



COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

THE VOICE OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

INTRODUCTION



Ron Regan
Executive Director

Thank you for volunteering to chair or participate in one or more of the Association's committees, subcommittees and working groups.

Long term conservation success requires the active involvement of an assembly of agencies, organizations and individuals with broad backgrounds, visions and values. Committees are the crucial mechanisms by which members and stakeholders are able to collaborate and coordinate on cross cutting fish and wildlife conservation issues including funding, legislation, regulation, science based management, species based interests, public outreach and professional development. Indeed, Committees are the primary source for the collective views of the Association and the engine driving the future of natural resource conservation.

This Committee Handbook provides a concise look at the Association's Committee structure and responsibilities while offering some helpful tips based on past experience. The document is divided into sections that should make it easy to find what you're looking for at a glance.

Please note that the Handbook is intended primarily as a reference, and does not purport to cover all circumstances.

Committee Structure

The Association maintains 34 Standing Committees and approximately 47 Subcommittees and Working Groups, which comprise more than 1,000 professionals from the United States and Canada.

Standing Committees are those that are not expected to change much over time and are often responsible for the creation of important national conservation actions and positions. The Association's bylaws require that a list of all Standing Committees be made and published annually (Appendix). The Executive Committee is authorized to establish a new Standing Committee.

Subcommittees are formed at the prerogative of the President. These entities generally address ongoing issues of relevance to the full Association and work under the corresponding Committee. Some Subcommittees are established with a finite duration in mind, while others are longer lived and perform essential work on an ongoing basis for their Committees. Presidents strive to avoid the proliferation of Subcommittees, preferring to work within the standing committee structure instead.

Did you know...

Almost without exception, the Association's proudest accomplishments began within our Committees.

For example, the report of the Legislative Committee at the Annual General Meeting held in New Orleans in 1918 touted our first legislative success with the enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Act carried forward the Association's first international success from two years earlier with the signing of the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds with Great Britain.

A **Technical Subcommittee** is comprised solely of state government members, and is created to provide a venue to work with the federal government. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) specifically provides for pre-action consultation with state officials and Technical Subcommittees enable the Association to offer a way to facilitate this collaboration.

Currently, Technical Subcommittees exist within the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee for trap testing and negotiations with Europe and within the International Relations Committee on matters relating to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Working Groups are formed and populated at the prerogative of Committee chairs. These groups, in contrast with Subcommittees, are established for durations as brief as a year. Working Groups may extend their terms to complete the tasks for which they were formed. They are most commonly established to perform a specific task or set of tasks relevant to the work of a Committee, and disband after completing such tasks.

Members of Subcommittees and Working Groups must also be members of the corresponding Committees.

A list of Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups including links to specific descriptions can be found on the Association's web site at www.fishwildlife.org in the Committees section.

Appointments and Committee Selections

State fish and wildlife agency leaders appointed by the President of the Association lead each committee. Chairs and Vice-Chairs serve at the pleasure of the President. Standing Committee members serve renewable terms of two years.

It's a fact...

The Association's Bylaws require employment by a Governmental or Contributing Member; for appointment to a committee.

See Appendix for Membership level descriptions.

Selection Process

The Association issues a request for nominations for committee and subcommittee assignments in late Spring of each even numbered year to member agencies and organizations. From these nominations, the incoming President makes the selections shortly after the Association's Annual Meeting considering a variety of factors such as geographical representation and committee size. The goal is to ensure all committees are fully staffed and functional at the beginning of each biennial cycle.

State fish and wildlife agency directors are asked to consider chairing or vice-chairing only one committee and to discuss priorities with the President. At the suggestion of the Executive Committee, and in the belief that each state director should be actively involved, directors without committee assignments will be requested fill a vacant Chair/Vice-Chair committee position.

In addition, because committees should reflect and advance the policies and positions of **Governmental Members** (as defined on page 11), each governmental member is requested to appoint a policy-level representative and a subject matter specialist to each committee with which they are concerned.

To keep the committees to a manageable size, **Contributing Members** are asked to officially assign only one person per organization to a committee, though additional representatives are welcome to attend meetings. Finally, **individuals** should not be nominated to more than two committees since members will be expected to spend time on committee work.

- **IMPORTANT: Committee members must reaffirm their interests by nomination or volunteering biennially.**

The Executive Director of the Association will assign Association staff to each committee. Committee chairs should feel free to engage assigned staff members in any process of committee work when staff can be of assistance.

In general, staff can assist with developing meeting agendas, minutes and reports; creating email lists; setting up conference calls; and facilitating communication between the Chair and the committee.

Committee Notifications

Once an incoming President appoints committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and members, Chairs receive a list of members from the Association's Washington office. This list contains email addresses.

As Chair, your first responsibility is to review the committee's charge and to understand and prepare to implement it. This is a good time to review the personnel assignments and make additional recommendations as appropriate.

Once you receive the master committee list, you should send a welcome note to members acknowledging their selection, confirming their contact info and encouraging them to provide input on pertinent issues in the committee's focus area. The Committee charge that was sent to you by the President with your appointment is useful for all and is an appropriate attachment to your letter of welcome.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the three elected officers of the Association, eight additional members and the previous year's or immediate past President. The eight additional members are elected to the Executive Committee at the Association's Annual Business Meeting by the voting members present or by proxy. The President of each regional association serves as an ex officio, voting member of the Executive Committee as well as one representative from Canada.

Effective Committees Communicate...

The best way to ensure that your committee is committed to its charge for the long haul is to get in touch as soon as the biennial committee list is available to welcome members on board.

The Executive Committee (Board of Directors) manages the corporate affairs of the Association and provides strategic direction. All matters not especially provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws are determined by the Executive Committee, until specially passed upon at a regular meeting. The Executive Committee is also responsible for approving the Association's annual budget.

Committee Meetings

Committees meet when the Association convenes for its Annual Meeting in September, and again in conjunction with the North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference convened in March of each year by the Wildlife Management Institute. Some committees, however, meet quarterly while many Chairs find a call in teleconference several times a year helpful in keeping members current or to provide a venue to sound out the committee on a pending issue. Participation through email listservs, and video conferencing is increasingly commonplace. Convening extra meetings is the sole prerogative of the Chair.

Meeting Planning

Several months prior to a regularly scheduled meeting, Chairs (or committee designee) are contacted by an Association representative, member of the hosting state or province or the Wildlife Management Institute to determine your meeting needs. You will be asked for five pieces of information; a request that should receive immediate attention:

1. Do you plan on holding a meeting at the upcoming Meeting?
2. How many persons are expected to attend?
3. How you would like the room configured?
4. What are your audio visual requirements?
5. What is the duration of your meeting? (*note: the suggested length of a meeting is 2 hours or less*).

When planning a meeting, Chairs should be sensitive to the other obligations of committee members. This is especially true of coordination issues when one or more committees need to be contacted. Chairs are also responsible for keeping in contact with the President and Executive Director and keeping them updated.

Call your meeting to order...

It is up to Committee Chairs to determine how formal or informal to conduct meetings. Consistency is key and making sure everyone knows the rules.

Meeting Agendas

It is standard practice for each Committee to provide members with a copy of the agenda for the upcoming meeting at least 30 days in advance. A draft is fine using the Association's template. In addition, Association staff assigned to the Committee will ensure that the working or final agenda is posted on the Association's website.

Past practice has shown that a "Call for Agenda Topics" from the Chair several weeks in advance is helpful in creating this agenda. Alternately, some Chairs assemble a proposed agenda and circulate it for comment and amendment. The choice of procedure is the prerogative of the Chair.

Running Meetings

Reasonable formality and decorum are important in conducting committee meetings. The Association prides itself on the professional and business like way our meetings are conducted, the careful manner in which decisions are made, and ultimately the soundness of committee recommendations.

Committee Chairs have great discretion in running meetings, but meetings must be convened promptly when scheduled and conducted according to rules of procedure. While some meetings are informal, others because of the size of the group or the contentiousness of the issues to be discussed, are kept highly structured. Some meetings are guided by Robert's Rules and others are more informal relying on discussion and consensus to reach positions.

In the meeting space, always make sure committee members get priority seating around the table. Once members are assured of priority seats, you may invite visitors to sit at the table or not if you feel that the members' interests are best served by maintaining a clear distinction between members and other attendees. Some committee chairs make name tags for each member thus subtly, but clearly, identifying members. Proper action is a function of the size of group and potential debate.

While the Association has established these guidelines, generally the procedure for the conduct of committee meetings is left to the individual Chair. This is a decision you can make based on what best suits your committee. Your responsibility as Chair is to provide the opportunity for all members to participate and that recommendations reached reflect the view of the majority of the members present. If there are a lot of visitors present and a vote is necessary, you may want to have a roll call vote to verify that only members vote. What is most important is that everyone in attendance knows, at the beginning of the meeting, the rules by which your meeting will operate.

The Association encourages a general policy of keeping meetings open to all attendees who are wearing nametags with their organizational affiliations; all members of our community benefit from seeing and participating in the vital work coming from our many committees, subcommittees, and working groups. But we also recognize that certain meetings may include sensitive topics or votes (e.g., on legal, financial, or foundationally strategic questions), for which deliberation ought to be limited to governmental members with voting privileges enshrined in the Bylaws, or a subset thereof.

Before commencing discussion on a topic that may lead to a vote, a Chair (or Vice-Chair when presiding in the absence of the chair) may exercise their judgment to call a closed session in order to provide for a frank and substantive discussion of the issue at hand.

Meeting Tasks...

1. Solicit and determine meeting agenda.
2. Send Resolutions Committee any items to go before the membership.
3. Send Association staff person final agenda.
4. Arrange to have someone take meeting minutes and type up the minutes post meeting.
5. Chair meeting and direct discussion.
6. Present proposed Resolution and/or committee report at Business Meeting if appropriate.
7. Submit meeting minutes to Association staff person.
8. Follow up and complete Action Items.

To do so, it is recommended that the Chair or Vice-Chair make a brief and cordial statement describing **1)** the nature of the issue, **2)** the reason(s) that deliberation must be limited to governmental members or a subset thereof, and **3)** whether there may or will be a need for a vote by governmental members or a subset thereof.

The Chair or Vice-Chair should then make a motion, have a governmental member second the motion, and then call a vote of governmental members to close the meeting, a majority of whom is necessary to do so.

Any votes should take place only after the session is reopened to all attendees.

Meeting Attendance List & Handouts

At the start of each meeting, you should ask attendees to sign in via QR code provided by your AFWA staff support, or an attendance list (Appendix) to log who participated in the meeting and to capture current contact information. The list is important for Association records and of great help to staff working to keep information up-to-date.

Chairs should refer the the uploaded agenda in the conference app and any other handouts to the meeting (or provide paper copies). If you require copying assistance, contact your assigned staff person. Often Chairs will include in the room configuration a table for attendees to place materials of interest to committee members.

When You Can't Be There

Occasionally, Chairs have to miss a meeting due to other important commitments. However, it remains the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the Committee has a productive meeting. This makes it of great consequence for the Vice-Chair to be fully involved in the Committee's activities so that someone is ready and able to stand in.

Vice-Chairs are appointed by the President but usually nominations are discussed with would-be Chairs during the selection process . The Vice-Chair is a very important person to the Committee, not only as a stand-in but as someone who assumes leadership for special projects that occur between meetings of the Committee.

Post Meeting Duties

After the committee meeting, the Chair or an assigned staff member is responsible for reporting out at the conference AFWA Business Meeting, as well as drafting and distributing meeting minutes/the committee report (Appendix). Your AFWA staff person can coordinate to have the minutes posted online in the Committee section of AFWA's website.

Committee Functions & Reports

The function of each committee is to consider carefully the merits of every proposal brought before it — a project, program, position, resolution or other type of action — and to judge whether or not the proposal should be submitted to the full Association membership, Executive Committee, or President for consideration as appropriate under the Bylaws.

The committee's responsibility is to create a report stating the members' collective view that may include a strong endorsement or a mild recommendation but should highlight enough factual data, pro and con, to permit other fish and wildlife directors to make a fair and responsible independent judgment about the proposal. Chairs are also encouraged to make recommendations to guide future committee activities.

Committee reports should contain the following sections (Appendix):

1. Introductory statement briefly listing the committee charge.
2. Progress toward achievement of goals in Association's Strategic Plan.
3. Deliberations, conclusions or recommendations as appropriate outlining necessary steps or actions to be taken by the Association.

Types of Committee Actions & Reports

Committees typically make recommendations and pass motions, or draft letters adopting certain positions. All of these types of committee actions go to the members' Business Meeting for adoption on behalf of the Association. The Association's Bylaws also provide that the Executive Committee has authority to act for the Association on a matter until it is specially passed upon at a regular meeting of the Association. Committees should use a motion when formally proposing that an action be taken.

Resolutions are used when the committee wishes to formally express an opinion. All resolutions must be submitted to the Resolution Committee, usually at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting, before coming to a vote by the membership.

The Resolutions Committee is responsible for soliciting resolutions from other Association committees or for developing resolutions from other appropriate sources. All proposed resolutions must be reviewed by the appropriate subject matter committee. The subject matter committees make recommendations to the Resolutions Committee. Resolutions should be aimed at establishing Association policy accomplishing a specific purpose and be designed in such a way as to permit follow up by the Washington, D.C. office. The membership only considers resolutions during its annual Business Meeting. It does not consider resolutions during its meeting at the March North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference. Committees making requests for approval of programs or projects requiring funds must first seek the approval of the Executive Committee prior to voting by the membership during the Association's Business Meetings. The Association's Bylaws give the Executive Committee oversight of budgetary matters and all funding requests must have a cost estimate attached to the proposal or recommendation.

- **IMPORTANT: Any Committee recommendations to instruct or direct Association staff must be coordinated with the Executive Director who is responsible for staff supervision under the Bylaws.**

A Committee may draft a letter or propose language for a piece of legislation to be considered by members during the Business Meeting. While input from nongovernmental members may be considered, it is important to remember that only a letter drafted by a fish and wildlife agency committee member may be used as a proposed position of the Association.

Submitting Reports

Generally, committee recommendations or positions must be brought to the membership if they are to be adopted as the Association's position. Committee reports, if any, are presented at the Business Meeting in September (and also at the March meeting if appropriate). If there are late breaking, sensitive or controversial issues requiring attention by the Executive Committee or the

Association Approval...

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general membership, the Chair is responsible for requesting agenda time. With either group, brevity is always appreciated since those meeting agendas are so full. When the report is fairly routine, written reports suffice.

Committee reports should be made available either at the end of a meeting, or shortly afterward for submission to the Executive Director and the Associations' Director of Communications. It is not uncommon for the Washington, D.C. office to receive requests for information from long past meetings. This makes coherent and well drafted committee reports very important.

Publications & Finance

Some committees author reports and studies or sponsor publications. In the world of furbearer management for instance, the definitive work in the testing of traps was developed by the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee. That Committee has published several works that have been seminal in its area of expertise and are widely sought for reference and guidance.

Activities like publications and research require dollars and committees are encouraged to apply for grants from a variety of available sources. Committees occasionally seek appropriated dollars as well. Committees are not allowed to pursue outside funding, however, without the approval of the Executive Committee. Ask your assigned staff member for guidance.

Other Committee Chair Responsibilities

As a Committee Chair you have become a part of the Association's leadership. In the period between annual meetings the Executive Committee and Committee Chairs are the Association!

In addition to the obvious responsibilities within the assigned area of your Committee, it is not unusual for a Chair to be asked by federal agencies or non-governmental organizations for reactions or advice on various issues. You may also be contacted by the Washington, D.C. office to help respond to a media inquiry surrounding a fish and wildlife conservation issue. Be mindful that in these situations your "opinion" could be misinterpreted as an official position of the Association. If you are unsure in any of these situations, ask or refer the query to the President or the Executive Director.

If you would like to send a request for information to the states or respond to a request for comments from members of Congress, Governors or by federal agencies, contact your assigned staff person first. The Washington, D.C. office will coordinate such correspondence and obtain required policy clearance if necessary.

Thank you again for your contribution to the Association and its mission to protect and support state, provincial and territorial authority for fish and wildlife conservation in the public interest!



Standing Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups

Agricultural Conservation Committee

Conservation Reserve Program Working Group
Environmental Quality Incentives Program / Conservation Stewardship Program Joint Working Group
Farm Bill Easements Working Group
Forestry Working Group
Public Access Working Group
Regional Conservation Partnership Program Working Group
Private Lands Working Group

Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Committee

Angler & Boater R3 Committee

Annual Meeting/Awards Committee

Audit Committee

Bird Conservation Committee

Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group
Grassland Work Group
Harvest Information Program (HIP) Work Group
Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group
Resident Game Bird Working Group
Waterfowl Working Group

Climate Adaptation Committee

Conservation Business Practices Committee

Technology & Data Subcommittee

Engagement and Education Committee

Education Working Group
Engagement & Connections Working Group
EEC/WDCF Joint Working Group
Outreach & Marketing Working Group
Project WILD Subcommittee
Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group

Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee

Solar Wildlife Working Group
Wind Wildlife Working Group

Executive Committee

Fall Flights Advisory Committee

Federal Lands Policy Committee

Wild Horses & Burro Working Group

Finance Committee

Fish & Wildlife Health Committee

Lead and Fish and Wildlife Health Working Group
Aquatic Animal Health Working Group
AFWA SARS CoV-2 Working Group

Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund Committee

Federal Assistance Coordinators Subcommittee
Trust Fund Collection Working Group

Fisheries & Water Resources Policy Committee

Subcommittee on Water
Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group
Drug Approval Working Group
Fish & Wildlife Coordination Act Working Group

Hunting/Shooting Sports Participation Committee

International Relations Committee

CITES Technical Working Group

Invasive Species Committee

Feral Swine Working Group

Law Enforcement Committee

Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Leadership/Professional Development Committee

Legal Committee

Legislative and Federal Budget Committee

National Grant Committee

Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Nominating Committee

One Health Committee

Ocean Resources Policy Committee

Resolutions Committee

Science and Research Committee

Human Dimensions and Social Science Subcommittee

Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee

Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

Threatened/Endangered Species Policy

ESA and Climate Change Working Group

Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee

Bat Working Group
EEC/WDCF Joint Working Group
Pollinator and Invertebrate Conservation Working Group

Wildlife Resource Policy Committee

Human/Wildlife Conflict Working Group
BearWise Working Group



Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Membership Levels

Governmental Members

Governmental membership is open to:

- state, provincial, commonwealth, territorial and federal district governmental agencies primarily responsible for administration of fish and wildlife resources; or
- such agencies having responsibility for management of fish and wildlife habitat on federal lands and waters in the United States, the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Mexico; and
- each such agency of a country located in the Western Hemisphere.

Regional Association Members

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies are current AFWA members.

The President of each regional association holding membership in the Association or another director from that regional association that he or she so designates shall serve as an ex officio, voting member of the Executive Committee, and shall be primarily responsible for coordinating activities of the regional association with those of the Association.

Contributing Membership

A Contributing Member is a non-governmental organization, institution, foundation, society, corporation or person that supports the objectives of the Association.

Contributing members shall have all the privileges of the Association, except that of voting when a vote by official governmental member representatives is requested by the Chair of the Committee.

Associate Membership

An Associate Member is:

- any past or present state, provincial, or territorial wildlife, game and fish or conservation official;
- any federal, state, provincial or local game, fish or conservation official and employee regularly employed and under salary; or
- a delegate, officer or staff member of a national, regional, state, provincial or local game, fish, wildlife or forest protective and conservation association and other organization whose objectives are basically similar to or supportive of all of the objectives of the Association.

Associate members shall have all the privileges of the Association, except that of membership on Committees and of voting when a vote by official governmental member representatives is requested by the Chair of the Committee.

Life Membership

The Association may elect as life members persons who have rendered distinguished service in the cause of conservation administration. Life members shall have all of the privileges of the Association, except that of membership on Committees and of voting when a vote by official governmental member representatives is requested by the Chair of the Committee. Individuals who have served as past presidents of the Association shall be life members. Individuals who have retired from service within a state, provincial, or territorial wildlife, game and fish, or conservation agency are eligible for election as life members.

All applications for AFWA Membership are subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Committee NAME

Chair: Name (State)

Vice-Chair: Name (State)

Day, Date

Time

Venue Location

City, State

Agenda

- Call to order [presenter, time allotted]
- (if appropriate) Reading of Minutes from previous meeting; corrections of minutes; vote minutes stand [presenter, time allotted]
- Reports [presenter(s), time allotted]
- Unfinished Business and general orders [presenter, time allotted]
- New Business [presenter, time allotted]
- Announcements [presenter, time allotted]
- Adjournment



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

[Committee Name] Committee Report

Chair: [Name]

Meeting of [Date]

[Venue Location]

[City, State]

Committee Charge

Meeting convened during (insert start and end times), chaired by (insert name). (insert participants in attendance, including (insert number current Committee members:

Scheduled Discussion Items

(Provide bulleted list with brief annotation about nature of each discussion item and substantive conclusions).

Other Discussion Items

(Provide bulleted list with brief annotation about nature of each deliberation and conclusion).

Progress and Opportunities

Progress made toward achievement of goals in Association's Strategic Plan (identify specific goal and progress):

Threats and Emerging Issues Identified:

New Opportunities Identified:

Action Items

(Include brief specific action statement in bold type and briefly describe the action requested and outline the necessary steps).

Submitted by: (insert Committee Chair)