

**National Grants Committee**

**March 11, 2025**

**8:00 AM– 10:00 AM**

**90th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Paul Johansen – Chair**

**Ryan Brown – Vice Chair**

**Committee Members:** Ted Will, GA (Vice Chair of Fish and Wildlife Trust Funds Committee), Alan Jenne, NV (WAFWA ), Mark Tisa, MA (NEAFWA), Kevin Robling, SD (MAFWA)

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* Call to Order, Introductions, Announcements, and Agenda Review – ***Paul Johansen, Chair***

The meeting convened at 8:00 AM, chaired by Paul Johansen. 37 participants attended, including all current Committee members: Paul Johansen, Chair, Ryan Brown, Vice Chair, Alan Jeene (WAFWA), Mark Tisa (NEAFWA), Ted Will, Kevin Robling (MAFWA)

* *The Committee* Approval of the September 2024 Meeting Minutes

Committee members approved the Minutes from the September 2024 meeting.

* Presentation /Approval of 2026 Strategic Priorities for Multistate Conservation Grant Program – ***Paul Johansen / Silvana Yaroschuk, AFWA***

The 2025 MSCGP Priorities were shared with AFWA Committees, Regional Associations, and the Office of Conservation Investments for review, followed by a call for updates to the 2026 priorities published in the Directors Line and AFWA Members Newsletter. Feedback was received from more than 30 partners, including all four Regional Associations, AFWA Committees, several states, universities, the Federal Aid Coordinators Work Group, and OCI. A summary of this input, along with red-lined edits to the 2025 priorities, was distributed to participants ahead of the February 21 discussion call, which drew over 30 attendees. The National Grants Committee then reviewed the draft 2026 priorities on February 27 and forwarded its recommendations to the Executive Committee, after which the approved 2026 MSCGP Strategic Priorities will be posted on the MSCGP website. The 2026 Strategic Priorities focus on four main areas: (1) Conservation & Science (including habitat connectivity, fish and wildlife health, invasive species, social science, and emerging technologies), (2) Relevancy and Capacity Building, (3) Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3), and (4) AFWA-identified funding priorities such as the National Survey, CITES, and coordination of conservation at a national scale.

The National Grant Committee suggested looking at the more focused priorities and narrowing them down for future cycles.

* 2026 Multistate Conservation Grant Program Housekeeping– ***Silvana Yaroschuk, AFWA***

* 2026 Process/Timeline

The tentative 2026 MSCGP timeline begins with a USFWS Notice of Funding Opportunity in April, proposal submissions in June, technical reviews in July, NGC review in August, applicant revisions in September, and final awards between October and December. Four technical review teams—aligned with the priority areas—will evaluate proposals, with Fish and Wildlife Agencies making final recommendations. Strict rules govern eligibility, reviewer conduct, and allowable activities, ensuring compliance with federal laws, cost principles, and the purposes of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Acts. Ineligible activities include public relations, law enforcement, general outdoor recreation, or wildlife viewing unless tied directly to eligible objectives.

* Technical Review Teams

The MSCGP uses four Technical Review Teams—Conservation and Science, Relevancy and Capacity Building, Recruitment/Retention/Reactivation (R3), and AFWA Priorities—to evaluate proposals. Teams are composed of representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies (F&WA) and non-F&WA partners such as NGOs, universities, industry, and federal agencies. Non-F&WA members score proposals and join initial discussions but cannot participate if their organization is applying for funding, while F&WA reviewers score proposals, take part in discussions, and make the final recommendations to the National Grants Committee. Scores and comments are shared anonymously with the full team to guide group deliberations, and F&WA reviewers meet separately to finalize recommendations. Chairs are currently selected informally from team members, though a more formal selection process—such as using AFWA Committee Chairs or NGC members—may be considered in the future. To maintain fairness, direct interactions between reviewers and applicants are prohibited, with all questions routed through AFWA staff or the NGC Chair.

* 2027 National Survey Update – ***NORC***

The 2027 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago in collaboration with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, is a continuation of a long-standing effort to collect comprehensive data on outdoor recreational activities in the United States. This survey, conducted approximately every five years since 1955, serves as the definitive source of data on fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation. It also includes information on related activities such as target shooting, archery, and recreational boating. The survey collects participation and expenditure data for adults and youth, as well as state-specific data for coastal and inland regions.

The 2022 survey introduced significant updates, including a redesigned questionnaire to reduce respondent burden and a multimode survey methodology to improve cost efficiency. Over 105,000 interviews were conducted, and 15 states purchased state-level data to support policy development, economic impact analysis, and conservation efforts. These state-level surveys used the same rigorous methods as the national survey, allowing for precise comparisons and tailored insights. States also had the option to add custom questions to address specific needs, such as recruitment and retention strategies.

Looking ahead, the 2027 survey will expand its scope by increasing the number of interviews by 25% and incorporating cost-saving measures like reducing reliance on paper-and-pencil interviews. It will also explore alternative sampling methods, such as using fishing and hunting license lists, to enhance data collection. Additionally, the survey will include new estimates for activities like bow hunting and work toward piloting an interim survey to provide high-level participation data during off-years. These efforts aim to improve data accuracy, reduce respondent burden, and enhance the survey’s utility for stakeholders.

States participating in the 2027 cycle will benefit from actionable data, in-depth analysis, and tailored reports to support their conservation and policy goals. NORC is actively engaging with states to finalize plans for state-level surveys by Fall 2025, offering flexible pricing and consultation services. The survey’s enhancements and collaborative approach underscore its commitment to providing reliable, actionable insights for the outdoor recreation community.

* Presentation on MSCGP ongoing/completed Grants:

The participants heard from two MSCGP grantees:

* Ensuring the Viability of the American System of Conservation Funding: Improving the understanding of excise-tax-based funding for conservation
* ***Jonathan Gassett, WMI***
* Communicating Conservation Success of the National Fish Habitat Partnership in fulfillment of America’s Conservation Enhancement Act
* ***Gary Whelan***

New Business

**9:45 AM** Adjourn