



WILDLIFE RESOURCE POLICY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes

Chair: Amanda Wuestefeld (Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife)
Vice-Chair: Pete Hildreth (Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Thursday, March 10th, 2022*
7:00 AM- 9:00 AM (PST)

87th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Committee Charge

To discuss and develop recommendations on Association positions related to federal laws, regulations and policies concerning habitat conservation, wildlife resources and related funding for such programs as well as wildlife management practices including those concerned with problem or nuisance wildlife, and emerging issues (e.g., commercial trade). The committee also stays abreast of threatened and endangered species wildlife issues, state legislation pertaining to wildlife management and wildlife diversity funding initiatives.

Agenda

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| 7:00 AM | Welcome and Introduction |
| 7: 10 AM | Review Agenda & Approve Mtg Notes (Amanda Wuestefeld, IN DNR) |
| 7:15 AM | USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services Report- (Janet Bucknall, Deputy Administrator) |
| 7:45 AM | Human/Wildlife Conflicts Working Group Report (Brian Wakeling, MT FWP) |
| 8:00 AM | Recovering America's Wildlife Act (AFWA staff, TBD) |
| 8:15 AM | Discovering and Building the Conservation Decision-Making Tools States Need and Want (Jen Mock Shaefer, JMS Resource Strategies) |
| 8:30 AM | Landscape Conservation and At-risk Species (Deb Rocque, USFWS) |
| 8:45 AM | Review 2023 Work Plan (Bryant White, AFWA) |
| 9:00 AM | Adjourn |

*This meeting will be virtual

The Voice of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Minutes of the Meeting

7:00 AM Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was attended by 45 people: in-person and virtual

7:10 AM Review Agenda & Approve Mtg Notes (Amanda Wuestefeld, IN DNR)

The minutes of the previous meeting (AFWA 2021) were unanimously approved (moved by Brad Howard (NC), second (Brian Wakeling (MT))

7:15 AM USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services Report- (Janet Bucknall, Deputy Administrator)

- Surveillance for SARS-COV2 in wildlife continues
- The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee provides recommendations about how to conduct efforts and what projects to prioritize. A solicitation for members will appear in the Federal Register
- Dr. Dana Cole now leads the Feral Swine Damage Management Program, which is active in 37 states and territories
- The new budget will increase funding for CWD research, feral swine damage management, new funds for the development of BMPs for trapping, black bird damage on sunflowers, non-lethal methods for predation control and disease control
- There was a change in the status of the gray wolf on February 10, 2022 (some populations relisted), but this did not affect populations in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana; but the Great Lakes DPS was listed. In Wisconsin non-lethal methods will be required, however, lethal methods can still be used for human safety. In Minnesota management will operate under the 4D rule (for threatened species).
- American Rescue Plan will provide \$300 million for surveillance of SARS-COV2 in wildlife populations and zoonotic diseases in wildlife that can affect humans. See the One Health Website at [One Health](#). So far samples for SARS-COV2 in deer populations have been collected from 27 states and Washington DC (7,500 samples) to determine broadscale exposure. 40% of sampled white-tailed deer had antibodies in some locations. Plan to expand sampling to 30-40 states/tribal agencies. Samples are from hunter harvested deer in cooperation with agencies.
- HPAI- high pathogenic avian influenza has been found in all 4 flyways which potentially impact wild birds (waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, etc.) Some domestic flocks have been depopulated. Early detection occurred in wild birds in January, domestics in February.
- Chronic Wasting Disease: Wildlife Services conducts surveillance for CWD in partnership with other agencies. Have developed a CWD task force. Will produce a state of the problem report and literature review.
- The Cooperative Agreement program will deliver \$10 million for cervid projects for CWD work. Will collaborate with various universities on vectors for CWD (scavengers) to determine spread and early detection. 20 agencies received funding.
- **National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), Director, Jason Suckow reported on the following:**
 - In FY21 the Center received \$1.5 million to do research on CWD with agencies and universities. Field work is being conducted with Colorado State University on how scavengers may spread CWD. Penn State University had equipped crows with telemetry to see if they potentially spread CWD. Michigan State University conducting research to determine if scrapes made by white-tailed deer bucks can spread CWD.
 - NWRC is developing a prion lab that should be operational by late summer or early fall.
 - The Research Needs Assessment (RNA) which is conducted every 5 years has been redesigned to be the largest ever. There were 84 respondents; 34 from 19 state agencies; 1/3 indicated they had collaborated on various damage issues; 294 research

needs were identified including invasive species, genetics work, feral swine, CWD, predator studies (conflicts with black bears). End goal of the RNA; 17 project areas will be investigated with a project leader for each.

- SARS-COV2 – NWRC projects will work to determine what species have receptors, primarily focusing on Mesocarnivores and other cervids.
- Currently working to fill the Project Leader position (Julie Young) at the Predator Research Center in Melville, Utah.

7:45 AM Human/Wildlife Conflicts Working Group Report (Brian Wakeling, MT FWP)

See Report in Appendix

8:15 AM Recovering America's Wildlife Act (AFWA staff, TBD)

See report in Appendix

8:30 AM Landscape Conservation and At-risk Species (Deb Rocque, USFWS)

Agencies typically measure conservation success in miles/ acres, but the evaluation methodology is outdated. FWS is working with partners to develop more comprehensive evaluation tools for LCCs. But actions are needed to ensure a durable future for landscape conservation that should involve the collective of private and public lands. Agencies must build trust, take inventories, support critical functions, prioritize equity and inclusion, and develop robust communication and outreach programs. To achieve a desirable future, we need proactive strategies, not necessarily a regulatory approach, or a species-by-species approach but the development conservation initiatives at the landscape scale. There is a joint task force for LCCs and climate issues that meets next week, that operates with the AFWA regions.

8:45 AM Review 2023 Work Plan (Bryant White, AFWA)

9:00 AM Adjourn

Appendix

**Report of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Working Group to the
Wildlife Resource Policy Committee
March 10, 2022**

Brian Wakeling
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

The Human-Wildlife Conflict Working Group (HWCWG) will meet on Thursday, March 17, 2022, using a hybrid format. Our agenda includes:

Potential to develop, conduct, and fund a national survey on how agencies manage and fund wildlife conflicts,

- Report on progress toward the development of peer reviewed publications on human-wildlife conflicts,
- USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services,
- Berryman Institute: Update on the WAFWA "Managing Cougars in North America,"
- Grizzly bear population growth and distribution,
- Development of an AFWA document on "humane dispatch of wildlife by agency personnel,"
- Update on USGS National Climate Adaptation Science Center: Impacts of Climate Change to Wildlife Conflicts, and
- An update on the Sixth International Human Bear Conflict Workshop.

Currently, a group has been tasked to draft a manuscript involving best management practices involving conflicts originating with coyotes. That group has been beset by a substantive number of personal challenges that has limited progress. Although it was our intent to have a review draft by this meeting, we have not been able to produce a suitable product yet. We have adopted a new strategy to begin progress towards completion and review by the HWCWG and the WRP Committee.

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services routinely provides the same high-quality update to the HWCWG as they do to the WRP Committee.

Berryman Institute (BI) routinely provides a briefing on the progress on several projects that they have ongoing that specifically address wildlife conflict issues. WAFWA has recently completed revisions to the draft revision of the Managing Cougars in North America and transferred the production to BI. We expect to hear about the planned progress and anticipated publication date for this much anticipated product.

Wyoming has prepared information regarding the expansion of grizzly bear populations, and we anticipate an update on the continued recovery of this species.

The HWCWG has been working cooperatively with Wildlife Health to support the need for a published document that addresses best management practices that address humane dispatch of wildlife by agency employees. Humane dispatch differs from euthanasia, and many agency employees may have a mistaken impression about what methods of dispatch are truly humane for

animals that are injured or incapable of being rehabilitated. The need for this document is evident, but progress on the manuscript has been slow due to similarly substantial challenges as described for the coyote manuscript earlier. We expect that Wildlife Health will have a larger responsibility and review on this document as it progresses than will HWCWG.

Finally, the Sixth International Human Bear Conflict Workshop is scheduled for October 16–22, 2022 at Lake Tahoe, Nevada. The theme is Pathways to Progress: Connecting People, Conserving Bears. Information may be found at <https://humanbearconflicts.org/>, and registration and paper submission are now open.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act overview for North American 2022

There has been a lot of good work and forward progress made recently as we identify the path to passage for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. We are very optimistic that this is the year we get this historic bill across the finish line! We currently stand at [165 bipartisan cosponsors](#) (123D – 37R) in the House. This January the House Committee on Natural Resources (HNR) voted 29 to 15 to pass the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* (H.R.2773) out of committee. The bill hasn't been officially discharged out of the House Natural Resources (HNR) committee yet, but we expect that to occur in advance of floor action this spring/summer. During the interim, the extra time allows for the opportunity to add cosponsors. Any assistance to that end is greatly appreciated. The House bill sponsors remain engaged and are discussing pay-for opportunities that may exist with leadership. The bill in the House currently does not identify a pay-for, and during the HNR markup in January, Congresswoman Dingell committed to work to find an offset prior to taking the bill to the floor.

In the Senate, we remain at [32 bipartisan cosponsors](#). On February 9, Sara Parker Pauley and Ron Regan, along with Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and National Wildlife Federation CEOs Jeff Crane and Collin O'Mara met with the Senate Co-Sponsors Sens. Roy Blunt and Martin Heinrich. They were very optimistic, engaged and looking forward to seeing the bill passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) via mark-up in March or April (at the latest) so that it can reach the floor by summer. In addition, Senate EPW committee staff have been actively engaged, as has the AFWA ExCom, in discussing opportunities to find a path through their committee that addresses some of the issues raised during the December 2021 hearing while maintaining strong bipartisan support for the bill. Additional cosponsors in the Senate, especially Republicans, would be helpful in advance of a markup, so again any assistance in making touches to potential Senate supporters would be valuable and demonstrations of in-state support from partners is greatly appreciated.

There will be several forums during the North American where the bill and legislative trajectory will be discussed including a special virtual appearance by the bill's congressional sponsors during the plenary and an exclusive conversation with state agency directors on Thursday the 17th in Spokane. Sean and Kurt will be on hand to give committee updates and answer questions throughout the conference as well.

Campaign resources can be found in the Alliance toolkit [HERE](#) and on the Alliance page of the AFWA site [HERE](#). Don't hesitate to reach out to Sean Saville at ssaville@fishwildlife.org; (202) 441-4214 with any questions or requests for information.

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