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**Teaming With Wildlife Committee Report**

Chair: Carter Smith

Vice-chair: David Whitehurst

Meeting of March 9, 2017

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Spokane, WA

**Committee Charge:** The Teaming With Wildlife Committeeadvocates for long-term, dedicated funding and annual appropriations for the conservation of at-risk fish and wildlife, nature-based recreation and conservation education. The committee supports the development, implementation and revision of State Wildlife Action Plans and builds, supports and coordinates the national Teaming With Wildlife coalition.

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

The meeting was convened at 8:02am. Carter Smith sends his regrets. He was required to stay in Texas to testify before his legislature.

David Whitehurst-Welcomed everyone and asked participants to introduce themselves. He said this is an important meeting and that the Blue Ribbon Panel is a heavy lift with lots of work going on behind the scenes. The Teaming With Wildlife coalition has come to an end and a new coalition will be built to advance the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel. We will also need to consider a new name for this committee. David asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

Jen Newmark-Offered a motion to approve the committee report which was seconded by Rex Sallabanks. The motion was approved.

State & Tribal Wildlife Grants

Mark Humpert-Gave a report on the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. A Fly-in event is being planned for the last week of March to advocate for funding. A Dear Colleague Letter is being circulated in the House and a similar letter is expected to be circulated in the Senate soon. States and partners are encouraged to contact their congressional offices. The new Administration has not released its full FY18 budget. Most organizations are bracing for cuts in conservation funding.

David Whitehurst-We need to keep fighting for funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program. Mark Humpert is working with Wildlife Diversity Program Managers. If you can engage the coalition in your state, that would be helpful.

Naomi Edelson-The National Wildlife Federation will be sending blasts up to the Hill. We cannot lose this program when we are waiting for something else.

David Whitehurst-The National Wildlife Federation has been a great partner.

Noami Edelson-There is a tendency to cut grant programs when budgets decline.

David Whitehurst-It’s only natural for agencies to prioritize their FTE’s.

Committee Name Change

Rex Sallabanks-The Wildlife Diversity Program Managers have been discussing this issue for several years. The group made a recommendation last year but no action was taken. We revisited the issue at our January meeting and propose the name of this committee be changed to the Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee.

Allison Fowler-The WDPM group went through lots of iterations. I support the recommendation.

Keith Norris-I appreciate the work of the WDPM group. I would encourage the group to consider thoughts about relevance. Consider calling this committee the Wildlife Conservation Committee. I am fine with the recommendation, but this just something to consider.

Allison Fowler-The use of the word diversity could be confused with ethnic diversity.

Dan Taylor-Why was funding added to the name, it makes the name longer? Isn’t funding our primary challenge?

Rex Sallabanks-We talked about funding and the length of the name. The very first charge is funding. The name change is not intended to change the purpose of the committee. The charge would stay with a few tweaks. The focus of the committee is on at-risk species conservation. Removing the word diversity could dilute the work of the committee.

Bill Bates-I like Teaming With Wildlife. It is well-branded and is a better name.

David Whitehurst-We’ve sailed past that since we are ending the Teaming With Wildlife coalition.

Rex Sallabanks-If there is discomfort we can hold off. We looked at who in the Wildlife Diversity Program Manager ranks are part of the committee. There was a clear consensus from the group that this is the best name. The recommendation has the support of Wildlife Diversity Program Managers.

David Whitehurst-This is a good recommendation and Wildlife Diversity Managers group has been helpful. We will need to revisit the committee charge. Should we take action to endorse the new name and then consult with the Committee Chair and AFWA president?

Jen Newmark-Offered a motion to approve the new name. Dan Taylor seconded.

Richard Heilbrun-We should include in the motion that we review and update the committee charge.

Keith Norris-I accept that as friendly amendment.

David Whitehurst-Asked all in favor off the change to say Aye. The motion was approved unanimously. I will take this recommendation to Carter Smith. The work of the Wildlife Diversity Program Managers Group is appreciated.

State Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revision Guidance

Rex Sallabanks-Gave a report of the SWAP Review and Revision Guidance Working Group. He asked if anyone had participated on the webinar to discuss changes to the guidance (two participants raised their hands). Most states have revised their State Wildlife Action Plans and there is a desire to keep the plans living and updated without a large administrative burden. This project is intended to update guidance in a memo signed by the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service and AFWA. The working group was formed at the last meeting and is chaired by Brian Branciforte (Florida) and Paul VanRyzin (USFWS) and includes members from each region. The current guidance has three categories of revision (comprehensive, major and minor). Some of the changes being consider are giving the states the ability to assign disignees, redefining what constitutes a major revision, adding a flow chart, etc. The working group will revise the guidance based on comments from the states and FWS and will present a final recommendation at the AFWA meeting in September and ask for formal action. A new memo will ultimately be signed by the FWS and AFWA.

David Whitehurst-The WSFR program is going through a review. Does this work fit with the review process timeline?

Bob Curry-Said yes it does.

David Whitehurst-WSFR is looking at administrative staffing levels. The review of SWAP’s requires a lot of work by FWS and the states. Did the working group feel like then needed to recommend a designee to alleviate a workload problem?

Rex Sallabanks-Sometimes this can be a pinch point. I think it will typically be a state director but this would give states another option.

David Whitehurst-Does the FWS need an official notification for the designee? Is everyone comfortable with progress being made. I like that you did a webinar and I like the composition of the working group.

State Wildlife Action Plan National Meeting

Mark Humpert-Announced that there will a National Meeting for State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators in 2017. A planning team will be helping plan the meeting.

Penny Becker-The focus of the meeting should be on how to implement the plans and also how to implement SWAPs with much greater funding.

David Whitehurst-That is a good thought. The Hill will also be asking that question.

Keith Norris-The Wildlife Society Conference is in Albuquerque September 23-27. I would be happy to explore options for hosting the meeting there.

David Whitehurst-If you add a meeting to a national meeting we should be mindful that it could result in competing interests.

Rex Sallabanks-Very few Idaho agency staff get to go to the TWS meeting. Holding the SWAP meeting in conjunction with the TWS meeting would get more people to attend the TWS meeting. If we could get SWAP on the plenary this would create exposure to a national office. Prioritization of conservation actions should be on the agenda.

David Whitehurst-I’m supportive of the meeting objectives. We should give people an opportunity to share what is working in their state.

A suggestion was made to have the meeting at Charles Elliott Wildlife Center in Georgia.

Dan Taylor-Did you consider holding the meeting in conjunction with the AFWA meeting?

Mark Humpert-We can consider that.

David Whitehurst-You should consider the Smithsonian Center for Conservation Biology, it’s not far from Dulles airport.

Naomi Edelson-On the agenda consider a session on identifying SGCN (i.e. lumping of declining species and species lacking information). We need credibility for the Blue Ribbon Panel. Also consider monarchs.

Kristal Stoner-Consider discussing the use of consistent terminology

Farmbill and State Wildlife Action Plans

Mark Humpert reported that several references to State Wildlife Action Plans were included in the Farmbill Platform drafted by the Farmbill Working Group.

Chris Berens-We developed fact sheets and direct EQIP funds to SWAP focus areas.

Rick Jacobson-We applied for a 3-year $3M grant and received a 5-year $5M grant.

Keith Norris-There will be a Farmbill symposium at The Wildlife Society Conference. Challenges to monitoring responses of Farmbill programs will be discussed.

Monarch Conservation

Ed Boggess-I retired as MN fish and wildlife director and am now working on a regional monarch plan.

Claire Beck-As the Monarch Technician Coordinator for MAFWA, I am working on the regional monarch strategy.

Naomi Edelson-The National Wildlife Federation is working with Pheasants Forever, MAFWA and AFWA. We held a monarch planning meeting in TX. There are three goals. Increase knowledge, develop a plan outline and develop a governance plan. It was a great meeting and we had industry representation. This is a big job and will require all hands on deck. Pheasants Forever has been an excellent partner and the meeting was a great opportunity to get everyone on the same page.

Ed Boggess-Gave a presentation on the MAFWA monarch project. MAFWA is working with the National Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever and the. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are providing funding. State monarch plans are being created and those plans will be part of a regional strategy. A new monarch priority map has just been released and that will be translated and stepped down to state acre goals. Conservation on private lands will be key. An interim leadership group has been assembled with Directors from MI, IA, MO, OH, TX, WV and they will be charged with drafting a governance structure for the regional monarch strategy. Claire Beck will lead development of a regional strategy and the plan is to have the strategy approved a year before the listing decision for monarchs.

David Whitehurst-This work is transformational. Ed passed a resolution in the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee several years ago which got the ball rolling. I encourage everyone to think about the opportunities here. You are doing a huge lift for a lot of species. This partnership could show how state agencies and partners can work together to prevent a listing. Listing of the monarch would have huge impacts. He extended his thanks to Ed and Claire.

Monica Tomosy-There are six fact sheets on at-risk species in six geographic regions.

David Whitehurst-Thanked Glen Olson for being here and welcomed EJ Williams.

Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources

Naomi Edelson-Securing new funding for wildlife agencies is the number one legislative goal for the National Wildlife Federation. The organization’s CEO is spending lots of time and capital. NWF is helping with communications, has an online team and legislative staff and field teams are helping. A campaign plan has been developed and 12 states have been identified as targets. We are working on agreements in those states. Affiliates in those states will be working with their state fish and wildlife agencies. We are working on tactics such as a national sign-on letter and will be asking affiliates to take the lead. This will be a good organizing tool since we no longer have the Teaming With Wildlife coalition. NWF is working on a report about the crisis facing wildlife and op eds. Field trips for District Congressional staff will be organized.

David Whitehurst-Affiliates can host tours that states may not be able to do.

Naomi Edelson-You can’t do this on your own. Having the voice of your partners is helpful.

Greg Johnson-Is there a name for this effort.

Naomi Edelson-Not yet.

Allison Fowler-What are the 12 target states.

Naomi Edelson-The list is based on states with legislators that we can reach without a push and the ones we won’t get without a grassroots campaign. These states include the following: TN, WY, ID, AK, WA, OR, CO, SD, MT, NJ, NM and others.

Greg Johnson-Is CA included on the list?

Naomi Edelson-There is not a strong state affiliate there and we are prioritizing members on important committees in the Senate.

David Whitehurst-It’s great to hear this. NWF gets tops honors for getting out early with this effort. We should share materials. We want to be transparent.

Monica Tomosy-Will the number of affiliates working on this grow? Yes, this is a six month plan and the list of targets can change. We want to do more but will need to raise money. We are using internal funds initially. We will reassess periodically. We want to move members from supporter to champions who will help get this done.

Rex Salabanks-There needs to be a lot of upfront communication between the affiliate and state agency so our message is the same. Meetings between state agencies and affiliates should happen soon.

Sean Saville-Gave a presentation on the Blue Ribbon Panel campaign. There is progress to report since my last update to this committee. I want to have a discussion with you. This is a historic opportunity to build a big tent coalition. This coalition has to be different, look different than before and build political power in a different political landscape. We need an intentional campaign. There is some anxiety being caused by the slow approach but we are making progress. We need all hands on deck. We are making good progress on the legislative, field and branding fronts and we are well-positioned with a new Administration and Congress. We are waging a sophisticated campaign and you will get a sneak peak when we do a soft launch which. We will be testing our messaging. We want to work with everyone to get the messaging right. There will be a new name for the campaign. The Blue Ribbon Panel developed a recommendation and we need to develop a new brand. The new name is the Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife. It is simple and patriotic. This came about through a lengthy process. We don’t have the taglines yet. The AFWA Executive Committee will see this later today. Fifteen states have passed resolutions. Since we are close to reintroduction of the legislation it would be best to hold off on outreach to members of Congress. Congressional committee leaders and ranking members will be targeted. We will use a western strategy and will allocate resources with that in mind. I am working with the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation to see who has the best resources to ramp this up. Once we have bills we will ramp up. We need everyone’s help. We need to decide who is the right messenger. We are building access and alliances with the best messengers. We are doing a capacity assessment to set up a field structure. We will need to know what pitfalls to stay away from and will need to customize messages for customized audiences. Why should 350 million citizens care about this? We need to come up with a selling point, why should someone take action.

Rick Jacobson-I see an overlap with the National Wildlife Federation’s focus.

Sean Saville-There are lots of similarities, this was developed with NWF.

Rick Jacobson-Is there a timeline for significant action. I will defer to Jen on the timeline.

Karen Kinkade-Can you give an example of a pitfall?

Sean Saville-The campaign to protect endangered species created a rift. We need to be aware of this.

David Whitehurst-I wouldn’t want to bring that up in certain conversations

Rex Sallabanks-What are state leads?

Sean Saville-I was talking about field strategy.

Rex-This would be champions in the conservation community?

Sean Saville-Some groups might want to do their own news releases. We need to develop a lead structure so we have strategic coordination.

David Whitehurst-Let’s hold off on questions. It might be better to get a better picture before questions.

Jen Mock Schaeffer-I’m anxious and ready to get going. After the bill was introduced last fall, Naomi, Mark and Keith held meetings with congressional staff. Many offices accepted the big number of $1.3 billion. We need to identify who is the best messenger in each state. Who would benefit the most, we need to think strategically. Members will be looking at how funding benefits their District. I looked at the statute. Would the funding be protected from diversion, would it include fish? There is a need for technical corrections. PR and WCR work as intended. A new bill with technical corrections and clarifying language is needed. There will be some slightly different language. We need to find out where there is an offset. We need people who have access to offsets to see benefits or put this in the infrastructure package. Sportsman’s groups asked for 5% from infrastructure package and we are getting an interested reception. I have been told there are no bad ideas for offsets. By this spring we should have a House and Senate bill introduced. The Senate is busier with confirmations. Zinke cares about this and is knowledgeable about this. We need to be patient with a Senate bill. We should have confirmations done by August. Even though we don’t have a bill today, we are in a good place. I appreciate your patience. There are some things we can do at the state level before the full court press. Does anyone know who Rob Bishop listens to. Who should we have in a meeting to get a member to yes.

Keith Norris-A joint working group was set up to assist with Blue Ribbon Panel communications. We had a meeting yesterday. We are waiting for the full rollout of materials from the communication firm. We have some folks developing guidelines on communications to the states.

Gary Kania-It may be a good idea to start answering the question of where will the match come from. Think about the reality of that. If we can’t answer that question, do we need a phased in approach. We need those questions answered.

David Whitehurst-We need to send that message to Directors and have wildlife diversity coordinators work on this.

Gary Kania-Get ahead of this.

Dave Chanda-That’s a good question. I heard from some Directors on this last year. New Jersey does not have the match but if we get the money we will have to come up with the match.

Gary Kania-This should be synthesized into talking points.

Dave Chanda-This will force states to create new partnerships which will lead to increased relevancy.

Gary Kania-What about the offset? We need to be on the same page on this.

David Whitehurst-If dangle new money in front of the legislature I will get new money.

Glen Olson-This will help use do landscape and full lifecycle conservation. We should have the ability to enhance programs like Southern Wings. Many of the 12,000 at risk species are birds but the bottle neck might not be in your state. It’s important to assess so we spend the money where the species needs it most.

Penny Becker-We had this discussion at the Wildlife Diversity Program Managers Meeting in January. John Davis in TX shared a prioritization table. We have started that conversation.

Rick Jacobson-There is value for states to identify priorities.

Gary Kania-We need a system to identify priorities, a template. We also need to quantify savings. There is a systematic answer on how much money will be saved and where the match will come from. We need these at least for priority states.

Jen Mock Schaeffer-Directors have asked what are the outcomes? Outcomes will be different in each state.

David Whitehurst-Is this something the committee could work on?

Jen Mock-This needs to be a task force subject for states. The outcomes need to be embraced, strategy in the outcomes.

David Whitehurst-A lot of this will tie back to landscapes and habitats. We need to stitch together stories.

Jen Mock Schaeffer-Yes, but members care mostly about their own states.

Gary Kania-What we need for tools on the Hill. Build up for a conference to get tools, get technical understanding, work with Sean, AFWA and Naomi. What are the priorities in key states. We need a tool to build these.

David Whitehurst-If I’m on the Hill then talk about the state.

Gary Kania-Use conference to gather information for multiyear campaign.

Chris Berens-There is some uncertainty on what we can use as match.

David Whitehurst-Can we use the same things we use for PR match?

Jen Mock Schaeffer-There are different cost principles for PR. State staff time is eligible, we need to clarify.

Penny-The question is are sportsman license dollars eligible to be used as match?

Jen Mock Schaeffer-The bill last year included a finding on license dollars. The intent is to use other dollars first. Still in discussion if it is a good idea to use license dollars. There are bigger political issues.

Karen Kinkade-Wasn’t there something about using license dollars once PR is matched.

Jen Mock-Its discretion.

Keith Norris-This is not the finding in the bill last fall.

Jen Mock Schaeffer-We are still discussing this issue. It is highly politically sensitive.

David Whitehurst-When justified.

Rick Jacobson-Is there a timeline for figuring this out?

Gary Kania-Six months at SWAP conference.

Keith Norris-The sooner the better.

Kristal Stoner-We have short-term priorities and long-term priorities.

Gary Kania-Both short-term and long-term could be useful.

Lisa Irby-We have to be careful about having these discussions at the SWAP conference because of federal funds.

Penny Becker-We need a template for short-term priorities soon.

Gary Kania-CARE has 20 organizations. We looked at each National Wildlife Refuge and what new funding could do.

Monica Tomosy-What is the sense for taking care of all species versus preventing endangered species?

Jen Mock Schaeffer-There are signals of support for states managing species within their borders. Some people think the ESA will be weakened. AFWA wants to get back to the intent of Congress and focus on recovery of species. There is a finding about building state capacity to recover species.

Naomi Edelson-The coalition that will help get federal funding would be the same coalition that would help get state money for match. We should get the same players and be explicit about that. The National Wildlife Federation is redoing its strategic plan to help with state campaigns. State caucuses could be great partners.

Penny Becker-What is the ability of Blue Ribbon Panel members to reach down into the states. To hear that national message come down would be helpful.

Sean Saville-We have started those conversations. It would be good for the Panels to communicate. We should see some of this soon.

David Whitehurst-Everyone was happy with the accomplishments of the Blue Ribbon Panel then we had a lull. Are the BRP members still behind this?

Glen Olson-Lots of us had our foot on the gas even when developing the recommendations. Gov. Freudenthal said focus on recommendation. The planned inaugural ball would have raised money for this but it became controversial. The Blue Ribbon Panelists are fully on board. We are planning to have a Panel meeting this spring or summer. In CA we have 50 chapters that are excited and want to help once we have campaign.

Sean Saville-We are formalizing a steering committee made up of a few state directors and working groups chairs. We are planning to do a Fly-in.

David Whitehurst-We have a compilation of partners. We have got to put the pieces together and get everyone on board. We saw what killed CARA. Thank you to all the speakers.

Jen Newmark-Will other Blue Ribbon Panel members be helping? The most important thing is the members of the Blue Ribbon Panel take this to their Board of Directors and get their help.

Glenn Olson and Sean Saville-They are all in.

Glen Olson-Some who wanted to be on the Panel but were not want to help. We held listening sessions in DC and Houston and others said they want to participate. When we are ready this could ripple out.

Jen Mock-A spotlight will be shined on the states by partners. Their success is tied to your success.

Dan Taylor-Is AFWA coming up with offsets?

Jen Mock Schaeffer-We don’t know where these will come from. We will work with Congress to find where offsets will come from. They are willing to facilitate that.

David Whitehurst-This was a good discussion. This group is anxious and you showed what is going on. We need to craft a winning strategy. CARA failed because one member was concerned about leadership position and property rights advocates made false information. Some organizations may use this to drive membership and mischaracterize what we want to accomplish. We have to have a response.

Gary Kania-Was AWCP letter distributed to this committee?

Sean Saville-We can send out the letter.

Naomi Edelson-That is a really important letter and should be shared. Collin O’Mara wrote the letter.

Penny-What is the timeline?

David Whitehurst-Invite regions and partner to share their insights.

Wildlife TRACS

Tim Smith-Gave a presentation on WSFR and TRACS. Forty-four revised State Wildlife Action Plans have been approved, nine are under review and three have not been submitted. WSFR staff are working with AFWA on revising the guidance for review and revision of State Wildlife Action Plans. There will be no new State Wildlife Grant funds to states who have not submitted their revisions. We expect a skinny budget from the president to be released in March followed by a full budget in Mid-May.

The TRACS Working Group has held a series of meetings related to TRACS including meetings with the states, WSFR Chiefs, JTF, etc. to review progress and process. The development and design of TRACS continues. We are using wireframes to help us understand configuration and screen shots so people can see the navigation. There are still questions about the data fields. We went back to SWG effectiveness measures and organized them by project and post project. We are looking at immediate results, intermediate results and long-term results. The challenge was that many of the long-term results fall outside the term of the grant. The TRACS working group went back to the framework and identified intermediate results for all programs and will use them as surrogates for long-term results. The tool to design the system was a matrix which was the basis for a national review. The response from states was not to use qualitative or optional measures. The states also said target species and major habitat types could be identified as appropriate and that a 5-year report could be used to communicate results.

David Whitehurst-Is this TRACS 2.0?

Tim-Yes.

David Whitehurst-Is the JTF good with this?

Tim-Yes.

Other Topics

Terra Rentz-I am conducting a survey on management effectiveness. I would like everyone to take two minutes to complete and return to me or drop off at the registration desk.

Allison Fowler-Was this survey also sent out via email?

Terra Rentz-No, a previous survey was sent out.

David Whitehurst-Introduced Greg Miller President of NatureServe and welcomed him to the committee.

Adjourn 11:55.

**Progress and Opportunities**

Progress was made toward achievement of Goals 1, 2, 3 in the Association's Strategic Plan. This was accomplished by hearing updates and facilitating discussion on funding for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program, State Wildlife Actions and the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources.

**Threats and Emerging Issues Identified**

None identified.

**New Opportunities Identified**

None

**Submitted by**: Carter Smith