

**Subcommittee on Water**

**Chair: Jason Olive (AR)**

**Vice-Chair: Bob Caccese (PA)**

**March 10, 2022**

**7:00 am to 9:00 am PST**

* Call to Order and Introductions *Jason Olive, AR*
	+ Review Agenda/Approval of Minutes from September 2021 Meeting
		- Motion to approve – Gary Whelan (MI) and Second by M. Koch (NE) – Approved
* Review of USGS Gap Analysis Online Materials and Implications *C. Estes*, *Life Member*
	+ Website links for presentations will be distributed to SOW members soon
	+ Updated data release by USGS almost complete
		- Will address feedback received from draft version
		- Not many changes and manuscript ready
		- www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/5f6b982482ce38aaa2454dc3
	+ Moving forward with correlation analysis for siting gauging and discharge estimates for ungauged sites
		- NE and CO River Basin testing new techniques
		- High confidence in predictability at ungauged sites
		- Need good geospatial system background
		- Many water rights at ungauged sites in West – Water use is not well documented
			* Western States Water Council (WaDE system) will compile this information using a Watersmart Grant
* IFC/AFS Instream Flow & Water Level Conservation (IFWLC) Training Center MSCG Grant Project Update *C. Estes, Life Member*
	+ Lack of full-time standardized training available to current and future generations of agency staff and other stakeholder drove the need for this project
		- Cause -- Training Center terminated in late 1990s after USFWS/USGS reorganization
		- Those who were previously trained by USFWS/USGS are retiring or near retirement, so there is a need to bridge the gap and to establish center to train current and future generations especially while existing veterans/experts are still available to facilitate the transition/ start-up phase
	+ Previously scheduled in-person Steering Committee (SC) meetings to craft the IFWLC Training Center Business Plan were cancelled due to COVID, resulting in the project completion being extended until 2023
		- Steering committee has been holding monthly virtual meetings
		- Stakeholder survey completed in 2021 – > 500 responses
			* Overwhelming agreement of need for standardized training
	+ Working on strategy for in person SC meeting in June to enable SC to refine draft products to complete products for AFWA, IFC, AFS and other stakeholder review before finalizing
	+ Draft plan distributed by the end of 2022
	+ Final completed in spring/summer 2023
* IFC Biennial Meeting Update *C. Estes, Life Member*
	+ Biennial Meeting of delegated US and Canada member agency representatives and other agency staff that participate in instream flow and water level conservation functions - meeting to be held on April 4-7, 2022 in Columbia MO
		- Will be a hybrid meeting
	+ IFC hosted an international workshop in 2018 focused on drought that included an abbreviated biennial gathering prior to the workshop
	+ Administrators are asked to support and ensure that, at a minimum, their designated IFC representative attend in addition to other staff that participate in instream flow and water level conservation functions
	+ Travel funding support is still available
	+ The keynote speaker for this meeting, Richard Roos-Collins, will present an update to the 1996 case histories on Public Trust Doctrine (PTD). Videos of the 1996 and earlier PTD case histories and background are posted at: *https://www.instreamflowcouncil.org/the-public-trust-doctrine/*
* Government Affairs Update *Devin DeMario, AFWA*
	+ Infrastructure Bill - $1.3 trillion – Passed Nov 15
		- $500 billion new dollars in funding
		- 71 programs are being tracked by AFWA
			* Trying to include state priorities
			* Provided full list at Fish Administrators Call
		- Partners
			* NOAA, BOR, USFWS, BLM
			* USEPA, USACOE
			* FHA – Culvert changes and connectivity
		- Pull together information to help with decisions
			* ROI and what happened
			* How much do we need was requested from us
			* Need tools and databases to support decisions
			* Need success monitoring tools like the NFHP Project Tracking Database
		- Federal agencies developing spend plans coming out which are an annual roadmap
		- A lot of complexity in the law including key expectations with climate change, climate resiliency, and environmental justice (40% of funding to underserved communities)
		- Capacity will be an issue to handle all components from engineering to permit analysis
		- 90% will be grant funding
		- Paul Souza (USFWS) - $162 million Klamath Basin restoration
			* Bring together OR and CA coordination with other many other agencies funding
		- Collaboration will be key
	+ AFWA letter in Feb on WOTUS submitted – Dec 7, 2021 rescinding and pre-2015 language
		- Codify case law
		- Always a tricky place due to the agencies’ positions or state politics
		- Focus is on the need for water for fish and wildlife habitat
		- Encourage USEPA and USACOE to engage fish and wildlife agencies in any definition change
		- Used a similar letter to past letters with much detail
		- Many court cases in progress
	+ Annual stream gaging letter has been drafted and as in past years will be signed by AFWA
	+ Federal Budget
		- FY2022 – CR in place until Friday
			* House passed Omnibus Package and over at Senate
			* Also House passed a CR extension to next Tuesday
			* USFWS is seeing increases in many areas in Omnibus Bill
			* USGS and USEPA also saw increases in Omnibus Bill
				+ PFAS and contaminant work was included
				+ Many water data collection systems including NHD in AK and next generation stream gauging
	+ WRDA
		- Every 2 years reauthorized
			* Fall 2022 passage is likely
			* Has gone farther than just USACOE
		- AFWA has provided comments in support of specific provisions
			* Consideration of fish and wildlife
			* AIS Mgt
				+ Barrier development important in some areas
			* Water monitoring
			* Low head dam removal and inventory – Outside of National Inventory of Dams
				+ CO and IA have good starts already
				+ Looking to ID key locations
				+ Funding for dam rehab including fish passage or removal
				+ Positive bi-partisan feedback on this issue
				+ SARP is working on a regional inventory with Midwest and West – Kat is the lead – connectivity.sarpdata.com

Have Kat give a presentation at the next Board meeting on the work

* + - * Key studies for dam removals, MS River and Everglades work all need to be authorized
		- Water Gaging has been provided some additional funding
			* Timely and accurate data has been identified
			* Minor increases in gauging noted in MI and ID
			* SC received $500K in recurring funds from the state legislature for additional gauges. FEMA added funding for flooding issues and gauges.
			* Transboundary issues are being evaluated
	+ Alex Funk, TRCP- policy update
		- Infrastructure Bill Barriers being evaluated by TRCP, particularly in the West
		- Farm Bill - Forestry – Lake shoreline restoration
		- Working on key issues for DOI and USFS
		- Rescue Act Funding – Justice 40 Issues
			* Sideboards are unclear for competitive funds
	+ Bottlenecks for engineering and NEPA analysis noted for the many funds
	+ USFWS and NOAA Coordination
		- Not much interaction with states on fish passage projects was noted across the country
		- Administration wants quick progress and dirt moving this summer
			* $200 million of projects in hand with USFWS – Many with state agencies as a partner
		- Likely want to coordinate in the future
		- Requesting grace and space with much pressure to get funds on the ground with existing staff
* NHD+ Hi-Resolution Future Webinar Planning Discussion *C. Estes, Life Member*
	+ Uniform coverage is not available yet nationally
		- Need higher resolution and routing
	+ Becci Anderson (USGS) is the national lead
		- Willing to give an overview to SOW on status and recent improvements
		- 3D hydrography is an important feature
	+ Support was expressed for mid-year virtual webinar with Becky and discussion at next meeting on policy for water
* A question was asked about the existence of a broad dashboard with all water datasets – this does not currently exist, but efforts are underway (e.g. Internet of Water- <https://internetofwater.org/>). See also the August 2020 AFWA SOW Water Data Webinar ([*https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fDCgX-FjEIa-Gfaj\_fAPqGlwUPT30Fdf*](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fDCgX-FjEIa-Gfaj_fAPqGlwUPT30Fdf)*)* for related water data resources and decision making tools.
	+ - A suggestion was made for SOW to host additional webinars on the topic of water data availability and coordination
		- ICWP and WSWC will be co-hosting a water policy roundtable in DC in April where several owners of water datasets will be together
			* This Roundtable will also include meetings with the President’s Water Sub-Cabinet
		- Drought information system ([www.drought.gov/about](http://www.drought.gov/about)) has a lot of information and USGS also has a water data dashboard (<https://www.usgs.gov/tools/national-water-dashboard-nwd>)
* FWCA Working Group Update *Karlyn Armstrong (CO) for* *Jen Sheehan, AR*
	+ First meeting was held yesterday (3/9/2022)
	+ Summary of background provided by Devin
	+ Ad-hoc committee recommendations
		- Legislative language should not be revised
		- Information and training for agency staff should be developed
		- Improved coordination and identification of funding source needed
		- Formation of FWCA Working Group
	+ Had a roundtable discussion on how states are currently handling FWCA
		- Highlighted the need for participation in the Working Group by both state and federal agencies
		- Areas highlighted for needs
			* Educational materials for all levels
			* State level agreements
			* Funding source for engagement
			* Roster of experts and materials – house online on a Google Drive folder
			* Case histories
	+ Charge and Scope of Work will be drafted with another meeting scheduled to discuss
	+ Need robust geographic representation on the Working Group
* SOW Priorities, Online Content and Next Meeting *Jason Olive, AR*
* Action Items/Meeting Wrap/Adjourn *Jason Olive, AR*
* **SOW Historical Background Info and Charge:**
	+ Slides: < *https://www.instreamflowcouncil.org/download/virgilmoore\_slides\_flow2018-pdf/?wpdmdl=11389&ind=5ccff16ab72bd >*
	+ Companion Dialogue: < *https://www.instreamflowcouncil.org/download/virgilmoore\_dialogue\_flow2018-pdf/?wpdmdl=11387&ind=5ccff167db4da* >

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| **Committee Charge:**  Focus Areas and Goals: 1. Identify, support, and communicate science, legal, policy and public involvement issues related to water that are of importance to fish and wildlife.
2. Support and build on recommendations from AFWA Drought Forum.

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