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**Wildlife Resources Policy Committee Report**

Chair: Jim Douglas

Vice-chair: Chuck Sykes

Meeting of March 30, 2018

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Richmond, VA

**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.*

**Attending:**

Jim Douglas (NGPC), Clayton Wolf (TPWD), Todd Bishop (IADNR), Mark Alessi (ILDNR), Keith Gauldin (ALDCNR), Gildo Tori (DU), Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA), Jennifer Sheehan (ARFGFD), Joel Pedersen (NWTF), Brian Reichert (USGS), Brad Howard (NCWRC), Patrick Hogan (Southwick Associates), Greg Siekaniec (FWS), Mark Gudlin (TNWRA), Gray Anderson (VDGIF), Kevin Blakely (ODFW), Larry Kruckenberg (WAFWA), Keith Norris (TWS), Bryant White (AFWA), Elsa Haubold (FWS), Doug Austen (AFS), Martin Mendoza (APHIS-WS), Larry Herrighty (NJDFW), Mitch Marcus (INDNR), Mallory Martin (USGS), Mark Humpert (AFWA).

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

Meeting convened at 8:02 am.

Jim Douglas-Thanked committee members for attending. There is one addition to the agenda. Brian Reichert will give the update on NA Bats.

**Human/Wildlife Conflicts Working Group Report**

Bryant White-The Human Wildlife Conflict Working Group met on March 28th. Approximately 40 working members and guests attended. Progress on the development of best practices documents for managing human wildlife conflicts with urban deer and black bears was discussed. A final draft of the Human-Black Bear Conflicts paper has been approved by the working group and we would like approval of this committee so it be published and distributed to agencies for use. The intent is to submit the paper for publication in Berryman Institute Monograph series. A final draft of the Human-Deer Conflicts in urban areas paper will be ready by September. This paper will be submitted to the committee for approval in early August. We intend, at this time, to also submit this paper to the Berryman Institute for publication as a monograph. The working group also discussed potentially developing similar best practices documents for dealing with urban coyotes and funding and managing human-wildlife conflicts. Efforts to develop the urban coyote paper will begin soon. We will begin to immediately recruit experts to serve on an ad hoc group to write this document. There was also some discussion on developing a paper on how states manage human wildlife conflicts from caller through resolution. State and federal agencies reported on other human wildlife conflict issues and how they are being handled.

Jim Douglas-The human-bear conflict paper is a good and comprehensive document. I forwarded the position paper to Directors in the past. They are not sure what process was needed. It was decided if there is not agency dissent then we are good to go. We will post on the committee website and make it available as a publication.

Mitch Marcus-Did you discuss other species?

Bryant White-We discussed white-tailed deer and will be asking for approval of a paper in September. Coyotes will be the next issue that will be tackled. After that, we will look into how to fund human wildlife conflict programs. We are looking 2-3 years down the road for those papers.

Jim Douglas-The process has been unencumbered so far. I expect the same if there are no edits. Getting drafts out to this committee early and well in advance of the September meeting is important.

Bryant White-We should have a draft available on deer by July.

Larry Herrighty-I received a 92 page document on Sunday. You should allow more time for review.

Clayton Wolf-Is there any consternation among the working group members.

Bryant White-No controversy with the bear paper. We are avoiding the landmine issues.

**Landscape Conservation Collaboration**

Jim Douglas-In December, the AFWA Executive Committee met with the FWS Directorate for half a day and discussed several issues including access on National Wildlife Refuges for hunting and fishing and landscape conservation & LCC's. The President’s budget zeroed out funding for LCCs. There was fear and opportunity in the air. AFWA President Moore requested that a working group be formed. This working group is a hybrid between a working group and a president’s task force. After consulting with Virgil, I received the OK to organize a working group using members from the four regional fish and wildlife associations, several state directors, FWS staff and others. The charge of the working group is to examine existing landscape partnerships and review their governance structure, commonalities of success, approaches, partner roles and other attributes and synthesize into a white paper that identifies key challenges and lessons learned We met via conference calls and develop a white paper. Mark has a presentation that he will show.

Mark Humpert-The working group was comprised of seventeen members including Jim who served as the chair and included teams that represented each state fish and wildlife regional association. Each region completed a questionnaire for key partnerships in their region to identify key drivers, challenges and elements of successes for a white paper. Top drivers identified for doing landscape conservation included federal ESA listing, conflict resolution, regional species & habitat conservation, project prioritization, address key stressors and the need to address regulatory uncertainty. Key challenged included partnership boundaries, meeting fatigue, lack of funding, too many partners, dilution of purpose, diminished state role, insufficient communication, turf issues and personality conflicts. Key elements of success included strong governance structure, relevant organizations that were engaged and contributing, recognition of unique role/authority of states, adequate funding, agreement on needed science, complemented other efforts, supports State Wildlife Action Plans, has a coordinator, used performance measures, had a shared vision and agreement on boundaries. The white paper included the following recommendations:

1. Establish a Working Group between AFWA and FWS leadership to identify immediate opportunities to continue and expand work on shared landscape conservation priorities through state-led partnerships. Investments in leadership, collaborative approaches, decision-support tools, science, and agency capacity are critically needed.
2. The charter of the Landscape Conservation Working Group should be extended to continue the dialogue and develop additional resources that can be used by policy-makers in the coming year to assess and provide direction on landscape conservation. Alternatively AFWA could engage a partner like the Wildlife Management Institute to coordinate such an effort.
3. Host a forum to gather input from broader audiences including NGOs to seek input on the direction and approach to landscape conservation and develop specific policy recommendations related to funding needs and other challenges identified in this report.
4. Expand on the best practices developed in the Northeast to include all regions of the US.

Greg Siekaniec.-Alaska is engaged. Have you thought about how to change the dialogue with the administration? They zeroed out LCCs. There is a tug of war between the FWS and DOI. Employees struggle when the budget is zeroed out.

Jim Douglas-The white paper identified successes and we have discussed these with FWS leadership. The recognition of the value of working with states has been enhanced greatly.

**Update on the North American Bat Monitoring Program**

Brian Reichert- White-nose syndrome has been reported in a number of new counties. Five million dollars is being invested in bat conservation through the Bats for the Future Fund. This includes $1.5M for research on treatments, $1.5M for other research and $1M for state capacity grants. There will also be a small grants program. We are trying to improve collaboration on monitoring. We made lots of progress last year. Eight additional states took part in the NA Bats monitoring program. We are working with FWS and Forest Service to pull together historical information on population counts to help guide surveillance.

Jim Douglas-It's important for the committee to get the information on bats. We welcome your presence at this meeting. If at some point there is a need for a working group on bats, we would be happy to have a discussion. We can always put information you have on the committee website. In Nebraska, we are in our fourth year of data collection. We understand the need to develop a long-term strategy for collecting data on bats.

**Wildlife Services Report**

Martin Mendoza-We continue to work on double-crested cormorant control. The NEPA was redone to allow the FWS to give out depredation permits for hatcheries. This permit does not apply to free swimming fish. We held some forums on the impacts of cormorants on free swimming fish. Guidance will be coming out. We helped Idaho Fish and Game implement a plan to use hunters and other methods to reduce wolf populations to a sustainable level. Wildlife Services removed 10 wolves in Idaho. We came out OK in the FY18 budget. The FY19 budget includes a proposal to reduce our budget by 50%. This would significantly reduce funding for feral swine control. We have successfully eliminated feral pigs in ID, MD, MN, NJ, WA and WI. We leave it up to the states to make a declaration on feral swine. We expect a number of other states to be declared feral swine free in the near future. We hosted a feral swine disease panel and discussed approaches to feral swine management. Three or four recommendations were made. I can provide the executive summary of the report. We conducted field trials in Texas on sodium nitrate toxicant. We have seen an 80% reduction in feral hog numbers. We found there are palatability issues with the carrier bait. We hope to have that resolved in time for spring trials in Alabama. We won't go forward without a fix. We are targeting 2023 for approval of sodium nitrite.

**Multiagency MOU on Aircraft-Wildlife Strikes**

Martin Mendoza-The FWS Migratory Bird office was initially involved in the discussion of the MOU. Ecological Services were brought into the discussion later and they raised concerns that designation of critical habitat could be impacted by the MOU. There were issues in New Mexico and Washington. Wildlife Services helped to facilitate those discussions. There is a meeting next week with the FAA. We hope to have a signed MOU by the AFWA meeting.

Jim Douglas-I’m glad to hear there is progress. There are lots of interested parties and some tough issues with authorities. Thanks for your efforts.

Martin Mendoza-Turnover in the FWS Migratory Bird Office has slowed things down. We expect Ron will be signing for AFWA.

Jim Douglas-Send our best to Janet.

**Update on the Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife**

Mark Humpert-The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in December by Congressman Jeff Fortenberry and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell. It now has 40 bipartisan co-sponsors. If passed the legislation would provide states with $1.3 billion annually to conserve species of greatest conservation need. A hearing on the bill was held in February in a subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee. It is hoped a companion bill in the Senate will be introduced soon. Your help is needed to work with members of Congress in your state to secure additional co-sponsors.

Jim Douglas-I can't underscore enough the importance of reaching out to your members of Congress. Let partners know how this will help with their priorities and the need for match. There is a prospect that this could move. Help build momentum with your governors and members of Congress

Gildo Tori-Less regulatory burden is an important part of this message.

**Update on Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy**

Ed Boggess-Monarch butterflies have been in decline for decades. Threats include loss of overwintering habitat, loss of milkweed, loss of nectar resources and impacts of insecticides. In 2014 we saw the lowest monarch overwintering counts. There was a directive to create a federal strategy. Monarchs were also petitioned for federal ESA listing and AFWA passed a resolution. In 2015, a joint MOU between AFWA and the FWS was signed on pollinator coordination. This led to the development of national strategy. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will make a decision on the listing petition by June 2019. A draft SSA will be sent out for comment in June. The FWS is developing a monarch conservation database which will open up in MAY. Conservation plans will feed into the evaluation and listing process. The strategy will be a living document and will use an adaptive approach incorporating new analysis as it becomes available. Most states have authorities for insects. We created map of monarach conservation units and identified the number of monarch stems needed. The Mid-American Monarch Strategy focused on the north core and south core areas.

Claire Beck-State monarch plans serve as building blocks for the strategy. The plan takes a regional scale approach and leverages state authority. The focus is on habitat creation and management. The goal is to support six hectares of overwintering monarchs. If you would like to review the plan, send an email to Ed or Claire at Ed.bogges@state.mn.us or claire.beck@dnr.state.oh.us.

Jim Douglas-Thank you Ed, you’ve accomplished a great amount of work in a short amount of time. I also want to thank the committee and ask you to contact Mark or me if you have anything to bring to the attention of the committee. You are also encouraged to check the committee website.

Adjourned at 9:52pm

**Progress and Opportunities**

Progress made toward achievement of Goal 2 in the Association's Strategic Plan:

* Protect state agency statutory authority for management of fish and wildlife resources within their borders
* Promote state, provincial, territorial and federal agency understanding of authority and jurisdictional issues.

**Threats and Emerging Issues Identified**

Non

**New Opportunities Identified**

Non

**Action Items**

None

***Submitted by***: Jim Douglas