



Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies International Collaborations 2016-2017



**XXI Meeting of the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for
Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management**

May 15-18, 2017, Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico

**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and State Agencies Report to the
Executive Table**

State Fish and Wildlife Agencies work throughout the world on conservation issues through both individual states and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). They understand that in order to achieve conservation goals, we must address conservation at the global scale.

Although it is not comprehensive, the following is a summary of ongoing international issues and projects with AFWA and state agencies participation.

**CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FLORA AND
FAUNA**

International treaties, agreements and initiatives offer opportunities and challenges to state fish and wildlife agency management. Understanding and engaging in international forums is important. Especially for CITES, the state agencies working relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is critical for both partners. The fish and wildlife agencies in the 50 states of the United States and their supporting regional and national organizations (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Associations of Midwest, Northeast, Southeastern, and Western Fish and Wildlife Agencies) have participated in CITES since its inception. The CITES Technical Work Group, comprised of one representative from each of the four Regional Associations, has worked in partnership with the USFWS to engage on CITES issues since 1992 and has proven to be both effective and efficient. The Work Group functions under the leadership of the Chair of the AFWA International Relations Committee and works closely with the AFWA International Director. They collaborate with USFWS to provide input on species status, management, and international trade to help ensure that actions taken through CITES support the conservation of wildlife in the U.S.

The CITES Technical Work Group has representatives from each Regional Association that include SEAFWA – Buddy Baker (LA); NEAFWA – Jack Buckley (MA); MAFWA – Carolyn Caldwell (OH); WAFWA – Jim deVos (AZ). They represented the state fish and wildlife agencies at the 17th Conference of the Parties in October 2016. The 17th Conference of the Parties was the largest CITES meeting to date, with more than 3,500 participants representing 152 countries and more than 200 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as the media. Delegates considered 90 agenda items and 62 species-listing proposals submitted

by 64 countries. The CITES Technical Work Group represented state and when applicable Provincial and Territorial interests at interagency meetings and the 17th Conference of the Parties regarding sustainable use of wildlife; and conservation of Polar Bear, American Eel, Corals, Peregrine Falcon, etc.

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN (NAWMP) AND NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT (NAWCA)

State Wildlife Agencies recognize the importance of full lifecycle conservation for migratory birds and have been addressing waterfowl conservation at the flyway level for decades. In support of NAWCA and in recognition of the importance of breeding habitat in both the United States and Canada, the state wildlife agencies have been contributing funds through conservation organizations, like Ducks Unlimited, who match the money and put it to work on wetland and waterfowl projects. NAWCA requires non-federal funds as match, and this incentive helps partners to triple or quadruple funding important breeding habitat projects.

Since 1986, State wildlife agencies have contributed tens of millions of non-federal match to the AFWA initiative for Canadian NAWMP/NAWCA projects. In 2015-2016, 37 states contributed a total of \$3,063,140. Ducks Unlimited matches each dollar from the State agencies before the funds are matched again with NAWCA funds. Canadian partners in turn provide additional match, thereby multiplying the impact on the breeding grounds of each state's contribution at least four to five-fold.

The outlook for 2016-2017 contributions from State wildlife agencies is very positive. Alabama is increasing the price of their duck stamp and will increase their contribution to Canada; New Mexico is contributing funds for the first time; Arizona is increasing its funding to \$50,000; and Texas is considering increasing its contribution to \$450,000 for FY17. It is anticipated that at least 42 states will contribute to waterfowl breeding ground projects in Canada.

The TPWD - Ducks Unlimited cooperative agreement for \$50,000 helped fund DUMAC's project at La Reforma Ranch in Tamaulipas, to enhance freshwater wetlands in the coastal plateau. Texas plans to continue to provide funds through this cooperative agreement.

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION ACT (NMBCA)

In 2011, there were 47 million birdwatchers – about 20 percent of the population. Expenditures associated with birding generated nearly \$107 billion in total industry output, 666,000 jobs, and \$13 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenue. Through the NMBCA, partnerships have received more than \$58 million for 510 projects in 36 countries and at least 28 U.S. states, but threats such as habitat loss are increasing, and demand continues to exceed available funding.

Numerous state agencies through Southern Wings or through their own projects are involved in conservation projects in the U.S. and Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean through the NMBCA. In addition, Arizona Game and Fish Department staff participates in the proposal review process.

The NMBCA IMPACT Program targets 13 highly threatened Neotropical migratory bird species, with the goal of achieving a **measurable biological improvement** in these species over the next 5-10 years. All of the 13 species identified are priorities to state fish and wildlife agencies such as Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. They are all considered Species of Greatest Conservation Need in at least 15 and upwards of 32.

In 2016, over \$4 million NMBCA grants funds supported 32 conservation projects across the Americas. The funds leveraged over \$16 million in additional private funding.

JOINT VENTURES

State wildlife agencies have an active role in supporting international partnerships in many of the Bird Habitat Joint Ventures, by sitting on management boards, providing technical expertise, or, in some cases, collaborating in specific projects.

The Sonoran and Rio Grande Joint Venture are bi-national Joint Ventures that continue to work collaboratively across the U.S./Mexico border. Other Joint Ventures like the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV) and the Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV) have formal international collaborations with partners in Mexico. State wildlife agencies sit on the boards of and participate actively in all of these Joint Ventures.

The Rio Grande Joint Venture (RGJV) continues to work collaboratively across its U.S.-Mexico geography.

- The Rio Grande Joint Venture is working with our partners in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo region of Southwest Texas, Chihuahua, and Coahuila to develop, secure funding for, implement, and monitor riparian and grassland rehabilitation projects on public and private lands in priority watersheds.
- The Rio Grande Joint Venture hosted a binational meeting with bird conservation partners in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, on January 12, 2017. The purpose of the meeting was to re-engage partners in Mexico and introduce the RGJV to potential new partners. Fifty-two people representing 30 organizations people attended the meeting which featured presentations on conserving grassland, riparian, and aquatic habitats for birds, other wildlife, and people. The presentations were followed by robust discussions about how to improve conservation methods and outcomes. Overall, the feedback from participants was very positive, making this an important step toward improving coordination and achieving shared conservation goals.
- The Rio Grande Joint Venture funded a project that was completed by Pronatura Noreste in October 2016 investigating goat grazing impacts on grasslands and shrublands of the El Tokio Grassland Priority Conservation Area in Mexico. The results of this project will help prescribe goat grazing best management practices to minimize impacts on the endangered Worthen's Sparrow and inform our biological planning for this species and other grassland birds in the area.

- The RGJV is leading efforts to develop a Conservation Investment Strategy for the Chihuahuan Desert Grassland Priority Conservation Areas in Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico. This will facilitate collaborative, adaptive management of critical wintering habitat for grassland birds, including establishing goals and tracking progress toward grassland bird and habitat objectives.
- The RGJV helped coordinate a binational team of federal, state, NGO, and academic partners to conduct the second annual Red-crowned Parrot survey in south Texas. Partially prompted by its proposed listing, significant interest has been generated in a better understanding of the species' population status, threats and critical conservation needs throughout its range of distribution in Texas and in Mexico.
- With the support of RGJV staff, partners at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León successfully submitted a proposal to restore up to 400 acres of native habitat for the endangered Worthen's Sparrow in Nuevo León, México. Population dynamics will also be determined through monitoring of reproductive success, bird census, and banding.
- Active collaboration continues with a diversity of Mexican and international partners on the development of conservation plans for the Reddish Egret and the Red-crowned Parrot in México and the U.S.
- Conservation planning for priority birds and Monarch butterfly in northern Mexico is being coordinated with partners PNE, CONANP, and key regional stakeholders.
- The RGJV continues to support NAWCA and NMBCA management and conservation projects proposed and implemented by partners in Mexico.

SOUTHERN WINGS

2016 marked the hundred year anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Signing of the treaty recognized that conserving migratory birds — which cross international boundaries as part of their annual life cycle — calls for international collaborations. The treaty set the cornerstone for innovative solutions and tools that have enabled waterfowl populations to grow and thrive. Just as successful waterfowl conservation required new strategies and approaches, we now need new and innovative solutions and tools to reverse the declines of hundreds of migratory birds throughout the Western Hemisphere as we embark on another 100 years of conservation.

Southern Wings is one of these tools. It facilitates state fish and wildlife agency participation in conservation of migratory birds on their breeding, migration, and nonbreeding sites. Southern Wings and its partners help to focus vital conservation funds on nonbreeding and migration sites for more than one-half of North America's breeding birds; such sites include forests, wetlands, and grasslands that face continually mounting pressures

Southern Wings:

- offers an easy, transparent, and flexible process for states to effectively conserve their migratory bird species of greatest conservation need when they are not in the U.S.;
- is a critical complement to in-state investment on migratory bird stop over and breeding habitats;
- leverages limited state funds;

- identifies strategic, biologically relevant projects with high quality partners that provide the most bang for your conservation buck;
- helps keep species off the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by addressing annual life cycle conservation needs; and
- provides an effective and efficient way to engage in successful conservation partnerships and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and other funding sources.

Southern Wings projects:

- implement objectives that are biologically relevant to the states;
- aim to take action on high priority objectives in critical habitats for state priority migratory bird species;
- protect your in-state investments through full-life cycle conservation; and
- work with partners that have an established and proven track record.

Thirty-one states participate in the Program (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and NEAFWA [Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and DC]). **Since its inception, state agencies and their in-state partners have contributed over \$1,500,000 USD and over \$1 million in-kind leveraging millions of additional funds.** All state contributions are matched at a minimum of 100% by non-state funds before directly supporting on-the-ground projects.

Southern Wings has demonstrated clear successes in protecting and managing crucial wintering habitat for priority species including Cerulean, Golden-winged and Prothonotary Warbler, Bicknell's and Wood Thrush, as well as a suite of grassland birds including Long-Billed Curlew and Mountain Plover. Oklahoma, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa focused on grassland conservation and restoration in Northern Mexico. Over 100,000 acres of grasslands have been secured for conservation. Laguna Madre located on the Gulf Coast just south of the U.S. border is an important stop over and wintering habitat for Migratory shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of Red heads. Texas Parks and Wildlife along with other partners restored 62 acres of mangroves. The Caribbean coast of Guatemala is an important area that supports at least 153 species of neotropical migrants during the nonbreeding season. Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee and Texas have helped conservation almost 9,000 acres that are now being managed for shared species. The Yucatan Peninsula is a critical area for songbirds and waterbirds including many waterfowl. In collaboration with work done by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Missouri and Tennessee worked with local partners in the Yucatan to conserve key habitat. The National Audubon Society, The Bahamas National Trust, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries are some of the partners involved in Piping Plover conservation in the Bahamas. Here we have the opportunity to protect and manage habitat used by 20% of the wintering piping plover population. A huge success this year was the declaration

of the 113,000 acre Joulter Cays national park. However, not insignificant is the continued monitoring and research being conducted.

The Southern Wings Program works with National Audubon Society, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Birdlife International, Vermont Center for EcoStudies, American Bird Conservancy, and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act in the US. Our in-country partners include FUNDAECO, Reserva El Jaguar, Bahamas National Trust, Fundación Lomo Quite Espuela (FLQE), Fundación Proaves, Pronatura Noreste, Pronatura Noroeste, Amigos de Sian Ka'an, Sociedad Ornitológica Hispaniola, Osa Conservation, and Asociación Armonía.

CONSERVATION BUSINESS PLANS FOR BIRDS

The bird conservation community has embraced annual life-cycle conservation of birds and is advancing the development of conservation business plans or investment strategies to guide bird conservation funding and action in particular habitats. Business strategies differ from standard conservation plans by focusing on a set of well-developed actions that link funding to specific, measurable conservation outcomes, rather than producing long lists of possible actions, some of which may not be clearly defined. The plans are a way to create a unified vision for full life cycle needs and how to address them with innovative approaches through the business plan approach. The results are intended to guide future conservation activities by conservation practitioners, educators, state and federal agencies, philanthropic organizations and researchers. Numerous plans are now being developed.

A more detailed discussion about the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Plan can be found below. The Pacific shorebird business strategy is nearing completion. Funding is being provided by the Packard Foundation, National Audubon, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A number of partners attended a workshop in January 2017 in Mexico where they discussed the Chihuahua Grasslands Conservation Business Plan. This two day workshop brought grassland experts together from Mexico and the US.

ATLANTIC FLYWAY SHOREBIRD BUSINESS STRATEGY

All the states within the flyway that deal with shorebird conservation were involved in the development of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Strategy Phase I. The Plan was finalized in 2015 and can be found [here](#). The goal of this conservation strategy is to create a long-term platform for stability and recovery of fifteen focal species identified. The cumulative impact of the projects developed herein, will increase current shorebird population levels by 10%, by 2025, at a cost of approximately \$90 million. NFWF has developed an [initiative](#) to help implement the Plan. Other partners and states are also actively involved.

STATE OF THE NORTH AMERICA'S BIRDS REPORT

The U.S., Canada and Mexico North American Bird Conservation Initiatives (NABCI) prepared the 2016 tri-national State of the Birds Report. The report was released on May 18, 2016 at the XXI Meeting of the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and

Management in Ottawa, Ontario in conjunction with the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty between Canada and the U.S., and the 80th anniversary of a similar treaty between Mexico and the U.S. This event was headed by Canada's Environment and Climate Change Minister, Catherine McKenna. The report is based on the first-ever conservation vulnerability assessment for all 1,154 native bird species that occur in Canada, the continental United States, and Mexico. State fish and wildlife agencies and AFWA helped develop the report and provided outreach support as members of both the Steering Committee and Communications Team.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK:

AFWA sits on the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) Hemispheric Council to help conserve shorebirds with partners throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Hemispheric Council met in April 2017. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network is a conservation strategy launched in 1986 with the designation of the first site, Delaware Bay in the United States. The Network aligns with the simple strategy that we must protect key habitats throughout the Americas in order to sustain healthy populations of shorebirds. There are currently 95 sites in 15 countries, from Alaska in the northernmost United States to Tierra del Fuego in southernmost South America. More than 33 million acres (over 13 million hectares) of shorebird habitat have been designated and are being conserved by WHSRN partners. (<http://www.whsrn.org>)

THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. AFWA represents the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies on the U.S. National Ramsar Committee. The Committee has helped designate 38 Ramsar wetlands in the U.S., supports sites needs for outreach and communication, and helps where possible on addressing threats to Ramsar sites. (<http://usnrc.net>). AFWA's International Relations Director participated in the most recent U.S. National Ramsar Committee meeting in February 2017. The focus of the meeting was on how to support the current sites, how to strategically grow the number of sites, and what the priorities of the Committee should be.

TRILATERAL COMMITTEE FOR WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT:

AFWA and individual State Wildlife Agency representatives actively participated in the Tables of the 2016 Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral) that took place in Ottawa, Canada. In addition, state agencies also participate at the Executive Table.

GRASSLAND BIRD INITIATIVES

In response to the urgent need to address grassland habitat loss and grassland bird declines, in September 2016 the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Bird Conservation Committee created a Grassland Work Group to 1) develop a resolution highlighting the grassland/grassland bird crisis and urging states to recommit to grassland conservation; 2) summarize current grassland bird programs and develop recommendations for addressing declines in the broad suite of grassland birds; and 3) explore options for funding grassland projects and encourage prioritization of grassland conservation funding. While initially the program summaries will focus on the US, opportunities for expanding these efforts into Canada and Mexico exist as a second phase of the project. The anticipated project completion date is September 2018.

FERAL AND FREE-RANGING CAT EFFORTS

Outdoor domestic cats threaten biodiversity through predation and disease; predation by domestic cats is the primary direct, anthropogenic threat to birds in the US and Canada. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies formed an interdisciplinary work group to: 1) identify current state regulations on feral and free-ranging cats; 2) propose regulatory language for states wishing to clarify their role in managing free-ranging cats on state lands managed for wildlife; 3) provide examples of successful methods for cat removal from conservation lands, and 4) provide examples of successful wildlife advocate/cat advocate partnerships. This group has compiled existing regulations across all 50 states and is evaluating whether and how these regulations are enforced. The anticipated project completion date is September 2017.

HUNTER/BIRDWATCHER/PUBLIC SURVEY: WETLAND/WATERFOWL ATTITUDES

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, in partnership with the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, the Flyways, the US Geological Survey, and other partners, is conducting a national survey of hunters, viewers (birdwatchers), and the public, both to evaluate the awareness and perceptions of waterfowl and wetlands and to measure participation in recreational activities and conservation behaviors focused on wetlands and wetland-associated birds. Surveys have been administered to all three constituent groups in the US, and a preliminary report on US data is expected in early May. Canada will distribute Hunter/Viewer surveys in March.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BIRD CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

The US bird conservation community has many different organizations, agencies, and partnerships working on bird conservation at different scales, with many plans and other resources available for bird conservation support and planning. In October 2016, the US North American Bird Conservation Initiative released a revised website (nabci-us.org) that both serves as a hub or repository for national bird conservation information but also attempts to explain how the different partnerships, programs, and players fit together for all-bird conservation. The new NABCI website also better explains the role of the US NABCI Committee and hosts NABCI's key documents as well as information on its primary areas of focus.

FLYWAY COUNCILS

The Pacific, Mississippi, Central and Atlantic Flyway Councils are international bodies that include members from both the U.S. state agencies and the Canadian provinces. Each flyway is involved in international projects for waterfowl and other migratory bird conservation.

For example, biologists from state, federal, and provincial agencies conduct surveys each year to determine the status of waterfowl populations, evaluate habitat conditions, and to estimate waterfowl harvest. Banding programs are used to estimate survival and migration patterns. Data are used cooperatively to manage migratory game birds and play a paramount role in the annual establishment of hunting regulations. Primary continental waterfowl habitats are monitored during the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey in May. Biologists from federal, provincial, and state agencies survey areas via fixed-wing aircraft to evaluate the conditions of habitats in the north-central United States and southern Canada.

MEXICAN WOLF RECOVERY

From December 2015 to February 2017, state wildlife agencies from Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado participated in a series of recovery planning workshops for the Mexican wolf, sponsored by the FWS. The purpose of these workshops is to provide and review the most up-to-date scientific information available on habitat suitability modeling, population demographics, and prey availability for the recovery of the Mexican wolf. Representatives from Mexico's Wildlife Office (Dirección General de Vida Silvestre-SEMARNAT) and the Priority Species Office of CONANP, as well as independent scientists from the US and Mexico, have also participated in these workshops. Information gathered during these workshops will be used to develop the recovery criteria that will lead to the delisting of the Mexican wolf under the Endangered Species Act. The four state agencies have worked closely with the FWS to address concerns about the development of a Population Viability Analysis using the Vortex model and the analysis of Mexican wolf habitat throughout its historical range. These items had to be addressed before a legally-sufficient, science-based recovery plan could be finalized. A revised binational recovery plan for the Mexican wolf is expected to be completed by November 2017.

BORDER GOVERNORS CONFERENCE

The BGC was established in 1980 as a forum for dialog and cooperation among the 10 Border States; New Mexico spearheaded the establishment of the Wildlife Table in 2004. The Wildlife Table works closely with the federal wildlife agencies of both countries and made capacity building one of its priorities. Many of the bi-national projects discussed in this report evolved from this forum.

US Border State Agencies-Mexico Collaborations

Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD):

- Since 1996, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has been implementing wetlands conservation workshops in Mexico. Through the years, the Department has partnered with multiple agencies and groups from Canada, Mexico, and the United States, such as the Canadian Wildlife Service, the U.S. Wildlife Service, Mexico's Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), Ducks Unlimited de Mexico A.C. (DUMAC), Sonoran Joint Venture (SJV), the Ramsar Convention, the Society of Wetlands Scientists, several of the Pronatura organizations, and others. On November 2016 and February 2017, AGFD implemented two wetland delineation training workshops in the States of Sonora and Veracruz respectively.
- Arizona continued collaborating with the National University of Mexico (UNAM), the Janos Biosphere Reserve in northern Chihuahua, Mexico to implement conservation actions for the black-tailed prairie dog and black-footed ferret. The Janos Biosphere Reserve is a unique grassland ecosystem containing the largest prairie dog complex in North America. No spotlighting surveys for ferrets were conducted in 2016. Despite severe losses over the last few years, the prairie dog colonies seem to be rebounding, a trend that was confirmed during 2016 population evaluations. In addition, Arizona continued working with Sonora's Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development (CEDES) to monitor the status of the black-tailed prairie dog Las Palmitas colony in northern Sonora.
- On September 6-8, 2016, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, in collaboration with Sonora and Arizona implemented an environmental education workshop focused on Sonoran Desert wildlife. Fourteen educators from Sonora participated at this workshop that took place at the Museum facilities in Tucson, Arizona. Arizona provided financial support for the Sonora educators to cover their visit to this workshop.
- In 2016, AGFD and Mexican partners surveyed known and suspected locations for the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (YBCU). The species is listed as Threatened due to the widespread habitat loss of riparian habitat in the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. In addition, AZ conducted call playback surveys during breeding season using the USFWS protocol.
- In 2016, Arizona continued to finance thick-billed parrot (TBPA) conservation actions accomplished by Pronatura Noroeste/ITESM: conducted 80 different surveillance transects on 649 hectares to monitor for wildfires, diseased trees, and illegal cattle grazing; documented habitat characteristics surrounding 144 TBPA nesting-trees; located 101 active TBPA nests and actively monitored and managed 23 accessible ones; radio-collared and tracked two TBPA individuals in Madera to better understand home ranges and identify foraging/drinking sites; monitored 150 TBPA artificial nest boxes; exchanged experiences and provided technical information to two forest management outfits to incorporate best management practices to benefit migratory species and TBPA.

Chihuahua

- The Chihuahua Wildlife Department helped in the organization of the workshop on Wildlife Management in the Chihuahuan Desert to be held in April in Alpine, Texas.

Coahuila

- Played a leading role in the Workshop on Building Partnerships to Promote Monarch Conservation in Priority Habitats along the Migratory Route in Mexico and the United States held in May, 2016, in Monterrey, Nuevo León.
- At the January 2017 meeting of the Rio Grande Joint Venture, presented a progress report on the State's feral hog control program with a focus on eradication from some areas where complete containment seems feasible.
- Participated in a coordination meeting of the state wildlife agencies from Northeast Mexico and Texas which was hosted by Nuevo Leon in January 2017.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF):

- New Mexico has worked over the years with Mexico under an ongoing MOU to facilitate capture and exchange and technical guidance between Mexico and New Mexico. The Department has exchanged New Mexico pronghorn for Mexican bighorn sheep and biologists continue to communicate on the status of the animals exchanged. Over the past year the Department began conversation with the country of Mexico to conduct a trade of pronghorn from New Mexico for Gould's turkeys in Mexico. Gould's turkeys are listed as New Mexico State threatened species and additional birds from Mexico could help assist in the eventual delisting of the bird.
- Over the last year NMDGF has been working in cooperation with the USFWS, AGFD, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Utah Division of Wildlife, SEMARNAT, and other partners in Mexico to help revise the USFWS, Mexican Gray Wolf recovery plan. As part of this process representatives from NMDGF traveled to Queretaro, Mexico to gain a better understanding of Mexican wolf habitat suitability, and prey availability along the Sierra Madre Occidental.

Nuevo León

- Nuevo León Parks and Wildlife Department
 - Hosted a coordination meeting among the state wildlife agencies for Northeast Mexico and Texas. Agreement was reached on continued collaboration to exchange information and to work cooperatively on common issues such as feral hog control.
 - Has established a citizens' advisory council and is developing a program to recognize landowners' restoration and conservation efforts for sustainable use. Nuevo León officials attended TPWD's landowners recognition dinner in Austin, Texas.

- Participated in the meeting of the Rio Grande Joint Venture and in the workshop to Build a Shared Vision for Conservation Investments in the Chihuahuan Grasslands, Mexico.
- Department of Sustainable Development and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) are teaming-up to hold a conference on green infrastructure development in June in Monterrey, Nuevo León.
- Consejo Estatal de Flora y Fauna de Nuevo León conducted a workshop to introduce landowners to birdwatching as a means for ranch income diversification.

Sonora

- The Governors of Arizona and Sonora signed a Memorandum of Understanding between both states for the development and implementation of an environmental strategic plan in the Megaregion that includes environmental and wildlife issues.

Tamaulipas

- Consejo Estatal de Vida Silvestre de Tamaulipas participated in the coordination meeting of the Rio Grande Joint Venture and has developed a landowners' incentives program for feral hog control.
- The Tamaulipas Fishing Association, Universidad Tecnológica del Mar de Tamaulipas (UTMarT) and the Tamaulipas Fisheries Department have signed a cooperative agreement with TPWD to provide internships at TPWD fisheries installations and state parks for UTMarT students, implement capacity building projects with professors and fisheries staff and exchange information on best practices for bass tournaments.
- Tamaulipas began tagging Monarch butterflies last year, had a leadership role in the "Workshop on Building Partnerships to Promote Monarch Conservation in Priority Habitats along the Migratory Route in Mexico and the United States" held in May, 2016, in Monterrey, Nuevo León, and is promoting the NWF Mayor's pledge among local government along the migratory route.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD):

- Texas Senator John Cornyn introduced in March a bipartisan Senate resolution (S. Res. 102) emphasizing the importance of U.S.-Mexico bilateral cooperation and the strategic partnership of both countries. Arizona Senator John McCain is a co-sponsor.
- For FY 2017, Texas is considering increasing to \$450,000 the contribution to NAWMP/NAWCA projects in Canada.
- The Texas - Ducks Unlimited cooperative agreement for \$50,000 helped fund DUMAC's project at La Reforma Ranch, Tamaulipas, to enhance freshwater wetlands in the coastal plateau. Texas plans to continue to provide funds through this cooperative agreement.
- TPWD continues to keep Mexico informed regarding chronic wasting disease (CWD) in deer in Texas.

- TPWD is hosting a workshop for Mexican landowners, hunter education instructors and wildlife biologists on the management of wildlife in the Chihuahuan Desert, to be held in April 2017 at Sul Ross University and Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area. NMGF and AGFD are participating.
- Mexico Chapter of the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA-Mexico) held its annual meeting in Puebla in October 2016 and TPWD participated. Mexico's Hunting Federation, FEMECA, trained in IHEA standards in 2007 as a capacity building project of the Border Governors Wildlife Table.
- TPWD participated in the January 2017 meetings of the Rio Grande Joint Venture and in the workshop to Build a Shared Vision for Conservation Investments in the Chihuahuan Grasslands, Mexico.
- Texas signed a fisheries cooperative agreement with Tamaulipas to encourage capacity building and information exchange on best management practices. See "Tamaulipas" above for details.
- The Native Fish Conservation Network (NFCN) would like to strengthen Mexico's participation in the Native Fish Conservation Areas (NFCA) of the Chihuahuan Desert to develop a holistic, habitat-oriented approach to conservation of focal species, restore and protect habitat, restore habitat connectivity and reduce deleterious effects of non-native species. Cross border threats that require collaboration include habitat fragmentation, loss of natural flow regimen, reduced stream flow, channel narrowing and sedimentation, and groundwater pollution.
- TPWD and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) are organizing an Environment Summit in collaboration with the four Mexican neighboring states and SEMARNAT.
- Texas and IBWC are holding in April the Rio Grande Basin annual coordinated monitoring meetings and partner refresher training of the Clean Rivers Program.

Sea Turtle Conservation Program.

- For Fiscal Year 2016, TPWD provided \$200,000 (plus \$56,000 in state match) from the USFWS State Wildlife Grant Program to the Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville, TX, to support the Cooperative Bi-National Project to conserve, protect, restore and recover the endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle conservation work being conducted in Tamaulipas.
- During the 2016 Kemp's Ridley nesting season, 18,128 nests were registered from Tamaulipas beaches. This represents a 29.4% increase from 2015 values.
- 72.7% of the nests were from the Rancho Nuevo Beach.
- 861,756 hatchlings were released into the Gulf of Mexico (66.3% from Rancho Nuevo), a 25% increase from 2015.
- The first nest of the 2016 season was registered at the Tepehuajes Field Station on March 15. This is the earliest Kemp's ridley nesting recorded in the history of the Binational Kemp's Ridley Project since it started in 1978.
- The Gladys Porter Zoo has been awarded funding through the Deepwater Horizon Sea Turtle Restoration Program to assist in continuing the sea turtle conservation

work in Tamaulipas. The target for funding of this effort is \$450,000 per year for up to 9 years.

- Texas continues to participate in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo Conservation Cooperative Initiative led by USFWS and NPS on the Texas side and by CONANP on the Mexican side.
 - TPWD initiated the Transboundary Conservation Program along the Borderlands of Texas and Mexico by funding the Chihuahuan Desert Wintering Grasslands Bird research grant with the Borderlands Research Institute of Sul Ross University. The Principal Investigator has been hired from Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua and will begin this September.
 - The Rio Grande – Rio Conchos Landscape Conservation Design Pilot Area is one of three pilot areas selected to participate in the Desert LCC's collaborative effort to develop conservation goals and measurable objectives for focal resources; produce spatial data and cultural and economic information; visualize potential effects of climate change; and develop implementable adaptation responses to help achieve common goals in FYs 16 – 20. The pilot area includes protected areas in both the U.S. and Mexico and 29 Conservation Priority Areas (Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 2014). The major partners collaborating in this pilot area project include the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, World Wildlife Fund, and Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas as well as numerous private landowners, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions. The ecological stressors that the plan will address include invasive species, soil erosion, resource extraction and use, all in the context of climate change, which are contributing to regional habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Project objectives include: Identification of shared objectives and adaptation capacity through community outreach, engagement, and development, and testing and evaluation of adaptation strategies including: invasive species management, vegetation management, water management and erosion.
 - In October 2016, the Desert LCC held a partner meeting in Ojinaga, Chihuahua to develop a shared understanding of desired outcomes for the Rio Grande – Rio Conchos pilot area with partners located in Mexico. Representatives included Big Bend National Park, Rio Grande Joint Venture, World Wildlife Fund, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Irrigation Units from the Rios San Pedro y Conchos, University of Chihuahua, Fundación Rio Conchos, Colegio de Postgraduados - Montecillo, Chihuahua State Government - Wildlife Department, CONANP, Fundación Produce, CONAGUA, Municipality of Julimes, Municipality of Meoqui, SAGARPA, and Irrigation District 090 Ojinaga. Participants shared information about their conservation work and greatest conservation challenges, as well as discussed how the Desert LCC could assist in meeting those challenges. Partners prioritized working on invasive species control, water conservation, and exploring opportunities for establishing payment for ecosystem services. Partners also agreed on a framework for how to engage and communicate across the international border which included

- supporting the translation and exchange of key information on the Desert LCC website, technology to allow for international phone calls and webinars, and future meetings in both the U.S. and Mexico.
- Partners in the Rio Grande – Rio Conchos pilot area are planning for another workshop in the fall of 2017 to define conservation indicators, threats, and targets for evaluating and monitoring vegetative communities, invasive species, and other partner priorities.

MONARCH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION:

The state fish and wildlife agencies continue to work on the conservation of the Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*. Twenty states list the Monarch butterfly as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in their State Wildlife Action Plans. Ten additional states mention it in their state plans. Texas serves on the Monarch Butterfly Interagency High Level Working Group under the direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which is partnering with members of AFWA and MAFWA to integrate state plans and implementation activities into a flyway plan.

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- TPWD participated in Workshop on Building Partnerships to Promote Monarch Conservation in Priority Habitats along the Migratory Route in Mexico and the United States held in May, 2016, in Monterrey, Nuevo León, and continues to work on the development of a sister state park network for Monarch conservation.
- Through a NFWF grant, staff is restoring habitat at TPWD sites to benefit monarch and native pollinators.
- Native Pollinator Management Protocols have been developed for private landowners working to achieve Wildlife Tax Valuation for their property and enable landowners to manage specifically for monarchs and other native pollinators. TPWD participated in a meeting to outline the Mid-America Regional Monarch Conservation Plan. It was coordinated by NWF in Austin, Texas.
- Texan by Nature and partners are hosting the South-Central Monarch Symposium, May 31-June 1, 2017, in Austin, Texas.
- Texas Comptroller and TPWD continue to collaborate to identify research needs on monarch biology and conservation in the state. TPWD biologists participate on the Texas Comptroller Endangered Species Task Force Monarch Working Group.

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVES (LCC):

The LCCs extend beyond the borders of the United States into Canada and Mexico. Along the Canadian and Mexican border state agencies have been asked to co-chair the LCCs along with

the USFWS. Texas is member of two bi-national LCCs: Desert LCC and Gulf Coast Prairie LCC which have had serious outreach with Mexican partners in the past 18 months. Arizona, California and Nevada participate in the Desert LCC. Texas serves as the current Chair of the Desert LCC. Virginia, Iowa, Nevada, and North Carolina sit on the National LCC Council. Jeff Raasch also sits on the LCC Council as the representative of the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures. TPWD hosted the LCC Council at the Headquarters on April 25-26, 2016.

The GCPLCC continues to focus on the US side of their geography after some significant outreach to potential Mexican partners.

AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

Through AFWA, and Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), the states participate with partners in Mexico and Canada on amphibian and reptile conservation. The AFWA Amphibian & Reptile Subcommittee continues to closely track the salamander fungal pathogen, *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal), which has decimated fire salamander populations in The Netherlands and Belgium. It has also been detected in Germany, and now in a total of three species in the wild in Europe. It is apparently endemic in some Asian newt species, which serve as reservoirs, and could be moved via the pet trade. The January 2016 interim final rule issued by USFWS remains in effect, prohibiting both importation into the US and interstate transport of the 201 “injurious”-listed salamander species.

Surveillance for Bsal occurred in the US throughout 2016 and will continue in 2017, led by the US Geological Survey. So far, it remains undetected in North America; these surveillance efforts will aid in early detection and rapid response. Lastly, the Subcommittee has finalized a Bsal Rapid Response template, that can be customized at different scales (e.g., by management agency, management unit, or otherwise), which will be released in Spring 2016; it may also serve as a model that Canadian and Mexican agencies and conservation groups may consider adapting for their needs.

The Bsal issue underscored a major policy gap in the prevention and movement restrictions of wildlife pathogens in the US, in general. Only pathogens that impact livestock or agricultural species, or those that impact human health, can be regulated. AFWA has secured funding from a private funder to address urgent research needs regarding Bsal and other urgent pathogens, as well as to address coordination and communication needs, and explore long-term funding options for both research and emergency responses. This grant has just been initiated; additional progress will be reported next year.

The Southwest regional working group of PARC will hold their 2017 meeting June 1-4 in Denver, CO. In August 2016, the Southwest Habitat Management Guidelines technical publication was completed, and is available for purchase via Amazon. The group continues to work on outreach to Mexico and will offer stipends again to Mexican participants. The SWPARC regional species prioritization effort has been completed; information is available at <http://www.swparc.org/products/>. PARC’s Northwest regional working group includes partners from British Columbia, Alberta, and Yukon. They held a symposium on top amphibian

conservation challenges on March 1, 2017 in Arcata, CA, as part of the Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology, with good participation from Canadian colleagues.

Demand for the PARC technical publication, *Inventory and Monitoring: Recommended Techniques for Reptiles and Amphibians*, applicable to Canada and northern Mexico, was reprinted in Fall 2016, is available on [Amazon](#). The 2016 PARC annual report is available [online](#). PARC has completed a Strategic Plan which will be posted on the PARC website soon; we will focus on opportunities to strategically grow our partnership, and to engage in species and habitat conservation, including expanding efforts to identify Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Areas (PARCAs).

Please contact Priya Nanjappa (pnanjappa@fishwildlife.org) for further information regarding AFWA Amphibian & Reptile conservation efforts, or PARC activities.

TRAPPING WORK WITH CANADA

The United States and Canada continue to collaborate on the trap research efforts of their respective programs. For the US, Canada has provided invaluable data and research results, primarily on bodygrip traps, which have been used toward the development of Best Management Practices for Trapping in the US. The US has provided extensive data to Canada on restraining traps to allow certification of various foothold, foot encapsulating and cage traps through the Canadian program. Researchers collaborate annually on research agendas and field and lab results. Data sharing prevents the need for duplicating research efforts and provides for the efficiency of the respective programs. The two countries have plans to continue this important partnership as they work toward evaluating and developing capture devices that meet the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). Since the start of the respective testing programs in 1997, over 450 types of commercially available traps have been evaluated for 22 furbearer species. In the U.S., some 1,200 trappers and wildlife technicians, as well as numerous state agency biologists have participated in the testing program in various ways. Field projects for the capture of furbearers and evaluation of traps have been conducted in 43 states. The U.S. program, coordinated through the AFWA, has included routine information exchange with other wildlife researchers worldwide. Reports and resource material are available at the AFWA website, www.fishwildlife.org

CANADIAN WILDLIFE DIRECTORS COMMITTEE

The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) is composed of the wildlife directors and agency leads representing the jurisdictions/agencies (13 Provinces and Territories and Environment Canada, Parks Canada Agency, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) with responsibility for wildlife conservation in Canada. The role of the CWDC is to provide leadership in the development and co-ordination of policies, strategies, programs and activities that address wildlife and habitat issues of national concern and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. AFWA and state wildlife agency representatives attend this meeting each year. Last year the CWDC met in May 2016 and October 2016. AFWA's Executive Director, President, International Relations Director and Canadian Liaison attended the meetings.

RESILIENT LANDS AND WATERS INITIATIVE

The Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative was created in 2014 to recognize seven partnerships across the country as opportunities to build upon existing efforts to conserve and restore important lands and waters in discrete geographies and to make them more resilient to a changing climate. In November 2017, at the White House, AFWA helped [release a report](#) on the culmination of this Initiative.

This report and the [companion website](#) summarize the experiences of each of the partnerships and highlight some key challenges, successes, lessons learned, and recommendations to carry forward large landscape-scale conservation planning for climate adaptation. It also highlights many of the dynamic maps and tools that the partnerships have produced to help them identify priority conservation areas and actions in their landscapes. The report recommends that future landscape-scale conservation planning efforts address the challenges that climate change is likely to pose in meeting conservation and restoration goals.

The seven landscapes are: California Headwaters, California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, Crown of the Continent (northern Rocky Mountains), Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands (Lakes Huron & Erie), Hawai'i (West Hawai'i, West Maui, and He'eia (O'ahu)), Puget Sound's Snohomish River Watershed, and Southwest Florida.