

**WATERFOWL WORKING GROUP
REPORT TO THE BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

24 March 2023

St. Louis, MO

- The Waterfowl Working Group (WWG) convened at 1:00 p.m. and had a very informative and productive meeting on Wednesday, March 22. Approximately 50 individuals participated in-person at some point during the meeting.
- Vice-chair Craig LeSchack (DU) provided a brief overview of the annual work plan.
- Jerome Ford and Ken Richkus (FWS) gave an update on changes to NAWCA's small grant and standard grant programs (increasing caps from \$100K to \$250K, and \$2 M to \$3M respectively).
- Diane Eggeman provided an update on NAWMP integration coordination.
- Cindy Longmire (DJ Case and Associates) updated the Working Group on the work of the human dimensions group (now called the Human Dimensions-Public Engagement Team or HD-PET).
- Dean Smith (AFWA) and Matt Harlow (DJ Case and Associates) provided an overview of the NAWMP marketing plan being developed and solicited feedback. Some concerns about the potential for changing the NAWMP logo and de-emphasizing waterfowl in favor of all birds were expressed.
- Tim Sopuck (ECCC) and Tom Moorman (DU), the Canadian and U.S. Co-chairs of the 2024 NAWMP Update Steering Committee gave a report on the initial progress (just getting underway) and timeline. They noted this was an update, not a full-scale revision.
- Shelly Plante (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Nature Tourism Manager) briefed attendees on the results of the Wildlife Viewer Survey: Enhancing Relevancy and Engaging Support from a Broader Constituency. Some analyses continue.
- Ross Melinchuk gave an update on Partners for Prairie Wetland Conservation.
- Jerome Ford and Ken Richkus (FWS) updated the group on the proposed rule for incidental take (maybe published later this summer or fall and perhaps with a 90-day comment period). The outlined a 3-tiered permitting process.
- Natalie Savoie (Manager of Migratory Birds, Wildlife Health, Canadian Wildlife Service) gave a presentation on HPAI in Canada. Ken Richkus gave a brief update from the U.S. perspective.
- Dean Smith provided information about the Pathways: Human Dimensions of Wildlife conference in Fort Collins, CO May 31-June 3, 2023. The theme is Managing Wildlife in an Era of Mutualism. AFWA and Virginia Tech (Fish and Wildlife Conservation) are co-sponsors with Colorado State University (Human Dimensions of Natural Resources). 600 people are registered thus far.

- Todd Bishop (Chair of the National Flyway Council) asked the Working Group to adopt a recommendation to be forwarded to the Bird Conservation Committee on Friday (seconded by Shaun Oldenburger, TPWD). It read:

“The Bird Conservation Committee and National Flyway Council recognize that the USFWS Migratory Bird Program is no longer funded at a level appropriate to fully support migratory bird conservation needs. Given the urgency of the situation, these groups recommend that AFWA’s President and the Executive Director meet with the Director of the USFWS to discuss strategies that will result in fully funding migratory bird conservation needs including,

- *A \$1 million annual increase for the Duck Stamp Office to better engage with artists and promote sales within the Duck Stamp program.*
- *Fully funding of the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures at \$19.9 million annually, and*
- *An increase of \$20 million/year for monitoring and surveys of waterfowl and other bird species populations.”*

The motion carried unanimously.

- Robert Perez, Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture Coordinator (American Bird Conservancy) presented an overview of the JV8 Central Grasslands Conservation Initiative (Eight Migratory Bird Joint Ventures unified for conservation of the Central Grasslands). The Working Group generally tries to include on its meeting agenda an update about Joint Venture activities.
- On behalf of Kurt Thiede (AFWA), Dean Smith explained the e-Duck Stamp legislation recently introduced by Senator Boozman of Arkansas (S.788). Representative Graves (LA) is expected to introduce a version in the House. The primary goal is to eliminate the 45-day period after which the e-stamp currently expires (make it valid through March 10 each year).
- Kurt Thiede was unable to attend the WWG meeting, so Dean Smith gave an update on RAWA.
- Vice-chair Craig LeSchack (DU) reviewed the action item from the afternoon (the motion from Todd Bishop to be referred to the Bird Conservation Committee for consideration and support and hopefully to be forwarded to the AFWA business meeting with a favorable recommendation).
- The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. (30 minutes ahead of schedule).