



### **Wildlife Resources Policy Committee**

Chair: Jim Douglas (Nebraska)

Vice-chair: Chuck Sykes (Alabama)

Meeting on September 12, 2018

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting

Tampa, FL

### **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.*

### **Participants**

Jim Douglas (NGPC), Chuck Sykes (ALDCNR), Elsa Haubold (USFWS), David Whitehurst (VADGIF), Mylea Bayless (BCI), Clayton Wolf (TPWD), Todd Bishop (IADNR), Steve Chadwick (MIDNR), Greg Wathen (TWRA), John Bowers (GADNR), Patty Hogan (Southwick Assoc.), Larry Clark (USDA), Martin Mendoza (USDA), Mitch Markus (INDNR), Norman Murray (MODOC), Bill Moritz (WMI), Benjamin Tuggle (UFWS), Joel Pedersen (NWTF), Chris Goudreau (NCWRC), Morgan Richardson (FLFWC), Brian Reichert (USGS), Ashley List (AKDFG), Frank Quamen (BLM), Brian Wakeling (NDOW), Jim Kurth (USFWS), Bert Frost (NPS), Sarah Quinn (NPS), Jennifer Cipolletti (ABC), Karen Clark (USFWS), Ernest Cook (NLC), Mark Humpert (AFWA)

### **Scheduled Discussion Items**

The meeting convened at 10:09am.

Jim Douglas-Asked everyone to introduce themselves.

### Wildlife Services Report

Martin Mendoza-The latest estimate for feral swine is that about \$1.5B in damage is done to agriculture and property every year. Progress is being made reducing and eradicating swine. We categorize a state's population from 1-5 (5 is for the highest populations). Before changing a category, we talk to the state fish and wildlife agency to evaluate and make that determination. During the past year Maryland and New Jersey were moved to elimination status, (i.e. no feral swine in 2 years). Iowa and Maine will move from level 1 to detection status, which entails 2 years of monitoring. Oregon has moved from level 3 to 2. Thirteen states have changed status. Swine brucellosis and pseudorabies have been detected in feral swine. A national survey will be conducted in 2019 to assess damage to agriculture. The report will be

available at the end of the year. A rabies barrier has been implemented from Alabama to Ohio. In Puerto Rico, after the hurricane rabies has been detected in mongoose. We will be conducting a study in 2019 using an oral vaccine. We are working with the Centers for Disease Control on a safety risk assessment. We are working with EPA on issues associated with sodium cyanide. We will identify human exposure and enhance our guidelines. The national research center has said the risk is low. We have implemented a half mile use restriction. We will not use sodium cyanide within a half mile of any residence. We are going through re-registration. We are working with the USFWS on double-crested cormorant control processes. Four scoping meetings have been held to discuss and better understand the impacts and cost to free swimming fish. The meetings have been good, we expect a report in the next several months. The guidelines have changed for the Wildlife Service Advisory committee. We have solicited nominations for the council. We expect to hear back soon and hope to have a meeting before the end of the year. In 2019 we are planning an aerial bait drop to control brown tree snakes and we are continuing research on canine detection dogs.

#### Multiagency MOU on Aircraft-Wildlife Strikes

Martin Mendoza-The aircraft wildlife strike MOU has expired. We are working to put a new one in place between USDA, DOD, FAA, EPA, FWS, AFWA and an aviation group. There was a need to discuss with FWS ecological services which has resulted in a delay. The FAA, Wildlife Services and FWS met and agreed to new language on threatened and endangered species to allow the MOU to meet its intended original purpose. The final draft will be circulated soon and we hope to have final signatures by the end of October or early November. We are undergoing litigation on carnivore control to conserve game populations.

Larry Clark-Sodium nitrate has been identified as the toxicant of choice for feral hogs. We ran field trials in Texas. One of the issues we have faced is the active ingredient produces an off taste and crumbles could get outside the bait box. Migratory birds could be impacted. We are testing better microencapsulation. The EPA is requiring additional testing which will take two more years and cost \$1.8M. We are taking genetic samples of feral hogs. Human transport for hunting is the highest risk factor. We have been contacted by Minnesota and Oklahoma about administrative actions so we are providing data for their cases. We are looking at magnetic bait boxes for bears, machine learning using real life photos and are examining product development. Two big future concerns are bioaccumulation of pesticides and gene technologies in wildlife. Gene technologies are being used in passive ways like e-DNA but gene blocking and other technologies are being developed. Social license is the big issue. Regulation will come. A symposium at the TWS meeting will look at what's on the horizon.

Jim Douglas-On the wildlife strike MOU, what affect does removal have on threatened and endangered species?

Martin Mendoza-The MOU clarifies jurisdiction and says that issues related to threatened and endangered species will be brought to a working group for discussion. It lays out how to work together to resolve issues.

Jim Douglas-Will the MOU be executed next month?

Martin Mendoza-We will send the final draft to you and the committee.

Jim Douglas-What is the new timeline for sodium nitrate approval, late 2020 or 2021? Will labels in non-bear range be approved first?

Larry Clark-Sodium nitrite activates fast so we can't use dye. We think the risk to people is low unless they are eating bait from the gut pile. Waivers have been denied.

Clayton Wolf-How about the Texas study?

Larry Clark-We will reformulate the product and will be testing in Australia then come back here. Next spring we plan to start testing in Alabama.

#### Human/Wildlife Conflicts Working Group Report

Brian Wakeling-Copies of the Human-Black Bear Conflicts publication were distributed. The final document will be a Human Wildlife Interactions monograph with 2500 copies printed. The next publication in the queue is Methods for Managing Deer in Populated Areas. We request that the committee approve before moving forward with publication. If the committee approves we will work with the Berryman Institute to publish. The peer review process could result in some changes but we would ensure there are no major changes without committee input. Would the committee like a longer review period? One additional project in the works is a report on Managing Coyote Conflicts. We will have an outline in March and will share with the committee then.

Jim Douglas-It is value added that the working group is creating useful products. I've asked the Executive Committee to see how they would like to proceed. They said if the publications are not prescriptive but show a full array of best practices. Since they are peer reviewed they can be approved by this committee and added to the committee report for approval by the Business Committee. We need to have a discussion, if we should move forward now or need further review. What is the will of the group?

Clayton Wolf-A little more time to review would help.

Brian Wakeling-The best practice documents are written by a taskforce of agency staff. When we submit for publication, blind reviewers review the document.

Clayton Wolf-My question is policy, should that discussion happen now or after publication.

Brian Wakeling-The working group checks to make sure no policy changes are made. There is a disclaimer in the front of the publication that this is not policy. We explain that best practices can vary geographically.

Jim Douglas-These are recipes without advocating for a meal. They are not prescriptive. We could take a motion that we further distribute to Directors and members of the committee and work towards finalizing in March.

Clayton Wolf-I move to accept the motion, John Bowers seconded. Motion passed.

Jim Douglas-Lets set 60 days as the deadline for review. Mark Humpert will send out.

Clayton Wolf-The Chronic Wasting Disease best management practices had the same caveats but was still controversial. It would be best to get comments sooner rather than later.

### Landscape Conservation Working Group

Jim Douglas-This work emanated from a meeting in December between the AFWA Executive Committee and the FWS Directorate on several topics including the future of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. The president of AFWA asked that I form a working group. This was a hybrid between a president's taskforce and a committee working group. We ran through the committee so we would have access to AFWA staff and interested parties from the committee. We carefully selected working group members from regional associations and staff from the states, FWS and selected NGO's. It was helpful to have a small group with regional leadership. The charge was to develop a white paper to examine challenges and successes using case studies and develop recommendations on best practices. We also communicated collaborative conservation opportunities between the FWS, states and partners. Further charges were given at the North American. We facilitated a conversation with the regional associations and explored how important partners can come into the conversation by holding a forum in Nebraska last summer. Lastly, we developed guiding principles and a resolution.

Mark Humpert-Gave a presentation highlighting the white paper addendum and resolution.

Ernest Cook-The Network for Landscape Conservation would like to continue working with AFWA and the working group.

Benjamin Tuggle-This working group allowed us to have difficult discussions, thanks for that. We are mobilizing the regional associations on how to best move forward. One size does not fit all. Once we were not burdened by geography, we were able to work together. The resolution sets a foundation or baseline and flexibility. Thanks for your leadership. The FWS and other agencies are committed to this approach.

David Whitehurst-I move to pass the resolution.

John Bowers-This adds consistency on landscape scale partnerships.

David Whitehurst-I move to amend the resolution to include John's suggestion.

John Bowers-I second. The motion passed unanimously.

Jim Douglas-There was a lot of consensus that we need to strengthen our partnership with the Network for Landscape Conservation and other government organizations. There is a question about how and when that will happen. We will have a new AFWA president and will discuss with him or her how that might happen. Could be a standing working group, or committee, we need to explore this.

There was an action of affirmation for the chair for leading this important piece of work. Your leadership style allowed us to establish flexibility. We should go on record that this is an outstanding piece of work.

Jim Douglas-Thanks for the words. Those on the working group were pulling in the same direction and put other things aside to get good work done.

### Update on Department of Interior Reorganization

Jim Kurth-Secretary of Interior Zinke has an interest in applying lessons from the military for restructuring the Department of Interior. The first draft was built on watersheds. The secretary sent a reprogramming request to Congress to establish 12 regions. After the 30 day period, we sent

communication to employees on the reorganization. A conference call will be held with members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) tomorrow. Within 30 days the SES will get together to elect a regional facilitator. Within 45 days the facilitator will meet with the secretariat and the regional facilitator will work on six regional priorities. Within 75 days the facilitator will make recommendations on authorities and other issues. The executive resource board will determine who the interior regional directors will be. There are still questions about who the interior regional directors will report to. There are some complications (e.g. NWR and listing of ESA must be done by the Director of FWS).

Jim Douglas-I appreciate the update. Creation of new boundaries creates more questions at the beginning. It would be beneficial to keep communication open on this so interested parties can be helpful.

Jim Kurth-We are learning as we go. We should read Leopold's writing on administration.

#### Update on Bats & Proposed Working Group

Mylea Bayless, Jeremy Coleman and Brian Reichert-White-nose syndrome is spreading rapidly, it is now found in 33 states and 7 provinces. The management of bat populations by state fish and wildlife agencies has increased greatly in complexity over the past 10 years due to several new challenges. Before 2006, management of bat populations was largely habitat focused, with emphasis on protecting roosts and providing suitable foraging and watering sites. Bat populations are now threatened throughout much of North America by White-nose Syndrome (WNS) and by collision with wind turbines at levels that have prompted new ESA listing proposals and increased attention to bat species within State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs). In a recent review of SWAP data, Bat Conservation International (BCI) noted that every bat species (n=47) in the United States is listed as a species of special concern in at least one SWAP, many are listed in every state within their range, and the overall number of species identified as special concern nationwide increased in the 2015 revisions relative to the original 2005 SWAPs. This observation coupled with the collaborative national response to WNS and the growing recognition of the important pest management services that bats provide in support of the U.S. agricultural industry has led to increased support for a multistate coordinated effort for managing and conserving North America's bat populations. In 2015, a Letter of Intent related to efforts to promote conservation of bats between the United States, Mexico and Canada was signed by all three countries, further emphasizing a need for landscape scale collaboration toward the management of bat populations. As the volume and complexity of information needed by state agencies to make informed decisions regarding bat conservation has increased, it has become increasingly cumbersome to share and exchange information about bats within the current AFWA organizational structure. Information and interest in bats are currently broadly distributed across multiple AFWA committees including the AFWA Climate Change, Energy and Wildlife Policy, Fish and Wildlife Health, Invasive Species, Science and Research, Threatened and Endangered Species Policy, Wildlife Resources Policy, and Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committees. There is currently no AFWA committee or working group that serves as a single point of contact for bats within the AFWA organizational structure. This has led to inefficiencies and redundancies in information sharing and soliciting feedback that pertain to conservation and management of bats. Bats are considered across divisions within most State Wildlife Agencies, from wind energy permitting to non-game management, further complicating information exchange within and between agencies. We propose the creation of a bat conservation working group at

AFWA to facilitate an AFWA State-Federal Interagency Bat Conservation Forum at the March 2019 North American Wildlife Management Meeting. We propose the following charge:

*Plan and implement an AFWA State-Federal Interagency Bat Conservation Forum for the March 2019 North American Wildlife Management Meeting to generate discussion between the leadership of state, provincial, and federal agencies on topics relevant to bats and bat conservation. Forum will focus on discussing best practices and current scientific knowledge for managing threats to bats and provide a platform for robust discussion surrounding regional/national initiatives for monitoring and sharing information on bats such as the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) and the North American Bat Conservation Alliance (NABCA). Additional topics may include White-nose Syndrome disease response and wind energy development threats. Maintain active liaison with appropriate state and federal agency offices, conservation organizations, and state and regional associations whose missions have a specific focus on bats.*

Jim Douglas-This committee has been serving as a forum for bat conservation, there is not a more logical home. This committee works on a diversity of issues, most recently we took on landscape conservation. I'm empathetic to the proposal to establish a bat working group under this committee. The working group will need to be active. I support the recommendation to establish a bat working group.

Ben Tuggle-Would the forum be an add-on or would it take place during the North American conference. I would like the working group to discuss how it will meet the intended outcomes.

David Whitehurst-We've looked at committee structures in the past. Maybe some of these issues could be reported in the Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding committee. I see the need to create a bat working group and this committee is the right place for it. There could be some tweaks to the charter. You have some discretion on the language of the charter. We also need to find a more permanent home for landscape conservation, but I'm not sure of the approach.

Benjamin Tuggle-Excellent idea, FWS would be happy to support this effort through science applications.

Pat Kline-This would be a great home for all things bats. There are lots of bats needs including white-nose syndrome. The working group could distill and synthesize and lead to interagency collaboration.

Frank Quamen-I echo that.

Sara Quinn-The two major issues facing bats have not been well integrated.

Jim Douglas-We will form the working group.

#### Renewable Fuel Standard Relationship to Wildlife and Landuse

Bill Moritz-The Wildlife Management Institute has been working on renewable fuel standards for some time. We put together a white paper that I will distribute to the committee. This is an important issue, 40% of corn goes into ethanol production.

Jim Douglas-This is an important topic and needs more discussion.

Bill Moritz-If you have any suggestions or nuances relative to your state that would strengthen paper, send me comments.

Jim Douglas-We are happy to send the white paper out.

#### Update on Regional Monarch Conservation Strategy

Bill Moritz-The Mid-America Monarch Strategy has been presented to several committees. The strategy has been completed and approved. A letter was written to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to formally engage on monarch conservation. A conference this fall between MAFWA and the Monarch JV to discuss implementation. Work is also occurring on the western population.

Claire Beck-If you are working on monarch conservation, please put it in the monarch database to inform the listing decision.

Mitch Marcus-What is the date for the conference and where will it be held.

Claire Beck-The meeting will be held in Nebraska City, Nebraska in November.

Jim Douglas-I appreciate your good work.

#### Committee Work Plan

Jim Douglas-There has been some evolution in the variety and depth of work of this committee.

Chuck Sykes-It's a learning process, I have not been able to devote much time to AFWA yet. This will move to the top of my agenda. I got a lot out of this meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 12:02

#### **Action Items**

A resolution on landscape conservation was approved and advanced to the Business Committee

A bat working group was established

#### **Progress and Opportunities**

The Human Wildlife Conflict Working Group has drafted a best practices document on urban deer management that will be sent to committee members for review. An addendum and resolution on landscape conservation were approved. A new bat working group will work on priority issues related to bat conservation and host a forum at the North American in March.

#### **Threats and Emerging Issues Identified**

None identified.

#### **New Opportunities Identified**

None

**Submitted by:** Jim Douglas