat species depend on ecological systems that cross geopolitical boundaries, and thereby require landscape scale collaboration among both public and private land managers for cross-boundary conservation; and

WHEREAS, there is value in standardizing data collection and management protocols for effective and efficient cross-boundary conservation, and the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) provides a shared repository and resource for federal, state, provincial, tribal, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies; and

WHEREAS, several bat species that use transportation structures, including tricolored and little brown bats, are currently being considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, which would necessitate transportation structure survey requirements before commencing relevant work; and

WHEREAS, transportation infrastructure in North America is generally aging and in disrepair, with increasing need for expansion and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the primary authority and capacity to protect and manage non-federally listed bat species resides in the states, provinces, tribes, and territories, which have a significant interest in protecting

their native wildlife resources, while allowing infrastructure projects to proceed without significant delays or increased project costs; and

WHEREAS, the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has made \$110 billion available for development, maintenance, and improvements to infrastructure, creating an opportunity for greater collaboration between wildlife agencies and state and federal departments of transportation to address wildlife and habitat in roadway rights-of-way; and

WHEREAS, because many states, provinces, tribes, and territories are already required to conduct migratory bird surveys before most maintenance or demolition projects under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), the opportunity exists for simultaneously surveying for the presence of bats at bridge and culvert projects; and

WHEREAS, the national Bats and Transportation Structures (BATS) survey training materials developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the standardized data protocols for collection and submission of recorded data to NABat, are available free of charge to federal, state, provincial, tribal, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies; and

WHEREAS, the BATS survey training and standardized data protocols for collection and submission of data to NABat are scientific guidance that are not meant to be prescriptive at the local, state, federal, tribal, or territorial levels, and should thereby be regarded as a set of recommendations for agencies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies acknowledges the importance of state, provincial, tribal, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies collaborating with their respective departments of transportation to determine the presence of bats at all bridge and culvert projects before any structural maintenance or demolition projects begin to help meet statutory and regulatory responsibilities to conserve bats and their habitats, while limiting delays and costs to infrastructure projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association recognizes the value of standardizing surveillance practices for landscape conservation, and therefore encourages use of national Bats and Transportation Structures (BATS) survey protocols by trained individuals, and submission of recorded data, when feasible, to the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat), which serves as a shared data repository for fish and wildlife agencies, to effectively manage and conserve bat populations while continuing to address transportation infrastructure improvement needs.

Resolution submitted by the Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee.



RESOLUTION 2023-06-07

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CONTEMPORARY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

WHEREAS, in 1930 the American Game Policy Committee (Aldo Leopold, Chair) of the American Game Protective Association (now the Wildlife Management Institute) articulated policies to govern the conservation of wildlife, primarily concerning game¹; and

WHEREAS, in 1973 the Committee on North American Wildlife Policy (Durward L. Allen, Chair) developed recommendations to supplement and update the 1930 policy statement by addressing contemporary wildlife conservation needs²; and

WHEREAS, in 2002 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) endorsed the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and its components set forth in 1995, and subsequently in 2001 by Valerius Geist, John Organ, and Shane Mahoney³; and

WHEREAS, these components (variously referred to as “tenets” or “principles”) expressed characteristics of wildlife conservation that are collectively unique to the United States and Canada, which can be stated as follows⁴:

1. Wildlife resources are a public trust;
2. Markets for game are eliminated;
3. Allocation of wildlife is by law;
4. Wildlife can be killed only for a legitimate purpose;
5. Wildlife is considered an international resource;
6. Science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy; and
7. Democracy of hunting is standard;

and

¹ Leopold, A. 1930. An American game policy. Proceedings of the Seventeenth American Game Conference.

² Allen, D.L. 1973. Report of the Committee on North American Wildlife Policy. Wildlife Society Bulletin 1(2):73-92.

³ Geist, V. 1995. North American policies of wildlife conservation. Pages 75-129 in V. Geist and I. McT. Cowan, editors. Wildlife conservation policy. Detselig Enterprises, Limited, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Geist, V., S.P. Mahoney, and J.F. Organ. 2001. Why hunting has defined the North American model of wildlife conservation. Transactions of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference 66:175-185.

⁴ Organ, J. F., et al. 2012. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The Wildlife Society Technical Review 12-04. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, MD.

WHEREAS, the Model quickly became a practical and widely-used framework for conservation planning, policy, and philosophy among wildlife managers in state and federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions, as well as partners in excise-tax-paying industries; and

WHEREAS, in 2012 The Wildlife Society convened a Technical Review Committee with the participation of the Association and other essential stakeholders, and issued a comprehensive Technical Review on the Model, including its historical foundations, implementation, emerging challenges to the Model's future success, and recommendations including "[c]onven[ing] key administrators and stakeholders in wildlife conservation and management in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico every 10 years to...assess the Model's principles and their application and adequacy, and develop joint strategies for consistent continental conservation delivery[;]" and

WHEREAS, the Association fulfilled this recommendation by initiating a decadal review process including two Special Sessions held during the 2022 and 2023 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conferences and several panels exploring the use and non-use of the Model by conservation professionals, as well as emerging critiques of the Model; and

WHEREAS, the Association sought the expertise of longstanding voices on the Model as well as wildlife professionals whose conservation and cultural backgrounds were underrepresented in the historical foundations of the Model and who have themselves issued critiques of the Model; and

WHEREAS, the decadal review produced a report titled "The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation: Contemporary Context and a Vision for the Future" (Report)⁵, which recommends that the Model (1) should be considered part of a storied lineage of conservation frameworks including those of 1930 and 1973; (2) should be referred to, studied, used, or applied in tandem with diverse Indigenous worldviews and sources of ecological knowledge that have shaped the North American landscape; (3) should be understood to reflect across its seven core components a uniquely North American discipline of collaboration across jurisdictional and ownership domains, including private lands; and (4) should not be understood as rigorously prescriptive toward a certain form of management action or proscriptive of another;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association supports ongoing work by its partners including a collaborative initiative with the Wildlife Management Institute that will explore and potentially issue a continental conservation framework that sustains the conceptual value of the Model, continues the visionary lineage of the 1930 and 1973 policies, and facilitates the development and communication of policies and programs in response to contemporary challenges and in pursuit of greater unity within the field of wildlife conservation.

Resolution submitted by the Executive Committee.

⁵ Kisonak, L., E.B. Arnett, G. Batcheller, C. Booher, A. Forstchen, M. Hessami, M. Johnson, J. Karlen, T. Koch, M. Leahy, S.P. Mahoney, J. Millspaugh, J.F. Organ, L. Parker, P. Seng, S. Roosevelt, and J. Thorstenson. *The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation: Decadal Review, Testimonials, and Recommendations*. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington, D.C., USA (forthcoming, 2023).



RESOLUTION 2023-07-07

APPRECIATION TO ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTED AREAS' FISH AND WILDLIFE STEWARDSHIP BRANCH FOR A SUCCESSFUL 113TH ANNUAL MEETING

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) convened its 113th Annual Meeting on September 23-27, 2023 in Calgary, Alberta, marking the auspicious occasion of bringing the Meeting to Canada for the first time since its 78th Annual Meeting held in 1988 in Toronto, Ontario; and

WHEREAS, Travis Ripley, Executive Director of the Regulatory Programs Branch for the Government of Alberta, commendably set the tone by connecting state, provincial, and territorial directors with elders and knowledgekeepers of the Stoney Nakoda Nation, and hosted a wide-ranging dialogue between the leadership of the Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deep in the heart of Treaty 7 lands at the foot of the Rockies; and

WHEREAS, in 2023 the wildlife conservation community in North America is celebrating both the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Endangered Species Act in the United States and the 20th anniversary of the effective date of the Species at Risk Act in Canada; and

WHEREAS, the two Plenary Sessions of the 113th Annual Meeting (“Relationship Conservation Across Borders and with First Nation Communities”) and (“Two Acts or Not to Act – Is that Really the Question?”) provided attendees with the chance to reflect on the essential role of the First Nations in Canada and Native American tribes in the United States, as well as the importance of cross-border collaboration, in stewarding fish and wildlife; and on the successes and challenges of recovering imperiled species under federal authority with state, provincial, or territorial consultation and cooperation; and

WHEREAS, in 1988 the Association’s President addressed the 78th Annual Meeting by encouraging the Association to “guard against [being] administered by a few” and “continue the active, participatory system [it has] used so effectively[,]” and its Executive Vice-President noted that the depth and breadth of expertise allows the Association to be “the most potent professional and political natural resource force in North America”; and

WHEREAS, Sue Cotterill, Acting Executive Director for Alberta Environment and Protected Areas’ Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch, and her capable staff have facilitated this Meeting with generous hospitality and outstanding coordination;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Association offers its deep gratitude to Alberta Environment and Protected Areas’ Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch for hosting a richly productive and

continentally unifying 2023 Meeting, and recognizes all Association members for their individual contributions to stewarding the wildlife trust for current and future generations.

Adopted by the Association on September 27, 2023 in Calgary, Alberta.