

**Resident Game Bird Working Group**

**Chair: Breck Carmichael, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources**

**Vice-Chair: Karie Decker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission**

**12 September 2017**

**3:30 – 5:00 PM**

**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting**

**Snowbird Resort, Sandy, Utah**

**Agenda**

3:30 Call to Order/Introductions/Review Agenda

*Karie Decker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

3:35 Approval of Minutes from the March 2017 meeting

*Karie Decker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

*Motion by Todd Bogenschutes, second by Bill White. Motion passed.*

3:40 Subgroup Report- Survey of States on Monitoring Harvest and Hunter Numbers

*Scott Taylor, National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan*

*Karie Decker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

Brief background of survey – implement Action 3 in work plan.

Survey solicited information from states about availability of data related to hunter participation, harvest, and populations of resident game birds. All 50 states participated in the survey.

Draft report is on National Pheasant Plan website (not accessible to general public online at this point.

Potential to put up on AFWA website eventually).

**Action**: Next steps -request review by work group; but also ask for input on initial question identified in

Action/Activities # 3; feasibility of range-wide population and hunter participation index? Might depend

on the species? Also consider who should this data be available to? Or not available to? Other

considerations? Karie and Scott will draft review request and send through Breck.

Link to draft report: http://nationalpheasantplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AFWA-RGBWG-

Survey-Report-8-18-17-discussion-draft.pdf

3:55 Non-Government Partner and Management Initiative/Plan Updates

**National Wild Turkey Federation**

Mark Hatfield:

Becky Humphries is now CEO.

They recently finalized their fiscal year. September 1 marked completion of Year 5 of “Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt” and are happy to report that they are above their goals at this point. Last FY, 544,000 acres were enhanced or conserved; 113,000 acres opened to recreation and hunting opportunities. 21,000 acres of management recommendations. In the first 5 years, have conserved/enhanced 2.5 M acres (goal is 4M).

Will be hiring additional staff to manage R3 and are hosting event with DU, PF, NWTF focused on train the trainer R3 efforts. Recently signed second MOU with NBCI and continue partnerships with USFS. Also, they are 15th largest timber purchaser - expedites stewardship.

**Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever**

Scott Taylor:

Farm Bill is front and center. August field tours for Congressional staff. Up to 145 Farm Bill biologists across the country. PF has sponsored several fly-in events, bringing in chapter volunteers, landowners to speak about Farm Bill programs they have personal experience with.

**National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan**

Scott Taylor:

Management board meeting Tuesday morning. Discussed Farm Bill, funding, a project examining the economics of pheasant hunting and effects of CRP on hunter numbers and spending, and several other projects in progress. Pheasant Plan Partnership and NBCI working on national early successional CRP practice. Final product anticipated end of October. Management Board was in favor of supporting a second 3 year term.

**National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative**

Don McKenzie:

NBCI management board meeting Tuesday morning. Annual Bobwhite Almanac Report available. Includes conservation reports from all 25 NBCI states. Feature articles on states and their progress. Compile habitat mgmt. inventory. Issued FY17 Annual Report as well as 3-year final report on PR-funded activities and other activities. Have 5 year renewal commitment from several states to use PR funding.

Signed 2 renewal MOUs- one with NWTF, FSA. NBTC successfully held a joint National Quail Symposium in conjunction with the National Bobwhite Technical Committee and will consider that approach in the future. Tech Committee meets annually, and Symposium is every 5 years. CIP (Coordinated Implementation Program)- 3 years in, by next spring they will have 23 CIP focal areas in 20 states.

**North American Grouse Partnership**

Steve Belinda

Reestablishing and re-formalizing partnership agreements with multiple groups, including PF, NBCI. Looking for opportunities to help, collaborate. Serve as technical advisors to land trusts, etc, on sage grouse issues. Working with WAFWA on prairie chicken efforts. Working with Farm Bill partners to provide grouse-specific and native prairie information that can be advocated during development of next Farm Bill. Also working to establish policy committee and revisit policy statements, make them more user-friendly. They have policy position on captive rearing of sage grouse. Currently do not support it for augmentation, but do support efforts to develop tool to use in future. Don’t want to see as substitute for habitat management. Resurrecting prairie grouse partnership.

Note: Bill van Pelt- tasked group to look at other species that would benefit from conservation actions on flagship species.

**Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative**

San Stiver:

Spend significant time next year completing Sagebrush Conservation Strategy. Objective: make sure sage grouse conservation efforts compatible with other ecosystem uses. Upcoming RFP will deal with social science and economics; examine economic benefits of sagebrush ecosystems. Also interest in understanding motivations of western people and how to engage them as sagebrush stewards.

How do you categorize ecological services of sage brush ecosystem? Hopefully this will provide tools to evaluate what other ecosystems are worth.

**Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative**

Roger Wolfe

Recently completed Aerial surveys; final report indicates approx. 33,000 birds, which is up 34% from last year. Continued trend upward since drought of 2012. Conservation efforts include 147k acres conserved…primarily term but some permanent contracts. Permanent agreements in 3 of 4 ecoregions; looking at easement in 4 grants.Currently 160 industry partners in the program at 1.8M acres enrolled. Continue to seek additions.

Q – why separate initiative AND interstate working group? – WAFWA developed work groups for species that were petitioned, then moved to a more ‘grassland’ oriented.

Action: Roger would be interested in providing a 1-2 page, more formal electronic update to the group. Karie suggested he send to Breck when one is developed.

**Western Quail Working Group**

Stewart Liley

Technical staff of Working Group met in NM recently, biologists from 8 states discussed research. Group also discussed how to move forward. Discussed potential development of ‘Status of the western quail’ (i.e., status of mule deer – something similar?) and make available online - WAFWA website?

Discussed potential to add federal agencies to WG MOU? Also working to develop translocation guideline for western quail. WG will meet at NWTF western tech meeting next May.

Don M- First quail translocation guidelines published recently – Don will pass those guidelines along to the Western Quail WG.

**Spruce Grouse Partnership**

No one present to report.

**Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan**

Brent Rudolph

Brent Rudolph, new Director of Conservation Policy. He is building more aggressive policy program. Additional shifts in staff and inclusion of a few new field positions; looking to grow in the private land arena. Working on messaging- healthy forests (broadly) and active management for early successional habitat. Events: Last year was the 35th annual grouse and woodcock hunt. October 24-27 is Woodcock Symposium. Mentioned that the Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan is 10+ years old. Has been successful as a tool for guidance and communications. Open to starting dialog about improvement or potential revision.

**Chukar/Hungarian Partridge Plan**

San Stiver

Recently in a meeting in Spokane, gave brief overview of Chukar/Partridge management guidelines. Solicited peer review and has a finished document, approved by Western Directors (went through WBCC). It is now in print.

Action: Offered to distribute the document electronically through the RGBWG, if provided by San.

4:45 State of the Birds Report and other North American Bird Conservation Initiative Committee Updates

*Judith Scarl, AFWA/NABCI*

New format for report to better communicate with congress and policy makers, leadership. This year’s focus is on Farm Bill and the benefits to birds and all bird conservation. Report was distributed to group.

Noted JV field tours in some regions and opportunities to use report during visits.

NABCI – all bird bulletin blog; NABCI is looking for a volunteer to write a blog (RGBWG is a partner); potential topics include partnerships, project highlights, etc. Not everyone was familiar with the audience or past content of the blog.

Action: send link to blog site so members can review past entries, then will contact Judith with blog ideas.

4:50 RGBWG Work Plan

*Karie Decker, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

*Briefly discussed need to update work plan; reiterated progress towards Action/Activity #3. Group decided that electronic communication for work plan may be most appropriate, given Breck’s absence.*

***Action****: update work plan by (date?) and submit to AFWA. Work plans should also now include statements about progress on activities (per Judith).*

5:00 Adjourn