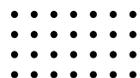


2025 ANNUAL REPORT



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES



INNOVATION and OPPORTUNITIES





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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Early in my tenure, as President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for 2025-26, I have been reminded anew of the passionate and brilliant men and women that serve the Association and its member state fish and wildlife agencies. These are professionals in every sense of the word that intersect with opportunity and drive innovation in support of national conservation policy every day.

This past year was marked by a fair measure of uncertainty on the federal landscape, yet the Association stayed the course with resiliency and delivered products and services ranging from a new commitment to full life-cycle bird conservation via Southern Wings to highlighting the importance of State Wildlife Action Plans 3.0 for landscape level and other planning constructs, to new thought leadership for delivering Farm Bill conservation programs. In addition, the Association navigated a vastly new timeline for approving priority projects for the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, without missing a beat, and we are poised to offer new guidance for strategic priorities associated with that important program.

The Association navigated uncharted waters with federal partners, using a constructive, non-partisan policy agenda, and that will pay dividends in 2026, as we look forward to durable conservation planning and delivery in the coming years. I certainly look forward to being part of that conversation with key federal leaders. Indeed, the responsiveness of the leadership at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for example, is setting a high bar and positive foundation for collaborative dialogue.

I have worked as a fish and wildlife professional for over 40 years with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. This year will prove to be a highlight of my career, and I am grateful for your support in making it a reality.



Paul Johansen
President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Earlier this week I attended a hearing of the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries, House Natural Resources Committee, regarding recreational access to federal public lands. Paul Johansen, the Association's President, offered testimony on behalf of state fish and wildlife agency interests. This is what we do, a core competency if you will, to address federal policy and legislation from a distinctly state, provincial, and territorial perspective. What a great way to start the new year — I was so proud of President Johansen's leadership, and the Association's standing in the conservation community, both enabling the invitation for this important testimony.

Moments like that remind me of the incredible work done by the Association as documented in the pages that follow. Year by year there is something new to advance and to celebrate, driven by a commitment to learning, to opportunity, and to innovation. 2025 was no exception.

Southern Wings took flight with a renewed commitment to life-cycle bird conservation. State Wildlife Action Plans took center stage anew, with the latest round of revisions and approvals. Landscape conservation planning remained a high priority and new synergistic partnership opportunities emerged, in part, linked to State Wildlife Action Plans and species of greatest conservation need. Behind the scenes, a new, innovative member service management system was implemented. With time, and adaptive learning, the administrative effectiveness of communicating with all members will be enhanced.

Our work is made possible by the leadership of state, provincial, and territorial members and with the engagement of a host of contributing members and partners. My profound thanks to each of you for that commitment to national conservation policy.

Very best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald J. Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ron Regan
Executive Director
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

40th Anniversary of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan

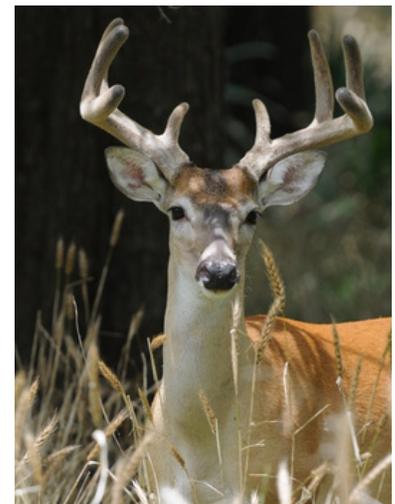
The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) is one of the most ambitious wildlife conservation initiatives in North America. State fish and wildlife agencies are leaders in the collaborative approach to conservation of waterfowl habitats. The NAWMP is a continental-scale conservation plan that benefits hunters, birders, and other outdoor recreationists. The 2024 NAWMP Update, the latest update since the Plan was initiated in 1986, focuses on embracing the concept of multiple benefits of bird habitat conservation and growing and diversifying the NAWMP Partnership.

The success of the NAWMP is a direct result of the power of partnerships and collaboration. Conserving Habitat Together is the rallying cry of the NAWMP enterprise that unites federal, state, provincial, territorial, tribal, and local agencies, conservation groups, and private stakeholders. In 2026, the NAWMP will celebrate its 40th anniversary as a highly successful cooperative effort of the United States, Canada, and Mexico working together and in partnership with the broader conservation community to protect waterfowl, wetlands, and wildlife. Together, we've made a significant difference in the conservation of wetlands and uplands and increased waterfowl populations by 50% through the implementation of over 6 billion dollars of on-the-ground conservation since 1986.



New World Screwworm

The AFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee and regional Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinators engaged closely with U.S. Department of Agriculture- Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services to support the development and review of the New World Screwworm (NWS) response playbook. NWS is a highly destructive parasitic fly that poses a significant threat to wildlife, livestock, and animal health if introduced or re-established in the United States. The Association's engagement helped ensure that wildlife agency authorities, surveillance capacity, and on-the-ground operational considerations were incorporated into response planning.



Fish & Wildlife Health

Throughout 2025, the Association advanced fish and wildlife health and comprehensive efforts through strengthening collaboration among state agencies, federal partners, regional and tribal coordinators, and external stakeholders. The Association responded to emerging disease threats, supported legislative and policy discussions, and helped build long-term capacity through tools, guidance, and coordinated initiatives that elevate wildlife health in state agency decision-making. The AFWA Fish & Wildlife Health Committee developed and disseminated key products, including the [National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative \(NFWHI\) Toolkit](#), an [AFWA National Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator](#) one-pager, and (soon to be published) updates to the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Best Management Practices, and supported passage of a resolution addressing the release of selectively bred captive cervids.



STRENGTH OF PARTNERSHIPS

Bird Conservation

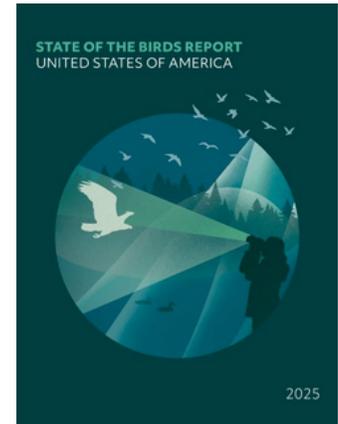
The AFWA Bird Conservation Committee began work on a toolkit aimed at state fish and wildlife agencies focused on Second-generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs), and their effects on non-target wildlife. The toolkit is intended to summarize existing knowledge, provide an overview of current regulatory frameworks, recommend potential actions for enhanced integrated pest managements activities, provide outreach tools for public education, and assess barriers to increased research on this topic.



The U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)



The U.S. NABCI Committee published a new edition of the [State of the Birds Report](#), which was released in March 2025 at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The Report continues to highlight ongoing declines in North American breeding bird species. The new edition of the Report leveraged eBird data from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, along with traditional sources of data such as the U.S. Geological Survey Breeding Bird Survey, to not only assess population trends but also show fine-scale geographic information associated with trends. Complementing this new spatial scale of analysis were vignettes of successful conservation action aimed at inspiring action and showing the value of partnerships. The Report was featured by mainstream media outlets, both in print and radio, provided the basis for several podcast episodes aimed at various target audiences, received millions of views on social media, and was referenced during Congressional hearings.



Southern Wings: Charting the Course for the Next 15 Years



State fish and wildlife agencies utilized the innovative [Full Annual Cycle Online Guide](#) to direct strategic investments that complement in-state efforts, bolster the \$100+ billion birding economy, and meet critical conservation objectives. To build on this momentum, the Southern Wings Presidential Task Force outlined a roadmap to reverse migratory bird declines while supporting ecological resilience and outdoor recreation.

Key Strategic Pillars:

- **State-Specific Annual Investment Goals:** Established clear targets to reach a \$2 million annual investment goal, supported by a new recognition program honoring agency leadership in full annual cycle conservation.
- **Governance & Efficiency:** Form a dedicated AFWA Advisory Committee for oversight and explore streamlined fund disbursement mechanisms that maintain agency flexibility.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Implement a national marketing strategy focused on conservation return on investment (ROI), including an outreach and marketing initiative that kicks off with the start of Spring migration.

This actionable framework empowers states to strengthen their role in international bird conservation, ensuring a sustainable future for the over 98 million birdwatchers and the birds they watch across the United States.



Fall Flights

The power of partnerships! In 2025, collaboration between state agencies and conservation organizations resulted in a record success. The year began with the Fall Flights Advisory Committee securing the Association's endorsement to launch the [Uniting States for Fall Flights Campaign](#). The momentum continued as 24 state agencies and bird conservation leaders shared their stories through videotaped interviews. The Fall Flights Communications Team transformed these stories into compelling videos and infographics, inspiring further investment. The results speak for themselves: 48 states invested a record-breaking \$5.8 million, generating more than \$30.1 million in on-the-ground conservation in Canada. Conservation delivery partners applied these funds to conserve and restore nearly 94,000 acres and manage an existing 2.7 million acres. It proves the mantra: If we each do a little, we can accomplish a lot together!



The Association's goal of \$10 million annually for Fall Flights by 2031 is ambitious, but it is soundly established on the habitat need in the Canadian breeding grounds. The objective of the Uniting States for Fall Flights Campaign is for states to invest \$6 million annually by 2026. The Fall Flights Advisory Committee members are working with all states to help them meet or exceed this milestone and to encourage states to achieve at least 50% of their Fall Flights goal.

Amphibians and Reptiles

AFWA's Amphibian and Reptile Program Manager position was left vacant this year due to the uncertainty of federal funding. In late 2025, an unknown pathogen was detected in a shipment of salamanders imported from Europe. In response, Amphibian and Reptile Committee leadership, AFWA staff, and the Northeast Regional Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and academic partners to coordinate information sharing and response actions. North America supports more than 700 salamander species—the highest diversity globally—with the southeastern United States recognized as a global hotspot, underscoring the importance of early detection and rapid coordination.



National Fish Habitat Partnership

In 2025, through the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) (<https://fishhabitat.org>), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and partners are providing more than \$23.4 million to support 53 on-the-ground fish habitat conservation projects in 29 states. The USFWS is providing \$5.9 million this year, with non-governmental organizations, state resource agencies, and other partners contributing an additional \$20.4 million. This represents a 6.7:1 leveraged funding match for NFHP funding.

These projects empower and boost locally led conservation efforts that restore and reconnect habitats to create more robust fish populations, improved fishing opportunities, and healthier waterways. Twenty individual Fish Habitat Partnerships across the nation make up the national efforts and work with a variety of partners, including private landowners, farmers and ranchers, Tribes, non-profit organizations, state, federal, and local government agencies, and many others to achieve fish habitat conservation goals that protect, restore, and enhance habitat conditions locally for fish.

In 2025, project types include removing barriers to fish passage, reducing erosion from farm and ranchlands, restoring stream banks, combating the impacts of drought, and conducting monitoring and assessment work to identify conservation needs for fish and their habitats. This year's projects meet local priorities through partnerships that span from restoring urban and suburban streams to reconnecting tidal wetlands, in states across the country from Alaska to Vermont. Projects target and address limiting factors to improve habitat, water quality, and benefit the nation's fisheries resources. This funding will also support the coordination of individual Fish Habitat Partnerships and the operations of the National Fish Habitat Board to help establish national priorities under NFHP.



“Annually, the National Fish Habitat Partnership focuses on putting priority conservation projects on-the-ground through partnerships, which benefit both fish and the American people. These locally-driven projects are designed to leave a conservation legacy for the protection, restoration and enhancement of fish habitat for future generations to enjoy in the outdoors.

~Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Chair of the National Fish Habitat Board.

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[View the full list of 2025 funded projects.](#)



NFHP uses a nationally focused aquatic conservation strategy to maximize the reach of limited fish habitat conservation dollars. Under NFHP, federal, state, tribal, and privately raised funds are leveraged through regional Fish Habitat Partnerships to address the nation's biggest fish habitat challenges. The USFWS is a key partner in implementing the partnership, providing leadership and technical expertise on the local, regional, and national levels, as well as financial assistance directly to partners for on-the-ground conservation projects. Since 2006, the USFWS has provided over \$65.6 million to conservation projects which leveraged at a 5:1 ratio to provide over \$335 million in funding support for fish habitat conservation projects that improve angling and recreational opportunities across the nation.

NFHP assembles the collective expertise of federal, state, and non-governmental organizations to identify and prioritize conservation work to achieve significant benefits for fish and other aquatic resources for the American people.



Dr. Tim Schaeffer Selected as National Fish Habitat Board Chair, Replacing Robert Boyles

The National Fish Habitat Board (Board) is following its first Board Meeting of 2025 with the announcement of a new Board Chair. Dr. Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, has been appointed to the seat on the Board held by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association), which is designated to Chair the Board per the 2020 America's Conservation Enhancement Act (ACE Act). Dr. Schaeffer became the sixth Chairman of the Board, following John Cooper (SD), Kelly Hepler (AK/SD), Tom Champeau (FL), Ed Schriever (ID), and Robert Boyles (SC). The appointment of Dr. Schaeffer was put into place following the announced retirement of Robert Boyles as the Director of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in late 2024.

National Fish Habitat Partnership Receives \$500,000 Grant for Reservoir Priority Projects

Following up on [13 priority Reservoir projects funded in 2024](#) through a Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Fund grant, the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), was grateful to receive another \$500,000.00 Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Fund Grant in 2025 to fund habitat conservation projects in nine priority reservoirs, identified by the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership, across the United States.

NFHP received these funds through [Beyond the Pond](#), the 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization established to benefit the work of NFHP through its 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships. The projects identified to receive funding below will be implemented in 2026 and are matched with over \$604,000 in leveraged funding.

The 2026 funded projects include:

- **Arkansas\Missouri, Upper Bull Shoals Lake Habitat Improvement Project**
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Grant amount \$75,000 with \$79,300 in non-federal match
- **East Lynn Lake Habitat Development Program, WV**
US Army Corps of Engineers, Grant amount \$33,697 with \$21,903 in match
- **East Branch Clarion River Lake Multi-Purpose Pier, PA**
US Army Corps of Engineers, Grant amount \$75,000 with \$150,000 in match
- **Mark Twain Lake Fisheries Enhancement Development Project, MO**
US Army Corps of Engineers, Grant amount \$66,000 with \$41,000 in match
- **Lake Brownwood Fish Habitat Enhancement Project, TX**
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Grant amount \$40,000 with \$11,500 in match
- **Lake Hartwell Fish Habitat Enhancement Project, SC**
South Carolina DNR, Grant amount \$75,000 with \$270,000 in match
- **Rock Lake Habitat Enhancement, WY**
The WYldlife Fund, Grant amount \$40,000 with \$64,200 in match
- **Canyon Lake Habitat Enhancement, AZ**
Arizona Game and Fish Department, Grant amount \$30,000 with \$52,500 in match
- **Habitat Renovations at Chickamauga Reservoir, TN**
Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency, Grant amount, \$19,801 with \$49,084 in match



Landscape Conservation

The Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force (JTF) continued advancing collaborative, landscape-scale conservation among states and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners, emphasizing alignment that is unified but not uniform. In 2025, the JTF focused on aligning regional priorities with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s NextGen business plans, beginning with the Southeast Forests and Rivers pilot. These efforts reinforced the role of State Wildlife Action Plans as foundational, state-led frameworks for guiding conservation investment, implementation, and measurable outcomes. The JTF also strengthened regional collaborative capacity by facilitating inter-regional dialogue, identifying system-level capacity needs, and advancing opportunities to connect regional efforts into a cohesive national network supported by shared science and flexible, regionally appropriate approaches.

Education and Outreach

Project WILD

2025 was a year for new offerings and new partnerships for Project WILD. Building on the programs’ previous 42 years of providing high quality professional development and award-winning curricula for formal and nonformal educators, this past year included the following accomplishments:



- Nearly 10,000 educators across the country participated in Project WILD professional development training.
- Through the Project WILD network of state hosts and partnering organizations, nearly 35,000 people engaged in outreach activities or events involving Project WILD.
- Over 400 educators took advantage of one of 11 online courses from the suite of Project WILD Online professional development offerings in 2025. New courses in 2025 included the following:
 - WILD About Monarchs
 - Human Dimensions of Wildlife Conservation
 - Healthy Connections (examining the relationship between healthy wildlife and healthy people)
 - Room to Roam (focusing on ecological connectivity)
 - WILD and Healthy Outside: A Tick Trek Adventure
 - WILD and Healthy Outside: Mosquito Mayhem
- The two “WILD and Healthy Outside” online courses were developed in partnership with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. The courses focused on the prevention of vector-borne illnesses carried by ticks and mosquitoes.
- Project WILD continued work on an EPA-funded grant program, ee360+, to advance environmental education through a national collaborative led by the North American Association for Environmental Education.





- Project WILD staff hosted the 42nd Annual Project WILD Coordinators' Conference in Bangor, Maine. In 2026, we look forward to co-hosting our coordinators' conference in Scottsdale, Arizona.
- The Association sold over 13,000 Project WILD publications. Most guides sold are distributed through professional development training.
- The Association published [WILD School Sites: Improving Wildlife on School Grounds](#). This module, available online, is designed to help students, teachers, and nonformal educators take constructive action to improve their communities for people and wildlife, beginning on school grounds.
- Project WILD teamed up with Bat Conservation International to offer a Teach About Bats webinar to 333 educators who joined the session.
- Project WILD provided training for over 40 staff with the Bureau of Land Management.

Thank you for supporting Project WILD! Learn more at projectwild.org.

Engagement and Outreach

State fish and wildlife agencies' conservation work—funded by the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration Acts—has largely gone untold nationally, limiting public knowledge, support, and funding, especially among non-hunters and non-anglers. An initial 2018 Making It Last outreach toolkit aimed to address this gap, but states found it impractical. The toolkit was therefore re-evaluated, leading to a new, more flexible approach focused on relevance messaging rather than a single national brand. Through focus groups, surveys, and pilot campaigns in four states, the effort identified effective messaging strategies and produced recommendations to help states better communicate their value to the public. The [Relevancy Communication Toolkit](#), funded by multistate conservation grant and published in 2025, was created using the results of this project, leading to recommendations regarding how states can help increase the importance the public assigns to their state fish and wildlife agencies.



Innovative BearWise® Program Builds Bridges

The Association's national [BearWise®](#) outreach and education program is the number one referenced resource for reliable information on coexisting with bears, trusted by the public and relied on by 45 member states.

BearWise® provides practical resources that help state wildlife agencies standardize messaging and materials so that no matter where people live or travel, they get the same information about how to prevent and reduce conflicts and live responsibly with bears.

This universal messaging helps BearWise® connect with the general public, the media and a diverse audience of stakeholders that state wildlife agencies don't always reach. An extensive library of BearWise® outreach materials makes it easy: in the past six years, BearWise® printed nearly one million items for our member states, and the public has downloaded more than 50,000 free fact sheets from the BearWise® online store.





BearWise® is managed by a national working group of state wildlife agency bear biologists and a private-sector communications team experienced at delivering science-based advice in people-friendly ways. In 2025, BearWise.org garnered more than 13 million total impressions in search results. In the past three years, more than one million people visited the website.

BearWise® began in 2018 as a regional education program in the Southeast; strong interest from other regions resulted in Association’s expanding BearWise® to a national program in 2022.

Industry Relations

Thanks to our industry partners, states leverage dollars from hunting and fishing licenses to use the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund and the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, which continue to be the foundational pillars of the American System of Conservation Funding. These funds are administered via the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR), through which over 35.5 million acres and 9,000 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are maintained and operated, with research, monitoring, and inventory conducted for more than 500 species of birds and mammals and 200 species of fish. The program supports approximately 300 state hatcheries producing over 1 billion fish, with more than 8,900 areas operated and maintained for public boating and fishing.

Partner with a Payer

The Partner with a Payer™ (PWP) initiative is a communication collaboration between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, industry, and the Association, increasing awareness and understanding of the achievements accomplished by federal manufactures excise tax funds, and State fishing and hunting license fees, strengthening relationships across all sectors of the partnership. In 2025, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Sportfish Restoration Act, and the Association worked with PWP and other partners on messaging, proclamations and celebrations of this program. PWP has hosted 77 field or facilities tours, engaging state and federal employees and industry staff in informative settings to better understand the conservation benefits achieved via manufacturers’ federal excise taxes, delivered by state fish and wildlife agencies. Over 135 organizations have been represented and over 1,200 attendees have participated. These events are successful because of the goodwill of the host manufactures and State agencies afield. The efforts merges information from Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration grant awards, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Watching and other initiatives such as recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) across the works the grants fund. Partner with a Payer remains a strong collaboration between State and federal agencies and our industry partners about the legacy benefits of the American System of Conservation funding, ensuring it remains a real and vibrant system for our programs to meet our conservation missions.



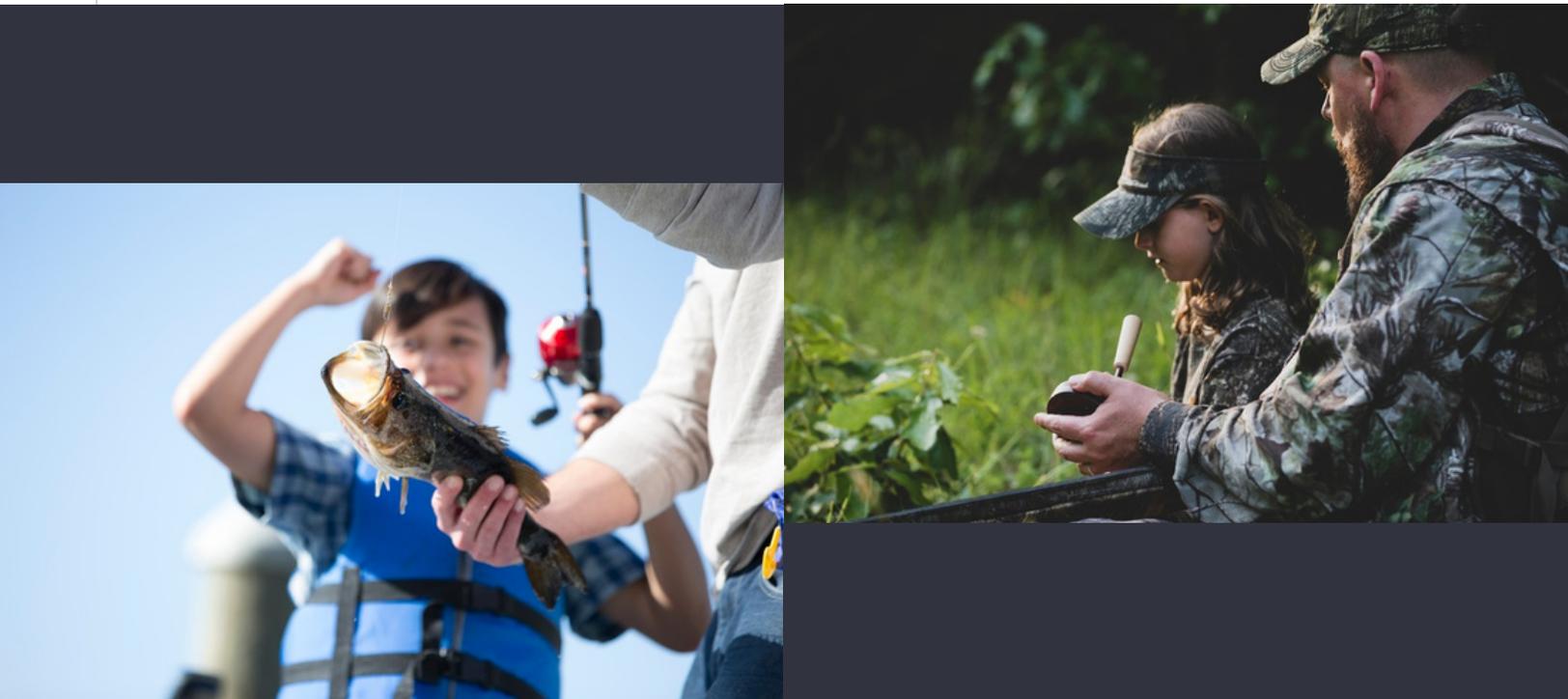
Partner with a Payer



Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3)

Recruitment, retention, and reactivation initiatives, for hunters, anglers, boaters, recreational shooters, and trappers, remained a high priority for the Association in 2025. The Association has a strong leadership presence of State fish and wildlife directors, and its Executive Director, on the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports and it continues to advocate for public recreational access in support of these outdoor recreational opportunities on federal public lands. Additionally, the process of renewing the Federal Lands Hunting and Shooting Sports Roundtable Memorandum of Understanding began this year. The Roundtable members have worked over the years to promote responsible behavior by shooters and hunters, sponsored clean ups at concentrated shooting sites, reviewed and submitted comments on land management plans affecting access and opportunities for hunting and recreational shooting, and defended against large-scale closures of federal lands to recreational shooting, and encouraged partnerships between NGOs and federal and state agencies in the development of shooting ranges. These efforts will continue. One of the Association’s top priorities is “Expanding outdoor recreation opportunities on lands and waters within the National Wildlife Refuge System...” grounded in “Early and consistent coordination with State agencies on changes to refuge policy or management practices...[to]...ensure consistency, transparency, and science-based decision-making across jurisdictions.” Such a commitment from a valued partner can only benefit the success of R3 practices.

Promoting fish and boating opportunities, and recruiting, retaining and reactivating anglers and boaters continues to be important work for AFWA, our state members and partners. It was unfortunate that the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) was unable to secure new federal funding to continue its work. A new National Outreach and Communication Program (NOCP) process was launched in 2025 and is intended to offer new competitive opportunities for like work by the RBFF and other partners.



GOVERNMENTAL PRIORITIES



Governmental Affairs & Congressional Advocacy

New Administration, New Opportunities

A change in Administrations brings new opportunities and uncertainties, including new faces and the opportunity for renewed engagement and focus on shared priorities with our federal partners. The Association developed detailed transition recommendations for both Congress and the Administration that reflected state fish and wildlife agency priorities. The Association also sent letters to leadership including Secretaries Burgum (Department of the Interior (DOI)), Lutnick (Commerce) and Rollins (U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)) communicating our priorities and highlighting support for critical programs.

We were encouraged to see a familiar face appointed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). As USFWS Director, Brian Nesvik has brought an innate working knowledge of state fish and wildlife agencies and the Association from his career as the Director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. His actions and engagement have been greatly appreciated by the Association and our members. His request for, and attention to prioritizing, state agency, the Association and regional association priorities is unprecedented and set a positive tone of collaboration in the years ahead.

Our engagement efforts also paid dividends throughout the year with several Executive, Secretarial and Director Orders that direct significant coordination with State agencies and recognize state authority while promoting shared priorities. Highlights included Secretarial Order 3342, *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Implementation*, which establishes that all Departmental guidance, manuals, and memoranda regarding the LWCF should reflect the provisions of the Dingell Act and Great American Outdoors Act, and prioritizes acquisitions that contribute to the recovery of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs).

Also signed was Executive Order 14313, *Establishing the President's Make America Beautiful Again Commission*, which directs federal land agencies to “recover America’s fish and wildlife populations through proactive, voluntary, on-the-ground collaborative conservation efforts,” as well as specifying the development of conservation policies in coordination with state wildlife agencies rather than through top-down regulation. In mid-December, Director Nesvik also issued a USFWS Director’s Order initiating comprehensive reviews of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the National Fish Hatchery System, focused on improving efficiency, aligning actions with original refuge purposes, and strengthening relationships with states, tribes, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while explicitly calling for engagement with State fish and wildlife agencies throughout the review process. The Association welcomed this approach and engaged early to ensure State expertise, authorities, and on-the-ground management realities are incorporated.



Securing Funding and Program Continuity

Another challenging federal budget cycle was exacerbated by the President's Executive Budget that proposed zeroing out several key programs, including State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG), the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (NAWCA), and the entirety of the U.S. Geological Survey Ecosystems Mission Area, including the Cooperative Research Units program (CRUs). A series of Continuing Resolutions (CR) kept the government funded through the year without a final F26 budget being passed, but by the end of December, Congressional appropriators put forward a strategy to bring up a series of three-bill mini-buses prior to the January 30 CR expiration. Fortunately, in early 2026, congress passed and the President signed spending bills that kept all of our priority programs at or near level funding, including STWG (\$73.8 million) NAWCA (\$49 million) and CRUs (\$28.2 million). This budget cycle unfolded against a backdrop of unprecedented disruption across the federal government, including a prolonged shutdown, workforce reductions, and agency reorganizations. These conditions created uncertainty for State fish and wildlife agencies, our federal partners, and the delivery of conservation programs on the ground. The Association continues to work closely with our members and partners to maintain communication, reduce impacts where possible, and preserve continuity of critical conservation programs during this period of disruption.

Success Through Partnerships

This year again highlighted the importance of partnerships in the advocating for and defending critical funding and authorities state fish and wildlife agencies depend on to deliver conservation and their important role in administering the tenets of the North American Model of Conservation. As a result of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act reconciliation package, the congressional Pay-As-You-Go-Rule (PAYGO) would have been triggered, which would have resulted in sequestration of Pittman-Robertson (PR) and Dingell-Johnson (DJ) funds. Through quick rallying of partners, we were able to communicate the need for a fix that avoided impacts to the flow of these dedicated excise tax dollars. Thankfully, the issue was addressed with a blanket PAYGO reset in the last continuing resolution, but the groundwork was laid for further action if and when the issue arises again.

With our conservation NGO partners we secured continuity for the NAWCA through passage and enactment of H.R. 2316, the *Wetlands Conservation and Access Improvement Act*, which reauthorized the allocation of PR interest into the NAWCA account. While passage of the *Sporting Goods Excise Tax Modernization Act* did not come to fruition in 2025, further momentum was built for the bill to pass in 2026, which would close the loophole in PR/DJ excise tax collection by requiring online marketplaces to collect and remit the excise tax on foreign imports.

Three pieces of bipartisan legislation to reauthorize and make permanent the hugely successful Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program were introduced in the House and Senate (H.R. 6078, S. 3556, S. 3503), all of which are supported by the Association and would reauthorize funds through FY 2031, though levels range from \$100 million to \$200 million annually.

While there were fewer attempts at federal overreach into state fish and wildlife agency authority this year, the Association stayed vigilant and engaged as necessary to ensure State authority was not eroded. One example was the surprise momentum for S.J. Res. 69, which would have overturned the *Record of Decision for the Barred Owl Management Strategy in Washington, Oregon, and California*, which warranted rapid response to encourage opposition on the Senate floor. While the Association did not take a position on the Strategy itself, we expressed concerns over the precedent of using the Congressional Review Act to override science-based wildlife management policy. The resolution was soundly defeated 72-25 in large part thanks to States, the Association, and the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP).



Celebrating Sport Fish Restoration Act and Reauthorizing the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund

This year, we celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Sportfish Restoration Act (Act), the most important piece of federal legislation to state fisheries management programs. We also worked to ensure the Act's continued relevance by introducing legislation to reauthorize the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (Trust Fund), the accounting mechanism that supports implementation of the Act.

Since its inception, the Sportfish Restoration Act has generated over \$12 billion in federal funds for the conservation and restoration of sport fish species and their habitats. Receipts generated from a 10% federal excise tax on fishing equipment, a 3% tax on electric boat motors and tackle and fly boxes, import duties on tackle, pleasure boats and yachts, and a portion of the federal gas tax that is attributable to motorboats and small engines, are transmitted into the Trust Fund throughout the year, where they are managed by the U.S. Treasury before being appropriated the next fiscal year.

The Trust Fund must be reauthorized every five years and its current authorization expires at the end of fiscal year 2026. In 2025, the Association and its partners in the Angling and Boating Alliance engaged with Congress to draft and introduce a bill to reauthorize the Trust Fund. H.R. 3858, the Sport Fish Restoration, Recreational Boating Safety, and Wildlife Restoration Act of 2025, was introduced by Representatives Dingell and Wittman on June 10 and passed out of the House Committee on Natural Resources by unanimous consent on July 15, 2025, demonstrating the continued strong bipartisan support for this program. In early 2026, we expect to see a Senate version introduced and will work toward final passage ahead of the end of the fiscal year to ensure continuity of funding for state fisheries programs.



Rotenone Re-Registration

In 2026, the Association ramped up its engagement with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the re-registration of the piscicide rotenone. Rotenone is a critical tool in the fisheries management toolbox used for the control of invasive fish species, restoration of ecosystem balance, support of sport fisheries, and conservation of threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species. Despite significant label restrictions and personal protective equipment requirements, the EPA still felt a 21-day sub-chronic inhalation neurotoxicity study was needed to support rotenone's continued registration. Because the registrant is unable to fund such a study, the cost would be borne by rotenone users which are primarily the state fish and wildlife agencies.

This year, the Association engaged directly with EPA and the registrant to try and find a path forward for the rotenone registration that would avoid the need for the costly and questionable inhalation study. It became clear that EPA had a limited understanding of how state fish and wildlife agencies apply rotenone and how much is used. With the help of state directors and leadership of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) Fish Chemicals Committee and input from state fish chiefs and federal partners, the Association educated EPA on modern rotenone use patterns to ensure accurate characterization of risk.

The EPA remains concerned about the potential for inhalation exposure to occupational handlers during the mixing and loading phases. In the coming year, the Association will be working with its partners to develop and propose additional measures that we hope will address EPA's concerns so that the study requirement may be waived.

Agriculture Conservation Policy

Despite 2025 starting and ending without an extension of the 2024 Farm Bill, there was still a fair amount of Farm Bill related activity. The Farm Bill policy paradigm dramatically shifted with the July 4, 2025 signing of the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* ([H.R.1](#)). From the nutrition title to the conservation title, programs that were traditionally legislated through a bipartisan Farm Bill were included in this law.

Conservation Title programs were included in some of these changes. Remaining Inflation Reduction Act funding was added to the baseline appropriation levels of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Climate sideboards were removed, so all practices are eligible to receive the funding. Notably, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was not included in this bill.

Additionally, the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) received \$70 million through 2031 which equates to \$10 million per year. The Senate Agriculture Committee revised language to VPA-HIP so that funds will be dispersed to successful applicants in a single grant period. However, at the end of 2025, states were still waiting for a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to be released by NRCS.

The Continuing Resolution (CR) that was signed into law at the end of 2025 that ended the longest partial federal government shutdown in the nation's history funded most of the federal government through January 30, 2026. This also included a three-bill mini-bus of full year spending packages, including the Agriculture appropriations spending bill. That package included an extension of Farm Bill programs that lost authority on Sept 30, 2025, when the previous CR expired. This includes the CRP. The full year funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) means they will be insulated from further shutdowns through fiscal year 2026. The bill provides \$850 million to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide technical assistance (TA). This deviates from the White House and House appropriators proposal which eliminated TA. However, this is roughly a 9% decrease in previously appropriated conservation TA funds. Additionally, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will receive \$15 million to hire new staff. The CR also reverses any firings that occurred during the shutdown and prohibits Reduction in Force (RIFs) while the CR is in effect.

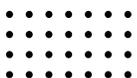


What does an extension mean for CRP? In total, 1.5 million acres of CRP are set to expire in 2026. Under the current Farm Bill rules, a General, Continuous and Grassland sign up will occur annually. With the national acreages being near the statutory cap, and splitting acres between the three sign-ups, there is not much room for additional acres. Expect 2026 sign-ups to be competitive, and there are unknowns as to what rental rates will look like, potentially decreasing interest in the program.

Looking forward, the House Committee on Agriculture has indicated they want to do a full Farm Bill in 2026. A timeline for a full Farm Bill is still unknown.

In 2025, given the Administration's interest in working with states and partners to deliver effective and efficient conservation results on the ground, the Association's Agricultural Conservation Committee (ACC) charged a Working Group to develop a proposal to explore a grant program between NRCS and state wildlife agencies that functions like the VPA-HIP grant agreement with funding available for states based on certain criteria and state interest in the program. The proposal was supported by the ACC and the Association's Executive Committee. Given the support for the proposal, conversations with NRCS leadership began in early 2026 and given the positive feedback we will continue to further explore this concept in the year ahead.

Finally, with the Departure of Shane Behler in 2025, we were fortunate that Jenny Prenosil, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, stepped up and helped us fill that role through the remainder of 2025 and into 2026. Thanks Jenny!



International Relations

Leveraging Opportunities for Global Wildlife Conservation Action

Throughout 2025, the Association leveraged strategic partnerships at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) and the 20th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of the Parties (CoP) to advance state, provincial, and territorial conservation objectives. One key outcome included successful efforts to prevent the CITES listing of the American eel, though the downlisting of the peregrine falcon remains a future priority.

At the Ramsar Convention (CoP15), members approved the 2025–2034 Strategic Plan, passing resolutions that encourage flyway-level collaboration and promote the wise use of wetlands. Simultaneously, the IUCN WCC established a 20-year strategic vision and adopted 148 resolutions. These mandates provide critical guidance for on-the-ground successes, ranging from sustainable rangeland management and grassland conservation to addressing wildlife trafficking and sustainable use and energy impacts.

By actively engaging in these international forums, the Association ensured that local conservation expertise directly shaped the global policies safeguarding our shared natural heritage.



Legal Strategy

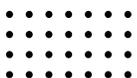
AFWA's Legal Strategy program enters 2026 having concluded a 10-year comprehensive review, which surveyed a decade of projects, partnerships, and learnings in service of maintaining State authorities to manage wildlife for the public trust, and raising public awareness of these authorities.

While last year brought a great deal of judicial and regulatory activity in the Federal arena for us to follow and keep States apprised of (National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), wolves, prairie chickens, and more), we maintained our focus on core jurisdictional issues like the open fields doctrine in conservation law enforcement, high-interest issues like advanced hunting and fishing technologies, and new challenges to the public trust doctrine. Through our deep network, we also continued to educate current and aspiring wildlife professionals about State wildlife law, impactful Supreme Court opinions in environmental and administrative law, and AFWA initiatives relevant to attorneys and policy-focused professionals.

With the critical input of directors and partner committees, AFWA counsel and the Legal Committee developed comments on Federal regulatory proposals for the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and more. We also filed a brief as amicus curiae in support of Alaska before the U.S. Supreme Court and continue to fill this need for States at the Federal appellate level.

In 2026, AFWA counsel will continue supporting our government affairs team by tracking Federal legislation and rulemaking on federal aid in wildlife restoration and education, endangered species listing, delisting, and consultation, management of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the continuing effects of significant opinions like *Loper Bright* on agency rulemaking processes.

Finally, we continue to offer general legal services, including intellectual property protection, contract review, and organizational governance, to state fish and wildlife agencies, regional associations, flyway councils, and related organizations.



CONSERVATION PRIORITIES



State Wildlife Action Plans

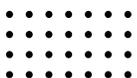
2025 marked another major milestone for State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), with most states and territories completing their second comprehensive revision. The third generation of these plans will guide conservation actions for thousands of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) over the next decade. The Association supported plan development through a series of webinars, coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to streamline plan review, and collaborated with the U.S. Geological Survey to integrate updated species lists into the SGCN database. The Association held a Fly-in and led two successful bipartisan Dear Colleague Letters in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate supporting the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program which supports SWAPs. The Association hosted a briefing on SWAPs in the U.S. House of Representatives and initiated development of a coordinated communications strategy. The Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee advanced a resolution to increase awareness, support, and use of SWAPs, that was adopted by the Association.

Climate Adaptation

The AFWA Climate Adaptation Committee continues to support members' efforts to sustain fish and wildlife in a changing climate. The Association supported state fish and wildlife agencies by facilitating resource sharing and knowledge exchange on approaches for incorporating climate adaptation, leading up to the finalization of 2025 SWAP revisions. The Committee advanced work on managed relocation by initiating development of policy resources to assist states evaluating the potential movement of species beyond their historical ranges. The Association also continued to collaborate with partners on the revision of the National Climate Adaptation Strategy for Fish, Wildlife, and Plants.

Energy and Wildlife

Following the departure of AFWA's Energy and Wildlife Policy Program Manager in September, the portfolio is being filled via contractual staff due to federal funding uncertainty. Draft National Utility-Scale Solar Wildlife Guidelines were developed to provide science-based, voluntary guidance for states, federal agencies, and developers to avoid, minimize, and mitigate wildlife and habitat impacts. The Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee hosted a forum on bats and wind energy and coordinated a field visit, in partnership with The Conservation Fund, to a large-scale transmission project near Tucson, Arizona. The State Fish and Wildlife Energy Resources Link Repository and the Solar Beneficial Management Practices Database were completed, and the Associations continued engagement with the Renewable Energy Wildlife Institute and other energy-related partnerships.



Furbearer Management Program

The Association continues to advance innovative, science-based approaches to furbearer management through the Best Management Practices for Trapping (BMPs) program, working in close collaboration with state and federal partners. In partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service- Wildlife Service (USDA-APHIS-WIS), the program is also exploring new research opportunities by examining the prevalence of SCV-2 (a coronavirus strain) in wild carnivore species. Demand for Trapping Matters Workshops and Wild Fur Schools remains strong among state, federal, and tribal agencies and conservation organizations; in 2025 alone, 15 events were delivered. Since 2003, the Association has hosted more than 200 Trapping Matters Workshops, reaching approximately 7,000 wildlife professionals and equipping agency staff with the tools to both understand and effectively communicate about regulated trapping. Through a multistate conservation grant, the program capitalized on emerging outreach opportunities by producing 14 educational videos for agency use, including content designed to support recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts for trapping. Once finalized, these innovative communication resources will be available at furbearermanagement.com.

Human-Wildlife Conflict Program

The AFWA Human-Wildlife Conflict Working Group continues to create forward-looking solutions to complex wildlife challenges by producing authoritative, peer-reviewed resources for agencies. During the reporting period, the group published the monograph *Urban Coyotes as a Source of Conflict with Humans: An Evaluation of Common Management Practices*, with contributions from multiple agencies and universities, and copies are being distributed nationwide. A second monograph, *Best Practices for Managing Human-Beaver Conflicts in North America: Balancing Ecological Benefits and Human Interests*, is in press with Human Wildlife Interactions (HWI) and is expected to be published this spring, expanding opportunities for agencies to apply proven, innovative management strategies. In addition, development is underway on a new monograph addressing wolf conflict management. Collectively, these publications reflect the Association's commitment to innovation by translating science into practical guidance that supports agencies in preventing conflicts, improving coexistence, and adapting to emerging wildlife management challenges.



Feral Swine Program

Coordinated, science-based management of feral swine remains a critical priority and presents ongoing opportunities for innovation and collaboration among state agencies, federal partners, regional associations, and the National Wild Pig Task Force through the AFWA Feral Swine Working Group. This group helps ensure coordination occurs at every level as agencies confront one of the most significant invasive wildlife challenges facing the United States. Established feral swine populations now occur in at least 35 states, with expanding distributions in several regions. Annual economic losses attributed to feral swine exceed \$1.5 billion, driven by agricultural damage, livestock depredation, infrastructure impacts, and disease surveillance costs. Beyond economic concerns, feral swine poses serious ecological and public-health risks by competing with native wildlife, preying on ground-nesting species and deer fawns, and serving as reservoirs for more than 30 pathogens affecting livestock, wildlife, and humans. Continued collaboration, coupled with adaptive management and innovative control strategies, remains essential to reducing feral swine populations and mitigating their growing impacts.



FINANCIAL & BUSINESS STRATEGIES

FINANCIAL & BUSINESS
STRATEGIES



Multistate Conservation Grant Program

The Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) was established through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000. It is administered by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Each year, the MSCGP directs up to \$11 million to support projects supporting fish and wildlife conservation work done by state fish and wildlife agencies and other conservation organizations. The 46 projects approved for 2025 focus on five strategic priorities identified by the Association's membership and were awarded \$11,798,400. In 2023, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies launched the Multistate Conservation Grant Program Grants Database, and it is growing with the addition of new grants every year. This platform provides a comprehensive overview of awarded MSCGP grants from the program's inception to the present year. Featuring over 650 previous grants, the dashboard is a great tool for applicants, offering a unique opportunity to explore the wealth of projects and initiatives that have received funding over the years.

Soon after assuming office, Association President Paul Johansen appointed a working group to develop the Strategic Priorities for the 2027 Multistate Conservation Grant Program. The primary goals of this effort were to:

- Reduce redundancy and overlap among existing priorities.
- Improve clarity and focus to support consistent interpretation and application.
- Align priorities more closely with measurable conservation outcomes and tangible benefits to state fish and wildlife agencies.
- Identify and address emerging or unmet needs relevant to the next cycle of multistate conservation investments.

The Association gathered broad input on the 2026 Strategic Priorities from state fish and wildlife agencies, the Office for Conservation Investment (CI) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and partner organizations. Respondents were asked to note areas needing clarification, consolidation, or additional focus, and to highlight emerging issues that may warrant new attention under the MSCGP.

Following this input, the Work Group agreed that the 2027 priorities should be more focused. Key themes included:

- Priorities should be narrower, more directive, and clearer in intent.
- Defined subcategories would improve applicant guidance and strengthen proposal relevance.
- Existing regional and multistate conservation plans may serve as useful reference points, though they vary significantly in scope.

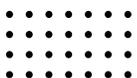
With this evaluation in mind, focused priorities for the 2027 MSCGP funding cycle will include landscape scale habitat connectivity, management and applied research, recruitment, retention, and reactivation, and national initiatives including the national survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching and professional development and capacity building for wildlife and sportfish restoration programs delivery.

Projects implemented in 2025 include:

TOOLS FOR REGIONALLY COORDINATED FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

This project reflects a regional commitment to modernizing coordination for fish and wildlife conservation in the Northeast. With support from the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies developed a next-generation Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN) Database to better support science, management, and policy



across 14 jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, with completion targeted for December 31, 2025. The database will serve as a truly regional tool, benefiting every member state and empowering more than 150 experts who contribute annually to keeping shared conservation priorities current. Beyond a technical upgrade, the project advances NEAFWA’s highest strategic priorities by strengthening scientific capacity, improving coordination, and preparing the region to address emerging environmental stressors, wildlife health threats, invasive species, and technological challenges.

The Northeast RSGCN Database includes information on more than 800 species spanning mammals, birds, fish, and invertebrates, many of which are ecologically, culturally, and economically significant. These include bats, moose, and Canada lynx; regionally important migratory birds such as the American black duck and golden eagle; and a wide range of freshwater, diadromous, and marine fish, from brook trout and lake sturgeon to Atlantic cod and bluefin tuna. Conservation needs increasingly overlap across traditional game, sportfish, and non-game species, as shared threats like disease, biodiversity loss, and environmental change affect ecosystems and human health alike. Growing angler interest in eligible non-traditional species and the ecological importance of invertebrates further underscore the need for an integrated, up-to-date regional conservation framework.

QUANTIFYING THE R3 “RIPPLE EFFECT”

Wildlife Management Institute

Evaluation of recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts has traditionally emphasized direct outputs and outcomes, such as improved participant skills or the number of new hunters recruited, leaving indirect impacts largely unexplored. This project sought to identify and quantify these indirect “ripple effects,” defined as the influence a new hunter may have on others’ attitudes and behaviors. Researchers pursued this goal through three approaches: interviews with 21 R3 professionals to clarify how ripple effects could be defined and measured, focus groups with 10–15 adult-onset hunters to capture participant perspectives, and a national survey targeting individuals who had recently purchased their first hunting license.

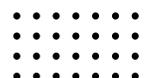


Based on interviews, focus groups, and a survey of 25,095 hunters across 25 states, the study confirmed for the first time that R3 ripple effects are measurable and significant. On average, hunters reported recruiting 1.8 new hunters and talking with nearly 10 non-hunters about hunting, though nearly half reported recruiting none, highlighting uneven influence. Hunters who continued from youth into adulthood showed the strongest ripple effects, while women were less likely to have begun hunting as youth, recruited fewer hunters, and engaged fewer non-hunters in conversation. Together, these findings demonstrate that R3 impacts extend beyond individual participants and provide new insights for designing more effective recruitment and engagement strategies.

Management Assistance Team

This year, the Management Assistance Team (MAT) generated more than 1,200 participant engagements through a dynamic mix of online courses, webinars, on-demand modules, in-person workshops, and state-specific offerings—supporting leadership and professional growth at every career stage and reaching conservation professionals across the country.

New programming sparked strong interest, including the launch of the Conservation Leaders Confluence, a webinar series designed for early- to mid-career professionals new to their leadership role. Another new



initiative, the Summer Series, brought fresh energy to the calendar with six weekly one-hour webinars that introduced new topics while highlighting existing content in management, communication, and leadership. A slate of stand-alone webinars introduced practical ideas, tools, and strategies on timely topics such as chaotic leadership, storytelling, effective delegation, adaptive leadership in action, navigating public interactions, and leading across generational differences. MAT webinars reached 581 engagements over 33 live sessions!

Momentum continued with the returning Leadership Launchpad, MAT's week-long hybrid program, which expanded to deliver three additional cohorts of 72 total participants, supporting the development of leadership skills and capacity aligned with individual strengths and styles.

MAT also significantly expanded its on-demand learning library, releasing 44 new modules covering artificial intelligence, emotional intelligence, management and communication skills, creativity and strategy, managing change, training and facilitation, and project management. These additions complemented 24 continuing modules focused on collaboration, communication, and presentation skills. These on-demand modules garnered 206 participant engagements.

Online courses on Adaptive Leadership, management skills and communication remained a staple of leadership development programs in certain state agencies, with six of the nine courses delivered specifically for Florida and Utah. Collectively, the nine offerings generated 134 engagements.

In addition to virtual learning, MAT delivered five in-person workshops serving 177 participants in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Utah. Workshop topics range from Adaptive Leadership to Boundary Setting and Elevating Meetings, providing hands-on, place-based learning experiences tailored to state needs.

Participation figures represent total engagements across programs. Some individuals participated in multiple offerings as part of their ongoing professional development.

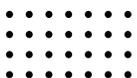
National Conservation Leadership Institute

The National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI), founded in 2005, was created with a bold mission: to develop the leadership capacity in those who are poised to tackle the complex, evolving challenges faced by conservation professionals. Through immersive, dynamic learning experiences led by world-renowned faculty and highly dedicated and passionate peer coaches, NCLI provides participants with the essential skills and knowledge to drive meaningful change in the field.

In January 2025, Cohort 18 embarked on a transformative three-day virtual residency, followed by their culminating residency in May 2025.

This milestone event marked the graduation of 38 exceptional individuals, bringing the total number of NCLI alumni to an impressive 631. The group represented 21 state agencies, including Alaska, Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In total, 25 hailed from state agencies, six from federal agencies, six from NGOs, and one from the private sector.

In October 2025, Cohort 19 began their own leadership journey, with 36 participants- 27 from state agencies and nine from NGOs—setting out to hone their leadership edge.



Throughout the year, NCLI staff also hosted two national receptions and a virtual town hall, where NCLI Board Chair Jimmy Bullock shared program updates and engaged in a lively Q&A session with alumni. Additionally, NCLI delivered an in-person Adaptive Leadership workshop at the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) National Conference, along with virtual informational sessions for potential applicants and nominators, as well as alumni interested in peer coaching opportunities.

For more information on the NCLI, please visit www.conservationleadership.org.

Northeast Regional Conservation Leadership Program (NECLP)

Sponsored by the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) and managed by AFWA’s Management Assistance Team, the NECLP pilot program was developed in response to expressed interest from several regions in regional specific leadership development training programs modeled after NCLI with the purpose of building extraordinary leadership within regional conservation agencies and organizations. The inaugural NECLP Cohort-1 consisting of 21 Fellows from ten states and D.C. recently completed a successful first residency at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in October, participating in challenging interactive sessions addressing Adaptive Leadership™ concepts in relation to real-world challenges. The Cohort worked remarkably well together and are fully dedicated to continuing to communicate, collaborate and grow as a network of professionals ready to tackle the region’s conservation challenges as they continue with an interim Virtual Session in January and a second residency in March 2026 at Hudson Farm in New Jersey. The NECLP program has received strong support from NEAFWA and is currently scheduling two additional Cohorts for 2026-2027.



2025 Annual Meeting

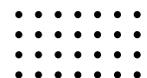
The Association held its 115th Annual Meeting, September 21-24, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona. Leading off the conference was the 2025 Plenary Session: “Crossing Boundaries: Coordinating Wildlife Movement and Species Recovery Across Jurisdictions.” The Plenary explored the complex landscape of international wildlife movement as it relates to the management and recovery of species that span national boundaries. Our three distinguished speakers delved into the intricacies of multijurisdictional conservation programs, highlighting the challenges and successes in coordinating efforts across borders. The plenary speakers focused on the legal and regulatory frameworks, including CITES compliance, health certification standards, and the implications of tri-national collaboration for species recovery. The Association thanks all our plenary speakers, Stewart Liley (Chief of Wildlife, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish), Eduardo Nieves (Resident Agent in Charge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service- Southern California and Las Vegas), and Keith Aune (Conservation Scientist, Green Fire Consulting) for their insights.

2025 Annual Meeting Resolutions

The voting membership of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies passed five resolutions during its Business Meeting held on September 24, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona. Resolutions are developed within AFWA Committees to express formal opinion for adoption by the Association.

1. Supporting Regulated Predator Hunting, Trapping, and Responsible Predation Management
2. In Support of the Voluntary Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Reducing Unintended Ingestion of Lead Ammunition and Tackle Residues in Wildlife Developed by the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
3. Preserving the Bird Banding Laboratory to Sustain Migratory Bird Populations
4. A Vision for Wildlife Diversity Conservation in the Future
5. Appreciation to the Arizona Game and Fish Department for a Successful 115th Annual Meeting.

[You can view the full text of the resolutions on the AFWA website.](#)



2025 Annual Awards



The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies recognized eleven individuals, one group, one state agency, and one private landowner and operations manager for their dedication to advancing fish and wildlife conservation at the Association's Annual Awards Ceremony on September 23, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona.

Recipients include:

Seth Gordon Award

Chuck Sykes

John L. Morris Award

Richard Childress

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Bob Ziehmer
Gordon Batcheller

Mark J. Reeff Memorial Award:

Jackie Rosenberger (Virginia Dept. Wildlife Resources)

Boone & Crockett Club Award:

Rachael Tuckett (Utah Department of Wildlife Resources)

National Private Lands Fish & Wildlife Stewardship Award:

Spider Ranch- Gail Steiger

Stephen Kellert Award:

Tony Wasley- Wildlife Management Institute

Gary Taylor Award:

Taylor Schmitz- Cong. Sportsmen Foundation

Special Recognition Awards:

Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group
Colin Gillin - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



Annual Meeting Sponsors

The Association extends its appreciation to the 115th Annual Meeting Sponsors and exhibitors.

Sustaining Partner Level:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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PayIt Outdoors

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NASA,
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation,
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DJ Case & Associates,
ESPER,
Everblue,
Gordon-Darby,
Guidefitter,
Mule Deer Foundation,
National Archery in the Schools Program,
National Conservation Leadership Institute/ AFWA Management Assistance Team,
The Nature Conservancy,
Pig Brig Trap Systems,
Priogen, Southwick Associates,
Southwick Associates,
Voss Signs,
The Wildlife Society

Organizational Excellence and Learning Organizations

The Association is committed to the concept of ensuring that AFWA is a vibrant and evolving organization, which we have come to recognize as a “learning organization.” Conceptually, we have embraced the vision of creating an organization that seeks to facilitate a culture of reflection, growth, curiosity, exploration, safety in taking risks, and learning. The Association is invested in furthering its commitment to foster a welcoming culture, which is an important aspect of cultivating a learning environment.

2025 Financials

The funds entrusted to the Association enable us to provide coordinated services; support for international programs, projects and coalitions; promote wildlife associated recreation; and help members continue to address the most pressing conservation challenges of the day.

REVENUE SUMMARY	FY2025
State	28%
Provincial/Territorial	<1%
Associate	<1%
Affiliate	<1%
Contributing 1	1.5%
GRANT REVENUE	
Federal	16%
Multistate	17%
Foundational	3%
International	5%
OTHER REVENUE	
Annual Meeting	7%
Misc. State Contributions	4%
Overhead	8%
Miscellaneous	8%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$6,834,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$6,334,000

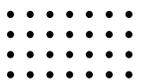
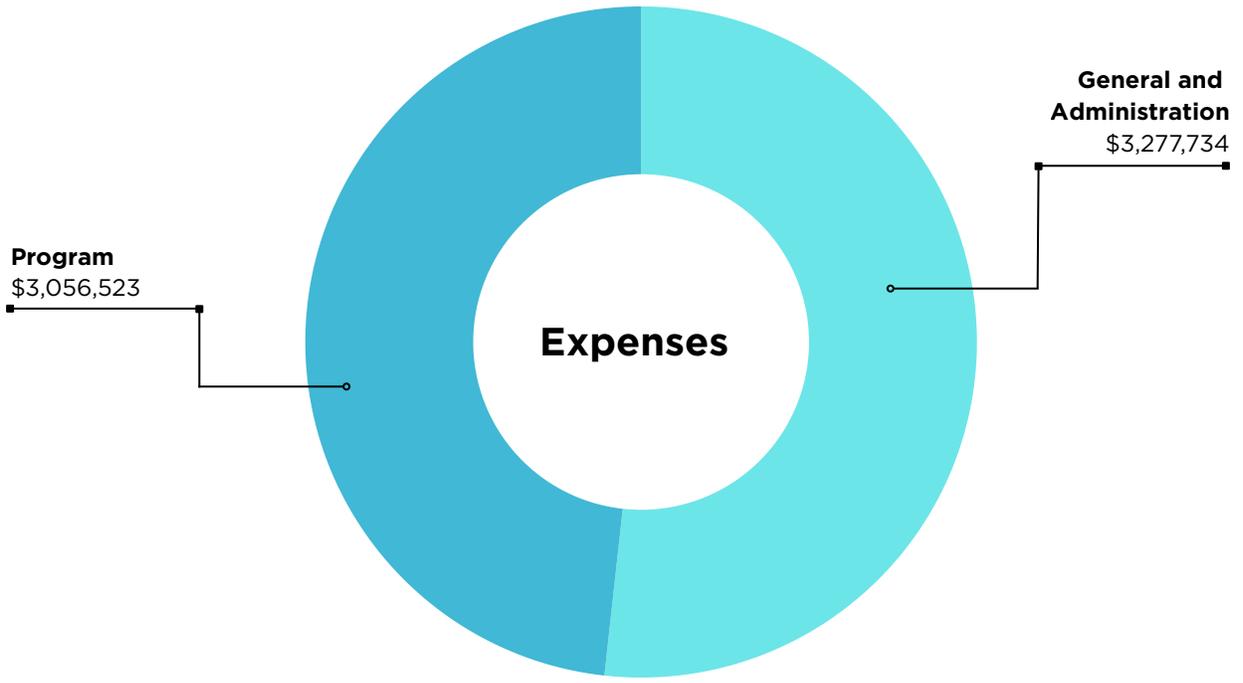
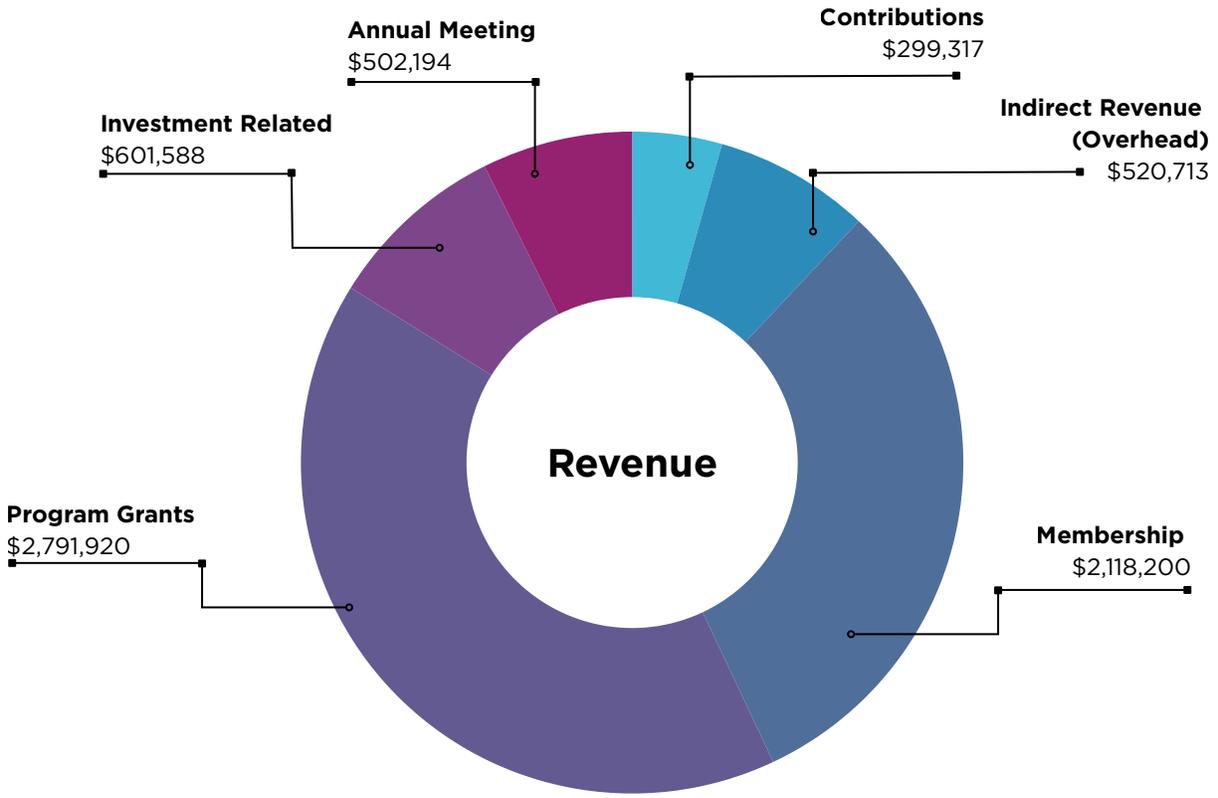


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Back Cover: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Additional Photos: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (pg. 2, 33); Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (pg. 3, 16); Keith Kohl (pg. 3); Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (pg. 3); West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (pg. 4, 9, 38); Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (pg. 6); Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (pg. 6, 20); Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (pg. 7); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (pg. 7, 27, 28); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (pg. 8, 10, 29); Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (pg. 12); Northeast Fish & Wildlife Association (pg 17); NRCS- Oklahoma (pg. 22); Idaho Fish and Game (pg. 24); Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (pg. 25); J. Bartholmai (pg. 26); Artemis (pg. 31).



OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE



Outlook for the Future

Looking ahead implies looking back. As this Annual Report ably demonstrates, the Association did not miss a beat in its work during the past year. Indeed, against a backdrop of great policy uncertainty, the Association maintained a positive approach to collaboration and relationships, one grounded in its nearly 125-year-old DNA. We will do likewise in the year ahead. As one state fish and wildlife director recently noted, regarding the Association’s successful efforts to revise a federal administrative decision, “here is the perfect example of the Association’s worth to state members.”

The year ahead will be borne on the wings of a well-honed policy agenda, with urgency, regarding reauthorization of the Sport Fish and Boating Trust, with perseverance, for the right moment and the right time to secure new dedicated funding for state fish and wildlife agencies, and with innovation, such as nascent conversations with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on a new partnership approach for delivery of private lands technical assistance.

The Association’s work, looking ahead, will be grounded in trusting relationships and meaningful dialogue among state, provincial, and territorial members, with partners, and a new Administration. We look forward to collaborative federal policy engagement in the coming years. That groundwork was laid in 2025, we will expand upon it in 2026, and set the stage for durable outcomes for conservation in our nation.

The celebration of America’s 250th Birthday is on our doorstep. It offers an opportunity for reflection, both about the past and the future. There is a great deal of informal speculation and formal assessment about, or for, respectively the future of conservation, driven in part by concern for the relevancy of conservation institutions. The Association will lean in as well, and we look forward to you leaning in alongside us.



The Association Committees, Subcommittees & Working Groups

Almost without exception, the accomplishments of which the Association is most proud started within our 70+ committees, subcommittees and working groups, and our 1,000+ committee members. Without a doubt, the Association’s success in advancing positions that further our collective capacity to manage resources will only continue thanks to the enduring personal contributions of the greater Association membership.

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
- Shared Science and Research Priorities Working Group

Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee

- Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

Threatened/Endangered Species Policy

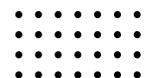
- ESA and Climate Change Working Group

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





Officers & Executive Committee

President:

Paul Johansen, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Vice-President:

Ryan Brown, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Secretary-Treasurer:

Amanda Wuestefeld, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife

Past President:

Judy Camuso, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair:

Kendra Wecker, Ohio Division of Wildlife

Vice-Chair:

Tim McCoy, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

Members:

Angi Bruce, Wyoming Game & Fish Department
 Chris Kennedy, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
 Jason Sumners, Missouri Department of Conservation
 Jeb Williams, North Dakota Game and Fish Department
 David Yoskowitz, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

EX OFFICIO VOTING MEMBERS

Canada:

Logan Wenham, Wildlife and Ecosystems Branch, British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

REGIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

Midwest:

Shannon Lott, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Northeast:

Jacqueline Lendrum, New York Division of Fish and Wildlife

Southeast:

Roger Young, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Western:

Jim Fredericks, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

**Current slate 2025-2026 Officers & Executive Committee Members - January 2026*



Staff*

**2025 staff list*

Ron Regan, Executive Director

Patricia Allen, Director of Communications

Shane Behler, Program Coordinator, Agriculture Policy

Julie Dieguez, Program Manager, Professional Development

Meaghan Gade, Energy and Wildlife Program Manager

Estelle Green, Administrative Assistant

Deb Hahn, Director of International Programs

Mark Humpert, Director of Conservation Initiatives

Gina Jackson-Krusinski, Program Manager, Development, Communications and Learning

Lane Kisonak, Chief Legal Officer

Marc LeFebvre, Program Manager, Project WILD

David Lind, Legislative Liaison

Amanda Myers, Program Manager, Training & Information Services

Angela Rivas Nelson, Executive Assistant

Ryan Roberts, Program Manager, National Fish Habitat Partnership

Ali Schwaab, Program Manager, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Policy

Dean Smith, NAWMP Director/Wildlife Liaison

Elena Takaki, Director, Project WILD and Director of Leadership Development

Kurt Thiede, Director of Government Affairs

Bryant White, Program Manager, Trapping Policy

Bradley Wilkinson, Program Manager, Bird Conservation / NABCI Coordinator

Silvana Yaroschuk, Senior Program Manager, Multistate Conservation Grants/Accounting Asst.

Jeff Yattaw, Senior Accounting Manager

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Why is the Association relevant? It's because of the active involvement of a great assembly of member agencies and organizations to achieve a great vision of sound fish and wildlife resource management throughout North America for long-term public benefit, use and support.

Governmental Members

U.S. State and Territorial Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries
 Alaska Department of Fish and Game
 Arizona Game and Fish Department
 Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
 California Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
 Connecticut DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources
 Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 Georgia Wildlife Resources Division
 Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
 Idaho Department of Fish and Game
 Illinois Department of Natural Resources
 Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Iowa Department of Natural Resources
 Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
 Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
 Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
 Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Service
 Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 Minnesota Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
 Missouri Department of Conservation
 Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
 Nevada Department of Wildlife
 New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
 New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
 New Mexico Game and Fish Department
 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
 North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
 North Dakota Game and Fish Department
 Ohio Division of Wildlife
 Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
 Pennsylvania Game Commission
 Rhode Island Department of

Environmental Management
 South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
 South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department
 Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
 Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
 Washington, DC Fisheries/Wildlife Division
 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
 West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
 Wyoming Game and Fish Department

U.S. Territories

Guam Department of Agriculture
 Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources
 District of Columbia Department of Energy & Environment

U.S. Federal Members

Bureau of Land Management
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries Service
 National Park Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture - APHIS/Wildlife Services
 U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 U.S. Geological Survey

North American Members

Alberta Environment and Parks
 British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
 Canadian Wildlife Service
 Manitoba Natural Resources and Northern Development
 New Brunswick Department of Energy and Resource Development
 Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Natural Resources
 Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
 Nunavut Wildlife
 Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
 Prince Edward Island Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division
 Quebec Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs
 Saskatchewan Environment
 Yukon Department of Environment

Contributing Members

American Clean Power Association (ACP)
 American Fisheries Society
 American Sportfishing Association
 Archery Trade Association
 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
 BASS LLC
 Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
 Bat Conservation International
 Boone & Crockett Club
 Canadian Wildlife Federation
 College of Natural Resources (Univ. of Wisconsin-Stevens Pt.)
 Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
 Conservation Visions
 Conservation Youth Shooting Sports Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
 Dallas Safari Club
 Delta Waterfowl Foundation
 Ducks Unlimited Canada
 Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
 Fur Institute of Canada
 Fur Takers of America, Inc.
 International Hunter Education Association-USA
 Island Conservation
 Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation
 Mule Deer Foundation
 National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
 National Audubon Society
 National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative
 National Bowhunter Education Foundation
 National Deer Association
 National Marine Manufacturers Association
 National Rifle Association
 National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.
 National Trappers Association
 National Wild Turkey Federation
 National Wildlife Federation
 NatureServe
 North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
 Pheasants Forever
 Pollinator Partnership
 Pope and Young Club
 PERC: The Property and Environment Research Center
 Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
 Renewable Energy Wildlife Institute
 Resource Management Service, LLC
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 Safari Club International
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
 The Conservation Fund
 The Wildlife Society
 Wild Sheep Foundation
 Wildlife Disease Association
 Wildlife Management Institute



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES



**SAVE THE
DATE
2026**



Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square
Monday, September 14 through
Friday, September 18





ASSOCIATION of FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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