AFWA Human-Wildlife Conflict Working Group

AFWA Annual Meeting 2026

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Minutes

- Call to Order/Review Agenda/Introductions/Approval of Minutes from the previous meeting (Tricia Hebdon)

    - The new Vice-Chair of the HWCWG is Tricia Hebdon (ID DFG).
    - Tricia chaired the meeting.
    - Attendees included numerous state, federal, and NGO partners.
    - The Minutes of the meeting from the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference were approved.

- USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (Jessica Fantinato, Deputy Administrator)

    - A report was provided that included many program updates regarding the efforts of Wildlife Services to manage conflicts with wildlife and assist agencies through partnerships.
    - Black belly whistling ducks spilled grain and grain contaminated (millions of dollars in depredation costs), more prevalent over the past five years. Migratory is moving into more endemic and population increase. LA has approved their first season and WS is working with LA on mitigation. Research on targeted movements and population
    - Black birds (ND/SD) – Loaded 700 propane cannons, rotation of seasonal WS staff on special assessments
    - Black vultures – Field station in FL are assisting with knowledge gaps and improving take models and test management methods. NWRC Implications for Black Vulture mortality risks, published in Ecology and Evolution
    - In trap harassment publication Raptor Research
    - Emergency Assistance (ELAP) Fisheries Aquaculture: Apply for compensation for farm raised fish losses due to avian take (Cormorant, White Pelican, and other). Reporting required. Marine aquaculture doesn't count.
    - Wolves – USFWS/WS Interagency agreement. Recover Gray and Mexican wolves for AZ, CA, MI, MN, WI,
    - Idaho – Livestock loss category expansion in multiple categories
    - WI – 143 reports of livestock loss to wolves and verified 98 investigations
    - CO – Joint investigation protocol CPD and WS
    - Mexican Gray Wolf standards of evidence – minor revision to standards of evidence and this year, with discussion with USFWS and revised standards of evidence. Reliance of subcutaneous evidence and clearer guidance.

Distributed the updated standards of evidence and consistent with an executive order.

- Grizzly Bears (ID, MT, WY) – Grizzly Bear depredation incidents are at an all-time high. WS is using drones as a tool. State is looking to provide non-lethal staff. WS in MT 133 investigation, FY26 143 investigation. EIS in MT is out from public comment. WY/WS nonlethal upon request
- Non-lethal work ($5 mill) – Specialized training in livestock protection, beaver management and safety equipment. FY25 Non-lethal initiative and cooperative survey report. National Wildlife Research Human Dimension Unit – Non-lethal rated as more desirable by producers than other methods. Sen Schiff and Dane to reduce conflicts between, codify and expand the non-lethal initiative and pilot program. Aimed at developing non-lethal methods for agricultural production and local communities
- AFWA Risk assessments with WS – Appreciate AFWA helping with Review. 34 risk assessments completed and thanks to Bryant for all the help.

- Berryman Institute: Progress on the update to "Managing Cougars in North America" (Nicki Frey, Utah State University, Berryman Institute)

    - A revised version of this document is expected soon. BI is getting the book ready for print. Copy edited almost two thirds. Stumbling blocks are not having the figures and need to recreate figures and tables. Major rewrites are re-reviewed.
    - Nicki also reported on various activities of the Berryman Institute.

- Update on AFWA HWC WG Publications: (Bryant White)

    - Urban Coyotes as a Source of Conflict with Humans: An Evaluation of Common Management Practices
        - This publication was released in June of 2025 in the Berryman Institute Monograph Series. It is available online and ~50 hard copies were shipped to each state fish and wildlife agency and Wildlife Services. More copies are available upon request.

    - Best Practices for Managing Human–Beaver Conflicts in North America: Balancing Ecological Benefits and Human Interests
        - This publication was released in May of 2026 in the Berryman Institute Monograph Series. It is available online and ~40 hard copies were shipped to each state fish and wildlife agency and Wildlife Service. More copies are available upon request.

- **"How State Wildlife Agencies Manage Human–Wildlife Conflict: A Nationwide Assessment"** (Julie K. Young (*Utah State University*), Lou Cornicelli (*Southwick Associates*) , Bill Moritz (*Wildlife Management Institute*), Bryant White (*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*) , Brian F. Wakeling (*Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks*).

    - This document is in press and will be published in *Human Wildlife Interactions*. The article was produced based on a Multistate Grant that was awarded to the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee. A report was produced to meet grant objectives, but the publication of the results will publicize the results more widely.

- **<u>Action Item</u>: Methods for Mitigating Wolf Interactions to Reduce Conflicts.**

    - This document is in a draft phase and is available to the AFWA Human-Wildlife Conflict Working group and the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee **for comment until January 1, 2027**.
    - The authors will incorporate comments and provide a revised draft to the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee by February 15, 2027, prior to the meeting at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference at which time **we will seek approval to move this document to publication as a monograph in the Berryman Institute Monograph Series.**

- Next up: Managing Grizzly Bear-Human Conflicts (Fall, 2027)

    - The AFWA Human Wildlife Conflict Working will next develop a monograph for publication in the Berryman Institute Monograph Series on managing conflicts with grizzly bears. We plan to have a draft before the AFWA Annual Meeting in 2027. **We are currently seeking recommendations for authors.** We need state, federal and tribal agencies, as well as NGO partners who actively participate in conflict management to assist.

- Other new conflict publications of interest: Mountain Sheep, Wild Turkeys
    - *"A review of methods to manage conflict among people because of wild turkey presence, abundance, or behavior"*. This paper is a product of the WAFWA Wild Turkey Technical Committee. The manuscript has been accepted for publication in *Human-Wildlife Interactions* and will have a publication date of 2025.

    - The Bighorn Sheep chapter is in Mountain Sheep in North America: Biology, Ecology, Conservation, and Management, edited by Paul Krausman and Bill Jex.

- Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment for the Use of Wildlife Damage Management Methods by APHIS-Wildlife Services (Bryant White)

    - 34 Risk Assessment Reviews have been completed by the HWCWG with the assistance of numerous state fish and wildlife agency personnel.
    - The next method under review will cover the use of drones in managing wildlife damage.

- **Action Item: Wording change to Wildlife Resource Policy Committee charge** (Tricia Hebdon)
    - The WRP Committee charge was discussed in April at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference during the WRPC meeting. It was pointed out that the current charge has some, **what is now considered outdated terminology, and should be amended**. AFWA HWCWG Chair, Brian Wakeling, recommended that a proposal would best come from the HWCWG since the terminology applies specifically to the work of that Group. The following is the current charge and recommendation:
    - **Current Charge**: To discuss and develop recommendations on Association positions related to federal laws, regulations and policies concerning habitat conservation, wildlife resources and related funding for such programs as well as wildlife management practices including those concerned with **problem or nuisance wildlife**, and emerging issues (e.g., commercial trade). The committee also stays abreast of threatened and endangered species wildlife issues, state legislation pertaining to wildlife management and wildlife diversity funding initiatives.
    - The HWCG **recommends** replacing the wording above in bold with: "**conflict arising from wildlife**."

- Roundtable: State/Federal/Tribal/Provincial/Regional Associations/AFWA Members

- Numerous agencies and NGOs provided reports on ongoing issues involving conflicts with wildlife.
- Florida requested that the group consider producing a best practices conflict management publication dealing American Alligators
- North Carolina suggested the group might consider developing a best practices conflict document for deer conflicts in general, not just urban deer.
- Urban Canada geese might be another potential monograph consideration

- FL – Sara Funk- New trapping regulations and trap type and use. Align with AFWA BMPs for trapping recommendations.
    - Technical assistance and Wildlife Conflicts. Overwhelmed with inquiries and complaints and are trying to figure out how to triage the system. Created an online reporting form for the public. Lower tier issues.

- Colorado DPW – Human Dimensions update – bear conflict and efficacy of BearWise on changing human compliance. Social Science subcommittee on the state range rider efficacy.

- MN – FWS Canada goose removal permit….. got rid of the permit. Farmers were not happy, but farmers are unhappy to get a USFWS form 47. 183 permits down to 32 permits. WS manages the permitting. Redoing federal permit process is proving difficult with the decrease in WS staffing. Venison donation program, $50,000 and $13/lb cost and must be X-rayed. We can't kill enough deer in the state. Commodity pricing. 2 different donation programs. Dependent on farmers, need to bring the farmers on board.

- NC – Black bears in Ashville and Western NC breaking into homes. Sows teaching cubs and high-profile situation. WHART situation.
    - Agriculture conflicts with deer, bigger issues and hunters not taking enough deer and hunters leasing areas separate of the ag. Depredation is cycling and farmers can shoot on sight and with second party shooters. Urban deer study, suburbia has the highest reproductive rates

    - Could we develop a non-urban deer monograph? Struggling to get hunters to shoot deer. Agriculture folks, hunters aren't going to just shoot deer. Must pay processors. Biggest challenges.

- OR – Bear, cougar, wolf issues that are common in the west. Big uptick in coyote conflicts in Portland and urban areas. Press and conflict with public.

Discussing human conflicts on wildlife with high whale mortality and crabbing industry which was contentious

- TX – Mandatory harvest reporting recommendations for mountain lions to have data on lion populations. Rookeries and deterrents work is ongoing but need to develop models to know where the birds go when hazed to continue deterrents. International urban wildlife conference June 6-9, 2026, Milwaukee, WI
- National Wildlife Federal professional working in urban wildlife to create programs.- what urban wildlife programs exist and know people and reach out.
- TN – Hosted AFWA BMPs for trapping necropsy event in 2026. Huge amount of Human bear conflict. Deer depredation problems and working with farmers for Deer Depredation permits and get hunters to reduce populations. Soybean Commodities, how are they evaluating crop damage, stumbling upon, how are we assessing damage.

- AZ – Coyote conflicts (WHART situation), using the monographs helps. Training up people on messaging, also bear conflicts.

- OH - Emerging conflicts survey through MAFWA. White Buffalo on deer sterilization project and wanted to make it a management technique instead of research. Must be included with lethal removal.

- NEAFWA – Gordon Batchelor – Panthera held a workshop on restoring Mountain Lions to the Northeast. Regional issue, but Vermont legislators to go it alone to restore. Resolution by the NE directors and provide information to the committee the notes. State biologists felt that the issues with conflicts related to lions were disregarded. Not an issue going away.

- UT – Feral swine in the corners of UT, bear conflicts from urban bear, invasion of fox squirrels, damage management with fox squirrels. VA opossum sightings.

- PA – Deer depredation is a problem, and the Commission is redoing their 10-year deer plan. New certified hunter program and suburban areas with deer problems. Ag tag season, people don't want just anyone on their land. Bats in houses (big brown bats), recent articles and rabies. One month with 300 calls, trying to figure out sample with direct contact. Conversations about how to move forward. Commercialization of deer meat? Questions about dog food?

- CO: End of August 6700 reports on sighting of bears, relocated bears. Injuries 9 WHART situations. Landowner damage. Investing a lot of wolf

damage. Range rider program initiated. The state has 4 reproducing packs. Hired 9 conflict specialists with 4 lethal removals.
- Other:
- Free ranging equids symposium Oct. 5- 9, 2026

- National trappers and nuisance wildlife control operators, true economic impacts (raccoons, bats and squirrels) are something to look at for potential publication.
- Jeff Westerfeld from Ohio DNR requested an update on the Committee that is working on the Guidelines for Dispatching Wildlife? Does anyone in this group have an update?

- Wrap-up Discussion and Assignments for Next Meeting (Tricia Hebdon)

    - Finalize the draft of the monograph on wolf conflicts by incorporating comments from the WRPC. Seek approval to publish at the WRPC meeting during the North American WNRC in 2027.
    - Begin development of a list of authors, outline, and draft for the monograph on human conflicts with grizzly bears.