

**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. |