

**2020 Multistate Conservation Grant Program
Proposed National Conservation Needs**

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Proposed NCN 1

Submitted by: Agricultural Conservation Committee, January 25, 2019

Statement of Need: The Farm Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation for providing fish and wildlife habitat on millions of acres of privately owned and managed lands. With a new Farm Bill passed into law late in 2018, the effective implementation of USDA conservation programs and their benefits to fish and wildlife will rely heavily on the participation and engagement of State fish and wildlife agencies.

Desired Proposals: Proposals should address one or more of the following:

- Provide recommendations on how fish, wildlife, and their habitats can best be integrated into Farm Bill programs, rules, policies, and guidelines used to implement the laws.
- Work with State fish and wildlife agencies, NGOs, producers, USDA, USFWS, forestry, and others to optimize fish and wildlife benefits from Farm Bill programs, including, but not limited to, CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and RCPP.
- Expand Farm Bill programs to regions of the nation where they are currently under-utilized.
- Increase the capacity to deliver fish and wildlife expertise/technical assistance and educational outreach to current and potential Farm Bill program participants.
- Assess the economics, human dimensions, promotional strategies, fish and wildlife benefits, and/or hunter/angler recruitment/retention effects of Farm Bill programs, including the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.
- Assess and improve the effectiveness of other conservation provisions, including conservation compliance and Sodsaver, on wildlife population and habitat trends.
- Facilitate information sharing of conservation program results to traditional and new audiences.
- Identify information needs and success stories that support strategic delivery of Farm Bill programs.
- Work with USDA to track Farm Bill-funded cover changes and investigate how programs and provisions have impacted native grassland and forestland habitat and its use by fish and wildlife, including pollinators.
- Identify and evaluate approaches to maintaining conservation benefits on expiring CRP acres, and increasing and retaining enrollment of high wildlife value CRP acres.
- Assess CRP mid-contract management activities and determine whether/how practice and program intent is being met across the country; evaluate the efficacy of incentives, cost share, or other methods that promote quality wildlife habitat.
- Increase engagement and involvement with the bioenergy industry to ensure the consideration of fish and wildlife needs in bioenergy development.
- Evaluate and increase the extent to which Farm Bill programs improve at-risk species conservation and decision-making.

Desired Outcomes: Successful proposals will improve Farm Bill benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and state fish and wildlife agencies' ability to manage their public trust resources.

Proposed NCN 2

Enable State Fish & Wildlife Agencies to Communicate and Implement Strategies to Increase Awareness and Better Engage Our Constituents Regarding the Benefits of State Wildlife Agencies, Wildlife, and Wildlife Management

Submitted by: Education, Outreach and Diversity Committee

Statement of Need: State fish and wildlife agencies are responsible for communicating national conservation issues. Many agencies face barriers that impact their ability to effectively implement strategies that would educate citizens to develop awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment resulting in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment.

Conservation Education is key to strengthening the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to engage people about the nation's natural resources and create opportunities for future generations.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted under this NCN should address needs related to communicating and/or engaging communities in conservation and wildlife related education/outreach, and preferably one or more of the following: (a) improving and/or implementing the strategies and tools of the North American Conservation Strategy; (b) strategies and best practices for outreach to under-represented audiences; (c) actions for creating connections within communities to wildlife-related recreation and conservation; (d) awareness that wildlife depends on the critical work that state fish and wildlife agency does to protect and conserve the habitat and the wildlife who rely on it.

Desired Results/Expected Benefits: Successful proposals will advance at least one and preferably more of these desired outcomes: (1) successfully improve and/or implement tools/strategies for state agency wildlife related/conservation education; (2) expand existing conservation education strategies to reach more desired audiences; (3) build an understanding and appreciation of and support for state fish and wildlife agencies and conservation among all user groups; and/or (4) increase awareness of state fish and wildlife agencies relevancy.

Proposed NCN 3

Incorporating Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Considerations into Energy Development

Submitted By: Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee

Statement of Need: Energy exploration, development and transmission are dominant influences affecting our nation's fish and wildlife resources. These energy-related activities will continue to cause major landscape disturbances as initiatives designed to increase renewable and traditional energy capacity are implemented to meet current and future energy needs in the United States. State fish and wildlife agencies are challenged in their ability to manage and conserve public trust resources in light of increased energy development on both public and private lands. An AFWA needs assessment of agencies identified and prioritized concerns with energy exploration, development and transmission (e.g. onshore and offshore wind, solar, onshore and offshore oil and gas, coal, etc.), effective communication and coordination with industry, federal agencies, other state agencies, tribes, and local governments, and in some cases limited state authority as factors affecting their ability to manage fish and wildlife resources. State fish and wildlife agencies are seeking assistance with facilitating integration of their resource concerns and authorities into industry decision-making considerations as well as federal, state, and local policies, processes and initiatives to maximize their ability to manage fish and wildlife resources. This NCN is intended to assist state fish and wildlife agencies in these efforts as well as support the objectives in the AFWA Strategic Plan.

Desired Proposals: This NCN seeks proposals in the following areas:

- Incorporate considerations for fish and wildlife resources into decision-making processes regarding energy exploration, development and transmission on public and private lands; collaborate with industry to design and implement practices beneficial for fish and wildlife resources; explore and better understand the relationships between energy development practices and impacts on fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.
- Enhance and facilitate communication between state fish and wildlife agencies, state and federal partners, tribes, local governments, industry and NGOs; provide training for state fish and wildlife agencies and partners to assist in understanding energy regulatory processes and how fish and wildlife concerns can be better integrated into those processes.
- Facilitate the development and implementation of transparent scientifically sound mitigation standards, adaptive management, conservation measures and BMPs designed to avoid or minimize impacts associated with energy development on fish and wildlife resources.
- Increase the capacity of state fish and wildlife agencies to effectively address energy exploration, development and transmission issues; maximize authority for state fish and wildlife agencies to manage fish and wildlife resources.
- Facilitate the development of scientifically sound pre-construction consultation and post-construction habitat loss and mortality studies that adhere to principles of scientific integrity.

Desired Results/Expected Benefits: Successful proposals will provide improved coordination among state fish and wildlife agencies on decision making processes regarding energy exploration, development and transmission; provide state fish and wildlife agency personnel with the training and tools needed to effectively engage and communicate the priorities of fish and wildlife resources into those processes; improve working relationships among state fish and wildlife agencies, state and federal partners, tribes, local governments, academia, NGOs and industry while maximizing state authority for managing public trust resources.

NCN 4

Enabling State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to Coordinate and Implement Large Scale Conservation Initiatives

Submitted by: Executive Committee

Statement of Need: State fish and wildlife agencies need to collectively address emerging national conservation issues to ensure they can continue to meet their management responsibilities and sustain the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Agencies face barriers that impact their ability to collectively address national conservation issues and manage trust resources. For example, many state agencies face significantly curtailed out of state travel funding.

Desired Proposals: Proposals will be considered that assist state agencies with the coordination and implementation of programs that address important conservation issues related to fish and wildlife management. Applicants must demonstrate they have a history of collaboration and the ability to coordinate work with all fifty state fish and wildlife agencies.

Desired Outcomes: Proposals funded under this NCN will enable coordination and provide states with technical, administrative and professional expertise and services. Detailed coordination objectives should be included along with an explanation of how these efforts will assist state agencies with their mission of fish and wildlife management.

NCN 5

Submitted by the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee and Science and Research Committee

Subject: Strengthening Fish and Wildlife Health Capacity through the National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative

Statement of Need: The importance of maintaining healthy populations of fish and wildlife has long been recognized by fish and wildlife managers, and several disease issues are of growing concern to fish and wildlife, animal health, and public health professionals and the publics they serve. Significant diseases, such as chronic wasting disease, plague, viral hemorrhagic septicemia, hemorrhagic disease, white-nose syndrome, West Nile virus, whirling disease, bacterial coldwater disease, and others have been found in wild and farmed fish or wildlife populations in North America and can significantly and negatively affect public trust resources. Reservoirs of economically important diseases like bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis have inadvertently become established in native wildlife and threaten livestock industries regionally. Also of concern are foreign animal diseases, such as foot and mouth disease, which was eradicated in the U.S. decades ago, New World screwworms, which reappeared in the U.S. and killed endangered Key deer in 2016, and highly pathogenic avian influenza, which was found in wild birds in North America in December 2014 for the first time. Intentional or accidental introduction of these diseases is likely to negatively affect wildlife, domestic animal, and/or human populations and would require a coordinated multi-agency response.

In view of the increasing need for fish and wildlife managers to effectively address wildlife health and disease issues, the Association resolved in 2005 to develop and implement a National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative, in cooperation with appropriate governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Although national in scope, the Health Initiative will not mandate programs at the state, tribal, or local level. The goal of the initiative is to protect fish and wildlife health through the enhancement of capabilities of state fish and wildlife management agencies to prevent, detect, manage, research, and educate the public about disease issues.

This NCN is designed to assist fish and wildlife management agencies in all 50 states and addresses several goals and strategies identified in the Association's Strategic Plan including Goal 3: Coordinated Conservation Initiatives – Support National Outreach and Education Initiatives, and Goal 4: Member Support and Coordination-Support and facilitate education, participation, communication and leadership capacity among state, provincial and territorial agencies to enhance fish and wildlife conservation.

Proposals Solicited: Proposals are requested that facilitate implementation of the National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative. Successful proposals should support the national initiative through the development of state expertise and capacity in fish and wildlife health, particularly in critically important areas such as disease detection, control, management, and prevention, as well as effective communications about disease and disease outbreaks.

Desired Outcomes: Desired outcomes will be the development and support of the National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative, as well as progress toward the implementation of specific goals and objectives to enhance state agency capacity and response to current and emerging fish and wildlife disease issues.

NCN 6

Recruitment, retention and reactivation in hunting, fishing, boating, and conservation-related recreation; enhanced relations among state agencies and related industries.

Submitted by: AFWA Hunting & Shooting Sports Participation Committee & Angler and Boater R3 Committee

Statement of Need: Participation in outdoor- and conservation-related recreation is key to enhancing the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to protect our natural resources and preserve opportunities for future generations. Participation in traditional outdoor recreation is declining—a trend expected to continue into the immediate future. The causes of this decline are varied and complex, but all states see the need to stabilize or reverse it. Effects of declining participation include a citizenry detached from nature and its related benefits, loss of funding for fish and wildlife conservation programs, and harms to industries that support and are supported by wildlife-associated recreation. Effective recruitment, retention, and reactivation must maximize crossover opportunities in outdoor recreation; form partnerships to implement state, regional, and national programs; and share best practices and financial/intellectual resources.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted under this NCN should address needs related to 1) recruitment, retention and reactivation in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and the shooting sports, 2) enhancement of industry and state agency relationships, and 3) building awareness of conservation funding by hunters and anglers, under the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, among students of conservation law and policy. This NCN also covers outdoor activities with valuable crossover applications. For example, approximately 101 million Americans participated in wildlife-associated recreation in 2016, with 35.8 million fishing and 11.5 million hunting. Proposals submitted under this NCN should address 1+ of the following: a) innovative tools and actions that foster initiation, recruitment, and retention, including efforts to increase opportunities in target markets; b) partnerships between successful recruitment and retention programs and related industries; c) new approaches to marketing that document and promote the socio-economic benefits of wildlife-associated recreation; d) tools and programs to assist hunting, fishing, and boating instructors, as well as instructors of law and policy, in communicating the role of sportspersons in conserving North America's fish and wildlife; e) methods to assist state fish and wildlife agencies in assessing and meeting demand for public shooting facilities, access to public waters for recreational fishing and boating, and public access to land for hunting; f) actions that help related recreational industries understand and enhance the important role they play in conservation and promoting these benefits to the public; and g) efforts to evaluate the efficacy of recruitment and retention programs and strategies.

Desired Results/Expected Benefits: Desired results and expected benefits of proposals include: 1) successful strategies to increase participation and retention in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and shooting sports; 2) steady and reliable revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies from license sales, registration fees, taxes, and associated federal aid; 3) continued long-term socio-economic benefits from participation and recruitment; 4) strategic guidance to state agencies to assist them in meeting demand for public shooting facilities, boating and fishing access to public waters, and public access to land and public waters for hunting; 5) enhanced networking and understanding among agencies, related industries, and other partners; and 6) an improved conservation ethic among outdoor recreational participants, and a more understanding and supportive public—all of which will foster a bright and sustainable future for our hunting, fishing, and boating heritage.

NCN 7

Submitted by the International Relations Committee

Subject: Coordination of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Authority to Manage Wildlife Resources in Concert with Federal Actions Required by International Treaties, Conventions, Partnerships, and Initiatives

Statement of Need: Rules established under international treaties often impact state authority and how states manage fish and wildlife. Added regulations can result from restrictions adopted through international treaties such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). State tagging requirements for otters and bobcats stem from CITE actions in 1975. State agencies looking to ensure sustainable harvest of turtle species desired by international markets are updating turtle regulations. Active involvement in CITES has ensured that permits are not required for international movement of items such as wallets and garments. Without these provisions it would be virtually impossible to travel abroad with alligator garments leading to catastrophic declines in sales in these sustainable use products. These are examples that have significant implications to state's management authority. Additionally, migratory species that spend part of their life cycles in our states often spend more than half of each year outside the United States. Thus, conservation actions outside of the states influence the status of Species of Greatest Conservation Need within the states. It is necessary for states to be able to participate in international conservation initiatives and actions that affect our migratory species. Other initiatives and treaties including IUCN, CMS, CBD require membership and participation to positively affect sustainable use issues and promote state priorities.

Understanding issues and developing working relationships over a sustained period by the CITES Technical Work Group and AFWA are essential for effectively resolving issues and require routine engagement with international colleagues. The Work Group has a long-standing and positive working relationship with key international counterparts and any disruption would result in lessening of state agency influence in important forums. Working as a team is effective and makes it easier to maintain expertise in CITES and other international forum. It is also an asset in building and maintaining a rapport with the international community. It also allows the Work Group and AFWA to support the Canadian Provinces and Territories when needed. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in NGO participation (e.g., HSUS and the Animal Welfare Institute) to push a protectionist/no use approach in CITES, IUCN, etc. necessitating continued participation. Without funding, our combined expertise and coordinated approach to state participation in international forums would need to be paid for by the Regional Associations or other means.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted under this NCN should address one or more of the following needs— fund a representative from each Regional Association and AFWA to participate in international treaties, conventions, and associated meetings; allow AFWA to maintain memberships in international initiatives; and allow for state agency participation in international bird conservation partnerships and projects.

Desired Outcomes/Expected Benefits: Successful proposals will provide two or more of the following. 1) an efficient, effective approach for state agencies to have input into federal policy on international treaties, 2) a means whereby state agencies may be appraised of pending developments internationally and respond appropriately, 3) a streamlined approach to coordinating state responses to provide state input into federal and / or international policies, rules, and procedures, 4) a mechanism to provide biological and administrative information to assist the federal government in executing its international responsibilities, 5) support sustainable use principles in international arenas, 6) ensure AFWA and the states have a voice in international initiatives, 7) ensure state agencies can participate in international bird conservation partnerships and projects.

NCN 8

Subject: Combating trafficking by strengthening communication and coordination among state and national conservation agencies' law enforcement investigations and intelligence sections.

Submitted by: AFWA Law Enforcement Committee

Statement of Need: Recent increases in illegal wildlife trade threaten to overturn decades of conservation efforts. Fish and wildlife resources are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms with economic impact reaching into the billions. Wildlife crime is second only to habitat loss in overall threats to species survival. Fish and wildlife agencies' law enforcement divisions represent the first line of defense against the illegal commercialization and trafficking of fish and wildlife resources.

AFWA Law Enforcement Committee members have identified a lack of intelligence sharing among conservation LE agencies due to inadequate engagement between investigators, intelligence staff, and officers from state and federal conservation law enforcement agencies. Without sharing information and intelligence and developing interagency relationships, crimes go undetected, trends go unnoticed, and species are illegally commercialized. This is a new initiative that is not currently funded.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted under this NCN should address the need to fund and provide a framework for a national meeting that provides

- a forum for in-depth discussion of new and emerging issues which includes, but is not limited to, intelligence methods, species of concern, investigation tactics, case studies and illegal trends.
- knowledge of and contextual information about new and emerging issues, so they can inform colleagues in their respective wildlife agencies and lead efforts to fully take advantage of information received.
- an opportunity to build and maintain professional relationships among state and federal participants to facilitate future cooperation and collaboration and to share best practices.
- a common vision of the intelligence/investigations framework that promotes inter-agency communication, information sharing and collaboration to support the North American conservation model.
- an annual report to AFWA outlining summit goals, achievements and results.

Desired Outcomes/Expected Benefits: Desired results and expected benefits of proposals would address AFWA Strategic Plan Goal #3 which promotes

- increased communication and information sharing between state and federal conservation law enforcement agencies.
- enhanced professional networks.
- increased number of joint operations combatting the illegal commercialization and trafficking of fish and wildlife resources.
- exploration of creation, expansion or enhancement of a database or other electronic framework for communication between agencies to effectively disseminate high priority intelligence/investigative information.

A national meeting held annually that promotes cross-agency communication, relationship building and collaboration will result in a more unified, cohesive and effective response to the illegal commercialization and trafficking of fish and wildlife resources.

NCN 9

Submitted by Leadership and Professional Development Committee

Subject: The Management Assistance Team (MAT) or similar entity to increase leadership capacity and agency effectiveness within state fish and wildlife agencies (SFWA) and the conservation community through leadership and professional development initiatives, training, consulting, and support of the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI).

Statement of Need: Significant loss of senior leadership across state fish and wildlife agencies (SFWA) continues to impact and put at risk the conservation community's future. Data reveal State Directors' tenure of an average of three years. This staggering loss of leadership capacity, coupled with the challenges facing SFWA's to remain relevant, adapt to changing landscapes and constituencies, and/or secure funding – just to name a few—requires continued, ongoing, and focused leadership and organizational development. Leadership development and well-managed fish and wildlife agencies is a priority identified in the Association's strategic plan. In a 2015 survey by AFWA's Management Assistance Team, a 76% response rate identified succession planning, development of adaptive leadership capacity, and strategic planning/agency relevancy as priorities. This survey further supported a 2014 survey where an overwhelming 92.6% of those directors surveyed believed that “leadership and professional development programs would help agencies achieve their conservation mission” and stressed succession planning and the need to develop a greater capacity of strategic thinkers in their organizations as their top two critical needs.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted under this NCN should outline strategies to increase the leadership capacity of tomorrow's fish and wildlife leadership through programming that provides:

- 1) leadership development programming that can reach a significant portion of the nation's state fish and wildlife agencies;
- 2) leadership program development, delivery expertise, and staff support to maintain an elite-level leadership development program, *the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI)*, on a nationwide basis reaching governments, NGOs, conservation-oriented businesses and tribes;
- 3) knowledge, expertise, and consulting services to expand leadership capacity and developing workforce planning strategies;
- 4) programs and opportunities for state fish and wildlife agency staff to increase their capabilities for delivering leadership development to their employees.

Desired Outcomes / Expected Benefits: As agencies continue to experience high levels of employee retirement / turnover creating a void in leadership experience, this NCN's programs will increase leadership capacity of the majority of states through leadership series workshops, consulting, assessments, online and on demand training, webinars, and other tools including building rich networks among state, federal, tribal, provincial, NGO, and for-profit organizations in the conservation arena. Agency access to leadership development services specifically tailored to the unique needs of state fish and wildlife agencies will also be a critical tool to help them develop their own internal leadership development programs. During this grant the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) will graduate its 14th cohort of Fellows and the 15th cohort will be in mid-program. By the end of this grant cycle the NCLI will have an accumulated cadre of almost 500 Fellows across the spectrum of conservation – creating a powerful professional network of graduates to effectively lead fish and wildlife conservation work through the challenging and unpredictable future.

NCN 10

Sustaining the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and Public Trust Doctrine through Legal Education and Communicating to State Agencies

Submitted by: AFWA Legal Committee

Statement of Need: Conduct legal research; monitor the progress of court cases, statutes, and regulations involving State agencies' management of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats in accordance with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

Desired Proposals: Proposals will be considered that would:

- Assist AFWA in developing and offering wildlife law courses at law schools across the United States, as well as coordinating with state bar associations and law schools to provide clinical and occupational learning opportunities for law students.
- Assist AFWA in developing symposia and continuing legal education (CLE) seminars for practitioners and observers of wildlife law, or educational programming (e.g., mock trials, moot courts) for students of wildlife law.
- Broaden members' and partners' understanding of State wildlife management and jurisdictional issues through online platforms and in-person forums.
- Collaborate with conservation stakeholders (e.g., renewable energy firms, outdoors companies, landowners' organizations) to build legal frameworks for State agency participation in areas of law relevant to conservation.
- Convene groups of experts to review developments in conservation law and policy, at AFWA's recommendation.
- Encourage State agency coordination in responding to Federal agency decision-making (e.g., rulemaking, departmental guidance).
- Enhance relationships and pre-regulatory information-sharing between State and Federal agencies, including between legal counsel.
- Facilitate use of the best available fish and wildlife scientific data in State agency management actions and policy-making.
- Improve processes for, and increase State involvement in, evaluating and responding to Federal budget priorities relevant to State wildlife conservation.
- Otherwise conduct legal research to facilitate State management of fish and wildlife resources in accordance with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and the principles of cooperative federalism.

Desired Outcomes / Expected Benefits: A proposal funded under this NCN would:

- Assist AFWA and State agency legal advisors in performing review of, and coordinated response to, legal issues involving State wildlife management.
- Provide legal education and updates to law students, judges, and practitioners to enhance the wildlife law community's understanding of State wildlife conservation.
- Clarify the effects of statutes setting forth fish and wildlife management within State borders, and promote State, provincial, territorial, and Federal agency understanding of jurisdictional issues.

Binational Notification System for Chronic Wasting Disease Carcass Risk Management

Submitted by: MAFWA Health Committee

Statement of Need: Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurologic disease of cervids that impacts wildlife management and poses a threat to cervid populations in all states. Transport of infected carcasses or parts from areas where CWD is present is an acknowledged risk for the continued geographic spread of the disease. States/provinces have a wide range of carcass transport restrictions and/or reporting measures, which are subject to change. Many hunters hunt out-of-state and (legally or illegally) bring carcasses or parts back to their home states/provinces. These hunters may or may not test their harvested cervids for CWD. Samples may be submitted to various State, University, and Federal labs conducting CWD testing and practices for reporting results vary. A system to share positive results between state/provincial wildlife agencies and track out-of-state hunting license purchases is urgently needed to address CWD risk associated with carcass movement.

Proposals Solicited: Proposals will focus on the development of a joint United States and Canada system for information sharing between state/provincial wildlife agencies to aid in tracking and managing the risk of import of CWD through movement of wild cervid carcasses or parts by two methods: 1) positive CWD results will be promptly reported to the wildlife agency in the state/province of harvest and in the hunter's home state/province and 2) State/provincial wildlife agencies will report zip codes +/- addresses of out-of-state hunters purchasing cervid hunting licenses to the hunter's home state/province wildlife agency. Proposals must demonstrate the appropriate expertise needed to coordinate multiple states and provinces and effectively address the legal and technical challenges of developing this proposed Notification System for CWD Carcass Risk Management. Proposals should allow for all states/provinces to voluntarily opt in or out of methods 1 and/or 2. Even without 100% participation, participating states' or provinces' ability to address CWD risk associated with carcass movements would greatly improve.

Desired Outcomes: Through Method 1, a state/province will be informed when its residents harvest or test a CWD-positive cervid outside of its borders. This alerts the state/provincial wildlife agency to the potential import of CWD-positive carcasses or parts. It provides the state/province the opportunity to respond as they choose, for example, by contacting the hunter to assist with or advise on appropriate carcass or parts disposal. If a deer harvested in one state, but tested in another, tests positive, Method 1 also ensures that the wildlife agency in the state of origin of the harvested deer is promptly informed of results. Method 2, through the sharing of license data, allows state/provincial wildlife management agencies to more accurately assess the risk of unknowing import of CWD. This helps states/provinces inform and refine CWD surveillance plans by identifying areas that may be at greater risk for import of CWD (if, for example, multiple hunters from a particular area in a state hunt in a known CWD positive state). Through these means, this System will allow wildlife agencies to improve assessment and management of CWD risk as well as to address criticisms that there is not adequate tracking and knowledge of deer carcass movement to allow for effective regulation and management.

Title: Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordination

Submitted by: National Grants Committee

Statement of Need: The Multistate Conservation Grant Program was established in 2000 by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000 (Improvement Act), which amended the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. The Improvement Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to make up to \$6,000,000 available each calendar year under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Assistance Program to fund Multistate Conservation Grants (CFDA Number 15-628). These grants may be awarded by the Secretary of the Interior only for projects identified on a priority list of wildlife or sport fish restoration projects submitted by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies by the mandated October 1 deadline. To ensure MSCGP funds are used to address important concerns of state fish and wildlife agencies, the Association has developed detailed requirements for the grant program applicants. The Act that established the MSCGP did not provide administrative funds for the Association to use for administration and implementation of its responsibilities. In 2018, the Association was awarded a Multistate Conservation Grant that currently supports the Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordinator responsible for implementing the grant program, which expires December 31, 2019.

Desired Proposals: The Multistate Conservation Grant Program Manager will continue to coordinate with Association Committees and interested NGOs regarding the solicitation of NCNs and proposals, review of proposals, and selection of priority projects.

The Manager is responsible for

- Disseminating information and responding to inquiries about the grant program.
- Ensuring that the Association's responsibilities for executing the grant program are met and for managing the resultant Multistate Conservation Grants administered by the Association.
- Continuous improvement of the program's processes as well as ensuring effective evaluation and communication of the accomplishments of the MSCGP to State Fish and Wildlife agencies.

Desired Outcomes: This project will:

- Enable the Association to meet its responsibilities under the Act, and ensure grant funds are used for projects that provide maximum benefits to state fish and wildlife agencies and the wildlife resources they manage.
- Provide accomplishments and results of the program to the State Fish and Wildlife agencies and other applicable audiences.
- Provide necessary resources to the Association for the administration and coordination of the Multi-State Conservation Grant program, which is cooperatively administered with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

NCN 13

Proactive Communications on Sustainable Uses of Wildlife to Maintain Authority to Manage Fish and Wildlife

Submitted By: Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee

Statement of Need: The continued ability of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to effectively manage fish and wildlife resources is contingent upon public support for those actions and our abilities to produce a harvestable surplus. Public awareness ranges from a very engaged and vocal constituency of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor enthusiasts to those who loudly and actively oppose any “uses” of wildlife. Most (~80%) Americans are unfamiliar or underinformed about the role and importance of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies sustaining fish and wildlife populations under the principles of the North American Model and a “user pay, public benefit” system of wildlife conservation. Often agencies can generate support for needed wildlife management by fostering “informed consent” among the public using critical facts on biological research, social science, and marketing. However, these actions are often reactive, highly prescriptive to a single issue, and formed far too late in the public engagement process. This often leaves a profession that is rich in information and driven by science to be an ineffective contributor to policy development, democratic governance, and informing the public input process.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted for this NCN will focus on developing and implementing agency-led communication strategies that promote the use and management of wildlife populations in a scientific and sustainable manner. Critical attention should be given towards proactive approaches that elevate key principles of the North American Model and core elements of use of wildlife and public understanding and support of these principles. This should include overall communications needs, such as understanding issues that impede the sustainable uses of wildlife, and novel approaches to communicate existing critical supporting information. Proposals should broadly address current challenges; for example, acceptance and use of harvesting of wildlife (via regulated hunting and trapping) for food (e.g., nutritional value of food, value of food across socio-economic sectors), clothing, art, and medicine.

Desired Outcomes/Expected Benefits: Fundamental to the design of proposals are outcomes that directly facilitate the dissemination of and access to core relevant information, highlighting the agency authority to sustainably harvested wildlife under the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Tangible outcomes of products, publications and initiatives that reach far beyond required reporting and maintain clear and definitive benchmarks of success are strongly preferred. Expected benefits include novel and focused management and policy support for all state fish and wildlife agencies to make decisions related to wildlife resources and help ensure state management authority and that legal and appropriate use of wildlife by the public. Further benefits may include direct recommendations for the most challenging and misunderstood issues of sustainable uses of wildlife through facilitating partnerships among agencies, policy makers, stakeholders, and NGOs, and to build national and international partnerships to address these issues.

Implementation and Coordination of the 2021 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (National Survey)

Submitted By: Fish & Wildlife Trust Funds Committee

Statement of Need: The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation has been conducted every five years from 1955 through 2016 to measure participation and expenditures by residents in the United States. The quantification of participants and economic impacts of wildlife-based recreation is an important source of data used by Association members, other state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, nongovernmental organizations and industry to assess trends in wildlife-related recreation. Several developments in the last two years will impact the 2021 survey:

-As part of the 2016 survey effort, an alternative methodology was explored to reduce future cost and increase the accuracy of these estimates at the state level. An evaluation of the two parallel efforts (National and State Level) resulted in numerous recommendations for improving the survey including; reducing respondent burden with a more focused survey, reducing bias within the survey, utilizing more cost-effective methods and using existing data sources where feasible.

-An AFWA President's Task Force was created to develop a new vision for the National Survey. The New Vision states that the survey should be more focused on high level data and should not seek data at the state level.

-Two separate studies using MSCGP funding are underway in 2019 which may increase the usability of 2016 data and which may also help to inform how future surveys are implemented.

Desired Proposals: Proposals submitted for this NCN will address either the 1) coordination or 2) implementation of this project. Proposals will be based upon the direction given by AFWA leadership through the President's Task Force and will also incorporate recommendations from the independent evaluation.

- 1) The coordination component of this effort will focus on two aspects as follows:
 - a. The first is for maintaining the National Survey Technical Workgroup's functions of overseeing this survey effort so that appropriate recommendations can be made to the Association. The responsibilities of the Workgroup will be to coordinate and collaborate with successful vendors of the research and coordination components of this NCN. The successful proposal will cover the needs of travel, facilitation, and advising for the Workgroup.
 - b. The other aspect of coordination focuses on technical support and maintaining data and reports of past National Surveys. This ensures that future survey efforts will have a historical basis for the National Survey and its use as well as technical support for helping guide future survey efforts and supporting storage of MSCGP reports.
- 2) Under the implementation component, proposals will be welcomed that implement a 2021 survey based on the direction given by the President's Task Force and the Independent Evaluation report. Proposals will be welcomed that include statistically valid methodologies while responding to the need for a more focused and cost-effective survey. Proposals that allow for individual states to 'piggy-back' on the national effort if desired will be preferred. Proposals that allow help to inform state-level economic impacts without performing a detailed survey at the state level are encouraged.

Desired Outcomes: The outcomes for this project will be implementation of the new vision for the National Survey; a statistically valid, more focused and cost effective survey that provides useful high level data on participation in hunting, fishing and wildlife related recreation.

NCN 15

Title: Implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap

Submitted by: AFWA Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee

Statement of Need: In September 2018, the Association passed a [resolution](#) supporting the development of a voluntary, non-prescriptive roadmap to fish and wildlife relevancy to help states, provinces and territories better serve and engage broader constituencies. The roadmap will be completed by September 2019 at which time resources will be needed to support its adoption, implementation, testing and adaptation.

Desired Proposals: Grant proposals should focus on one or more of the following areas:

- 1) Support implementation and testing of the relevancy roadmap in multiple state fish and wildlife agencies and commissions of varying size and capacity and reflecting different cultures and regional differences. Support could include consultation, facilitation, training, planning, coordination, stakeholder engagement, staff training, internal/external stakeholder surveys and program design and planning. Lessons learned and findings will be compiled and shared with all state fish and wildlife agencies and used to update the roadmap.
- 2) Provide support to strategically communicate the roadmap and share success stories in order to provide states and partner organizations with the information they need to implement the roadmap. Work could include developing and testing messages, developing communication tools, presenting the roadmap to diverse constituencies including governmental and non-governmental organizations and using technology to increase access, performance reporting and updates of the roadmap.

Desired Outcomes/Expected Benefits: Adoption, implementation, testing and adaptation of a relevancy roadmap will help state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies and their commissions overcome barriers to engaging and serving broader constituencies. Implementation of the relevancy roadmap will enhance conservation by assisting fish and wildlife agencies in addressing demographic and societal changes (such as changing wildlife value orientations) to help ensure these agencies maintain the highest level of public support. Sharing lessons learned from early adopters of the roadmap will help state fish and wildlife agencies choose the best path that is consistent with organizational values and missions and reduce the likelihood that repeat mistakes are made. The national conservation need will benefit all fifty states, territories, provinces and the District of Columbia and support all four goals of the AFWA strategic plan. Successful implementation of the roadmap will improve conservation for the nation's birds, mammals, fish and other species by increasing and broadening support for conservation.

NCN 16

Develop and support science informed aquatic resource management through research and collaboration.

Submitted by: Fisheries and Water Resources Policy and Ocean Resources Policy Committees

Statement of Need: Given the limitations of individual agency resources and increasing threats to our aquatic ecosystems the need to identify and support collaborative multi-jurisdictional management efforts of aquatic resources has never been more important. It is imperative that increased emphasis be given to approaches that facilitate state fish and wildlife agency cooperation and provide better mechanisms and tools for joint fisheries and aquatic conservation actions.

Desired Proposals: Proposals should address one or more of the following:

- Develop an inventory of the biologic, physical, chemical, socioeconomic, and other related data systems being used by natural resource conservation agencies across the nation of which should include data types, structures, formats, web links, and administrator contacts.
- Develop recommendations to state fish and wildlife agencies on how to better integrate incompatible aquatic resource biologic, physical, chemical, socioeconomic, and other related data systems and share these data between natural resource agencies.
- Identify gaps and needs in aquatic resource data (biologic, physical, chemical, socioeconomic and other related data) and standardized sampling methodology that, if addressed, have the potential to significantly influence efficient and effective conservation management of aquatic resources.
- Work with states, NGO's, private industry, federal agencies, academic institutions, and others to develop proposals that seek to identify, summarize and address priority aquatic animal health pathogens and needs.
- Develop or refine fish and aquatic habitat conservation assessment tools with priority given to proposals that provide recommendations leading directly to conservation actions and identify priority waters in support of National Fish Habitat Partnership Board (NFHP) approved Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs).
- Develop new methods for assessing and quantifying the socio-economic recreational, and subsistence benefits associated with fisheries management and habitat conservation projects.
- Develop improved guidance for use of angler derived data in fisheries management actions including assessment of current approaches, utilization of new or emerging technology, recommendations for best practices including statistical design, and related studies that will support improved state agency use of such information.
- Build upon previous Multi-State Conservation Grants to promote strategic fish habitat conservation through regionally-coordinated conservation efforts by assisting FHPs and similar organizations with development, growth, organizational capacity, and project/program management.
- Increase the capacity of state fish and wildlife agencies to deliver fish and wildlife scientific/expertise/technical assistance and educational outreach to traditional and new audiences on state and multi-jurisdictional fisheries and their supporting habitat.
- Analyze existing federal and international programs, including, but not limited to, the Farm Bill, Water Resources Development Act, and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and their effects on aquatic resource conservation by providing an inventory of all existing programs and case histories on how to best use each one to improve recreational and commercial fisheries.
- Develop novel approaches that seek to restore aquatic ecosystem health and support the management of native species.
- Provide needed information and guidance to support the cross-disciplinary challenge of managing conflicts between fish and piscivorous birds.

Desired Outcomes: Successful proposals will improve the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to: more effectively work in multi-jurisdictional management systems and aquatic resources conservation partnerships; better understand the status of, and challenges to, their fisheries and other aquatic resources; improve their ability to query available useful datasets; and better design and deliver conservation actions.