

OVERVIEW: Fish & Wildlife Health Forum

The Challenge: Preparing for and addressing fish and wildlife diseases transmitted within wildlife populations is a growing struggle in fish and wildlife conservation, with major impacts to aquatic (including marine) and terrestrial ecosystems. Several emerging and ongoing disease issues continue to occupy the time and efforts of fish and wildlife scientists and managers, and may require inter-agency coordination. It is clear that such communication and cooperation are key in responses to disease outbreaks, with appropriate parties engaged and informed at the right stages. It is also apparent that there are opportunities for improvement, recognizing each agency's unique jurisdictional authorities and policies for wildlife and land management, availability of wildlife disease diagnostic facilities, and funding sources, as well as information sharing, to address these threats.

Purpose: To improve the potential to respond to wildlife disease events in the US through the evaluation of existing systems, policies, and procedures. This will be achieved at the forum through sharing and exchanging ideas and approaches among peers who are tackling various aspects of fish and wildlife disease control. Participants will examine opportunities for improved coordination, prevention, rapid response and early intervention.

We will convene:

- **Scientific experts** in selected emerging and persisting diseases
 - 1) address the state of the science, specifically what the latest evidence shows regarding opportunities for intervention within the epidemiology triad of host, pathogen, and environment components, and
 - 2) provide examples of what ideal scenarios might have looked like for prevention, early detection, rapid response, early interventions or mitigation
- **Management experts** for selected ongoing pathogen challenges to:
 - 1) Reflect on current systems, policies and procedures and highlight those areas that are working well, and those that could be improved, and
 - 2) Provide examples of management approaches in the context of host, pathogen, and environment that were effective, and may have application to other diseases

Participants will be able to learn from one another's experiences and to identify:

- 1) Commonalities among pathogens, as well as common unmet needs and goals
- 2) Unique challenges for particular pathogens, as well as specific and immediate needs for research, prevention, early detection and monitoring, rapid response, management and mitigation
- 3) Communication and intervention approaches that are working well and may be replicated across taxa or systems
- 4) Opportunities for increased efficiencies in coordination and communication across fish and wildlife agencies toward effective early detection, rapid response or containment, coordinated management
- 5) Opportunities for improved infrastructure, outreach, information and education

Outcomes: A post-conference report will summarize findings, and will include suggestions for improving existing systems, policies, and procedures. These findings will inform strategic directions for prevention and response to current or future fish and wildlife diseases, such as improved capacities, infrastructure, and multi-agency coordination.