



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

**Report to the Bird Conservation Committee from the
AFWA Feral & Free-Ranging Cat Work group
Co-Chairs: Sara Schweitzer, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission; Colin Gillin, Oregon
Department of Fish & Wildlife**

**110th AFWA Annual Meeting
Virtual Conference**

**Thursday, September 10, 2020
9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Central Time Zone**

Grant Sizemore (American Bird Conservancy) provided a summary of legal and policy issues associated with free-ranging domestic cats, including an overview of six (6) bills introduced at the state level, four (4) of which propose to authorize Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) as the method to use to control free-ranging domestic cat populations. These bills have been introduced in Michigan, New Jersey, Vermont, and Virginia. An introduced bill in California would require micro-chipping of domestic cats in shelters, and a bill introduced in Pennsylvania would create a One Health Task Force, identifying free-ranging domestic cats as a major concern, especially for rabies transmission.

It is important for state agencies to detect and act on bills introduced in state legislatures that would recommend control methods that are contrary to proper, science-based techniques of reducing populations of free-ranging domestic cats.

The remainder of the meeting was used to review and discuss the final draft of the “Toolkit to Address Free-ranging Domestic Cats (*Felis catus*) on Agency Lands Managed for Native Wildlife and Ecosystem Health,” which was distributed to members of the Bird Conservation Committee and the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee in August for review, and again in September, after responding to comments and suggestions.

The Toolkit is intended to provide guidance to fish and wildlife agencies as they address free-ranging domestic cats (*Felis catus*) on agency lands managed for native wildlife and ecosystem health.

We discussed next steps, the goals of which are to,

- Disseminate information in the Toolkit to state and federal agencies;
- Evaluate use of the Toolkit by agencies and its value to agencies.

To achieve these goals, participants in the WG will work through AFWA Committees during the next six (6) months and report back at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference during a WG meeting. Actions include:

- Providing presentations and discussion sessions on the Toolkit at Flyway Council Nongame Technical Committees or Sections (Bird Conservation Committee);
- Drafting general, informative language on the issue, using human dimension scientists’ suggestions (Science and Research Committee’s Human Dimensions & Social Sciences Subcommittee);

- Use suggested general language for education and outreach materials and kiosk designs, and develop webinars for agencies that include suggested actions to form beneficial partnerships (Education, Outreach, and Diversity Committee);
- Examine the possibility of publishing the Toolkit as a monograph, working with the Human-Wildlife Conflict WG of the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee;
- Providing regulatory language suggestions for states using Hawai'i's recent case as an example (Legal Committee); and
- Consider updating the 1997 AFWA Resolution on free-ranging domestic cats (Resolutions Committee).

Ongoing activities in AFWA Committees will include,

- Tracking emerging health issues associated with free-ranging domestic cats (Fish and Wildlife Health Committee); and
- Tracking policies and legal issues associated with free-ranging domestic cats (Invasive Species Committee and Legal Committee).

The WG participants agreed that the Toolkit will need to remain current; therefore, they suggested providing a supplement to it, as needed, in the future. Such a supplement will go through the review and approval process of AFWA before being posted to the AFWA web site with the Toolkit.

Today, we ask that the Bird Conservation Committee approve the Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Toolkit and advance the Toolkit to the Directors for their consideration and approval.