

Climate Change

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Climate Change Technical Working Committee Report

Meeting Time and Place – A face-to-face meeting was held in Milwaukee, WI in conjunction with The Wildlife Society Annual Conference, however, a quorum was not present. The committee met by conference call on April 29, 2014 and May 22, 2014.

Attendance – Six States participated on the April 29 call. Six States participated in the May 22 call (see Appendix 1).

Executive Summary – States in this region are addressing climate change at different paces and in a variety of ways; approaches vary depending upon capacity, resources, and priorities of elected representatives. Several committee members focused on vulnerability assessments this year. Assessments determined that aquatic and wetland species are often vulnerable, but many fully terrestrial species were vulnerable as well, including some important game species, such as moose and snowshoe hare.

Using AFWA’s climate adaptation survey as a jumping-off point, an ad-hoc subcommittee of this technical committee conducted phone interviews of all of the member states to document the approaches, strengths, and challenges of the diverse approaches of each state to the impacts of a changing climate. The results will be used to craft a basis for future collaborations among member states. A summary of the survey on Midwestern state activities on climate change is included with this report.

On the April 29 conference call, committee members also discussed potential Director Action items. Decisions were made at the May 22 conference call to forward a letter to the Directors for action.

Director Action Items –

1. A letter commending Dr. Arpita Choudhury for her services to our committee, and supporting the filling of her position.

Director Information Items –

1. Despite considerable effort to schedule meetings, this Committee has struggled to reach quorum, even for short conference calls. Unless the MAFWA Directors explicitly support staff participation, this technical committee cannot provide the guidance the Directors expect or that agency staff need.
2. Nebraska and Iowa collaborated on a project to roll up the results from four independently conducted Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments into a regional report. Results of this project, which assessed the vulnerability of aquatic and terrestrial species across Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois, were presented in December 2013 as part of the monthly web conference series “Safeguarding Wildlife from Climate Change.” This conference series is put on through a

partnership between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Wildlife Federation. The webinar, entitled “Climate Change Vulnerability of Fish & Wildlife in the US Corn Belt Region” shared our findings that some of the most climate vulnerable species are those that use wetland and aquatic systems. We suggested that, if managed sustainably, Midwestern river systems and wetlands could buffer climate change impacts and serve as important migration corridors to allow species to move in response to climate change. This webinar has been archived and can be viewed at <http://nctc.fws.gov/topic/online-training/webinars/safeguarding-wildlife.html>

Concurrently, Michigan completed its own Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment of 400 species. Similar to other states in the region, Michigan found that aquatic and wetland species were particularly vulnerable. Michigan also determined that 17% of terrestrial game species, including moose, American marten, snowshoe hare, and Canada goose, are likely to see population declines due to climate change impacts over the next 25 years. The report can be found at <http://1.usa.gov/1gHPDKu>

3. State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) are currently being revised, and most states are incorporating climate adaptation into those plans. However, recent state and national reports have highlighted significant vulnerabilities among more common species, including high-profile game species like moose, white-tailed deer, and cold-water fishes. For those states that are able to invest in programs to increase the resilience of fish and wildlife resources to climate change, the Committee encourages consideration of the full range of appropriate funding sources.
4. In response to a request for comments about federal budget priorities, this committee reviewed FY14 budget proposals for several federal agencies engaged in climate change science, planning and adaptation work relevant to fish and wildlife. The committee has two priorities to share with Directors:
 - a. The committee would like to see The **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program** funding level returned to the level of FY2010. While this program is not intended to address climate change specifically, it has become the focus of several Federal climate change programs, including several LCCs and the USGS CSCs. Thus, the Federal agency demands on the program are increasing even as funding has continued to decline. The situation is both inefficient and unsustainable. We also discussed **the need to create stability in this fund to allow States to invest in staff capacity**, which is difficult to justify for a program with year-to-year (and declining) appropriations. Several members feel that stability is more critical than increasing appropriations; all agree that both are needed.
 - b. Members also support increasing the funding level for conservation programs under the Farm Bill, especially the **Wetland Reserve Program and the Grassland Reserve Program**. Those two programs contribute to adaptation, by promoting healthy habitats and healthy populations of wetland and grassland species. Those programs also have the potential to fix and store significant amounts of atmospheric carbon in wetland and grassland soils.

- c. The Committee also discussed the importance of several Department of Energy (DOE) programs in promoting renewable energy, and thus reducing the impacts of future climate change on fish and wildlife resources. However, many of these renewable energy sources also have significant impacts on fish and wildlife. DOE funds research into innovative ways to reduce impacts to fisheries from hydropower or bat mortality from wind energy. **We support increasing the capacity of DOE to fund research on cost-effective ways to avoid or minimize impacts to fish and wildlife at renewable energy facilities.**
5. To aid in planning and coordination, this committee continue to rotate the chair the committee of the committee to follow the same order as the location of the Director's meeting host state. Thus, for 2014-2015, Minnesota's representative will assume the chairmanship role.

Time and Place of Next Meeting – In 2014-2015, the committee will meet quarterly by conference call, and will decide in winter if a face-to-face meeting would be fruitful.

Appendix 1 – Meeting Attendance

Representatives to this technical committee from each state are named below, with the calls in which they participated after their name:

1. Iowa – Katy Reeder - April, May
2. Illinois – Ann Marie Holtrop - April
3. Indiana – Currently Vacant
4. Kansas – Brad Simpson
5. Kentucky – None (this MAFWA member state has declined to name a representative; instead participates in SEAFWA Climate Technical Committee)
6. Michigan – Chris Hoving – April, May
7. Minnesota – Olivia LeDee - May
Ann Pierce
(in addition, Kathy DonCarlos of MN DNR is the Director Liaison)
8. Missouri – Janet Sternburg – April, May
9. Nebraska – Rick Schneider – April, May
10. North Dakota – Terry Steinwand
11. Ohio – Nathan Stricker
12. South Dakota – John Lott - April
13. Wisconsin – Tara Bergeson
Karl Martin - May

Appendix 2 – Organizational Guidelines

ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES CLIMATE CHANGE TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEE

Mission: Advance wildlife and fish conservation in the member states of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) by providing a forum to facilitate sharing of climate change adaptation information, strategies, and resources, activity that will result in coordinated fish and wildlife adaptation planning actions and recommendations to MAFWA from the member states.

Objectives:

1. Provide a forum for the discussion of how fish and wildlife agencies are addressing climate change in member states, including how agency staff view the role climate change plays in conservation, and how climate considerations are integrated into agency organizational structure, policy, and planning efforts.
2. Define common priorities, develop coordinated strategies, and seek multi-state grants to address climate change threats to fish and wildlife and their habitats in member states (as identified in their climate adaptation plans, if such plans exist).
3. Stimulate an exchange of information among member states on legislation, administrative rules, adaptation and mitigation activity, education, funding and research related to climate change and fish, wildlife, and habitat.

4. Ensure coordination and cooperation among member states and federal agencies in dealing with programs to address the likely impacts of climate change.
5. Work closely with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Climate Change Committee, the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and other regional committees, institutions, organizations and groups working to address climate change.
6. Stay up-to-date on climate change issues that impact fish and wildlife and inform/advise the Midwest Association of Wildlife Agency directors on pertinent issues and solutions.

Membership: The membership of the MAFWA Climate Change Technical Working Committee (MAFWA CCC) is open to employees of member states and provinces. Member states will be allowed one vote each, regardless of delegation size. Representatives of federal agencies, research institutions, conservation organizations, and other individuals may be invited to attend Working Group meetings.

Officers: The MAFWA Executive Committee shall appoint a Chair each year. The Chair shall be an employee of a member state agency. The Chair and his/her member agency shall provide clerical support needed for conducting committee business and shall maintain a file of all minutes of committee meetings, correspondence and other items as necessary. The Chair's responsibility shall include, but not be limited to, organizing a minimum of one MAFWA CCC meeting per year, maintaining committee files, preparing necessary correspondence and preparing a report of all CCC activities for submission to the MAFWA Executive Committee. The MAFWA Executive Committee shall appoint a Vice-Chair. The duties of the Vice-Chair will be to assist the Chair as required, assume the duties of the Chair in the event that the Chair is unable to perform those duties, and to succeed the chair when her/his term is over.

Sub-Committees: Ad-hoc Sub-Committees may be appointed by the Chair to investigate and report on specific issues. Sub-Committees will be appointed by the Chair upon review of requests from members of the Executive Committee for specific Committee action.

Meetings: The MAFWA CCC will meet at least once per year. The meeting may be held in any member state or in conjunction with other regional or national meetings that are timely or to reduce travel costs, or be conducted by conference call or webinar. The schedule and duration of each meeting will be determined by the Chair after consultation with other members of the Working Group. Notice of meeting dates and locations will be made available to members far enough in advance to enable them to secure out-of-state travel authorization for attendance.

Meeting Agenda: The program will be organized to permit adequate time for discussion of agenda items. Each Working Group meeting should include a short (10-minute) report from each state on the status of climate change-related projects in that state. Other topics on the agenda will reflect current issues related to the relationship between climate change, fish and wildlife, and habitat, as well as progress toward meeting the objectives of the Working Group. The Chair may request special reports from states and individuals on current topics. State and special reports will also be submitted in written format to

facilitate sharing them with agency directors, maintenance of proper files and provision of reports to other appropriate persons. Guest speakers may be invited to Working Group meetings to make presentations on topics of interest. Short field trips may be arranged in conjunction with the meetings.

Attendance: To enhance an atmosphere of participation and exchange of ideas, attendance from all member states and provinces is strongly encouraged.

Business Meeting: A formal MAFWA CCC business meeting will be held in conjunction with any Working Group meeting. The business meeting will discuss and determine specific recommendations to the MAFWA Executive Committee. Recommendations to the Executive Committee must represent the majority view of member states/provinces. Each member state with a representative in attendance will be allowed one vote. Invited agencies, private citizens, NGOs and others in attendance are not eligible to vote.

Report: Following any MAFWA CCC meeting, the Chair will prepare a report for the Executive Committee of the MAFWA. The Chair will also send a copy of the report to all members of the Working Group. MAFWA CCC members should brief their own administration immediately following the Working Group meeting. The report shall contain a summary of the information presented at the Working Group meeting, items covered in the business meeting, any recommendations from the Working Group, appropriate handouts obtained at the meeting and names and address of all attendees. This report shall be submitted to the Executive Committee not less than 30 days before the MAFWA Directors Annual Meeting.



MIDWEST
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May 20, 2014

Mr. Dan Forster
President
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
444 North Capitol Street NW Suite 725
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Forster,

We are writing to commend Dr. Arpita Choudhury for her great work and to recommend that her position be re-filled. Dr. Choudhury has provided a valuable service to the state fish and wildlife agencies in her role as Science and Research Liaison, particularly in the arena of climate change. With her AFWA Climate Change Roundup, she provided a highly valuable clearing house for information in a rapidly evolving field of knowledge. She was also instrumental in pulling together workshops and surveys to help our agencies better understand and cope with the issue of climate change. She helped organize the Climate Academy courses provided by the National Conservation Training Center. She was the glue that kept staff from our agencies engaged in this critical issue, and we thank AFWA for showing leadership on this topic.

Given how rapidly this field is evolving, including our understanding of climate change and its impacts on fish and wildlife and the development of adaptation strategies, we continue to see a need for this position, and we fully support re-filling the vacancy. Because of the increasing variety of challenges for fish and wildlife managers, it would be difficult for our staff to stay current on all of the research, as well as trying to keep track of all the webinars, workshops, conferences, and granting opportunities related to climate change. This position is essential to helping our agencies stay informed and continue addressing what may be one of the largest challenges facing the conservation of fish and wildlife.

Please extend our appreciation to Dr. Choudhury for her efforts, and thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

President



CC:
MAFWA Board of Directors
MAFWA Climate Change Technical Committee

DRAFT

Climate Change Adaptation

among Midwest State Fish and Wildlife Agencies



Most state agencies are responding to the threat of climate change, but in different ways. In 2013 the MAFWA Climate Change Technical Committee reviewed adaptive governance structures among the MAFWA member states. Eleven of 13 states participated in structured interviews, which are summarized below. A more detailed report is available upon request from the MAFWA Climate Change Technical Committee.

Agency Staff

- Five: 0.25 to two FTE dedicated to climate adaptation
- Six: no FTE responsible for climate adaptation

Internal Coordination

- Two: use senior level Department level managers
- Four: use informal working groups
- Five: have no coordination structure for climate adaptation

External Collaboration

- Three: private-university-government partnerships
- Two: cross-agency partnerships
- Four: research collaborations
- Two: no collaboration on climate adaptation

Planning

- Four: integrated climate threats into strategic plans
- Five: included climate as threat only in SWAP
- Two: did not include climate in any plans

Funding

- Most used State Wildlife Grants
- Other sources included
 - Landscape Conservation Cooperative grants
 - NOAA
 - USGS
 - Pittman-Robertson funds

Adaptation Lessons Learned

- A changing climate is today's issue, not a potential future problem.
- Adaptation to recent extreme weather and climate trends is prudent.
- Adaptation action can help avert costly problems.
- Staff should be encouraged to consider climate explicitly and develop forward-looking goals.
- Climate vulnerability should be incorporated into existing work.
- Many partnerships are available to help state agencies adapt.
- Agency focus should be broadened to game species and vulnerable infrastructure.

