



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

A group of people in winter gear, including jackets, hats, and gloves, are working on a table outdoors. They appear to be handling a large animal, possibly a bison or moose, which is lying on the table. The background shows a white structure, possibly a tent or trailer, and a clear sky. The foreground shows the back of a large animal with thick, brown fur.

BUILDING RESILIENCE...
the Power of Adaptation





SARA PARKER PAULEY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There is no doubt 2020 shaped us. When COVID surged through our communities, bringing with it fear and uncertainty, it presented an opportunity for all of us to evaluate our processes, check our resolve, and grow our resilience. And as for the public we serve, a common theme emerged from the chaos — people needed the outdoors for their own well-being.

Record numbers flocked to the outdoors. Bikes and camping gear flew off the shelves at sporting-goods stores. Hunting and fishing license sales soared as indoor events were canceled, and people had more free time. While the world was hurting and scared, nature burst into the spotlight as a place for people to destress, decompress, and deal with life. It became a personal, meaningful connection.

As director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, my life also changed this past September when I was sworn in as first female president of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). This action also showed that relevancy, including inclusion and diversity, is not just a hot topic conversation around the table. It's action. It's commitment. It's a willingness to look candidly at where we are and say, with respect and collaboration, we can do better, especially if we are willing to be open to change.

When I think about the big priorities ahead for AFWA, I'm reminded of a quote from the book *The Little Prince* that says, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." We can dream big (and I hope we do!), but we also need a plan of action to get it done. AFWA's new strategic plan is a testament to that plan of action and keeping us on course to deliver on these nationwide priorities.

We enjoyed some great successes in 2020, including the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, America's Conservation Enhancement Act, and continued implementation from the President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities. These were huge wins with years of work and resources to get them across the finish line. We have more exciting work still on the horizon such as the passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, fully operationalizing the strategic plan, and building on communication efforts with industry and other partners.

Nearest and dearest to my heart, however, are our efforts to more personally support our members both on a professional level and building relationships with one another. To that end, I hope that members will continue to engage in our monthly Fireside Chats and, for newer members, our New Director Orientation Workshop. One of the greatest benefits of AFWA is the fellowship and support we can give to one another as we carry out our critical work for our country's fish and wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve alongside you in this leadership role. I'm excited to see how much we can achieve by working together!

All my best,

Sara Parker Pauley

President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Where to begin? Turmoil, unbelief, distress, stay-at-home orders, unrest, separation, anxiety.....2020 was unlike any year with the cloud of a pandemic ever-present, a summer of civil unrest, and disruptions to relationships, families, communities, and business practices.

Despite that backdrop of tumultuous uncertainty, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies stayed the course and managed priorities to important outcomes. There were huge, positive legislative victories for conservation and substantive products and services to improve the governance of the Association's work, including a new strategic plan. There was a highly meaningful virtual Annual Meeting and space throughout the year to honor our values to the community of conservation relationships, even remotely, with a host of new webinars and Fireside Chats. Indeed, we learned together how to adapt, how to share anxieties, how to lead remotely, how to have difficult conversations, how to stay focused, and how to deliver results.

2021 offers opportunities to reimagine, to re-joy, our collective work with a new spirit of anticipation. We will continue to press forward with a host of legislative and policy priorities - Recovering America's Wildlife Act, relevancy, industry partnerships, diversity and inclusivity, and science and conservation planning, to name a few. We will make a commitment to, and an investment in, operational planning constructs to help us make measured, meaningful progress with our new strategic plan. We will establish relationships with new Administration leaders to ensure the best possible collaborative approach to shared state-federal conservation priorities.

Thank you for your strong commitment to the work of the Association during the trying times of 2020. You have made an importance difference for fish and wildlife conservation at international scales, and I trust the same will remain true in the coming year. I personally look forward to working with all of you, and I hope, perhaps, that some of our interactions will return to in-person opportunities.

Very best regards,



Ronald J. Regan

Executive Director

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



RONALD J. REGAN



ALLIANCE FOR AMERICA'S FISH & WILDLIFE CAMPAIGN

FAST
FACT:
185
bipartisan
cosponsors
representing
40 states

Despite the many obvious challenges we faced last year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we had much to be thankful for. The landmark *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* (H.R.3742) garnered the support of 185 bipartisan cosponsors representing 40 states, 3 U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. A version of the bill also passed the U.S. House of Representatives as an amendment to H.R.2, the House transportation/infrastructure package and was notably included in the only bipartisan block of amendments to that bill. Together with over 100 formal members and many other supporting partners, the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife is well positioned for success and poised for introduction of the legislation in the House and swift advancement in the 117th Congress under the continued leadership of House sponsors Reps Dingell (D-MI) and Fortenberry (R-NE). We look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration, House and Senate champions and all our partners to enact this historic wildlife conservation legislation in this congressional session.



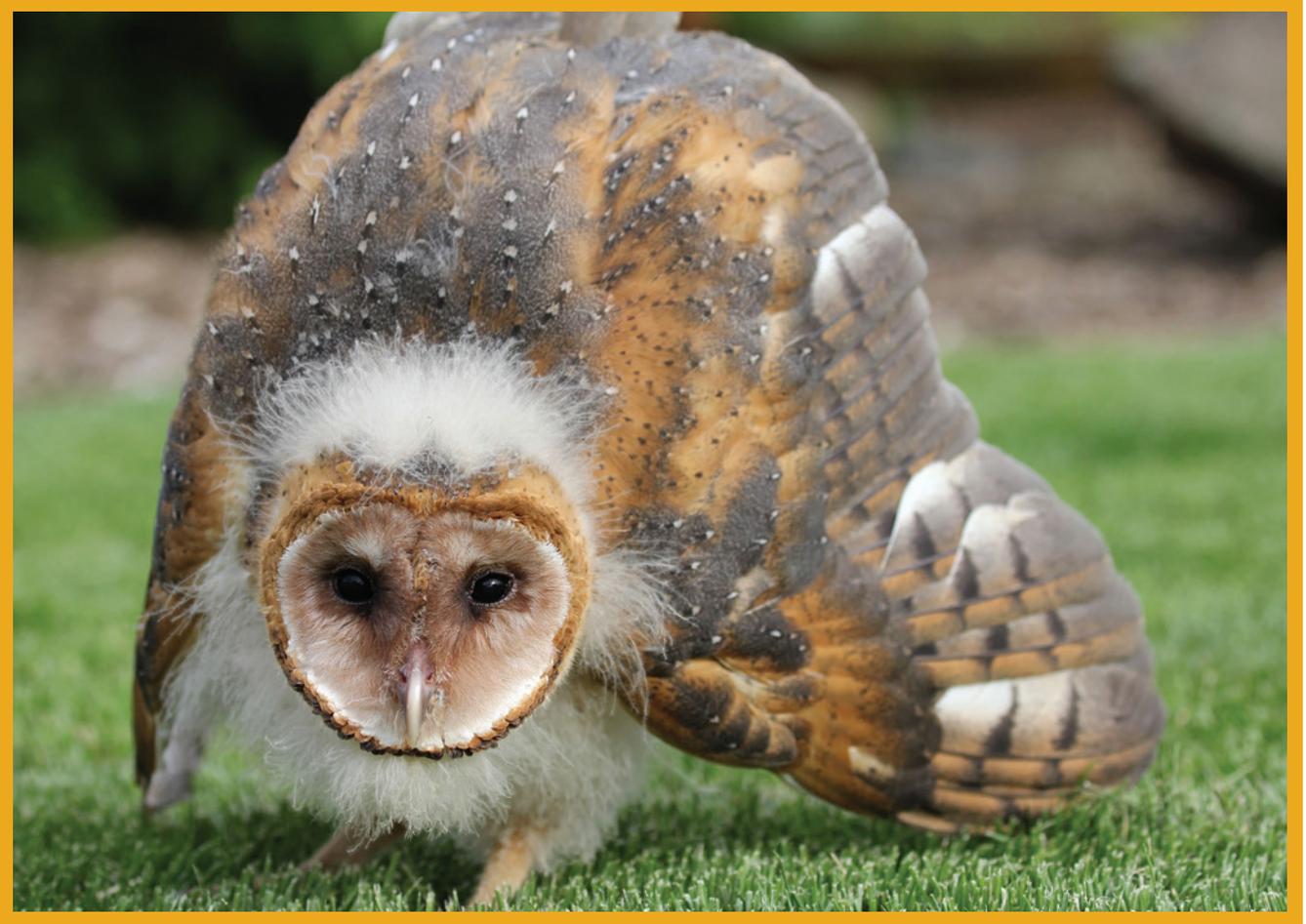
Enactment of this bill could be the most impactful wildlife conservation investment in U.S. history, providing \$1.4 billion in dedicated funding annually to restore habitat, recover wildlife populations, and rebuild the infrastructure for both our natural systems and outdoor recreation opportunities across the country. These investments would put Americans back to work immediately by creating tens of thousands of non-exportable jobs annually. The Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife is leading the charge in reaching a broader, more diverse audience for support. Partners in our sportsmen's and women's community including the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, the National Wildlife Federation and others rose to the challenge garnering support of the hunting/angling community across the country with strategic briefings, virtual summits and forums, and making direct contact with Members of Congress and their staff. Organizations like The Wildlife Society, the American Fisheries Society and the National Audubon Society have educated their vast grassroots networks to engage in advocacy on behalf of the campaign generating hundreds of thousands of emails and phone calls to Congress. And our outdoor recreation industry partners including Bass Pro Shops, Outdoor Industry Association, REI and others continue to make the case for the value of healthy wildlife populations to the growing \$778 billion outdoor recreation economy in this country. The Native American Fish and Wildlife Society has engaged its membership of tribal fish and wildlife managers and built inroads into other communities that may not have been represented in this campaign otherwise. This is truly a diverse partnership rallying around a common vision and we will be successful.

FAST
FACT:
\$778B
outdoor
recreation
economy in
this country

One of the real silver linings of the new paradigm we find ourselves in with many of us now working from home is a reconnection with nature. We were so tired of being cooped up for months in the early days of the quarantine that once the threat levels lessened and public spaces were reopened, people flocked to our public lands, parks and special areas to spend a little more time outdoors with family. A new conservation ethic has emerged, and people are primed to take conservation actions that support the recreation opportunities that they enjoy, the places they love, the wildlife managers that provide those opportunities and the wildlife habitat that is so critical to our nation's outdoor recreation economy. To help nurture this ethic and to encourage responsible recreation, the Alliance began a new #RecoverWildlife initiative to generate financial support for our wildlife conservation work and to give people the opportunity to take positive action for wildlife and outdoor recreation. To participate in this new initiative, go to www.RecoverWildlife.com Also see the new responsible recreation section on the Alliance site <https://ournatureusa.com/responsible-recreation/>



LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Maintaining International Momentum and Action

On the international stage, 2020 was coined the “super year” for biodiversity, but in the end The International Union Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, the Convention on Biological Diversity and UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meetings, endorsement of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Framework), and more did not occur. This does not mean that nothing happened or that international partnerships did not advance nature conservation. It means that conventions, organizations, and partnerships adjusted to virtual meetings; conducted webinars and dialogues focused on marginalized communities and livelihoods, One Health, and biodiversity and wildlife use; and considered how connected we are to nature and how much impact our relationship with nature has on our well-being. The Association was part of that work.

The AFWA International Relations Committee developed a position paper, *Wildlife Conservation, Consumption, and Use in a Post-COVID-19 World* in response to the dialogues. The Association engaged in preparations for online voting in IUCN. We commented on the drafts of the Framework and shared statements to inform the Framework on sustainable use and state, provincial and territorial agency priorities. We engaged in CITES intersessional working groups and maintained connections with international partners.



FAST FACT:

2020 was coined the “super year” for biodiversity

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY



Despite the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we capitalized on the shift to virtual communication, utilizing every platform available to engage with our members, partners, and Capitol Hill. While we lost the connection of being in person, we still grew closer through the year, learning about each other's homelife and meeting family members for the first time, whether they were on two legs or four, often by accident! We never relented in our advocacy efforts, working to advance our legislative priorities with Congressional members and staff whether meeting from cars, closets, living rooms, or make-shift home offices. We carried the momentum from our legislative success during 2019 into 2020, overcoming the odds and making the 116th Congress an historic session for state fish and wildlife agencies, the Association, and our nation's legacy of conservation.

Securing Funding, Protecting State Authority, and Priming Relief

The Association was called to testify during three critical junctures in 2020, each time providing Congress with the necessary education and information to recognize the needs and importance of state natural resource agencies. In February, Executive Director Tim Schaeffer of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission testified before the House Appropriations' Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Our major federal budget priorities were highlighted, many of which saw increased appropriations, including State and Tribal

Wildlife Grants (STWG) and funding to combat Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). In June, Mr. Gordon Batcheller, former New York Wildlife Chief and current Executive Secretary of the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, testified on our behalf before the House Subcommittee on Waters, Oceans, and Wildlife, in a hearing to consider the *Bear Protection Act* of 2019 and the *Captive Primate Protection Act*. Both bills would have infringed on states' jurisdiction over wildlife management, whether by preempting state authority to regulate the legal trade of bear parts, prohibiting the interstate transport of bear parts for any reason, or banning State-licensed rehabilitators from working with protected species. Neither bill advanced to a full Committee hearing. In July, Mr. Kelly Hepler, the Association's then-President and Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources during a hearing examining the impact of COVID-19 on public lands and resources. President Hepler's testimony highlighted the record use by the public of state lands and waters and the ever more critical role state agencies have in conservation and management. Vital to ongoing relief efforts that we will carry into 2021, his testimony also informed the Senate of the fiscal challenges many state agencies face and the work that will need done to fuel recovery.

Increasing Appropriations for Conservation and Natural Resource Agencies

On December 27, the appropriations omnibus was enacted, funding the federal government through FY2021 and successfully reauthorizing the Water Resources Development Act. Highlights include a roughly \$5 million increase for STWG with funding at \$72.36 million, \$46.5 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), and \$54.5 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is fully funded at \$900 million as a result of enactment of the *Great American Outdoors Act*, with \$360 million for the state grants program. \$504 million is appropriated for the National Wildlife Refuge System, \$74 million to the BLM for sage-grouse conservation, and \$1.3 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units were funded at \$25 million, one million dollars above FY2021 appropriations. COVID relief provisions include an extension to December 31, 2021, for the use of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funds by states and localities. The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) includes a number of new provisions for combating aquatic invasive species, totaling \$80 million annually in new appropriations authority with a \$20 million increase for existing aquatic invasive species control measures, \$10 million annually over the next five years for an invasive species management pilot program, and \$50 million annually for invasive species prevention, control, and eradication.

Enacting Historic Legislation: A Decade in the Making

Several of the Association's long-running legislative priorities, including the *National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act* (NFHP) and the *North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act* (NAWCA) were packaged with reauthorizations of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Along with measures establishing a state and federal Task Force to combat CWD and directing a National Academy of Sciences study of CWD transmission in cervidae, this package formed *America's Conservation Enhancement Act* (ACE Act, P.L. 116-52), which was successfully enacted in October. Whether raising awareness for CWD, executing the most successful wetland conservation program in the nation through NAWCA, or leading the 12-year effort to codify NFHP, state agencies and their partners worked tirelessly to see this monumental legislation enacted. Congress reaffirmed their commitment to conservation in resounding fashion, passing the bill in both the House and Senate unanimously, *twice*. Once again, our natural resources proved to be the unifying issue of critical importance through which Congress could reach bipartisan, bicameral agreement.



Permanently Funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund

In August, the *Great American Outdoors Act* (P.L. 116-52) was enacted, authorizing permanent, full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million annually, and authorizing \$9.5 billion to address the deferred maintenance backlogs of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges, U.S. Forest Service, and schools within the Bureau of Indian Affairs over the next five years. State-side LWCF programs became even more critical throughout the record land use seen during the pandemic, and funding for recreational infrastructure likely will further drive the resurgence in public enthusiasm for outdoor recreation.

Reauthorizing the Sportfish Restoration and Boating Safety Trust Fund

After successfully brokering unanimous agreement for *Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund* (Trust Fund) reauthorization provisions, the Angling & Boating Alliance advanced the *Sport Fish Restoration and Recreational Boating Safety Act of 2020* through the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, as well as passage through the full House via the transportation bill – the *Moving Forward Act* (HR 2), the typical vehicle for reauthorization. Requiring reauthorization every five years, and with its last authorization in 2015, passage of the Trust Fund legislation is critical. However, Congress chose to extend the current Transportation Bill authorization by one year, including a continuation of the Trust Fund. While this creates a necessity again in 2021 to secure reauthorization, we are primed for expedited movement through both chambers once reintroduced.



Increasing Recreational Access with Largest Expansion Ever

Securing expansion of recreational opportunities for hunting and fishing on federal lands is a continuing top priority for the Association, one we have been constantly advocating for and communicating to the Administration. In April, we saw these efforts culminate in a proposed rule from the Department of the Interior that would represent the single largest expansion in history. We voiced our strong support for the rule, including through a letter from then-President Hepler to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. In August, the rule was finalized, opening more than 2.3 million acres for hunting and fishing opportunities across 147 national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries.

Preparing for the New Administration

Prior to the presidential election, the Association prepared a conservation blueprint outlining the highest-level priorities for state fish and wildlife agencies that was transmitted to both campaigns. Once President Biden was elected, this was tailored to align with and incorporate the priorities of his campaign platform and sent to the transition team. This helped to create open lines of communication with the transition team members overseeing the areas most critical to state agencies, and we have recommended a list of actions that should be prioritized within the first week, first 100 days, and first year of the Biden-Harris administration. These range from an executive order to affirm state agency authority over species within their borders, to a memorandum of agreement between the Association and our federal partners, to endorsing legislation that would grant states fiscal relief and fuel recovery efforts. With these pieces in place, the Association finished 2020 in prime position to accomplish even more in the coming year.

Farm Bill Implementation

The 2018 Farm Bill has been almost fully implemented, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) releasing final rules and updated policies and procedures for most of their conservation programs. In spite of the challenges brought on by COVID-19, USDA, state fish and wildlife agencies, and partners have continued to deliver these programs to private landowners. Throughout the implementation process, AFWA's Agricultural Conservation Committee and its state agency members have worked in cooperation with USDA and our conservation partners to ensure that these programs meet their intended goals of conserving fish and wildlife habitat.

On the ground, state fish and wildlife agencies have remained engaged in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committees and continued providing technical assistance to private landowners participating in USDA programs. In DC, AFWA staff have engaged USDA through virtual meetings and formal letters to encourage the Department to align program delivery with state agencies' priorities and on-the-ground expertise. Taking stock of these program implementation and delivery efforts, the Agricultural Conservation Committee delivered program recommendations to the Biden-Harris transition team and has undertaken preliminary planning for the 2023 Farm Bill.





LEGAL STRATEGY PROGRAM

AFWA's Legal Strategy, having completed its seventh year, took the opportunity presented by the Association's development of a new Strategic Plan to lay the groundwork for even deeper support of our committees, programs, and partners. While the COVID-19 pandemic made collaboration look a little different last year, our network of wildlife attorneys continued to show the Association's value as a knowledge center and reaffirm the Legal Strategy as one of many areas where the voice of the agencies takes shape.

We continue to offer general legal services, including intellectual property protection, contract review, and corporate governance, to state fish and wildlife agencies, regional associations, flyway councils and related organizations.

Committee Support and Projects on the Horizon

AFWA's attorney network addressed several high-profile issues in state wildlife management in 2020. With the critical input of directors and other committees, AFWA counsel and the Legal Committee:

- Commented on federal rulemaking proposals for the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act.
- Provided support for AFWA committees' work on topics including state/tribal collaboration, chronic wasting disease, excise tax collection, feral and free-ranging cats, combatting illegal trade in turtles, and more.
- Supported the Joint Task Force on Federal Assistance and P-R Modernization implementation team to address issues of national interest emerging with recent legislation such as P-R Mod and the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act.

In 2021, AFWA counsel will further support our government affairs team by closely tracking federal legislation and rulemaking pertaining to federal aid in wildlife restoration and education, endangered species and habitat management, and state-federal cooperation. We will also contribute key support to the work of the Legal Strategy Advisory Council (a.k.a. Think Tank), which plans to launch a variety of committee-requested projects in the coming year.

Law School Outreach and Curricular Development

In 2020 the Association continued to build on a strong foundation for the State Wildlife Law Project, a legal search platform for students and practitioners. Research to support the Project will continue into 2021, and the platform will be updated with legislation passed in recent state sessions nationwide. We have also used research from the Project to respond rapidly to queries from conservation partners working on hot-button issues like conservation of imperiled plants and state legislation on hunting contests.

The Association's former general counsel Carol Frampton, now Chief of Legal Services for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), taught two law courses at Michigan State University (MSU) School of Law, on wildlife law and energy development, and will continue to teach these courses at MSU. Students in those courses contributed to issues of the *Wildlife Law Call*, a periodical newsletter containing updates and articles on case law, legislation, and regulation concerning natural resources. The Association and NWTf will continue this vital work together in the year ahead, including through presentation of continuing legal education for practicing attorneys.

Whether it is tracking new court opinions, legislations, or regulations, engaging with other AFWA committees on the work of the Think Tank or AFWA's Strategic Plan, or keeping members informed of the rapidly changing field of conservation law, we are excited to provide legal support to the Association in a post-pandemic landscape.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES



BIRD CONSERVATION

Bird conservation is at a critical juncture. Widespread concern generated by the 2019 publication documenting the [loss of 3 billion birds since 1970](#) inspired professional and public momentum to address the urgency of bird conservation. 2020 saw a further upswelling of interest in birds and bird conservation, as a global pandemic motivated people to get outdoors and pursue activities close to home, such as backyard birdwatching.



North American Bird Conservation Initiative

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) continues to promote and enable creative partnerships that advance bird conservation and other human goals. NABCI's [Relevancy Toolkit](#), released in 2018 and updated in January 2021, provides documented examples of how bird conservation is linked with clean air, clean water, human health, and a diverse set of economic interests. To help conservation professionals connect and build partnerships with entities whose primary focus may not be bird conservation, NABCI compiled expertise from 40 contributors across 23 organizations in its [Field Guide to Developing Partnerships](#), released in January 2021. This ambitious project presents practical guidance for identifying and developing broad and impactful partnerships, while serving to encourage and empower bird conservation professionals to look outside of their existing communities to pursue unprecedented partnerships with the potential to implement lasting, positive change for birds and people. In August 2020, the U.S. NABCI Committee voted unanimously to explore NABCI's niche in working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice issues as they relate to bird conservation, and subsequently developed a plan to help the bird conservation community become more inclusive.





Thirty-nine States Embrace Full Life-cycle Conservation through Southern Wings

The pandemic clearly demonstrated how interconnected we are. A fact that migratory birds highlight each year as they make their incredible migrations. Even though 2020 was a challenging and tumultuous year Southern Wings and its partners advanced conservation actions to support birds, nature and the well-being of people in amazing ways. Thirteen projects have put conservation on-the-ground. Projects like the Neotropical Flyway Project are critical. It is filling an urgent need to identify major Neotropical stopover regions and assess the needs of birds within them to guide strategic on-the-ground conservation. Other projects restored grasslands, protected habitat, and worked with communities to improve habitat for birds while providing livelihoods. Southern Wings also welcomed seven new state fish and wildlife agencies. Since 2009, thirty-nine states have contributed almost 3.2 Million to conservation across the Western Hemisphere. State agencies are looking to Southern Wings to advance implementation of their migratory bird biodiversity priorities.



Fall Flights and North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)

State fish and wildlife agencies are instrumental in the conservation of wetlands and their associated upland habitats which provide more than just duck habitat. Wetlands help recharge aquifers, secure safe and abundant drinking water that all people need, and wetlands reduce soil erosion in the event of floods.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan helps guide the intersection of waterfowl, habitat, and people in wildlife management decisions and encourages collaboration between governments and non-government organizations in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA) has provided the foundational funding for waterfowl conservation over the past 30 years and is one of the most significant conservation programs in history.

The Association, along with the nation's hunters, anglers, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts of every kind, celebrated the signing into law of the America's Conservation Enhancement Act on October 30, 2020. The Act reauthorized the NAWCA and enacted numerous other vital fish and wildlife conservation programs. The goal of the multibillion-dollar NAWCA program is to guarantee waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species success across the continent—from breeding to wintering grounds.

State fish and wildlife agencies are leaders in local, regional, and international conservation. Their leadership is exemplified by the Association's program known as **Fall Flights—Giving Wings to Cross-Border Waterfowl Conservation**. The program encourages State investments in wetland conservation on the waterfowl breeding grounds in Canada. During 2019-2020, forty-three states contributed a total of \$3.66 million (US) dollars to Canadian waterfowl habitat projects, which is the second highest annual commitment since the program began in 1991. The state funds leverage other monies (e.g., NAWCA grants and Canadian partner funds) such that the state commitment results in a total investment in the Canadian breeding grounds of approximately \$19 million.



North American Waterfowl
Management Plan
Plan nord-américain de
gestion de la sauvagine
Plan de Manejo de Aves
Acuáticas de Norteamérica



NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

The National Fish Habitat Partnership (www.fishhabitat.org) implemented 95 projects across 31 states in 2020. Since 2006, the National Fish Habitat Partnership has implemented over 1,000 projects in all 50 states through 20 regional partnerships. Many of these projects have been fostered through state fish and wildlife and natural resource agencies' coordination efforts. These projects are making a difference in conserving fish habitat and improving angling opportunities across the country.

2020 Changes for the National Fish Habitat Board, Ed Schriever Appointed as Chairman



On the heels of the President's signature of the [America's Conservation Enhancement Act](#) (ACE Act) into law (October 30, 2020), there are several responsibilities of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) to meet the provisions of the legislation.

The Board's composition differs from the previous National Fish Habitat Board seated after the

inception of NFHP in 2006. As described in the ACE Act, the Board will consist of 26 members and will add new interest group representation, including national private landowner organizations, agricultural production organizations, local government interests involved in fish habitat restoration, corporate industries, and the private sector or landowner representative in an active Fish Habitat Partnership. The new Board will be seated in 2021.

On November 3, 2020, Ed Schriever, Director of Idaho Fish and Game, was appointed to represent the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies on the Board. By virtue of the ACE Act, the Association appointment serves as Chairman of the Board for three years. Learn more about the seating of the Board: <http://bit.ly/2VpgOUs>.

2020 WATERS TO WATCH

States were a key partner in implementing the National Fish Habitat Partnership's list of "Waters to Watch" in 2020, representing a snapshot of voluntary, locally driven freshwater, estuarine and marine habitat conservation efforts implemented across the country.

In 2020, the National Fish Habitat Partnership focused on five projects retrospectively to highlight the positive impact these projects have made on the communities and the fish habitat and populations since being listed as a Waters to Watch project in previous years.

The list for 2020, Included:

[Bear River Estuary, Washington](#) (Retrospective)
Pacific Marine and Estuarine Partnership

[Boone River Watershed, Iowa](#) (Retrospective)
Fishers and Farmers Partnership

[Chipola River, Florida](#) (Retrospective)
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

[Deep Creek Town Diversion and Warner Basin, Oregon](#) (Retrospective)
Western Native Trout Initiative

[Maunaloa Bay, Hawai'i](#)
Hawai'i Fish Habitat Partnership

[Minsi Lake, Pennsylvania](#)
Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership

[San Juan and Santiago Watersheds, California](#)
California Fish Passage Forum

[San Luis Obispo Creek, California](#)
Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative

[Shoshone Springs, California](#) (Retrospective)
Desert Fish Habitat Partnership

[Tularosa River, New Mexico](#)
Desert Fish Habitat Partnership

For more information on project maps and descriptions of the "Waters to Watch" list for 2020, Visit: <http://www.fishhabitat.org/waters-to-watch/archive/2020>.



FURBEARER RESOURCES

The Wildlife Society has recently published a new *Wildlife Monograph*, "[Best Management Practices for Trapping Furbearers in the United States - White - 2021 - Wildlife Monographs - Wiley Online Library](#)" on the Association's program to develop Best Management Practices (BMP) for Trapping in the U.S. This very significant publication is based on over 2 decades of scientific research and details the largest trap testing study ever conducted. The work leading to this publication was done through biologists from state fish and wildlife agencies, as reflected in the list of authors. The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services through the National Wildlife Research Center provided primary financial support. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also provided financial and technical support, primarily through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) Program. This is an open access publication available to everyone.



The BMP program was initiated to improve animal welfare in U.S. trapping programs by identifying restraining traps that achieve internationally acceptable injury thresholds while remaining efficient and safe, and promoting their use among trappers. This is an ongoing project with additional restraining traps tested annually. This publication does not include completed research on cable restraint devices or lethal traps, but future publications will focus on these methods. Stay tuned for those publications in the future.

While the Monograph is the technical scientific publication, the BMPs themselves (created for trap users) can be found at the following link along with various other reports and publications created by the AFWA Furbearer Resources Technical Work Group: [Furbearer Management & Best Management Practices for Trapping Program](#).

The furbearer program will develop three new science briefs to help agencies grapple with some of the tougher issues about trapping and sustainable wildlife use.

Information contained in these documents came from decades of research on human dimensions, trapping, various surveys of the general public and, surveys of those who participate in the sustainable use of wildlife. The briefs cover animal selectivity, animal welfare and sustainable use of wildlife. For more information contact AFWA staff Bryant White bwhite@fishwildlife.org

SCIENCE BRIEF
ANIMAL SELECTIVITY

Trapping is strictly regulated in North America. Modern traps are highly selective, which means they capture only species they're designed to catch, thanks to advances in trap engineering and the skills of those who use them. The United States and Canada have conducted the most extensive scientific testing of traps in the world to develop Best Management Practices for Trapping (BMPs), a program that ensures that traps are humane, efficient, safe, and selective.

Research Results
Data indicate that traps are highly selective.

During this program, various designs of traps were set to capture legal furbearers over a quarter of a million times. No threatened or endangered species were caught during the extensive trap testing. No domestic dog or cat was captured in any of the traps. The few dogs that were captured were released unharmed.

While conducting research in New Hampshire, beaver traps were tested daily for three months. Eighty-seven beavers were caught; the only other animals that were caught were a muskrat and a raccoon. The overall selectivity for legal furbearers was high.

During this research, traps set in the mountains of Colorado for marten, an invasive and destructive rodent -- were checked 271 times during several winters. In total, 491 martens were caught; other legal furbearers caught included arctic skunk and a weasel. Four rabbits, 1 hawk, and 1 domestic dog, which are not allowed to be trapped, were also caught. Of the animals captured, 91% were legal furbearers.

Traps set for American marten were checked 139 times in the state of Idaho, and its marten were captured; other species included a weasel, a squirrel, a fox, a mink, and a bob. The overall selectivity for legal furbearers was 98%.

Recent national surveys have shown that 95% of the traps used in the United States today are the same designs that are designed to be the most selective. Trappers have also adopted the designs and methods that maximize animal welfare and selectivity.

SCIENCE BRIEF
ANIMAL WELFARE

Any discussion on the topic of animal use by humans brings with it moral, ethical, and practical implications. It concerns that industry at the forefront of this discussion is animal welfare. We all want to know how that the animals are treated as part of the process. The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services through the National Wildlife Research Center provided primary financial support. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also provided financial and technical support, primarily through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) Program. This is an open access publication available to everyone.

Agencies have taken action to ensure the highest standard of welfare for captured animals.

When it comes to wildlife in particular, state, Tribal, and Federal Fish and Wildlife agencies in the United States regulate activities that involve the capture or harvest of wild animals through hunting and trapping. Millions of people who participate in hunting and trapping most typically go through education programs, be licensed, and then consent to abide by numerous laws and regulations regarding when, where and how wildlife may be taken and used.

Agencies not only provide education, but they also employ officers to ensure that laws and regulations are strictly enforced. This helps to make certain that all animals are appropriately cared for. Whether an animal is trapped to reintroduce a population, offer a wolf or a pronghorn, or protect threatened or endangered species (intoxicant predators like foxes and raccoons), to participate in a research project or to help fund trapping or conservation programs, agencies agree to make sure that each animal is captured humanely.

Regulated trapping is a common capture technique used by agency furbearer management programs. Fish and Wildlife agencies in the United States have partnered through U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to support the welfare of animals captured in traps. When the use of wildlife is limited, agency wildlife professionals are the source of expertise.

SCIENCE BRIEF
SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILDLIFE

As members of the natural system, humans have always relied on the land for food, clothing, and shelter. When used responsibly, the use of wild animals is a natural and sustainable part of life. Using wild animals sustainably not only ensures that future generations will continue to benefit from these resources, but also that wildlife populations will remain in balance with the environment.

What is sustainability?
Living populations naturally fluctuate. Many wildlife populations experience peaks right after hatching and banking seasons and experience low populations at the end of winter. Sustainable use of wildlife refers to the long-term viability or persistence of a population, often in a state of parts, whole or larger. Sustainability occurs when natural systems are diverse, productive, and capable of supporting healthy wildlife, and where humans are a single part of natural systems. We play an active role in responsibly managing them using techniques based on the best available science. Unlike some other human activities, the sustainable harvest of wild fur, food and their results in little pollution and development or degradation of habitat.

Use of wildlife
People from diverse cultures who use wildlife often feel a deeper connection to the land and develop a strong conservation ethic. People who value wildlife seek to maintain and conserve those resources for future generations. Unfortunately, when wildlife is used for some members of the public, at this point, society has little ability to force those species or people's behavior to follow their own treatment, intrinsic value, and whether the wildlife population will even persist.

For example, bobcats, like many carnivores, were once viewed as a "vermin" with little to no high production in much of the United States. In the 1970s, bobcat pelts generated a resurgence in wild fur markets and helped to re-emerge as a valuable resource to conserve and use.

Human Wildlife Conflicts

The AFWA Human Wildlife Conflict Working Group began a project in 2015 to develop peer reviewed publications on various urban human-wildlife conflicts. New in 2020 is a monograph on human-deer conflicts in urban areas that is published in the Berryman Institute monograph series.

This publication is [available online](#) and copies are also [available for purchase](#). The group has also published a monograph on [urban black bear conflicts](#), and is in the process of developing a similar document on human-coyote conflicts in urban areas. The document on coyotes is being developed by an ad hoc group of state and federal agency urban coyote conflict experts from across North America. Be looking for this document in 2021. See more about the Human Wildlife Conflict efforts of the Association at www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/human-wildlife-conflicts.

Feral Swine

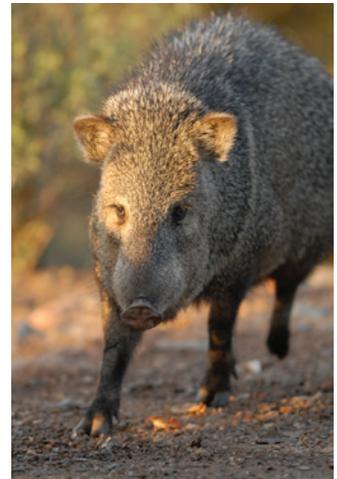
At the request of both State and Federal fish and wildlife agencies, the Association has developed a new Feral Swine Working Group. This group was developed under the aegis of the Invasive Species Committee. This working group met for the first time at the 2020 AFWA virtual annual meeting. Gray Anderson (VA DWR) and Dr. Jim LaCour (LA DWF) serve as chair and vice-chair respectively. This group will liaison between the various regional associations, federal agencies and NGOs involved in feral swine management and facilitate opportunities to further national management objectives. For more information about this new group contact Bryant White (bwhite@fishwildlife.org) or check out the new webpage at www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/feral-swine.

FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH

The Fish and Wildlife Health Committee and the Bat Working Group collaborated on [interim voluntary guidance](#) related to bat conservation work during the pandemic. The guidance laid out recommendations for conducting research, monitoring, bat rehabilitation, and management in an attempt to cause no harm to people or bats. An update of the interim guidance is underway. The Fish and Wildlife Health Committee served as a forum for discussion and information exchange on the spread of COVID-19 to wildlife, developed guidance on the spread of rabbit hemorrhagic disease and continued efforts to expand the reach of the Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative.

STATE AND TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS

The Association began a year-long celebration of the 20th anniversary of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. The Association collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a new [report](#) highlighting successes from the program. In September, Sara Parker Pauley and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director Aurelia Skipwith gave a presentation on the program to directors at the AFWA Business Meeting. Additional events are planned in 2021. The Association held its first virtual Fly-in in March to support funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program. About a dozen states participated by briefing congressional staff on the impact of the program and encouraging them to sign on to two bipartisan [Dear Colleague Letters](#) supporting funding for the program. Letters in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate were signed by 177 and 46 bipartisan members, respectively. In December, Congress passed an omnibus budget bill that included \$72.4 million for the program, a nearly five million increase from the previous year.





FISH AND WILDLIFE RELEVANCY ROADMAP

Implementation of the [Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap](#) began in earnest in 2020. Using funding from the Multistate Conservation Grant, the Wildlife Management Institute supported pilot relevancy projects in six states. They also created an online [community of practice portal](#) to bring together interested staff from state fish and wildlife agencies and partners for learning and to share experiences. Several workshops were held and projects to design a future for conservation, state scenario planning and an examination of how university fish and wildlife programs could evolve were also started.

PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON SCIENCE & LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The Association approved a [report](#) and recommendations from a President's Task Force stood-up by AFWA President Kelly Hepler. The recommendations included 1) establishment of a new process for identifying shared science priorities; 2) a recommendation for regional fish and wildlife association partnerships to align with the guidance and principles from AFWA's resolution on landscape conservation; 3) establishment of a work group to examine the eight required elements and best practices for State Wildlife Action Plans and make recommendations for improvements to better guide and contribute to regional and landscape conservation. Implementation of the recommendations began in 2020 and will continue in 2021.



ENERGY AND WILDLIFE

The Energy and Wildlife Policy committee began implementing recommendations made in a 2019 report on wind-wildlife interactions. Committee members communicated the results from the wind-wildlife survey at several meetings and submitted an article to *The Wildlife Professional*, held discussions about the use and effectiveness of the Wind Energy Guidelines, discussed wind research needs and began work on a follow-up survey to states on non-regulatory guidelines and best practices.



CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Amid a strange year, the Association's climate adaptation program quickly pivoted to provide an opportunity for its members to discuss and explore the complex intersections between climate change, conservation, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a questionnaire to identify the biggest challenges and opportunities for natural resource management and climate action, a roundtable discussion was hosted with guest speakers Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, a world-renowned climate scientist and Dr. Kyle White, a nationally recognized voice of Indigenous climate justice. The 90-minute roundtable was well attended and explored themes such as relevancy, social justice, and opportunities for leveraging lessons learned for climate action. The discussion and pre-roundtable questionnaire were summarized in a [report](#). The roundtable recording is available [here](#).

While many things changed, the climate adaptation program's core services continued as normal. The monthly *Climate News Roundup* helped to keep members up to date on climate research, news, and policy, and added a climate justice section as well. Six webinars were hosted on a variety of topics important to members, such as invasive species management in a changing climate and tools on tracking phenology changes. In addition, the 2020 Climate Adaptation Survey was administered, gaining insight into the needs and priorities of state fish and wildlife agencies. A report summarizing the survey results is available [here](#).

The Association also continued to be a core sponsor of the Climate Adaptation Leadership Awards for Natural Resources. This annual award recognizes people and organizations for their outstanding work in raising awareness and addressing the

impacts of climate change on the nation’s living natural resources. Six were honored this year at the AFWA Virtual Annual Meeting. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, in collaboration with the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington, was recognized for their work to develop a Climate Adapted Culverts Project for their state, working across a variety of sectors and agencies to make projections of future changes in stream flows and channel widths due to climate change. This information will help engineers obtain site-specific information for designing climate-adapted culverts which will support fish conservation and management goals. In addition, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, in collaboration with a variety of partners making up the Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia was given an Honorable Mention for the development of Oregon’s Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Action Plan which will guide the state’s efforts in responding to climate change impacts on its ocean and coastal resources.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Making It Last

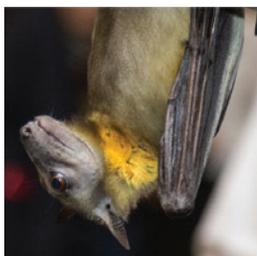
This national conservation outreach strategy is an opportunity for each state agency to significantly increase awareness of its role in protecting and conserving wildlife among target audiences. The Making It Last campaign toolkit, updated May 2020, makes specific recommendations on how states can approach and implement this effort using both nonpaid and paid media and includes a flexible creative approach, allowing states to use their own imagery and messaging relevant to specific goals.

In 2020, the Making It Last toolkit was implemented in five states, covering the remaining two regions (Southeast and Northeast). These pilot states have just wrapped up with the final report being available in early 2021. The best practices learned from these introductory projects will be used to finetune the Making It Last toolkit. Learn more about this toolkit at www.MakingItLast.org.



Project WILD

While Project WILD faced significant obstacles in 2020 brought on by the COVID pandemic, the network of Project WILD state coordinators, facilitators, and pre-K-12 formal and nonformal educators rose to meet those challenges. Beginning in the spring of 2020, nearly all of the in-person, face-to-face Project WILD professional development events were cancelled. Consequently, sales and distribution of Project WILD curricula dropped sharply in 2021. For example, in 2019, a total of 25,343 guides were sold; but in 2020, a total of 9,151 guides were sold – most of the sales occurred prior to March. Significant progress was made, however, in providing new opportunities for training online. Efforts also shifted in 2020 to adapt and redesign Project WILD content to provide educators with more options for online implementation as part of their school curricula or out-of-school programming.



The Association launched *Growing Up WILD Online* in early 2020 and *Project WILD Online* in December 2020-- 253 people and 63 people enrolled in each course, respectively. These courses were designed to pair with professional development being offered by state Project WILD coordinators, who have the option of incorporating the online courses as part of their own state Project WILD professional development programs.

In total, including traditional in-person training in the early months of 2020, combined with online training, a total of 5,740 educators participated in Project WILD professional development for the year.

Additional virtual learning events hosted or co-hosted by Project WILD included the first online Project WILD/Project WET Annual Conference, a special Earth Day webinar, an online course on Climate Change Education in which approximately 4,000 educators registered, and educational presentations as part of the collaborative effort known as BatWeek. These events and courses involved partnerships with a host of conservation and environmental education programs, including Project WET, Project Learning Tree, Earth Day Network, National Wildlife Federation, and the North American Association for Environmental Education. The Project WILD team at the Association also hosted monthly online meetings for state Project WILD Coordinators for program updates, planning, and partner input.

In 2020 the Association was pleased to welcome Johnnie Smith, Director of Outreach and Education at Texas Parks and Wildlife, to serve as co-chair for the Project WILD Subcommittee. With the recent retirement of Rusty Garrison, who served as Chair for the Project WILD Subcommittee, a new chairperson, yet to be determined, will fill this position in 2021.

Priorities for 2021 include the continued development of new online materials and training for educators to implement Project WILD, the production of a short series of Project WILD promotional videos, special training for new Project WILD State Coordinators, and hosting the *2021 Conservation Education Conference on Virtual Learning*. Project WILD will also participate in an EPA-funded grant program to advance environmental education through a national collaborative led by the North American Association for Environmental Education.



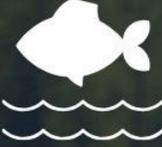
Responsible Recreation Campaign

In May 2020, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies partnered with conservation leaders, including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and Pheasants Forever to spearhead #ResponsibleRecreation, a media campaign encouraging Americans to enjoy outdoor recreation while adhering to proper COVID-19 safety protocol.

Whether participating in hunting, fishing, shooting sports or numerous other outdoor activities, the conservation community sees the #ResponsibleRecreation campaign as a safe and constructive way to encourage individuals and families to get outside and enjoy the outdoors as a means to cope with the current COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to advocating safe outdoor etiquette, the campaign encourages people to take advantage of the numerous opportunities our nation offers to recreate on public lands, waters and parks. This campaign is a great reminder of how we can all help to keep our public lands open for the public to enjoy responsibly during this stressful time.

The #ResponsibleRecreation campaign encourages all outdoor enthusiasts to share their pursuits by using the hashtag #ResponsibleRecreation on the social media channel of their choice.



#ResponsibleRecreation

- PLAN AHEAD
- RECREATE CLOSE TO HOME
- ADHERE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR AVOIDING COVID-19
- FOLLOW STATE AND FEDERAL GUIDELINES
- PACK OUT YOUR TRASH

Share your adventures!
responsible-recreation.org

FINANCIAL & BUSINESS STRATEGIES



MULTISTATE CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM

Since 2000, the Multistate Conservation Grant Program has dedicated more than \$100 million to national and regional level conservation priorities.

The modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act was signed into law on December 20, 2019 adding up to \$5 million annually beginning with 2020 for Wildlife Restoration eligible grants as defined by the legislation.

Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCG) projects implemented in 2020 include:

- **Gray Literature Clearinghouse – American Fisheries Society**

An immense amount of critical information on fisheries is contained in unpublished (non-peer reviewed) reports and other documents within state agencies. Sometimes these are found on agency websites, but more frequently they are simply unavailable or very difficult to find by other fisheries managers and researchers. In working with a diverse group of state, federal and academic fisheries leaders, the American Fisheries Society (AFS) has developed an innovated [Gray Literature Clearinghouse](#) that provides free access to thousands of fisheries reports uploaded from state agency files. In only the first year of this project the system was developed, tested, and over 8,000 reports have been uploaded. Documents are searchable by species, location, agency, and other terms and reports are easily downloaded as pdf's for reading, printing or sharing with others. A second MSCG in 2021 will expand the Clearinghouse to include documents from about 25 states.

- **Advancing k-12 conservation education through improved tools for educators to explore the public trust doctrine, North American Model, and related examples of wildlife management scenarios – Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and Project WILD**

A central component to the success of wildlife conservation efforts in North America are the defining policy and practice of the Public Trust Doctrine and the user pay-public benefit model. This grant worked with leading experts to produce a national curriculum to assist K-12 educators in teaching these important concepts in the classroom. It entails over 20 pages of new curriculum and provides additional bridge curriculum to other highly successful portions of Project WILD. It will be publicly available and free of charge to be used as a stand-alone curriculum in tandem with Project WILD.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Management Assistance Team

The Management Assistance Team's (MAT) work is funded by a Multistate Conservation Grant. MAT is charged with increasing the leadership capacity and agency effectiveness within state fish and wildlife agencies and the conservation community through leadership and organizational development initiatives, training, consulting, and support of the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI). MAT's vision to "further the conservation goals of state fish and wildlife agencies through organizational and leadership development of agency staff at all levels" is achieved by MAT's products and services which concentrate on agency administration—the people part of the equation. In 2020, MAT was able to respond to the urgent need for engagement, connectivity, and continued professional development—even in the midst of a pandemic—by conducting 19 online courses (348 students), 86 webinars (1,801 students) and three OnDemand webinars (1,568 views) free of charge. Participation in online courses and webinars saw a 400% increase in 2020. MAT also provided leadership and organizational development



consulting to nine state fish and wildlife agencies bringing the total number of state fish and wildlife agencies served in 2020 to 41, an impressive 195% increase. For more information on MAT's products and services visit www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/mat-team.

National Conservation Leadership Institute

The National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) was established in 2005 to help develop future conservation leadership to address the daunting challenges facing our ever-changing world...socially, politically, and—yes— environmentally. Across conservation we are facing difficult questions of sustainability, organizational relevancy, funding shifts, and climate change. At the heart of all of these, we find ourselves wrestling not only with the science-based issues but also the increasingly complex human element. This past year brought on even greater challenges with the onset of COVID-19 and the dramatic shifts to 'how we do business' in our community. Despite this, 2020 still saw the graduation of the NCLI's 14th Cohort—altered from its original in-person venue and reimagined into an all virtual 3-day event—bringing the total NCLI Alumni to 496 strong. To date, the NCLI program has served 100 different organizations... 45 State Fish and Wildlife Agencies, eight Federal, 31 NGO, six Tribal, and 10 Industry organizations/agencies/ tribes. Alumni engagement continued in 2020 with an unprecedented 12 NCLI Alumni Webinars delivered free of charge to Alumni. Each webinar was 90 Minutes in length and addressed one of three topics: Getting on the Balcony, Exploring Multiple Interpretations, and Embracing the Power of Adaptation. Two hundred and thirty-five seats were filled reaching 86 Alumni (some Fellows participated in more than one webinar). The first residency for Cohort 15, originally scheduled for October 12 - 23, 2020, was postponed due to the developing effects of the pandemic such as travel restrictions, impact to agency budgets, and overall concern for the safety of the fellows, coaches, staff, and faculty. The first residency for Cohort 15 is now scheduled for October 2021. For more information on the NCLI, please visit www.conservationleadership.org.



2020 ANNUAL MEETING

The Association held its 110th Annual Meeting, September 9-11 & 14-15, 2020 as a virtual meeting. Leading off the conference, the 2020 plenary “Conservation in the Time of Coronavirus: Social Pandemics. Cultural Pandemics” which focused on the social and cultural pandemics of our day against the backdrop of a coronavirus.

The Association thanks our plenary speakers Mr. Preston Cole, Secretary/Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Ms. Angelou Ezeilo, J.D./CEO and Founder, Greening Youth Foundation, Ms. Jennifer Psyllakis, Ph.D., Director/Wildlife and Habitat, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resources Operations, British Columbia, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, J.D./Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Quebec, and Ms. Sara Parker Pauley/Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation and Vice-President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for their insights.

2020 Annual Meeting Resolutions

The voting membership of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed 3 resolutions during its Business Meeting held on September 15, 2020. Resolutions are developed within AFWA Committees to express formal opinion for adoption by the Association.

1. Support for the Open Fields Doctrine in Inspections and Investigations by State Conservation Officers
2. Support for Prioritization of State Fish and Wildlife Agency Private Land Technical Assistance Efforts
3. Celebrating a Successful Virtual Annual Meeting and Acknowledging a Year of Unprecedented Challenges and Adaptation

[You can view the full text of the resolutions online.](#)

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORS

The Association extends its appreciation to the 110th Annual Meeting Sponsors and exhibitors.

Sustaining Partner Level: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Platinum Level Sponsors: Bass Pro Shops, US Department of Agriculture, NOAA, Kalkomey, Brandt Information Services

Gold Level Sponsors: Sovereign Sportsman Solutions, Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation, USDA/NRCS, Archery Trade Association, USDA Forest Service, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Boone and Crockett Club, Ducks Unlimited

Silver Level Sponsors: Visual Labs Smartphone Body Cameras, U.S. Geological Survey, NIC, ESRI, Aspira

Bronze Level Sponsors: Airgun Sporting Association, Wildlife Management Institute, DJ Case & Associates, The Wildlife Society, American Sportfishing Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Signage Sponsor: VOSS Signs



2020 ANNUAL AWARDS

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies recognized eleven individuals, three state agencies and one private landowner for their dedication to advancing fish and wildlife conservation at the Association's Annual Awards Ceremony held virtually on September 14, 2020.

Recipients include:

Seth Gordon Award

Gordon Myers (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission)

John L. Morris Award

Dr. Mamie Parker

Ernest Thompson Seton Award

Lisa Williams and the Pennsylvania Game Commission

Boone and Crockett Award

Jim Posewitz and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Mark Reeff Award

Mike Ervin (Ohio Division of Wildlife)

Private Lands Fish & Wildlife Stewardship Award

Doug Moore and the South Prong Plantation

Stephen Kellert Award

Wildlife on WiFi (WoW) Program (Pennsylvania Game Commission)

Gary Taylor Award

Jim Odenkirk (Arizona Game and Fish Department)

Conservation Law Enforcement Award

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources' Special Operations Unit

Special Recognition Awards

Collin O'Mara (National Wildlife Federation)

Jeff Crane (Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation)

Miles Moretti

Chuck Kowaleski

Steve Sheriff

National R3 Implementation Workgroup

The Association would like to pay tribute to the wildlife professionals, Fallen Heroes, who have lost their lives while carrying out their duties to enforce conservation laws and regulations and manage fish and wildlife resources in 2020. In memory of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Officer Julian Keen; Wildlife Biologist Dewey Stockbridge, Fish and Wildlife Technician Brandon White, and State Wildlife Veterinarian Dr. Robert Dittmar of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; and Captain Stan Elrod with the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division.



STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Under the leadership of Past President Kelly Hepler, the Association spent all of 2020 working on our new strategic plan. Based on input from AFWA members we undertook an ‘updating’ of the plan rather than a full re-write but it still contains many new components, including a focus on diversity and a new suite of Association values to help guide our work. The process of developing the new plan focused on intensive interaction with all of members. The following is a high-level summary of the new plan:

Mission: To advocate for the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of our member agencies to manage fish and wildlife as public trust resources for current and future generations.

Vision: Providing conservation leadership for a sustainable, publicly supported future for fish and wildlife.

Values

Community: We prioritize collegiality, cooperation, trust, and mutual support.

Inclusiveness: We foster a culture that welcomes diverse people and ideas.

Respect: We treat people with dignity, kindness, and fairness.

Integrity: We are honest, reliable, and ethical.

Collaboration: We work together to achieve shared goals and priorities.

Excellence: We commit ourselves to exemplary work.

Strategic Goals:

Goal 1: Advocate for funding, laws, regulations, and policies that fulfill the missions and capabilities of our members.

Goal 2: Increase participation, relevancy, diversity, and inclusiveness in fish and wildlife conservation and nature-based recreation.

Goal 3: Provide leadership in developing fish and wildlife conservation science and its application in decision and policy making.

Goal 4: Attain comprehensive and dedicated funding for fish and wildlife conservation.

Goal 5: Provide communication, training, and capacity-building to support member fish and wildlife agencies.

Goal 6: Improve fiscal and operational excellence of the Association

The new plan took effect at the Business Meeting in September where it was unanimously approved by the membership. Under the leadership of President Sara Parker Pauley, we will spend 2021 working with AFWA Leadership and Staff to operationalize the plan, developing metrics and a prototype dashboard to keep AFWA members up to date on our progress achieving our goals.

[You can view the detailed plan on the AFWA website.](#)

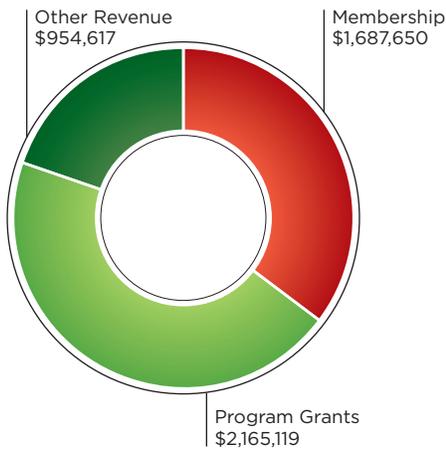
2020 FINANCIALS



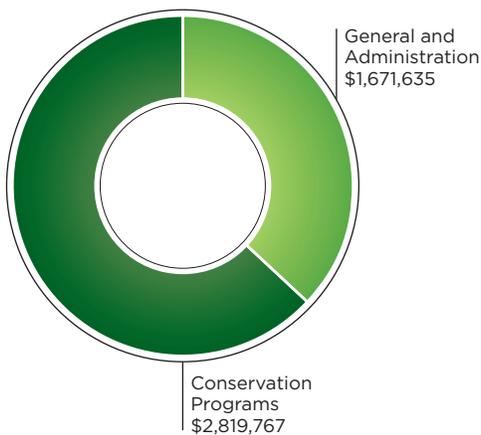
2020 FINANCIALS

The funds entrusted to the Association enable us to provide coordinated services; support international programs, projects and coalitions; promote wildlife-associated recreation; and help members continue to address the most pressing conservation challenges of the day.

2020 Revenue



2020 Expenses



The Association's independently audited financial statements and IRS 990 are available upon request.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

State	33.73%
Federal	<1%
Provincial	<1%
Associate	<1%
Contributing	1.00%

GRANT REVENUE

Federal	11.11%
Multistate	21.53%
Foundation	4.57%
International	4.77%

OTHER REVENUE

Annual Meeting	7.51%
Misc. State Contributions	3.04%
Overhead	7.63%
Miscellaneous	4.71%

TOTAL REVENUE \$4,807,386

TOTAL EXPENSES \$4,491,402

Photographers:

Cover Photo: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Inside Cover: Nevada Department of Wildlife

Back Cover: Michael Parsons

Additional Featured Photos:

Missouri Department of Conservation (pg. 4, 5); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (pg.7); Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (pg. 8, 11, 21); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (pg. 9, 29); California Department of Fish & Wildlife (pg. 12); Outdoor Alabama (pg. 13); Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (pg. 14); Maryland Department of Natural Resources (pg. 16); Elena Takaki (pg. 17); West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (pg. 18); Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership (pg. 19); Idaho Fish and Game (pg. 19); Gary Wise (pg. 20); Arizona Game and Fish Department (pg. 21, 26); North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (pg. 21, 27, 30, 32); Ohio Department of Natural Resources (pg. 21, 22); Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (pg. 22); Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (pg. 22); Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (pg. 23); Stephanie Kendall (pg. 24); New York State Department of Conservation (pg. 27).

THE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES, SUBCOMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

Almost without exception, the accomplishments of which the Association are most proud started within our 70+ committees, subcommittees and working groups, and our 1,000+ committee members. Without a doubt, the Association's success in advancing positions that further our collective capacity to manage resources will only continue thanks to the enduring personal contributions of the greater Association membership.

Agricultural Conservation Committee

Bioenergy Working Group

Conservation Reserve Program Working Group

Environmental Quality Incentives Program / Conservation Stewardship Program Joint Working Group

Farm Bill Easements Working Group

Forestry Working Group

Public Access Working Group

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Working Group

Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Committee

Angler & Boater R3 Committee

Annual Meeting/Awards Committee

Audit Committee

Bird Conservation Committee

Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group

Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Working Group

Grassland Work Group

Harvest Information Program (HIP) Work Group

Incidental Take Working Group

Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group

Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group

Resident Game Bird Working Group

Waterfowl Working Group

Climate Adaptation Committee

Education, Outreach & Diversity Committee

Diversity & Inclusion Working Group

Education Working Group

Outreach Working Group

Project WILD Subcommittee

Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group

Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee

Executive Committee

Federal and Tribal Relations Committee

Finance Committee

Fish & Wildlife Health Committee

Lead and Fish and Wildlife Health Working Group

Aquatic Animal Health Working Group

Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund Committee

Federal Assistance Coordinators Subcommittee

Trust Fund Collection Working Group

Fisheries & Water Resources Policy Committee

Subcommittee on Water

Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group

Drug Approval Working Group

Hunting/Shooting Sports Participation Committee

International Relations Committee

CITES Technical Working Group

Invasive Species Committee

Feral Swine Working Group

Law Enforcement Committee

Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Leadership/Professional Development Committee

Adaptive Leadership Working Group

Legal Committee

Legislative and Federal Budget Committee

National Grants Committee

Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Nominating Committee

Ocean Resources Policy Committee

Resolutions Committee

Science and Research Committee

Human Dimensions and Social Science Subcommittee

Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee

Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

Technology & Data Committee

Threatened/Endangered

Species Policy

ESA and Climate Change Working Group

Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee

Wildlife Resource Policy Committee

Bat Working Group

Human/Wildlife Conflict Working Group

Task Forces

Joint Federal/State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy

National Survey Technical Workgroup

President's Task Force on the Multistate Conservation Grants Program

President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities

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Dean Smith, NAWMP Director/Wildlife Liaison

Elena Takaki, Director of Project WILD and Interim Director of MAT

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2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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