**Support for Grassland Bird Conservation, Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring**

*Submitted by AFWA’s Bird Conservation Committee, August 2017*

**Whereas,** North American grassland ecosystems are home to a suite of declining birds, pollinators, and other grassland dependent wildlife; and

**Whereas,** those grasslands are under ongoing threats of conversion to cropland**,** non-native pasture, and development; and

**Whereas,** only 53% of the total acres in the Great Plains remain as intact grasslands, with 53 million acres of grassland converted to cropland across the Great Plains since 2009; and

**Whereas,** 84% of the intact habitat in the Great Plains is privately owned, and more than 80% of grassland bird distributions nationwide are on private lands (U.S. State of the Birds Report 2013); and

**Whereas,** in the Eastern U.S. true native grasslands are for practical purposes completely extirpated, and other habitats that support grassland species such as longleaf pine savannahs have declined from 90 million acres to 3 million acres; and

**Whereas,** other threats to intact grasslands such as woody invasion, fragmentation, introduction of non-native species, aquifer depletion, and lack of habitat management including prescribed burning further impact the diversity and health of grassland ecosystems, threatening our agricultural heritage and human quality of life in rural America; and

**Whereas,** grassland birds are dependent on multiple countries to meet full life cycle needs have declined most dramatically, with some populations declining by 70% since 1970 (North American Bird Conservation Initiative, State of North America’s Birds, 2016); and petitions for listing as threatened or endangered are imminent; and

**Whereas**, grassland birds have shown some of the most dramatic population declines of any suite of North American avifauna (North American Bird Conservation Initiative, State of North America’s Birds, 2016); and

**Whereas**, 27% of grassland birds of conservation concern have slipped below Watch List threshold (NABCI 2016), and many will likely lose 50% of their remaining population by 2050 (Partners In Flight 2016); and

**Whereas**, Grassland birds represent a significant proportion of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and state T&E species in nearly every U.S. state (e.g. Grasshopper Sparrow in 35 states); and

**Whereas**, important resident gamebird species, including Northern Bobwhite, Scaled Quail, Lesser and Greater Prairie-Chickens, and Ring-necked Pheasant, are also among the most steeply declining grassland birds, contributing to a loss of significant recreational income to states; and

**Whereas**, pollinators are declining and they play a critical role in grassland ecosystems and pollination services.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved**, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes the urgent plight of North America’s grasslands and supports increased trilateral resources for conservation, research, monitoring, and evaluation of grasslands and the fauna that depend on them.

Be it further resolved, that this includes identifying specific trilateral threats and limiting factors causing the declines of the highest concern species and conservation efforts to stabilize and reverse trends.

**Be it further resolved**, that significant new investment in voluntary and incentive-based efforts, such as conservation provisions in the U.S. Farm Bill, to improve the quality and diversity of remaining grasslands and to slow or reverse declines in grassland bird populations, pollinators, and other grassland dependent wildlife is supported by State and Provincial members.