



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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## OUTREACH AND MARKETING WORKING GROUP NOTES

Co-Chairs: Christy Firestone (Nebraska) and Micah Holmes (Oklahoma)

Monday, March 30, 2026

3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

91<sup>st</sup> North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference  
Columbus, Ohio

Attendees: 32

### Agenda

- Introductions (3:30 – 3:45)
  - Round table introductions

**Review of Working Group Charge** - *To continue to initiate public understanding, appreciation and relevancy of state fish and wildlife management while shaping long-term conservation and enjoyment of natural resources through outreach and marketing.*

- We've made a lot of progress in this over the past few years. Especially with the development of the Communication Relevancy Toolkit.
- **Relevancy messaging updates MAFWA & SEAFWA** – DJ Case (3:45 to 4:00) Matt Harlow
  - Linking together the AFWA Relevancy Communication Toolkit and the MAFWA/SEAFWA Increasing Public Awareness of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (toolkit).
  - Messages- areas the public feels are important = Access, habitat, control, and species.
  - Lessons learned in Focus Groups:
    - Images are VERY important [high quality, smiling people, room for other elements]
    - Broadening the message to make it relevant and appeal to more people; don't need to change the 'work on the ground' but talk about it in a broader sense.
    - If you put the broader message (appealing to many) in front of hunters/anglers → found no negative effect on hunters/anglers with the

receiving of that message. SUPPORT that broadening the message does not 'harm' the effect on the traditional audience.

- Grabbing the audience depends on 1) interest (in the topic shown), and 2) quality of image
- News is only news when it's new. People tired of seeing the same thing and won't click through it multiple times. Need new material.
  - Took a weeklong flight with 4 ads → took a week off → weeklong flight with 4 new ads (etc).
- You can find a lot (30K) high quality images for free at the R3 clearing house. [CLICK HERE.](#)
- It's very difficult to show relevancy to new people without a cost.
  
- Joint EEC + WDCF WG Updates -Shelly
  - Joint WG was stood up for a way for biologists and communicators to work together; initially to help move the Recovering America's Wildlife Act forward.
  - We are looking for someone to step up from the communication side to help Chair that working group.
    - If we cannot find a chair then this joint WG may dissolve as Shelly will have to step down this year.
  - Invite everyone to attend the joint WG on Wednesday
  - Current topic is around advancing messaging around State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), and to effectively communicate with our legislators.
  
- **General and Partner Updates (4:00 to 5:00)**
  - Southern Wings – Deb Hahn
    - Works on the conservation of shared priorities birds
    - **ASK:** development of communication and outreach tools
    - Developed a communication and outreach strategy
    - Looking to roll out a spring migration communication strategy/toolkit
    - Looking to make state specific toolkits as well as director packets to help states become more involved and invest in southern wings.
    - Learn more at: <https://southern-wings.fishwildlife.org/>
  - Fall Flights – Andy Raedeke
    - Fall Flights is an AFWA program.
    - Website: <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/fallflights>
    - Mission: to ensure the continued abundance of waterfowl in north America
    - Uniting States for Fall Flights campaign
      - Focus on: the partnership, conservation delivery, and ROI
      - Using strategic storytelling; when people see themselves in the story, they invest in its future.
      - VIDEO about Fall Flights [\[CLICK HERE\]](#).
      - Currently there's a 'blame game' about why ducks aren't available in their states; the real issue is abundance due to a multiyear extended drought that is affecting reproduction → missed opportunity to tell the STORY.
      - Question: how can we help shift the narrative from issues of distribution to abundance?

- Question: what can Fall Flights Communication Team provide your state or organization? (content format; audiences; key messages)
    - More outreach on waterfowl habitat would be helpful
    - Help with telling the story about birds going to Canada
    - Showcase ROI; impact metrics; number of acres preserved, etc. [...together we are investing and protecting XX number of acres for waterfowl → ROI is substantial].
- MAFWA Deer Wise – Tricia Fry [[download presentation](#)]
  - Asking for HELP from this working group
  - There is a recent AFWA resolution ‘voluntary BMPs for reducing unintended ingestion of lead ammo and tackle residues in wildlife’
    - We are in the implementation phase of this resolution
      - Need help with messaging. Please join the Lead WG Meeting on Thursday, April 2 @ 1:15pm.
  - Looking at creating DeerWise (placeholder name)
    - GOAL: engaging conservation enthusiasts in meaningful conversation about deer hunting, management, interactions between deer and humans and the work our state agencies do.
    - Using deer as a way to communicate with outdoor enthusiasts.
    - **The ASK:** if there is interest, this group can use help with communication around this topic.
      - Looking to make a connection to (human) health
      - Join the One Health Committee on Thursday to help further this conversation.
- National Deer Association – Jen Wisniewski [[download presentation](#)]
  - Opportunities and Challenges
    - Podcast/streaming ads (available on the R3 Clearing House)
    - Spent 60K in 4 states. ROI with podcast ads isn’t very good unless you can truly invest \$\$ in the marketing.
      - The industry average in marketing is 10% of an organization’s budget
    - For ROI- the best action you can do is spend \$\$ on retention (of adults)
    - Deer provides the best ROI as a program. Fragmenting programs may reduce effectiveness.
    - Doe Harvest Proactive Comms – campaigns in Florida, Pennsylvania, Louisiana
      - Effected hunter behavior to harvest deer in key habitat that are needed
    - MSCG for 2026: looking at nutritional values of wild white-tailed deer; venison recipes; processing videos coming out this summer (from 2025).
    - **ASK:** for this WG to partner with NDA on a MSCG to replicate this proactive deer communication campaign.
- Southwick & Associates – Lou Cornicelli [[download presentation](#)]
  - Beyond the Participant: Measuring the Ripple Effect [MSCG project]
    - Very little is known or measured relative to the indirect (“ripple”) effects, behavioral or otherwise, on individuals who are influenced by interactions with a hunter.

- Ripple Effect Defined: the process by which hunter's actions, identify, and engagement generate secondary impacts by influencing people in their social circles- family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances.
- Findings- responses from a survey of 25,095 hunters in 25 states.
- Likely 3 dimensions of the ripple effect:
  - Direct recruitment
  - Awareness, approval, advocacy
  - Conservation-related behavior
- Findings- the average respondent self-reported that they recruited 1.8 new hunters, 7 new shooters, and talked to 19.9 non-hunters about hunting
  - However, half of the survey respondents reported that they recruited nobody.
- Findings- adults that have been hunting since youth reported the largest ripple.
- ACI – Micah Holmes [[download presentation](#)]
  - Association for Conservation Information (ACI): [www.aci-net.org](http://www.aci-net.org)
  - Professional organization: The Association for Conservation Information (ACI) is a non-profit organization of natural resources communicators. We serve to further natural resource conservation and exchange. We are made up of professionals representing state, federal and Canadian wildlife conservation and parks and natural resource agencies as well as private conservation organizations.
  - Next conference is in Oklahoma City, OK in 20-23 July 2026
    - Skill building sessions
    - Awards contest → great way to showcase the work being done in your state
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- Others
  - National Archery in the Schools (NASP)- looking to help kids gain more pathways to success.
    - Developing a toolkit so that NASP Coordinators can market other programs (angling, archery, etc.) to get kids engaged outdoors. Toolkit created through a MSCG.
  - Kalkomey [[download presentation](#)]- opportunities to collaborate and reach the hunters you haven't reached yet; offering 30 minute consultations to collaborate.
- Open Discussion (5:00 to 5:30) – Successes and stories
- Dismiss (5:30)