

Education, Outreach, and Diversity Committee

March 28, 2024

Attendee: 25

Agenda:

Introductions and Welcome- Amanda

- This committee is a 'work horse' and does a lot of great and impactful work/actions across the country
- Round-robin introductions

Reports from the EOD Working Groups

- **WVNT Working Group:** next WVNT Academy will be happening in February 2026 (SAVE THE DATE: 16-20, 2026); this will be our 6th academy; state agencies, NGO's, federal agencies, and industry attend this meeting; wrapping up the Wildlife Viewing Survey with Vtech-MSCG. The new website that has all the data from the Wildlife Viewing Survey can be found <https://viewing.fishwild.vt.edu>.
- **Joint WG:** had a robust meeting; supporting RAWA for the past few years; goal is to get the communicators and biologists together to help tell the state story or the story of conservation; create supportive documents for RAWA and social media assets; need to do things to keep the drum beat going with RAWA so we don't lose the momentum of the importance of RAWA until there can be movement on the Hill → new goal for the joint WG
- **Outreach & Marketing WG:** SEAFWA Relevancy Study has some very valuable information about how we can communicate and bring more people into the fold with what our state agencies do; can use data to see how people prefer to receive communications from our state agencies; MSCG: rebranding, repiloting and *Rebranding, Repiloting, and Reevaluating the National Conservation Outreach Strategy and Relevancy Toolkit - Part 3* grant to try to make the messaging more relevant to state agencies, also adding employee recruitment to communication relevancy; looking for volunteers to be on the steering committee for the MSCG and for pilot states; Fall Flights reached out requesting support; there's a robust photo library available for free (<https://find.nationalr3community.org/media/?viewType=grid>).
- **Diversity & Inclusion WG:** David Buggs is the new chair of this WG; had a mini-workshop 'Staying Above the Fray' that focused on how we navigate the changing political climate and still do the good work; there are 80 bills introduced to dissolve any DEI efforts in states; 9 have been approved but not signed, 9 signed into law; discussion about needing accomplices and not just alleys; having discussions about a potential name change to this group and the full committee (possibly Engagement and Connection WG??)- no decisions made yet; our goal is to still to the great work and not lessening the work.
- **Education WG:** there is a national discussion group on CE leaders- if you want to connect please contact Kellie Tharp (email: ktharp@azgfd.gov); Michigan reported on their highly successful environment education programs; Early Childhood Field Guides (K-2) is now available for free in Ohio, will be available online soon

Association of Conservation Information ACI (update)

- The Association for Conservation Information (ACI) is a non-profit organization of natural resources communicators. We serve to further natural resource conservation and

exchange. We are made up of professionals representing state, federal and Canadian wildlife conservation and parks and natural resource agencies as well as private conservation organizations.

- These are YOUR people who do the work you do. A great networking opportunity.
- The 2024 ACI Conference will be held July 22-25, 2024, in Arlington, Virginia.
 - Scholarships available
- Working on a rebrand and updating the website over the next year or so.

Fall Flights Communications/Marketing

- Fall Flights is an AFWA initiative- goal is to invest in Canadian wetland and associated upland habitats critical for water and many other species of birds that migrate and winter in the U.S.
- Goal for \$10M per year by 2031; \$5M annually by 2026. Have reached the 2026 goal as of 2023; have all 48 contiguous states participating in this initiative
- Led by a state director-level advisory committee
- Want to highlight that this is a state-led program; need messaging to reflect this and the value of investing in the Fall Flights program
- Looking to develop a communication/marketing plan
- **ASK:** do you have interest in joining our Comms Team to develop the Fall Flights comms/marketing plan? Please contact Andrew.raedeke@fallflights.com

DEI Discussion:

- Overview of where we are today. Why diversity is important! We are better when there is a diverse gathering and adds value to organizations conservation.
- The chronicle of higher education is tracking anti DEI bills in 28 states
- The bills are stopping some of our state agencies from participating in meetings, etc if any words (diversity, equity, inclusion) are present on the agenda; we want to continue to do great work; 'this isn't the hill to die on'
- Need to focus on system thinking
- Instead of picking alleys we need to pick accomplices; being strategic as we move forward
- When people are trying to stop us means that we are doing something well.
- We can adapt by changing our nomenclature, keep the people we need at the table; broadening our engagement
- This discussion will continue at the EOD member call next week on April 4. Please join us!
- Linking the working being done to your mission makes it harder to attack

Rename Discussion

- Look at renaming the D&I WG
- Look at renaming the entire EOD committee; include the WVNT in there somewhere

Update and Introductions from the Social Science Subcommittee

- **Purpose:** Provide forum for discussion about social science research and applications in states, federal, and provincial wildlife and natural resources agencies and partners to 1. Highlight the necessity of social science integration, 2. Identify and provide effective tools, resources, and expertise, 3. Promote and foster increased social science capacity & literacy, and 4. build cross-jurisdictional connections.

- Highlights: a) highlight the necessity of social science at the Pathways Conference, b) created a science needs survey: effective tools, resources and expertise, c) increased social science capacity and literacy through a Conservation Biology manuscript, d) shown cross jurisdictional connections through WAFWA, NEAFWA, MAFWA, TWS
- Will be supporting SWAP revisions (webinar SS101 Webinar May 18, 2024), develop CWD resources clearinghouse, human dimensions foundations training – Sept 10-12, 2024, work to make a deeper connection with other AFWA Committees.

Possible future MSCG for the next year

- Training on how to deal with attacks and intensity of negative chatter, personal attacks on state agency social media channels; understanding the ins-and-outs of the legal process of what is allowed and not; look through different lenses with how to deal with this.
 - May be good to do more research and see overall interest and have something around this topic in 2026
- Training to agency staff to deal with negative public comments and turn around to get more constructive feedback?? → MAT Team??

Progress measures discussion

- May be value in a periodic newsletter- quarterly? Bi-monthly?
- How to keep engagement throughout the year?
 - Have some deep dives in our work/ human dimensions work, etc
 - Create forums for discussions (instead of just updates)