



## **Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee\***

**Chair: Doug Vincent-Lang (Alaska)**

**Vice-Chair: Dave Kay (Alberta)**

**Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**1:00 – 4:00 PM (CDT)**

**Majestic G – Conference Center Upper Level**

### **[North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference](#)**

#### **Committee Charge:**

Advocate the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and promote the sustainable use of fish and wildlife resources at the international level.

#### **Subcommittees and Working Groups:**

U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

#### **Agenda & Minutes**

- Agenda review, adjustments, and opening comments (Elise Goldstein, NMDGF)
- Introductions (Elise)
- Approval of Minutes from the previous meeting (Elise)
- Update: Current and Future Multi-State Grants (Bryant White)
- Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Program (Dave Windsor)
- Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Partner with a Payer update (Tom Decker)
- Safari Club International (Regina Lennox/Beebe Frederick)
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (Taylor Schmitz)
- Sportsmen's Alliance (Todd Adkins & Naomi Farmer)
- Update: Best Management Practices for Trapping (Bryant)

# Minutes of the Meeting

- **Agenda review, adjustments, and opening comments** (Elise Goldstein, NMDGF)

The Committee would like to thank New Mexico Game and Fish Department, Assistant Wildlife Chief, Elise Goldstein for Chairing the meeting. The Committee also thanks Alaska Fish and Game Deputy Commissioner, Ben Mulligan for providing a report on the meeting during the AFWA Business Meeting.

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- The agenda was reviewed and enacted without adjustments.

- **Introductions** (Elise)

- 33 members and guests from numerous state and federal agencies, and NGOs introduced themselves.

- **Approval of Minutes from the previous meeting** (Elise)

- The minutes of the previous meeting (AFWA Annual Meeting, Fort Worth, Texas, 2022) were approved and may be found [here](#)

- **Update: Current and Future Multi-State Grants** (Bryant White)

- Multistate Conservation Grant Projects Recently Completed:
  - Grant 1
- “Maintaining the relevancy of the AFWA North American Trapper Education Program”
- The North American Trapper Education Program is maintained by AFWA at no cost to agencies and available for use by all agencies. (As a caveat, some states (NM & LA) do pay a fee per user because AFWA houses a separate state specific version of the course on the AFWA platform for those state). A MSCG was awarded to create trapper education videos and update the trapper education manual based on the updated national trapper education standards created by AFWA and IHEA in 2019.
- Seventeen videos (including the trailer) have been produced and uploaded into the program. Videos will be close captioned in English and Spanish
- The manual and online program have been reviewed and edits are being made to both so that we can maintain IHEA certification.

- Grant 2
- “Modernizing Trapping Matters Professional Development Workshops and Wild Fur Schools Delivery Through Updated Messaging and the Creation of Distance Learning modules”
- This grant allowed for creation of distance learning modules for virtual delivery of professional development workshops on regulated trapping. Production of all videos occurred in August, and we anticipate having the online program available for agency use soon.
- Delivery of workshops took place in person (5 workshops were delivered under this grant).
- Six national focus groups were conducted to evaluate messages used to gain approval of sustainable wildlife use and trapping. The final report is available [here](#). Results of this project relative to messaging will be incorporated into the Trapping Matters Workshop and education modules.
- Grant 3
- “Trapping Matters - Communication Message Training”
- This grant also allowed for creation of distance learning modules for virtual delivery of professional development workshops regarding trapping
- We delivered 16 in-person Trapping Matters Workshops and 5 Wild Fur Schools under this grant. In all, over 800 agency staff, university staff and students attended these workshops and schools.
- \*Future Multistate Grant Opportunities
- Repeat the AFWA National Trapper Survey to collect information on trap types used by trappers (to document use of BMP traps and guide future research), furbearer species preferred, number of trappers nationally (to document current growth in trapper numbers....yes, trapper numbers are increasing!), understand trapper demographics, etc. This will be the fourth iteration of this survey which was conducted in 1992, 2005, 2015. We need to repeat this survey every 10 years to guide research and communication efforts.
- Conduct Trapping Matters Workshops and Wild Fur Schools for state and federal agencies, The Wildlife Society, and other Conservation Organizations
- Conduct a national R3 effort specifically for trappers. While much has been done relative to hunter and angler R3, no projects we are aware of have focused on R3 strategies for recruiting trappers.
- Developing social media packages for agencies to use for trapper recruitment and to educate the public about the importance of trapping in wildlife management. (This will be a component of the grant mentioned above) This is a critical need because the public is highly uniformed about trapping and, as a result, easily misinformed by groups with anti-trapping agendas.

- \*The Committee approved moving these grant ideas forward
- **Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Program** (Dave Windsor)
  - Dave (CLFT Program Director) reported on the creation of several videos to enhance the online distance learning modules previously developed. In addition, Dave provided a presentation to the Committee on the development of the virtual trapping workshop that has been created and was filmed recently by DJ Case and Associates. We anticipate the program will be available for use in the coming weeks.
  - Since 2012 we have maintained “Cooperative Agreements” with states that opt to participate in our programs
  - We consider our relationship more than a “business/ customer” relationship!
  - Starting our 2022-2023 season we have a 3-year Cooperative Agreement with all 4 Regional Associations
  - CLft maintains partnerships with 28 State Fish and Wildlife Agencies, US FWS, and the BLM.
  - During 2022-2023 the following were offered:
    - 7 in person workshops
    - 4 locations:
      - CEWC - Georgia
      - NCTC - West Virginia
      - George S. and Delores Dore Eccles Wildlife Education Center – Utah
      - Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation - IL
    - 5 online cohorts (for more about the online offering see the link below)
    - <https://clft.org/conservation-hunting-america-online>
  - CLFT Guidance Committee
    - Summer 2023
    - Diverse group
    - To discuss various issues, recommendations, and suggestions
    - Ensure CLFT curriculum remains relevant
  - Summer Review
    - Review the Goals and Objectives of the following:
      - Trapping and Fishing
      - Rifle Shot Placement
      - Effective Communication
  - 2023-2024 Course Offerings
    - In-person
      - 8 workshops
      - 4 locations
    - Online
      - 5 cohorts
  - 2005-2023
    - Program Milestones

- 160 total workshops
  - 89 university/ 71 professional
  - 43 online cohorts
  - ~3000 participants
- For more on past programs see: <https://clft.org/past-programs>
- **Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Partner With A Payer update** (Tom Decker)
  - Partner With a Payer strengthens the ties between the people who make a successful partnership work- the manufacturers that pay excise tax through the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Acts, the state agencies that conserve wildlife and habitat across the country, and the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
  - For more information see: <https://partnerwithapayer.org/>
  - Strategic Communications
    - Created Branch of Communications, Analysis, and Partnerships (CAPS Branch) to expand and synergize communication capacity. Including:
      - - Partner with a Payer
      - - National Survey
      - - Multi-State Conservation Grants
      - - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants
      - - Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize
  - National Apportionment Information & National License Certification Information
    - Since 1939 apportionments total \$14,600,732,269
    - Inflation adjusted apportionments total \$22,526,469,294
  - National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR)
    - The report from the 2021 survey will be released in the fall of 2023
    - For more see the link below:
    - <https://www.fws.gov/program/national-survey-fishing-hunting-and-wildlife-associated-recreation-fhwar>
  - Partner With a Payer Objectives
    - **Strengthen relationship** - FWS, States and excise tax paying manufacturers
    - **Increase awareness** by manufacturers about successes that are achieved with excise tax funds
    - **Increase manufacturer access to success stories** for sharing with their customers
    - **Increase understanding** by State and WSFR staff of manufacturers and the origin of the funding for WR + SFR projects.
  - Research Findings
    - Findings:

- Staff from excise tax paying industry have little or no relationship or awareness of state fish and wildlife agency roles.
- Lack understanding of conservation partnership and benefits.
- Hunger for content and program stories.
- Strategies and Tactics-
  - Develop Awareness and Understanding of the benefits
  - Strengthen Relationships
- Partnerships – Recognition - Collaboration
- [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3615/1853/8699/The\\_State\\_Conservation\\_Machine-FINAL.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3615/1853/8699/The_State_Conservation_Machine-FINAL.pdf)
  - Key Audiences – Trade Associations and Manufacturers
  - National Shooting Sports Foundation (1961) 12,000 companies.
  - Archery Trade Association (1953) 9000 companies.
  - American Sportfishing Association (1933) 900 companies.
  - National Marine Manufacturers Association
  - (1979) 1,300 companies.
  - American Fly Fishing Trade Association (1988) 1,200 companies.
  - Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation 1998
  - Individual Companies:
    - Colt
    - Sig Sauer
    - Federal Ammunition
    - Ruger
    - Mossberg
    - Smith & Wesson
    - Orvis
    - Rapala
    - Z-Man
    - Shimano
  - Partner With A Payer provides information on the program through
    - [FishingWire](#)
    - [ArcheryWire](#)
    - [The Outdoor Wire](#)
  - PwP has produced 26 videos and 74 articles on WSFR partnerships and benefits of excise taxes
  - Many large and small target ranges have been developed
    - There are numerous WSFR Range Guidance Staff
  - Hatcheries and Fish Stocking
    - 70 Species of fish stocked
    - 316 hatcheries operated and maintained
    - 1.3 billion fish stocked each year
  - Wild Turkey Population Restoration (see the website for more information)
  - Compendium of Conservation
    - A New Parallel Information Source to Partner with a Payer*
      - Hosts elements related to handouts, videos, and news articles with information about:

- Species restoration, research, monitoring, and inventory
  - Land acquisition and management
  - Fish and wildlife diseases
  - R3, hunter education, aquatic education, public access
  - Wetland management, habitat improvement, prescribed burning
  - **Website:**
  - *Partnerwithapayer.org*
  - *CompendiumofConservation.org*
- **Safari Club International** (Regina Lennox/Beebe Frederick)
    - Beebe Frederick reported on the following:
    - Challenge to California Firearm Marketing Law – In the wake of the Uvalde, Texas, school shooting, the State of California quickly pushed through a law that prevents “firearms industry member” from advertising the “use” of firearms in a manner attractive to minors. The law was so broadly worded that an organization like SCI or Sportsmen’s Alliance could qualify as a “firearms industry member” for promoting the “use” of firearms through hunting. After the suit was filed, the legislature amended the law to exclude youth hunting and shooting activities, but SCI and partners have continued with the suit because the law potentially restricts how they can place advertising for firearms in publications. SCI and partners sought to enjoin the law, but the California district court denied that motion, holding that the law does not violate the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. SCI, Sportsmen’s, Alliance, and CSF appealed the district court’s decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.
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    - Gray Wolf Delisting – In 2020 (effective the beginning of 2021), once again, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed gray wolves from the Endangered Species Act lists of threatened and endangered species. The Service has been trying to do this for over 20 years, given the wolves’ significant recovery, especially in the Great Lakes region and Northern Rocky Mountains. Three sets of plaintiffs sued to vacate the Service’s 2021 rule, which delisted all gray wolves in the lower 48 U.S. States. SCI and NRA intervened to defend the rule. A California federal district court granted summary judgment in favor of plaintiffs and overturned the delisting rule. The judge’s decision largely turns on technical issues in interpreting the ESA; in one positive aspect, the court held that wolf management in the Great Lakes states did not threaten the recovery of wolves. This is important, because plaintiffs argued that hunting in the Great Lakes states (especially Wisconsin) demonstrated the inadequacy of state management mechanisms, which is one grounds to keep wolves listed. SCI and NRA were the first to appeal the judge’s ruling, followed by Utah, then the Service. Ranching groups were also permitted to join the appeal to defend the delisting.
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- The appeal is stayed for a year while the Service reviews the status of wolves in the lower 48 states. The Service anticipates preparing a status assessment, which could hopefully support future delisting rules and succeed in litigation. Notably, there is a bill pending in Congress (hearing March 23) to reinstate the 2021 delisting rule.
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- Challenge to 2020 Hunt Fish Rule – The Center for Biological Diversity challenged the 2020 Hunt Fish Rule, which expanded hunting and fishing on over 2 million acres of National Wildlife Refuges across the U.S. The Center alleged that increased use of lead ammunition and tackle will harm ESA listed species, and more hunters on the landscape will harass these species. The complaint specifically named eight refuges in Montana, Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Indiana, and South Dakota. The Montana federal district court denied SCI, NRA, Sportsmen’s Alliance, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation’s motion to join the lawsuit to defend the rule, primarily because the Center and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were already discussing settlement.
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- After the Service published a Hunt Fish Rule for 2022 which pledged to restrict use of lead ammunition and tackle on 18 refuges, the Center and the Service settled the case. The bottom line is that the Service has indicated that it will continue to look into, and support, phasing out the use of lead ammo and tackle on National Wildlife Refuges.
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- Alaska Hunting Restrictions – In 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service adopted rules which restricted certain hunting, particularly of wolves and bears, on National Wildlife Refuges and National Preserves in Alaska. SCI and the State of Alaska challenged these rules. We largely lost a lawsuit challenging hunting restrictions on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, particularly a restriction on the use of bait to hunt brown bears, despite extensive evidence from the State about an increasing bear population and increasing human-bear conflicts on the Kenai Peninsula. The Supreme Court recently denied the State of Alaska’s petition for review of the Alaska district court and Ninth Circuit’s negative decisions.
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- SCI, the State, and Alaska Professional Hunters Association also challenged the National Park Service rule, but the Park Service itself withdrew that rule in 2020 and allowed the challenged hunting to take place. A number of groups challenged the 2020 rule. SCI, the State, Alaska Professional Hunters Association, and Sportsmen’s Alliance defended that rule in district court. The Park Service sought remand without vacatur (meaning the rule would be sent back to the Park Service for review, but would remain in place in the interim) to conduct a third rulemaking and reimpose the restrictions that SCI et al. had initially challenged. The Alaska federal court denied that request and SCI, APHA, Sportsmen’s Alliance, and the State took over briefing from the Park Service (the Park Service didn’t defend the rule at all). After oral argument the court upheld the rule in most respects, but also held that the Park Service made three errors in the rule and remanded the case without vacatur. All parties have appealed



that decision to the Ninth Circuit. The appeal is stayed pending a separate rulemaking. In January, the Park Service proposed a rule to reinstate all the restrictions that were contained in the 2015 rule and withdrawn in the 2020 rule. These include: hunting bears over bait on National Preserves; an extended season for wolves and coyotes in certain management areas; hunting bears in dens (practiced by local Alaska Native hunters and their families), hunting swimming caribou/caribou from boats under power (same), and hunting black bears with dogs (permitted in very few cases). The comment deadline for comments on this proposal is Monday, March 27. Contact Regina for more info. For more from SCI see:

- <https://safariclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-08-SCI-Cases-Update.pdf>
- <https://safariclub.org/advocacy-issues/>
- Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (Taylor Schmitz)
  - No report. Information on the great work of CSF can be found at:
  - <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/>
- Sportsmen’s Alliance (Todd Adkins & Naomi Farmer)
  - Todd Adkins from SA gave a presentation that focused on some recent actions regarding appointments of Commissioners to state fish and wildlife agencies that could have a negative impact on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Efforts to manage fish and wildlife resources through polls, rather than by science, threaten the Model. Concern stems from the association with Wildlife For All, which claims that firearms should not fund conservation among other issues. This would eliminate PR dollars that fund many needed conservation programs. Wildlife For All has made a concerted effort to impact commissions. SA strongly supports and defends the North American Model.
  - For more on the great work of the Sportsmen’s Alliance see:
    - <https://sportsmensalliance.org/>
- Update: Best Management Practices for Trapping (Bryant)
  - The BMP program continues to conduct research to evaluate trapping devices for furbearers and develop outreach materials to assist agencies with regulated trapping programs.
  - Trap testing projects were conducted in 7 states during the 2023 winter trapping season and focused primarily on foothold traps and cable devices for the capture of bobcat, gray fox, red fox, river otter and coyotes.
  - Captured animals will be necropsied during July 17-21 in Ashland, Wisconsin. Wildlife Veterinarians from state agencies including Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Colorado will conduct the necropsies.
  - During 2023-2025 AFWA has a grant through the American Rescue Plan. Projects will be partnered with disease surveillance for SARS-Cov-2 in wildlife.
    - As of 3/14/23 this program has collected samples from 181 animals including (polar bear, black bear, grizzly bear, wolverine, gray wolf, arctic fox, Canada lynx, marten, river otter, bobcat, red fox, and coyote)

- New outreach materials have been developed including:
  - Science Briefs:
    - [Animal Welfare in Trapping](#)
    - [Animal Selectivity in Trapping](#)
    - [Sustainable Wildlife Use](#)
  - Conservation Briefs:
    - [Trapping and Public Safety](#)
    - [Trapping and North American Model of Wildlife Conservation](#)
    - [The Implication of a Statewide Ban on Trapping: The Massachusetts Experience](#)