

## ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE AGENDA

**Chair:** Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)

**Vice-Chair:** Judy Camuso (ME)

Attendees: 23

### 90<sup>th</sup> North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference

#### Agenda

Introductions and Welcome- *Amanda Wuestefeld (IN), Judy Camuso (ME)*

#### Reports from Engagement & Education Working Groups

- Engagement & Connections – *Jen Newmark (WMI), Taniya Bethke (CAHSS)*
  - Had our (last) **Coffee Talk: The Business of Conservation** to kick off the North American Conference
  - MSCG that supported the evaluation of the Engagement Academy 2024 as been frozen; an incomplete evaluation has been given to the working group to work with; we will polish it up and make available.
  - Discussion about the disruption that's in the system now and how we can move forward
  - Looking at future work: translations; funding and partnerships; digital resources
- Education WG and Project WILD Subcommittee – *Kellie Tharp (AZ), Elena Takaki (AFWA)*
  - Project WILD updates- new online courses available; annual conference coming soon; <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/project-wild-conference-2025>
  - Teacher Externship program that provides teachers with experience and credits; bringing natural resources into the classroom curriculum development
  - Next virtual call in May 2025- will be looking at revisiting future topics such as succession planning and evaluation practices
- Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism – *Shelly Plante (TX)*
  - Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Academy [www.WVNTAcademy.com](http://www.WVNTAcademy.com) ; Seattle, Washington Feb 16-20, 2026; presentation request for proposals now OPEN; registration for academy will start in August 2025.
  - Finishing up 2024 MSCG with VTech on wildlife viewing accessibility; should have a webinar in May;
  - Will be starting up 2025 MSCG with VTech looking at case studies of working with people with disabilities and engaging with them in the outdoors
    - Looking at loaner projects that people can use (ie. Wheelchairs)
  - Webinar series starting this month- top requested topics based off of the last WVNT Academy. Will be recorded and posted to the AFWA YouTube WVNT playlist.
- Joint Working Group: Engagement & Education Committee and Wildlife Diversity and Conservation Funding Committees – *Shelly Plante (TX)*
  - Objective→ have the communicators working with the biologists to get important messaging done.
  - Priorities have been on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act; will continue to support this moving forward

- New Priorities include working with promoting SWAPs and the success of using STWG dollars
  - There will be a Fly-In later this month (March 2025) with a Dear colleague Letter around STWG (funding for SWAP); work on messaging to hill staffers as well as social media push; Jen Dickson (CT), Patty Allen (AFWA), and Shelly Plante (TX) will be working on something that can be sent to agency staff.
- Will meet again in April 2025 at a virtual meeting to discuss and prioritize projects for the coming year.
- Outreach & Marketing –*Christy Firestone (NE), Micah Holmes (OK)*
  - Updating the National Conservation Outreach Strategy (Making It Last 2.0)
    - This will be more of a recipe instead of a template
    - More malleable than previous versions that will work better for states
    - Have 4 pilot states; finished focus groups

#### Association of Conservation Information (ACI) update- *Micah Holmes (ACI/OK)*

- a non-profit organization of natural resources communicators. We serve to further natural resource conservation and exchange. We are made up of professionals representing state, federal and Canadian wildlife conservation and parks and natural resource agencies as well as private conservation organizations. [www.aci-net.org/](http://www.aci-net.org/)
- If your state agency isn't a member, please consider
- ACI Conference- July 22-24, 2025, in Atlantic City, NJ
  - Theme: The Power of Partnerships
  - Keynote speakers include David Shiffman- the Shark Guy
  - ACI Awards is now OPEN- please submit your agencies <https://aci.awardsplatform.com/>
  - Finishing up a rebranding project
    - New logo has been released
    - New website coming soon

#### Fall Flights update- *Andrew Raedeke (Fall Flights)* [www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/fallflights](http://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/fallflights)

- Mission: to ensure the continued abundance of waterfowl in North America by investing in priority habitat in Canada
- Vision: Future generations enjoying the wonder of bird migrations
- Value proposition: for every dollar the state invests is matched by over \$5
- New campaign: Uniting States for Fall Flights
  - Goal: helping states reach their \$6M goal by 2026
- Looking to provide consistent messages with our partners; include addressing questions about Avian Influenza → working with the One Health Committee to help develop messaging (with the help of the communication experts) to get messaging out [ASK: to have this committee help with messaging] → **YES**, we are happy to help!

#### Discussion: Goals of the Engagement & Education Committee 2025

- What projects should we work on over the next year; possible multistate grant projects
  - Possibly look at something around ADA; as well as connecting state ADA coordinators within our State Agencies; connecting people to the outdoors (hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.).
  - Skill building with **customer engagement strategies** (terms of good business

- practices) → cross pollination between all the EEC working groups.
  - Consulting with entities that provide knowledge (on accessibility, engagement, etc)
  - Look at some of the fishing accessibility sessions from the RBFF State Marketing workshop to come up with additional ideas; those sessions were recorded and will be available online within the next few weeks.
  - Look at where state fish and wildlife agencies get audited and where do they fail → create professional development opportunities around those topics.
  - How to work with reader assisting technology to make agency websites more accessible and understandable with those technologies.
  - Can tie Customer Engagement Strategies into economic benefits; what are the skills we can develop to have better customer engagement (and retention).
  - Focus on Skill Building – something that touches all the working groups in EEC.
- Progress measures discussion
    - Start looking at the impact of the products; not just the final product
    - Using something measurable will help with funding and how this will help the states to get the states to invest and use some of the tools developed by this committee.
    - Help this committee to better tell their story.
    - Look at the underlying IMPACTS
    - Look at how highlighting the impacts in the AFWA Knowledge Hub
      - ASK- can we make that more accessible to state agency staff
    - Skill Building idea- *Theories of Change* (Bat Conservation International) – how they were able to relabel their products that helped. Contact: [mbayless@batcon.org](mailto:mbayless@batcon.org) for more information.

#### Roundtable Wrap-up & Adjourn

- Round robin introductions and highlights of the work they do within their agencies/organizations.