



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

STAFF REPORT

**MAFWA
75th Annual Director's Meeting
Estes Park, Colorado
June 29 - July 2, 2008**

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INTRODUCTION -- MATT HOGAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Changes in Member Agencies

The following changes in state fish and wildlife agency leadership have occurred since the Association's Annual Meeting last September:

Don Koch has been named Director of the California Department of Fish and Game.

Steve Ferrell has been named Director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Association Staff Updates

The Association has hired **Mark Humpert** as Wildlife Diversity Director. With more than 20 years of experience in the wildlife conservation field, Mark is currently the Wildlife Diversity Program Manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Mark has been involved with the Teaming with Wildlife coalition at the state and national levels for many years and has represented Nebraska on the Association's Teaming with Wildlife Committee. Notably, he coordinated the Nebraska Teaming with Wildlife coalition, which grew from 49 to more than 270 organizations within five years during his tenure. Mark also led outreach efforts for Nebraska's Wildlife Action Plan, State Wildlife Grants Program, Nongame Check-off Program, Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation, and the Healthy Families Play Outside Network. Mark will begin work at the Association on August 11.

Mark will replace **Naomi Edelson**, who has elected to not return to her job as Wildlife Diversity Director following the birth of her son in July of last year. In addition, **Dave Chadwick**, Wildlife Diversity Senior Associate and Acting Wildlife Diversity Director, has accepted a job with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Both Naomi and Dave have done outstanding work on behalf of state agencies and will be missed.

Len Ugarenko has accepted the position of President of Wildlife Habitat Canada effective July 1, 2008. Len will continue to assist the Association through the annual meeting and transition to his replacement as North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator.

Dr. Arpita Choudhury has been hired as the Association's new Science and Research Liaison beginning August 4th. Arpita is currently working as a National Research Council Post Doctoral fellow at NOAA's Coastal Center of Environmental Health and Biomolecular Research in Charleston, South Carolina. Arpita received her PhD at the University of Rhode Island in Environmental Science with a focus on population genetics and fisheries science. She received a BS at the University of Miami in Biology and Marine Science with a minor in Chemistry.

Brian Bohnsack from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program has begun a two-year detail with the Association to serve as the coordinator of the Industry-Agency Summit (see below). In addition to his work at the FWS, Brian has worked for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on March 26 and 27 in Phoenix, Arizona at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and took the following actions: 1) approved changes to the by-laws that will be forwarded to the membership before the Association's Annual Meeting in September; 2) approved Contributing Member applications for the National Marine Manufacturers Association, Trust for Public Land, XONtv, Resource Management Services, LLC, and National Trappers Association; 3) tabled a Contributing Member application for the North American Gamebird Association pending discussions with their new Executive Director; 4) rejected a Contributing Member application for ALL Consulting, Inc.; 5) directed continued work on the Association's Strategic Plan; 6) established a taskforce to review and make recommendations on future office space needs for the Association; 7) reviewed and approved the future program direction for the Teaming with Wildlife program; and 8) re-chartered the task force reviewing the scheduling and length of the Association's Annual Meeting. In addition, the Executive Committee met with Mark Rey, Undersecretary of Agriculture to discuss the status of the Farm Bill and received briefings on the closeout of the Association's 2007 budget, recent industry summit meeting in Alabama, State Wildlife Grants competitive funding program, 2011 National Survey on Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, the White House Conference on hunting and wildlife conservation, the strategic plan for the Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration programs, the Association's Conservation Education Initiative, reauthorization of Wallop-Breaux program, and the status of climate change legislation pending before the Congress.

The Executive Committee met by conference call on June 19 and took the following actions: 1) approved continued discussions between AFWA and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in an effort to reach a consensus position on reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund; 2) approved AFWA becoming an interim founding member of the American Wind and Wildlife Institute (AWWI) contingent on approval of the full AFWA membership in September so that AFWA can participate in the initial meeting of AWWI in July; and 3) approved sending revisions to the AFWA by-laws to all AFWA members in anticipation of consideration of these changes at the AFWA Business Committee meeting in September.

Business Meeting at North American Conference

The Business Committee for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies met on Friday, March 28 at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Phoenix, Arizona to receive reports from the committees of the Association and approve action items from those committees. A summary of all the action items and their status was sent to all agency members following the meeting. If you did not see this summary and would like another copy, please contact me or Angela Nelson.

Industry-Agency Summit

The initial meeting of the Industry-Agency Steering Committee took place on May 29 at the AFWA offices in Washington, DC. At that meeting, Doug Painter of the National Shooting Sports Foundation and **Glen Salmon**, Director of the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife, were elected co-chairs of the group. The Steering Committee is made up of two representatives from each of the four major industry groups (fishing, shooting, archery, and boating), four representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies (**John Frampton** (SC), **Jeff Vonk** (SD), **Glen Salmon** (IN) and **Carol Bamberg** (AFWA) as well as Dale Hall (USFWS). The committee discussed and set goals in the areas of outreach, partner communications, state agency funding, and recruitment and retention. In addition, the committee scheduled the next full Industry-Agency Summit meeting for the week of December 15, 2008 in Washington, DC.

National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board

The Board of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan met in Arlington, VA on May 13-14, 2008. At that meeting, the board elected **Kelly Hepler** from Alaska as the new Chairman. Kelly replaced **John Cooper** (SD) who stepped down following the board meeting. In addition, the board approved the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership as a Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) and had considerable discussions on the guidance on the structure and function of FHPs. For more information about the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, please see that section in this report.

North American Wildlife Conservation Policy Workshop

On June 16-17, 2008, the Council on Environmental Quality convened a Conservation Policy Workshop to discuss implementation of the Presidential Executive Order on Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation. Discussions at the Policy Workshop centered on policy options developed at the April Technical Workshop on the following topics: North American Conservation Model, State/Federal/Tribal Wildlife Management, Habitat Conservation and Management, Climate Change, Energy, Funding for Wildlife Conservation, and Perpetuating Hunter Traditions. The policy options discussed at this workshop will help lay the groundwork for a Fall Conference on North American Wildlife Policy in Washington, DC. Eight state directors (**Corky Pugh, John Frampton, Curtis Taylor, Ed Parker, Jon Gassett, Dan Forster, Jeff Koenings, and Ken Haddad**) as well as **Matt Hogan** and **Gary Taylor** from the AFWA staff attended the workshop.

National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI)

The 2nd cohort for the National Conservation Leadership Institute graduated in April. The cohort included a total of 36 fellows, including 21 from state agencies, 2 from the FWS, 5 from other federal agencies and 8 from NGOs and Industry. **Jen Mock Schaeffer**, the Association's Agriculture Conservation Policy Analyst, was one of the fellows.

The nomination period for Cohort 3 of the NCLI closed on May 31, 2008. The applications for potential fellows are currently being reviewed and recommendations for Cohort 3 will be presented to the NCLI Board for final approval in July. The NCLI is an outstanding opportunity for a select group of conservation professionals – including someone from your organization. Fellows must be nominated by their agency director. Please visit www.conservationleadership.org for further information.

AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

The Amphibian and Reptile Coordinator, a staff position created in January 2008, represents state interests on a variety of amphibian and reptile issues, advocates for state interests to federal agencies and NGOs, and coordinates capacity building workshops, trainings, and tools for state agencies through the Association and in collaboration with the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) network. The Coordinator serves as the primary point of contact for the Association with respect to amphibian and reptile issues, and encourages and facilitates interstate, regional, and national collaboration. The Coordinator reports directly to the Resource Director, and provides supplemental expertise to Association staff and committees for amphibian, reptile, and related habitat issues of importance to the state fish and wildlife agencies. The current Coordinator, Ms. Priya Nanjappa Mitchell (pnanjappa@fishwildlife.org, 847.672.9275), works remotely from her home office in Illinois. If long-term funding is secured, she will relocate to the Association's DC offices in 2009.

Current Projects:

Amphibian and Reptile Subcommittee – A new Amphibian and Reptile subcommittee has been created under the Wildlife Resource Policy Committee. Dave Erickson of the Missouri Department of Conservation and Eric Gardner of the Arizona Game and Fish Department will serve as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the subcommittee, respectively, with the Coordinator providing executive staff support. The subcommittee charge was approved during the Wildlife Resource Policy Committee meeting at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources (NA) conference in March 2008 in Phoenix, AZ. The first meeting of the subcommittee will occur during the Association's Annual meeting in September 2008 in Saratoga Springs, NY.

- The Coordinator worked with the Subcommittee to formulate a response to the recent Federal Register information request with respect to adding certain constrictor snake species to the Lacey Act list of "injurious wildlife." This letter is available on via the Wildlife Resource Policy Committee description page at http://www.fishwildlife.org/about_comm_wildlife.html.
- **The Subcommittee met via an introductory conference call on May 23, 2008. At least one more conference call will be held before the Association's Annual meeting. State Wildlife Action Plan Implementation, regulatory issues and capacity-building for State Wildlife Agencies in the area of amphibian & reptile conservation will be key themes within this Subcommittee.**

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) – The Association's Amphibian and Reptile Subcommittee will serve as the State advisory board to PARC, represented by the subcommittee chair as a member of the PARC Joint National Steering Committee. The Coordinator ensures that State interests in all

issues relevant to amphibian and reptile species and habitats are represented in, and/or accomplished through, the PARC network. In addition, the Coordinator provides assistance/auxiliary support as needed in state fish and wildlife agency related topics and projects brought to the Association's committees or the PARC Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC). The PARC JNSC will meet during the North American conference in March 2008.

- Habitat Management Guidelines – The Coordinator assisted the editors in facilitating the peer-review by State Wildlife Agencies and other NGO partners for the fourth regionally-based publication in the PARC Technical Publication Series, *Habitat Management Guidelines for Amphibian and Reptiles of the Northwestern United States and Western Canada*. The book will be in print by Fall 2008. For more information, please contact the Coordinator, Priya Nanjappa Mitchell at pnanjappa@fishwildlife.org, 847.672.9275.

Amphibian Declines & Chytridiomycosis: Translating Science into Urgent Action – In November 2007 over 200 people, representing eight (8) countries across four (4) continents met to discuss the science and management needs related to the amphibian chytrid fungus implicated in declining amphibian populations worldwide. The conference was sponsored primarily by PARC and the USFWS Division of the National Fish Hatchery System as well as 19 other sponsors, including the Association. Representatives from nine (9) U.S. states and one Canadian province participated; four (4) of them delivered presentations on their own research and management experiences related to this deadly fungus. See http://www.parcplace.org/Bd_conference.html for additional information.

- The Coordinator was a key member of the conference planning committee, and continues to provide assistance in making the follow-up materials available to the States.
- With assistance from the Science & Research Liaison, the Association was able to partially sponsor the participation of three state representatives at the symposium.

AUTOMATED WILDLIFE DATA SYSTEMS (AWDS)

The Executive Committee voted, at its December meeting, to formally end the AWDS initiative – it was concluded that the original purpose of AWDS had been successfully achieved. The AWDS website has been “taken offline,” after first archiving data sets with some continuing value. In the near future, the Association will provide some reimbursement dollars to states that made a contribution in support of AWDS in 2007. It is anticipated that the Association will continue to engage on data management issues through its partnership efforts with industry regarding angler and hunter recruitment/retention.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Strategic Communications—Laura MacLean, the new Director of Communications and Marketing for the Association, is settling in to the position. She has been working with Senior Staff to produce a one-page Association Strategic Plan document. The document will be presented for approval at the upcoming Annual Meeting. MacLean is also in the process of updating the Association's “About Us” PowerPoint presentation. She recently established a bi-weekly email for directors highlighting current hot topics and Association progress.

Working on Behalf of the State Agencies—MacLean has assumed the role of overseeing AFWA materials and messaging to ensure consistent branding, fielding media calls and coordinating fish and wildlife community outreach as needed. She continues to work with agency leaders and information and education contacts to respond effectively and rapidly to national conservation issues including the recent reauthorization of the Farm Bill, the ESA listing of the polar bear, fair chase and the study release on threat of climate change to U.S. fish and wildlife.

In addition, she serves as the communications liaison on a number of special projects between federal agencies and Association members. Currently, she is helping to develop a video spotlighting on-the-ground success stories resulting from state-use of Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Funds. She also contributes to communications and marketing-focused working groups for the Association's new Industry/Agency Steering committee, Conservation Education committee and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan as well as on the White House Conference on North American Wildlife Conservation Policy media team and U.S. EPA's climate change educational toolkit development group.

Annual Meeting—Preparations for the 2008 Annual Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY are in full swing. Registration is now open and a promotional mailer will be sent to potential attendees shortly. This year, the plenary session *“Beyond The Boundaries: Meeting the Challenge of Landscape Conservation”* will address best practices, barriers and opportunities for collaboration in landscape-level conservation. Also, the Association will pay tribute to those wildlife professionals, Fallen Heroes, who have lost their lives while carrying out their duties to enforce conservation laws and regulations and manage fish and wildlife resources within the past year. Fallen Heroes will be honored during a moment of reflection at the Annual Awards banquet. Following the ceremony, the heroes’ names will be listed on the Association’s website and on a plaque in the Association’s Washington, DC office.

Website Changes—the Association will be updating its web site in two major areas. First, the “public” site will be updated with streamlined navigation, new graphics and enhanced functionality. To facilitate communication between committees and among committee members, the Association plans to add collaborative online workspaces. The Association will be issuing a short survey to member agencies and committee chairs and vice-chairs to identify needs. Following, the Association will issue an RFP to secure the services of a contractor.

In the meantime, MacLean has been bringing the existing site up to date and adding new sub-sections including Multi-state Conservation Grant previous projects, All Bird Workshops’ reports and more. She also posts new items on the Conservation News site 2-3 times per week. These items feature state news, Association news and information from partner fish and wildlife organizations. Members are welcome to submit announcements by emailing her at lmaclean@fishwildlife.org.

FARM BILL

The 2002 Farm Bill was reauthorized in May and June 2008 by both Congressional chambers overriding two presidential vetoes to enact the new Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (originally HR 2419, now HR 6124, P.L. 110-246) which increases total spending on conservation programs by approximately \$4 billion to about \$7.9 billion through 2012. The Association, its State fish and wildlife agency members and partner conservation organizations worked together to improve the conservation programs’ benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats. A special thanks to all of you who spent time, energy, and political capital to assist. Your time and dedication is deeply appreciated.

2008 Farm Bill

How did fish and wildlife fair in the 2008 Farm Bill? It’s all politics. The fish and wildlife conservation community was in a difficult position going into reauthorization of the farm bill. The Wetland Reserve Program and Grassland Reserve Program had zero funding in their budget baselines, and the budget baseline for the conservation title was about \$500 million less than the 2002 Farm Bill. Consequently, new money was needed to continue these programs and grow other programs above and beyond the funds currently expended. Furthermore, current PAYGO rules require any increase in spending to be offset by program reductions or tax increases elsewhere. In addition to difficult budget conditions, membership of the Agriculture Committees was not weighted toward conservation interests (even though both Chairman strongly support conservation) which made interesting political considerations and negotiations.

The 2008 Farm Bill Conference Report passed the House of Representatives and the Senate by veto-proof margins. Both House and Senate individually passed bills contained language that would advance and improve fish and wildlife conservation in USDA conservation programs, and our community may have seemed to be in a good position going into the conference committee to move forward on many fish and wildlife initiatives and priorities. Unfortunately, the conference report reflects the power of the conference committee, particular interests of its membership and the complications that can arise from jurisdictional conflicts between committees (i.e., Senate Agriculture and Finance) not to mention the interesting negotiations among members that occurred behind closed doors.

Politically, the deck was not stacked in favor of conservation in the conference committee with many House and Senate members advancing the interests of production agriculture and pushing back on Chairman Harkin and Chairman Peterson on conservation in general, including fish and wildlife conservation benefits. For example, many members of the conference committee were opposed to

Sodsaver. Beneficial Sodsaver language to reduce prairie conversion was included in both House and Senate bills, but opposition from conferees relegated Sodsaver in the final conference report to a provision that may not work and affects only a handful of states. Witness the power of the conference committee membership that over-ruled both Ag Committee Chairmen and their desire to conserve native prairie and reduce conversion rates.

Additionally, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was reduced from 39.2 million acres to 32 million acres at a time when millions of acres are leaving the program through the re-enrollment and extension process and others are petitioning USDA for early release from CRP contract obligations in order to bring those acres back into production to take advantage of high commodity prices. Furthermore, there is a growing interest across Capitol Hill and seemingly the nation to shift the focus of conservation programs to working lands and ranches through programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program (formerly the Conservation Security Program), both of which received increases in funding authorization in the 2008 Farm Bill. Unfortunately for years, CRP county rental rates have not kept step with current cash rates making the program less financially competitive under current market conditions. This is significantly to blame for the lost enrollments, but the new farm bill strives to correct this problem requiring annual rate adjustments. Fortunately, the Manager's Report is very clear that conferees fully support the CRP, and the program will continue as one of USDA's key conservation programs. It also directs USDA to work with state wildlife agencies and NGOs on CRP implementation and promotion as well as priority and opportunity to roll expiring/leaving CRP acres into other conservation programs to facilitate continued conservation benefits.

While our community did not accomplish everything we set out to do, we did make some progress with provisions such as Open Fields, new funding for GRP and WRP as well as fixing the WRP appraisal problem, and luckily, we were able to keep all conservation funding within the conservation title of the bill. Furthermore, several conservation programs are to address issues raised by state, regional, and national conservation initiatives such as the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy, and State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies. Now that the bill is enacted, we have much work to do with the Administration to improve fish and wildlife benefits through the new farm bill conservation provisions, and the last provision of the conservation title instructs USDA to issue interim rules within 90 days of enactment. Fortunately, the Manager's Report provides direction to USDA to work with state wildlife agencies to improve fish and wildlife benefits from various conservation provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill, but we will have to continue our quest and diligently fight for progress and program benefits for fish and wildlife as the rules and regulation processes proceed. Our challenge still remains: to work with USDA and the agriculture industries to implement wildlife friendly and beneficial practices across the country through the conservation provisions in the farm bill.

Major Changes to Conservation Programs in the 2008 Farm Bill

Here is a condensed summary of the major changes to conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill that you may find interesting. For additional information please contact Jen Mock Schaeffer, the Association's Farm Bill Coordinator, at 202-624-3688 or at jenmock@fishwildlife.org.

Conservation Reserve Program

- Reauthorizes CRP through 2012. Enrollment is maintained at an overall acreage cap of 39.2 million acres for 2008 and 2009; however, for 2010, 2011, and 2012, the overall enrollment cap is lowered to 32.0 million acres (with additional acres expiring, CCRP and CREP will continue).
- Adds as an additional program purpose the issues raised by State, regional, and national conservation initiatives (see Manager's Report language below for intent of this provision).
- Eligibility for the Farmable Wetland Program is expanded to include, with appropriate buffers, constructed wetlands designed to provide nitrogen removal, land devoted to commercial pond-raised aquaculture, and intermittently flooded prairie land.
- Participant required to undertake management as needed throughout the term of the contract to implement the conservation plan. Additional cost-share assistance is authorized, up to \$100 million, for thinning of trees necessary to improve the condition of resources on the land.

- Routine grazing of eligible land replaces managed grazing and includes prescribed grazing for the control of invasive species under appropriate vegetation management requirements, stocking rates and frequencies.
- Requires annual surveys of per-acre estimates of county average market dryland and irrigated cash rental rates for cropland and pastureland.
- Includes a provision giving the Secretary authority to exceed the 25% CRP county cap with county government's concurrence.

Wetland Reserve Program

- Increases acreage cap to 3,041,200. No annual enrollment goal. Includes Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP), but removes payment limitation exception for state WREP agreements. Limits payments under restoration cost-share agreements to \$50,000 annually.
- Eligibility restricted to private and tribal lands, eliminating state and local government participation. Land ineligible because of an ownership change is increased from 12 months to 7 years.
- Grassland and cropland flooded due to natural overflow of a closed basin lake or pothole along with functionally dependent adjacent land is eligible.
- Fair market value determined by USDA using one of 3 options that results in lowest amount of compensation paid by Secretary (Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices or area-wide market analysis; geographical cap; landowner offer).
- Method of compensation based on value of easement. Below \$500,000, payments may be in a lump sum or in equal amounts not to exceed 30 annual payments. Above \$500,000, payments in at least 5, but not more than 30 annual payments, but allows lump sum if Secretary determines it is in the public interest.
- Retains requirement for consultation with Secretary of Interior at the local level to determine WRP land eligibility.

Grassland Reserve Program

- Reauthorizes GRP to enroll an additional 1.22 million acres during FY 2009 through 2012 through 10-, 15- or 20-year rental contracts or permanent easements (or an easement for maximum duration allowed by State law). 40 acre minimum contract size removed.
- Forty percent of the funding is allotted for rental contracts and sixty percent for easements. Fair market value determined same as WRP. Rental payments limited to \$50,000/year.
- Haying and seed harvest are permissible uses.
- Otherwise eligible land that is enrolled in CRP may be enrolled in GRP, up to 10 percent of acres enrolled in a calendar year, if the land is of high ecological value and under significant threat of conversion to uses other than grazing.
- Additional eligible land includes land that would address issues raised by State, regional and national conservation priorities (see Manager's Report language below for intent of this provision).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Adds forest management, organic transition and energy conservation to program purposes.
- Reauthorized through 2012 at the following levels:
 - \$1.2 billion – FY 08
 - \$1.337 billion – FY 09
 - \$1.450 billion – FY 2010
 - \$1.588 billion – FY 2011
 - \$1.750 billion – FY 2012

- 60% of funds allocated for livestock practices.
- Application evaluation criteria will ensure that national, State and local conservation priorities are effectively addressed.
- Authorizes \$37.5 million annually for air quality improvements through Conservation Innovation Grants Program.
- Payments can include 75% cost-share for practice implementation and 100% for income forgone with great significance accorded to practices that promote pollinator habitat and invasive species management.
- Includes Agricultural Water Enhancement Program authorized between \$60 and \$74 million annually through grants based on partnership proposals.
- Program payment limit dropped from \$450,000 over 6 years to \$300,000 over 6 years.

Conservation Security Program

- Renamed the Conservation Stewardship Program to be implemented nationwide with a goal of enrolling 12.7 million acres/year at a national average rate of \$18/acre.
- Five-year contracts available to eligible producers that meet the stewardship threshold for at least one resource concern and will meet or exceed stewardship threshold for at least one priority resource concern by the end of the contract.
- Additional criteria for evaluating applications can include criteria necessary to ensure national, State, and local conservation priorities are effectively addressed. Local conservation priority could be fish and wildlife.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

- Reauthorized through 2012 at the following levels:
 - \$97 million – FY 2008
 - \$121 million – FY 2009
 - \$150 million – FY 2010
 - \$175 million – FY 2011
 - \$200 million – FY 2012
- For land eligibility includes a provision for “the protection of which will further a State or local policy consistent with the purposes of the program.”

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

- Reauthorized through 2012 at \$85 million annually.
- Restricts eligibility to private agricultural and non-industrial forest lands. Previous eligibility was all landowners.
- Allows habitat development on pivot corners and irregular areas.
- 25% of total funding reserved for long-term contracts. Creates an annual payment limit for the program of \$50,000.
- Adds priority for projects that address issues raised by State, regional and national conservation initiatives

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program

- A new program to assist producers in implementing conservation activities on agricultural lands in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. New budget authority is authorized as follows:
 - \$23 million – FY 09
 - \$43 million – FY 10
 - \$72 million – FY 11
 - \$50 million – FY 12
- Conservation activities include improving water quality and quantity and restoring, enhancing, and preserving soil, air, and related resources. The program is implemented through existing conservation programs.
- Special consideration is afforded to the Susquehanna, Shenandoah, Potomac, and Patuxent Rivers.

Forestry Title—Healthy Forest Reserve Program

- HFRP authorized through 2012 at 9.75 million/year. Uses 10-year cost-share agreements or 30-year and permanent easements (or easement for maximum duration allowed by State law).
- No more that 40% for cost-share and 60% for easements. Repooling of funds by April 1.
- Within 2 years each state will develop a Statewide Assessment and Strategies for Forest Resources....a similar process to the State Comprehensive Wildlife Strategies. \$10 million/year funding.
- Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program - allows grants to local entities to acquire and preserve private forest land that are threatened by conversion or provide public benefits to communities
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program - provides for restoration of private forests damaged by natural disasters.
- Illegal Logging Practices -- Implements program to prevent illegal logging overseas.
- Secretary shall establish a national Forest Resource Coordinating Committee which includes a representative of a State fish and wildlife agency.

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

- Adds new authority for States and Tribal governments to apply for grants to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreating including hunting or fishing under a program implemented by State or Tribal governments. \$50 million is authorized for the period 2009 through 2012.
- Priority for awarding grants includes those grant applications that propose to maximize participation which would meet with widespread acceptance by landowners, land with appropriate wildlife habitat, strengthens wildlife habitat improvement efforts on land enrolled under the CRP's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, uses additional Federal, State, Tribal, or private resources, and makes locations of land enrolled public.
- State or tribal Government law regarding liability is not pre-empted.
- Amount of grant for a state is reduced 25% if opening dates for migratory bird hunting for residents and non-residents are not consistent.

State Technical Committees

- Adds State wildlife agencies to the list of statutory representatives on State Technical Committees.

- FWS removed from list of statutory representatives on State technical Committees. However the Managers report includes the statement that “The Managers expect that other relevant Federal Agencies will also be invited to participate as needed.”

Conservation Compliance

- HEL and Swampbuster violations require second level of review by FSA with concurrence by NRCS. Creates a system of graduated penalties based on severity of the violation.
- Sodsaver provision limited to Prairie Pothole National Priority Area and requires affected State Governors to opt-in to the provision. Loss of benefits applies only to crop insurance for first 5 years. Covers conversion of native sod not planted prior to enactment of the Farm Bill and includes a 5 acre exemption.

Energy Title

- Biomass Crop Assistance Program provides assistance to producers in designated project areas to grow renewable biomass feedstocks. Includes assistance in storage, harvest and transportation. All references in previous versions regarding wildlife conservation were removed. Funding amount not specified.
- Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels -- allows contracts with producers to grow advanced biofuels feedstocks. Authorizes \$55 m in 2009 and \$105 m in 2012.
- Biorefinery Assistance assists in the development of advanced biofuels from agricultural forestry and agriculture waste.
- Repowering Assistance assists existing refineries to replace fossil fuels used for heat or power.
- Forest Biomass for Energy provides research and development to encourage use of forest biomass for energy.
- Community Wood Energy Program provides grants up to \$50,000 to develop community wood energy plans and competitive grants to acquire or upgrade community wood energy systems.

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

- Allows for cooperative agreements for up to 5 years to enhance conservation on nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land through WHIP, EQIP or CSP where 6% of funds and acres will be set aside annually for initiative. 90% of funds and acres will be expended on projects in states and 10% will be available for national projects. Overhead by partners are not covered by funds.

Additional Provisions in Conference Report

- State, Regional and National Conservation Initiatives -- This terminology is used in CRP (new program purpose), GRP, WHIP, and CSP. The intent of the provision as described in the Managers Report is to consider the goals and objectives identified in relevant fish and wildlife conservation initiatives, such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, the Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy, the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, and State forest resource strategies.
- Tax Provisions
 - Tax Credit for Endangered Species Recovery Expenditures - Allows a tax credit for expenditure paid or incurred for the purpose of achieving site-specific management actions recommended in recovery plans under the ESA.
 - Increased and enhanced tax deductions for donations of conservation easements by private landowners is extended for two years.
 - Tax exclusion for CRP payments from self-employment tax for some individuals.

- **County Acreage Cap --** Acreage devoted to continuous CRP and CREP would be excluded from 25% county cap provided the county government concurs.
- **Technical Assistance --** Definition of technical assistance includes monitoring and effects analysis. Nonprofit entities, State or local governments or agencies and other Federal agencies with technical expertise can be approved third party providers of technical assistance.
- **Environmental Service Markets --** To facilitate development of markets for environmental services provided by agricultural producers, the bill requires development of technical guidelines that outline science-based methods to measure environmental services benefits from conservation and land-management activities. Guidelines will be developed for a procedure to measure environmental services benefits, a protocol to report environmental services benefits, and a registry to collect, record, and maintain the benefits measured. It also requires development of guidelines for a process to verify environmental services benefits. No funding identified.
- **Conservation of Pollinator Habitat --** The Conference Report encourages the development of habitat for native and managed pollinators and use of conservation practices that benefit pollinators in all conservation programs.

FY2009 Agriculture Appropriations Proceed in the House

The House Committee on Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee met Thursday, June 19, 2008 to mark-up the agriculture appropriations bill. Full committee consideration of the bill is currently scheduled for June 25, 2008. Details of the funding proposal will be distributed as soon as possible after analysis.

FEDERAL-STATE AQUACULTURE DRUG APPROVAL PROJECT

After more than 12 years of work, this project is moving toward conclusion. The Federal-State Aquaculture Drug Approval Partnership Project (known as the Association Project) and the continuing efforts on the part of its participants have made great progress and are close to having limited approvals from the Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) for seven of the nine Association Project drugs. With the extensive base of existing data, it is anticipated that some additional effectiveness data will be required to develop the broad "all freshwater-reared fish" approvals envisioned in the original Association Project proposal. These broad approvals will allow the widespread, legal use of these drugs for fish management and aquaculture.

To date the project has helped gain expansions and extensions of the New Animal Drug Applications (NADAs) for two label claims for formalin and one supplemental label claim for immersion marking with oxytetracycline. Two pharmaceutical sponsors for formalin and three for oxytetracycline have stepped forward to add the new label claims to the labeling of their products.

It is anticipated that NADAs will be submitted in 2006 for three broad label claims for hydrogen peroxide. In addition, final data packages are projected to be submitted in late 2006 or 2007 to CVM for the following drugs with the number of label claims in parenthesis: chloramine-T (2), copper sulfate (1), florfenicol (4), formalin (1), hydrogen peroxide (1), oral oxytetracycline (2), and immersion oxytetracycline (1). From 2008 to 2009, copper sulfate (1) and potassium permanganate (1).

The submission of these NADAs should lead to approvals for nine drugs and 20 label claims. All of this progress will have been made as a result of the efforts that were funded in large part by 38 state natural resources agencies, three federal agencies, and 10 company sponsors over a 15-year period. The total public sector contribution as of 2005 is more than \$25 million; drug sponsors have also contributed a significant, but for confidentiality reasons, unknown amount. To put this effort in perspective, pharmaceutical companies usually expect to spend \$12 million over a ten-year period on one drug, one label claim and one species.

To help realize these potential outcomes and to finish the Association's commitment to this project a new National Conservation Need was selected for the 2006 MSCG cycle to solicit proposals specific to approval requirement for AQUI-S, a zero withdrawal anesthetic drug. In cooperation with the national coordinator and other project partners, the Association's Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee submitted a successful proposal under that NCN to conduct critical studies and related activities necessary to complete national coordination of

this project and obtain approval for AQUI-S use. All studies, however, related to AQUI-S target animal safety were temporarily suspended in 2007 until the National Toxicology Program completed its review of the active ingredient (Isoeugenol) in AQUI-S. **That review was completed earlier this year, and it was concluded there is clear evidence of carcinogenicity. Therefore, AQUI-S in its present formulation is no longer a candidate as an anesthetic for fisheries field use. The Drug Approval Working Group is now evaluating other candidate drugs for testing using remaining MSCG dollars. The DAWG will meet in Bozeman, MT during the week of July 28th.**

FURBEARER RESOURCES AND BMP OUTREACH PROJECTS

Furbearer Research Program – While all 50 states support the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Trapping in the United States, to date, 38 states have participated in and assisted with trap testing projects to evaluate traps and trapping methods. All regions of the US have directly participated including states in the Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, West, and Alaska. More than 80 different restraining and body-gripping trap types have been evaluated. Data have been collected on 16 of the 23 species of furbearers prioritized for testing.

As wildlife management agencies across the nation continue to face impediments to managing furbearer species through trapping, it is critical that agencies have the type of science based information on trapping, provided by BMPs, to allow them to maintain regulated trapping as a viable wildlife management tool. Likewise, the BMP project work is an important component of the U.S. understanding with the European Union (USA/EU Agreed Minute and Annex) for improving the welfare of trapped animals, and continues to effectively sustain the USA/EU trade in wild fur.

The purpose of the Best Management Practices process is to scientifically evaluate the traps and trapping systems used for capturing furbearers in the United States. Trapping BMPs are based on scientific research and professional experience regarding currently available traps and trapping technology. Trapping BMPs identify both techniques and traps that address the welfare of trapped animals and allow for the efficient, selective, safe, and practical capture of furbearers. These guides are intended to be a practical tool for trappers, wildlife biologists, wildlife agencies, and anyone interested in improved traps and trapping systems. BMPs include technical recommendations from expert trappers and biologists, and a list of specifications of traps that meet or exceed BMP criteria. The results of this research serve as a reference guide to wildlife management agencies, conservation organizations, tribal nations, researchers, trapper organizations, individual trappers, and others interested in the continued improvement of traps and trapping systems. Trapping is an element of many wildlife management programs. State fish and wildlife agencies must continue to take a lead role by establishing a practical and effective plan for the improvement of trapping systems in order to maintain trapping as a valuable wildlife management practice.

BMP Development – Best Management Practices for Trapping documents for mink, marten, weasel, and skunk will be produced during 2008. To date, thirteen trapping BMPs have been produced including BMPs for beaver, muskrat, fisher, river otter, nutria, eastern coyote, western coyote, red fox, gray fox, bobcat, raccoon and opossum, along with a general Introduction. These are now available on the website at www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html. CDs containing these BMPs have been distributed to state agency directors, I&E chiefs, state furbearer biologists, federal fish and wildlife agencies, and trapper associations.

National Furbearer Harvest Database -- This new database will be administered by the U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group and supported by Association staff. It will provide an outlet for all states to collect furbearer harvest information in one concise location. Information such as the number of licenses sold, amount of revenue collected from license sales, average pelt value, harvest estimates, and harvest status of species will be collected. This database is expected to be on-line for state use this summer.

Ownership and Use of Traps by Trappers in the United States Survey -- A survey of trappers in the United States was conducted to provide a better understanding of trappers, their equipment and techniques used for capturing furbearers, and to provide information to those in furbearer management which will allow them to make informed decisions on trapping matters. More than 4000 trappers from 46 states were surveyed. Results of the survey have recently been provided to all state fish and wildlife agencies via CD. The report is also available at www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html. The survey was conducted on behalf of the Association by Responsive Management.

Summary of Trapping Regulations for Fur Harvesting in the United States -- The U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group conducted a survey to summarize state furbearer trapping regulations in 1995. A similar survey was conducted in 2007 and is now available on the website at www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html. Results represent the current conditions and restrictions within existing laws for the harvest of 26 species of furbearers by regulated trapping throughout the United States. The body of regulations set forth by state and provincial wildlife agencies for the harvest of furbearers is among the most complex and comprehensive of all laws concerning wildlife today. The information within this report will be very useful to furbearer managers to help examine technologies and initiate and make furbearer management decisions. Results have been provided to state and federal fish and wildlife agencies via electronic format as well as being available on the Association website.

Technical papers on “Modern Snaring Technology” and “Ethical Use of Bodygrip Traps” on dry land – These papers are currently being written by members of the U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group for use by state agency wildlife managers and other user groups. These papers will provide wildlife managers and other user groups with information on the state-of-the-art in these trapping technologies as well as giving suggestions about their proper use. These documents will be provided to state and federal fish and wildlife agencies in electronic format. They will also be available via the Association website.

Train the Trainers Workshops

Based on requests by state agency personnel, the Association has received a grant to present “Train the Trainers” workshops to support state agency hunter/trapper education coordinators and instructors in the use of these newly developed trapper education materials. The workshop has three main components – use and customization of the student manual and workbook; presenting a skills/field program; and use of the authentic assessment method for student performance evaluation. Numerous workshops were held around the country but workshops are no longer available. A website is now being developed which will continue to provide states with the instructor training needed to administer the National Trapper Education Program.

National Trapper Education Curriculum -- In 1979, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed a resolution recommending and supporting the development of trapper education course materials. These materials were distributed to state agencies following an 18-month development period that included extensive evaluation. Designed for trappers of all experience levels, developed using trapping best management practices and using the standardized approach that has made hunter education so successful, the program is very flexible and can be adapted to the needs of each state. The curriculum provides content standards, learning objectives, student manuals, student workbooks, a student exam, and an instructors guide and evaluation forms. Educators, furbearer biologists, expert trappers, and representatives from the International Hunter Education Association were consulted in the development of this program. Because each state implements hunter/trapper education differently, we have sent this CD to the following state agency personnel: Director, Public Affairs/I&E chief, Hunter/trapper coordinator, Furbearer program contact, and Law enforcement chief. Additionally, the CD was shared with the Canadian provinces/territories and the state offices for USDA-Wildlife Services. The education curriculum is also available at www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html.

These materials are especially timely, as many state agencies have recently begun the process of revising trapper education materials. It is our hope that by adopting and customizing these materials, states will be able to save valuable time and expense. The curriculum will not only inform trappers about Best Management Practices, but it will also provide consistent information to trappers in every state. As a result, the program will provide for the potential for licensing reciprocity through content standards. *If states choose to customize the materials, please note that the content standards should be maintained to promote consistency among the states. At the March 2005 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies business meeting, a recommendation was passed by the agency Directors that state agencies voluntarily adopt the content standards developed for this program.*

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROJECT

International activities have been focused on CITES for this reporting period, while domestic activities have been focused on Trap Testing work where significant gains have been made (see Trap Testing report Page 11).

During the last few months, a sizeable percentage of project time (presently funded and staffed at the 50% level) was focused on CITES work – preparing for the then pending meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees in Geneva. It should be noted that state management of bears, bobcats and otters was raised as an issue in those meetings in Geneva. The regional representatives who were present were splendid in their defense of state management of these species; thankfully they were present!

At this time the project work is directed to preparations for the upcoming CITES Standing Committee meeting in Geneva which follows closely on the heels of the EU Fur Understanding meeting in Brussels. All items on the agenda for the CITES meeting have been reviewed, working with the Regional representatives, and positions or “watch” tags attached to each item.

When the Regional Association representatives met in Louisville, KY last Fall with the Federal CITES leaders, consensus was reached that our first priority would be working to make this CITES control system more efficient for our member agencies. CITES Team Leader Carolyn Caldwell, the MAFWA CITES coordinator, set a timetable for the group’s work to carry this agenda forward. This whole effort at de-coupling bobcat management from CITES is a good example of how our endeavors can free up state agency resources presently being wasted on unnecessary tracking, tagging and reporting on an abundant resource with robust populations. Buddy Baker (SC), the SEAFWA CITES coordinator, is one of the leaders who coordinated the National bobcat survey. Canada and Mexico participated as well. We are presently negotiating with one of the students at a State Cooperative Unit to assimilate our data into a comprehensive North American document. This is but one of the efforts underway to wrest control of bobcat management from the protectionists. This project continues and we have scheduled an October meeting in Brussels with EU Authorities to share our information and better understand trade flow.

Our CITES representatives and our Furbearer Technical Work Group have been assisting the EU as they pursue required research under our mutual understanding. Our contacts believe that the EU will honor the understanding with respect to maintaining trade as long as we maintain an active testing program and carry out our own commitments. The next meeting of the Joint Management committee (JMC) of the Parties and cooperators to the understanding will be held in Brussels in July 2008.

US/Canada/ Mexico Trilateral Conference -- The four US/Mexico Border States representatives were funded by an Association Grant to attend this year’s US/Canada/Mexico Trilateral Conference in Veracruz, Mexico. The Association annually provides funding to each US Mexican border state to send a representative. The Fish and Wildlife Health and Bird Conservation Committees, and the CITES Work Group of the International Relations Committee were represented.

JOINT TASK FORCE ON FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

The Joint Federal/State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF) was established in September 2002 to review issues identified by State and Service personnel in the administration and policies of the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. The Office of the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a state fish and wildlife agency director, as designated by the Association, serve as the co-chairs of the JTF. The Service names six additional federal employees as members and the Association names six additional state fish and wildlife agency employees as members.

Current members include:

State Representatives: Glen Salmon (IN), Co-Chair; Ed Parker (CT), Lisa Evans (AK); John Frampton (SC); Kelly Hepler (AK); Tom Niebauer (WI); Keith Sexson (KS)

FWS Representatives: Rowan Gould, Co-Chair; Tom Barnes; Joyce Johnson; Steve Barton, Robyn Thorson; Chris McKay; John Organ

JTF Staff: Carol Bambery (Association Counsel); Kim Galvin (FWS); Larry Mellinger (DOI Attorney); Christina Zarrella (Association)

If determined to be necessary, the JTF recommends policy clarifications to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Starting in late 2005, the USFWS began issuing policy clarifications as new Service Manual Chapters rather than issuing Director's Orders (DOs), which are only in effect for one year and must be renewed. To date, 16 clarifications have been issued, including five Manual Chapters, six DOs (which are being converted to Manual Chapters), three Director's memorandums, and two memorandums from the JTF Co-Chairs. These policy clarifications are used by USFWS's regional staff in administering grant programs.

The JTF is exploring the applicability of policy clarifications to not just the two Federal Aid programs, Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration, but also ten other programs whose funds come from the Wildlife Restoration Fund (WR) and/or Sport Fish Restoration Account (SFR). The 10 include (1) Clean Vessel Act Pumpout Grant Program; (2) Boating Infrastructure Grants; (3) Section 10 Firearm and Bow Hunter Education and Safety Grants; (4) Multistate Conservation Grant Program; (5) Landowner Incentive Program; (6) State Wildlife Grants; (7) National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants; (8) North American Wetlands Conservation Fund; (9) Boating Safety Financial Assistance (DHS and US Coast Guard), and (10) Priority Louisiana Coastal Wetland Restoration Projects.

The last JTF meeting was held February 11-12, 2008 in Arlington, VA. Items on the Agenda included: Cooperative Farming (policy language was finalized and approved), Climate Change Legislation Review (for potential impacts to the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration Programs), Status of SWG Program Review, White House Conference on North American Model, USFWS Staff and Budget Update, and Review of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Draft Strategic Plan and Draft Conservation Heritage Measures.

More information including Director's Orders, USFWS Manual Chapters, Policy Recommendations and Meeting Reports is available at: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/Policy/JPTF.htm>.

LEGAL REPORT

Constitutional Right to Hunt in Virginia

James Lewis et al v Reston Association, Circuit Court, Fairfax County, Virginia, case no. CL 2007-550

The Plaintiffs in this case are property owners that want to bow hunt on their property. Reston Homeowners Association changed the homeowner restrictions to include a provision against discharge of bow and arrow on property within the homeowners association. Virginia has a constitutional provision guaranteeing the right of its citizens to hunt. The trial court found against the Association which sought to prohibit them from deer hunting on their own land under this restrictive covenant. An order entered Dec. 15, 2007, found that no claim existed under Virginia's Right to Hunt provision because no state action was involved, but that enforcement by the court of the restrictive covenant would be state action, and unreasonable restrictions are not enforceable. Further, the court held that the restrictive covenant against deer hunting did not apply to plaintiffs because they are grandfathered. Any use of the property which is being carried out on the effective date of the deed shall be permitted if by the same person on the same lot.

The court rejected plaintiffs' alternate ground for relief alleging that denial of their application to hunt was arbitrary and capricious. The evidence showed a need to cull the deer population for reasons of health and safety and that no safety concern existed from bow hunting from tree stand. However, there was evidence that a wounded deer may go onto another's property and may present health and safety problems. Also there was evidence that this limited hunting would not appreciably affect the deer population. The court could not say that the board had no rational basis for its decision, so it was not arbitrary and capricious.

However, as noted previously, plaintiffs' hunting activity predated the restrictive covenant and they have been engaged in the activity continuously. They were thus grandfathered, and are entitled to judgment. The case is now on appeal. The Archery Trade Association has been very helpful in advancing this case.

Exclusive Jurisdiction of State Agency to Manage Bobcat Population Upheld

Michigan Bear Hunters Ass'n v. Michigan Natural Resources Com'n, 2007 WL 4124266 (November 2007)

Plaintiff Michigan Bear Hunters Association (MBHA) and intervening plaintiffs Michigan State United Coon Hunters Association, Michigan Hunting Dog Federation, and Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association filed a cause of action to enjoin a bobcat trapping season in the Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP) implemented by defendants Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC). After a bench trial, Ingham Circuit Judge Beverley Nettles-Nickerson reversed defendants' decision implementing a bobcat trapping season in the NLP and permanently enjoined the bobcat trapping season. Defendants appealed and the Michigan Court of Appeals reversed the trial court.

Plaintiffs argue that defendants violated Michigan law by failing to use principles of sound scientific management when issuing an order permitting bobcat trapping in the NLP. The court concluded that the circuit court did not have jurisdiction to hear this cause of action. Michigan law (MCL 324.40113a(2)) states:

"The commission of natural resources shall have the exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game as defined in section 40103 in this state. The commission of natural resources shall, to the greatest extent practicable, utilize principles of sound scientific management in making decisions regarding the taking of game. Issuance of orders by the commission of natural resources regarding the taking of game shall be made following a public meeting and an opportunity for public input...."

This case is important because it recognized the Michigan Natural Resources Commission's exclusive jurisdiction to regulate taking of game in Michigan and did not permit plaintiffs to challenge that authority.

Western Great Lakes gray wolves

Humane Society of the United States, et al, v Dirk Kempthorne, DOI, case no. 07-CV-00677.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies thanks the Michigan DNR for an important amicus curie brief written by Michigan Attorney General's office in the lawsuit filed in the district court for the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. against the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the Humane Society of the United States. The lawsuit challenged the Service's decision to remove the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes states from the endangered species list under Endangered Species Act. Based upon the documented recovery of the wolf population in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, the Service determined that the gray wolf no longer met the definitions of threatened or endangered under the ESA. Michigan's brief supported the Service's decision to delist.

Through the leadership of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the States of Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, Iowa, Nebraska, Wisconsin, as well as both the Association and the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies signed onto Michigan's state brief. Michigan's brief argues that the Service's action is consistent with law, the protection of the gray wolf, and represents an appropriate allocation of wildlife management responsibility between the federal and State governments and should be upheld.

Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves

Defenders of Wildlife v Dale Hall, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director, CASE NO cv-08-14-m-dwm

FWS published a proposed revision of special regulation for the Central Idaho and Yellowstone area nonessential experimental populations of gray wolves in the Northern Rockies in order to protect big game from wolf predation. The Service completed a FONSI for the section 10(j) rule, stating the 10(j) rule revision was not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment with the meaning of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The new 10(j) rule permitted take of wolves having an unacceptable impact on wild ungulate populations.

Plaintiffs filed suit in the U. S. District Court for District of Montana, Missoula Division, claiming FWS had violated NEPA, asking the court to enjoin the Service from authorizing any take of gray wolves under the revised 10(j) rule.

Since filing of this lawsuit, the Service has delisted the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves from the Endangered Species Act which may serve to moot this lawsuit but trigger a subsequent suit on the delist decision.

LEGISLATION

The 110th Congress has fully experienced that a narrow majority makes legislating challenging. Bipartisan support is essential but elusive, and cloture has been and will be required for any significant vote in the Senate. The Farm Bill reauthorization was finally concluded and enacted after Congress overturned the President's veto. And while there has been much legislative attention devoted to and more progress than expected on climate change proposals, a significant and comprehensive bill that regulates greenhouse gas emissions will wait to be enacted until a future Congress.

Farm Bill: After 4 short-term extensions, and a Presidential veto, Congress enacted a Farm Bill with somewhat mixed outcomes for conservation. Funding for conservation programs was continued although not at levels advocated by the conservation community; an "Open Fields" program was authorized and funded; and increased deductions for donation of conservation easements by private landowners was continued for 2 years. However, the cap on CRP was reduced to 32 million acres, forecasting a shift from conservation focused on land retirement to conservation on working lands through EQIP, CSP, WRP, and GRP. See more details elsewhere in this report.

Assured Wildlife Funding: We continue to seek assured and dedicated (direct spending, not subject to annual discretionary appropriations) funds for state comprehensive wildlife programs (the WCRP account under the Pittman-Robertson fund). Many income sources remain potentially viable, from Outer Continental Shelf gas and oil lease receipts; onshore gas and oil lease receipts; cap and trade revenue from a potential regulatory emissions protocol for greenhouse gases; or others.

Climate Change Bills: Several bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate addressing climate change, and many have identified direct-spending funding (not subject to appropriations) to be made available to state and federal agencies to remediate impacts to fish, wildlife and their habitats. Amounts, delivery mechanisms, and other details differ widely. However, it is very favorable that many of the bills recognize the need for wildlife funding at the state and federal level. In general, we favor a design that would allocate funds to the state fish and wildlife programs using the existing Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux and/or Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (under PR) accounts as delivery mechanisms, with the appropriate sideboards on program expenditures to ensure that the funds are used to remediate impacts from climate change to fish, wildlife and their habitats. Our preference is a 90:10 federal:state match. The source of anticipated funds would most likely be revenues accruing to the federal government from the auction of carbon credits to industry that enable them to satisfy the carbon emission allowances imposed on them by legislation. Of course, some of that money will also go to research and development; remediation of impacts on infrastructure; assistance to under-privileged communities, etc.

A comprehensive regulatory based climate bill that could pass Congress and would be signed by the President will not occur until after the 2008 Presidential election. From a substance perspective, a comprehensive legislative approach that would address all energy sectors (electricity, transportation, manufacturing, etc.) in an equitable manner that is fair economy-wide is as daunting a task as Congress has recently faced. Thus, there will continue to be many hearings preceding the construction of a bill, and much deliberation in both chambers.

We will continue to work with key Committee leadership and House and Senate leaders on both sides of the aisle on proposals that best meet our objectives.

In December 2007 the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, by a vote of 11-8, reported S2191 (from Senator Lieberman and Senator Warner) to the floor for consideration. This was the first significant legislative action taken by this Congress on a comprehensive Climate Change bill that would impose allowances economy-wide on GHG emissions and establish an auction of carbon credits, the revenues from which would be dedicated under direct spending (not subject to annual appropriations) for remediating the effects of Climate Change on natural resources; for public infrastructure; for research and development of new technologies; for assistance to underprivileged communities, etc. Most significantly, under S2191, 18% of those auction credit revenues would be dedicated to state and federal activities to remediate the effects of Climate Change on fish, wildlife, their habitats and other natural resources through state and national strategies and other existing

programs. By some estimates, that could mean ultimately up to several billion dollars each year for fish, wildlife and other natural resources programs. The bill would direct 35% of that revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies using the WCRP Account under Pittman-Robertson as the delivery mechanism, for activities to assist fish and wildlife adaptation and habitat resiliency in response to Climate Change. Any and all species of fish and wildlife affected by Climate Change are eligible and spending would be driven by a state developed strategy which would be approved by the Secretary of the Interior. In addition to the 35% going to the state fish and wildlife agencies, the Department of the Interior, U.S. Forest Service, EPA, Corps of Engineers, and NOAA would receive funds to be spent on Climate Change remediation according to a national strategy to be developed with input from a Science Advisory Board.

The Senate attempted to come to cloture in order to substantively debate S3036 (the revised S2191) in June, but failed on the cloture vote, thus effectively ending the consideration of a climate bill in the Senate in this Congress. While House Committees continue climate-related hearings, no comprehensive bill will be considered by the House this year.

We worked very closely with our colleagues in the hunting and fishing conservation community and at the National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy and Defenders of Wildlife in particular on the construction of the language that is represented in the natural resources adaptation title. We are very appreciative of their interest in and support for the role of the state fish and wildlife agencies in the Climate Change arena, and our mutual commitment to protecting both the funds and substance of this title will be imperative as climate bills advance in a future Congress.

Conservation Tax Incentives: We worked closely with Congressional champions in the leadership of the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee on a bill to make permanent the tax deduction to private landowners who donate conservation easements on their property to the government or a qualified conservation organization. This provision, passed last Congress after many years of work by the fish and wildlife, land and agriculture conservation community, is good only for tax year 2006 and 2007. **As part of its enactment of the Farm Bill, Congress extended this provision to tax years 2008 and 2009.**

Senator Crapo (ID) and Senator Lincoln (AR) reintroduced (from the last Congress) a bill with broad bipartisan support which would give landowners a tax credit for either entering into an easement or a habitat restoration agreement for conservation of threatened or endangered species and their habitat on their property. The bill amends the IRS code and not the ESA. **A bill of reduced scope was also included in the enacted Farm Bill.**

Endangered Species Act: ESA reauthorization is not a high priority for either Congressional Committee of jurisdiction. The House Natural Resources Committee leadership has held oversight hearings, and is seeking more robust funding for ESA implementation. However, no significant ESA reauthorization bill will move in this Congress.

Clean Water Act Jurisdiction: Congressman Oberstar (MN) and Congressman Dingell (MI) introduced a bill that seeks to clarify the jurisdictional reach of the CWA as it relates to isolated wetlands and intermittent streams, in the context of the post Rapanos-Carabell Supreme Court decision of last year. Senator Feingold (WI) has introduced the companion Senate bill. The bill would also seek to restore wetlands protection to the pre-SWANCC (2001 Supreme Court decision) jurisdictional status. While we are supportive of their effort, we are hesitant to support their explicit bill language. While we share their objective, we continue to look at alternative bill language which we (and others) believe is more explicit in grounding Congress' authority (to protect these waters) in the Constitution, and less subject to judicial interpretation. We will continue to work with Congressman Oberstar, Congressman Dingell, Senator Feingold and others as their bill legislatively progresses. It is still unclear though what scope of a legislative clarification (if any) could pass this Congress and be signed by this President.

FY2009 Appropriations: As always, there are winners and losers in the President's FY2009 budget request, but in this economy constrained by war-time and national security spending, maintaining level funding has to be considered a success. Budget recommendations have been provided in **the Association's FY2009 Budget Recommendations, supplied to each Director. FY2009 Appropriations bills will not pass before the Presidential election or perhaps even the Presidential Inauguration. However, Committees will construct the bills, so Directors need to get their priorities to their members of Congress as soon as possible.**

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM

The Management Assistance Team (MAT) provides expertise focused on leadership development in the form of consulting, employee training, and other related services in the area of organization and human resources development, management systems, change management and agency effectiveness. All MAT services are provided at no additional cost to state fish and wildlife agencies because MAT is funded by a Multi-state Conservation Grant. MAT's current funding runs from January 1, 2008 – December 31, 2010. MAT also receives funding from the National Conservation Leadership Institute, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service pays the salary for project leader, Dwight Guynn.

State Leadership Development Program

Per direction from the Association's Executive Committee and Leadership and Professional Development Committee, MAT is focused on implementing leadership development programs for state fish and wildlife agencies. Using input from a survey with participation from all state fish and wildlife agencies, MAT completed the *States' Toolbox for Leadership Development*. The *Toolbox* is a approach to integrating a leadership development program within any state fish and wildlife agency and includes strategies necessary for implementing the program as well as a comprehensive set of resources to develop leadership at all levels in an agency: online and face-to-face workshops, evaluation methods, and facilitator resources. MAT provides train-the-trainer workshops so that state agencies can have their own staff deliver the MAT workshops at will.

In September 2007, the directors voted to approve MAT's implementation of the Conservation Leadership Program of Study (CLPS). This program would permit states without the resources to develop and manage their own, comprehensive leadership development program to involve key personnel in a significant leadership development program resulting in a certificate of completion. MAT designed the CLPS curriculum to encompass the key knowledge areas and competencies required by an individual to successfully exercise leadership and mid- and senior-levels in a state fish and wildlife agency. The CLPS combines online courses with face-to-face workshops over a 1-3 year period.

In 2007 MAT provided the Conservation Learning Campus to deliver leadership development opportunities to all state fish and wildlife agencies through an online learning system. Visit www.conservationlearning.org. MAT has contracted with eCollege to provide the platform for MAT to offer select leadership courses in an instructor-led, asynchronous learning environment. The eCollege software used by MAT uses research supported (www.sloan-c.org) best practices to economically deliver learning to geographically dispersed professionals in a way that can *improve* learning in many cases.

MAT provides 6 online leadership classes and 5 face-to-face leadership classes as part of the *Toolbox*. MAT also continues to train a National Faculty to assist with course delivery. MAT's online courses have been a success by providing increased accessibility to leadership development opportunities with fewer time, travel, and cost restrictions. Online courses are available through open registration to Association member agencies on a quarterly basis.

Online Courses Available:

- Creative & Critical Thinking
- The Adaptive Leader
- Visionary Leadership
- Power
- Secrets to Agency Assessment & Development
- Going from Good to Great

MAT is offering a new online leadership course this summer, *Leader as Supervisor*.

Face-to-Face Courses Currently Available (MAT focuses on train-the-trainer so states can deliver their own courses):

- Emotional Intelligence
- Mastering Agency Change
- Leadership Ethics
- Publics, Problems, and Politics
- National Faculty Certification for Online Courses

MAT is offering a new face-to-face leadership course this summer, *Leading at the Speed of Trust*.

National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI)

The National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) is a world class leadership development program focused on rising stars within conservation organizations. The Association joined with a number of like-minded conservation organizations to develop the National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) to prepare future leaders in fish and wildlife conservation. This initiative has been integrated into the Association's leadership initiative under the guidance of the Management Assistance Team and the Leadership and Professional Development Committee. Beginning in 2006, the NCLI provides an annual opportunity for state, federal and private fish and wildlife professionals to benefit from a top-rate leadership development program. Developed to help conservation organizations meet the challenge of continued leadership as current leaders retire from the workforce, the Institute combines leadership and management development training with exposure to the history and current challenges of fish and wildlife conservation in North America.

MAT worked with faculty from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the Association, USFWS, The Conservation Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, WMI, the Boone and Crockett Club, and others to design and successfully implement the NCLI. MAT created the NCLI curriculum and website and is responsible for program coordination and management.

The first cohort of the NCLI concluded at Big Cedar Lodge in Missouri on May 2, 2007 with 35 Fellows completing the 9-month experience. The second cohort concluded their experience on April 22, 2008. In all, 36 Fellows participated in the second cohort coming from state fish and wildlife agencies, conservation-focused federal agencies, and the non-governmental community. Selection of Fellows for the third cohort is underway.

One goal of the NCLI is to create a network of conservation leaders. At the conclusion of the first NCLI program, the Fellows created the NCLI Alumni Association (NCLIAA). MAT is working with the NCLIAA to facilitate their network building efforts, and has built a website for the NCLIAA to enhance their networking opportunities.

The NCLI application period for Cohort 3 concluded on May 31, and an independent selection committee appointed by the NCLI Board of Directors will complete its recommendations for the slate of Cohort 3 fellows in early July. Cohort 3 Fellows will be announced in mid-July.

Additional information is available via the NCLI website (www.conservationleadership.org).

Consulting and Training

MAT provides ongoing consulting and training for state fish and wildlife agencies primarily focused on leadership development. States most recently helped by MAT this year regarding leadership development include TX, MT, AZ, AK, UT, FL, and SD. MAT facilitated an all-employee meeting for Delaware Wildlife Section to help them develop a clear mission, vision, and values. In addition, MAT worked with WAFWA to revise and put online the Commission and Boards Guidebook produced by MAT. Also MAT conducted a workshop at the 2007 WAFWA commissioner's forum and will make a plenary presentation on workforce planning at the 2008 WAFWA conference. MAT also delivered a plenary presentation at the NEAFWA conference on workforce planning and leadership development and is scheduled to offer another plenary presentation at the American Fisheries Society annual meeting. MAT is currently working with Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Alabama to meet their requests for providing on-site leadership training.

As approved by the Leadership and Professional Development Committee, MAT has developed and will offer a regional workshop in late July at the National Conservation Training Center to help states address their workforce planning needs. More than 30 individuals from 10 states are registered to participate. If there is need MAT will offer more regionally focused workshops on workforce planning at a later date. These workshops will be held at accessible locations designed to attract the highest number of states possible. Participating states would send a small team of people who would learn how to create a workforce planning framework and begin to work on their state's workforce planning needs.

As directed by the AFWA directors at their March 2008 business meeting, MAT will conduct a telephone survey of all state and provincial fish and wildlife agency directors to assess their perceptions of the problem of fish and wildlife agency needs and the training received by wildlife and fisheries biology students at universities. The short telephone survey will be conducted in late June and early July.

Staffing

Melissa McCormick has moved to Florida – the new location for her husband's employment. Sally Ann Hardy joined MAT as the new training services coordinator responsible for working with all of our program participants.

For more information on MAT and their services offered to state fish and wildlife agencies, please visit www.matteam.org or contact Dr. Sally Gynn at 304-876-7395, Dr. Dwight Gynn at 304-876-7387 or Jake Faibisch at 304-876-7915, sallyg@matteam.org, dwrightg@matteam.org or jacobf@matteam.org.

MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION

North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) – The U.S. NABCI Committee met on February 4-5, 2008 to discuss progress and make decisions about its work plan that includes coordinated monitoring, private lands management, conservation design/landscape planning, international cooperation, and communications. Eighteen of its 21 member were in attendance. The National Park Service is the newest member of the NABCI Committee. Terrell Erickson, NRCS, Bob Ellis, Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries, and David Goad, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, are the new representatives for NRCS, the National Flyway Council, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, respectively. The next meeting is on August 11-12, 2008 in Arlington, VA.

The Private Lands Subcommittee is looking at how the US NABCI Committee can improve the conservation of birds on private lands across the country. The Subcommittee is advancing the concept of strategic habitat initiatives with NRCS leadership, State Conservationists, and biologists. The concept is to use the biological foundation available within the bird community to help NRCS focus conservation program delivery; in other words, how working with the bird conservation community can help NRCS. The Subcommittee met with the Regional Assistant Chiefs, the Chief and his staff, and will be conducting a webcast in August for NRCS biologists. The discussion of strategic Farm Bill habitat initiatives was framed by a series of examples of bird conservation planning from the FWS Habitat Assessment and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) in North Dakota and Minnesota, Sage Grouse conservation between NRCS and the WY Fish and Game and the Rainwater Basin JV. The examples helped illustrate the type of planning/modeling being conducted by the bird conservation community and how these products might be used by NRCS. The June issue of The All-Bird Bulletin (<http://www.nabci-us.org/news.html>) highlighted some of the great partnerships that are ongoing on private lands that the bird conservation community is a partner. The Subcommittee is updating the Farm Bill User's Guide developed in the late 1990's. The audience is the wildlife conservationist. The updated User's Guide will be available as soon as possible. A Table of Contents has been developed and Randy Gray, retired NRCS national biologist, will be assisting with development of the guide. The Subcommittee is working with Jen Mock Schaeffer and the Agricultural Conservation Committee on the Guide. The Committee also discussed the idea of developing a farm bill user's guide for the landowners. The purpose of the guide would be to help landowners understand the bottom line economic benefits of conservation practices and how/what conservation practices can help them solve specific problems. There are some resources available now that can help advance the discussion. They include work done in Missouri and Arkansas, the NRCS Agricultural Wildlife Conservation Center, and by Kansas State University.

The Tri-national NABCI Committee is advancing international conservation efforts on various fronts with a focus on promoting regional alliances (joint venture-like partnerships) in Mexico; securing new and innovative funding sources for bird conservation by promoting and soliciting funding for Continentally Important Proposals. The Continentally Important Proposals have been developed from five priority sites in Mexico (Janos, Yucatan, Marismas Nacionales, Laguna Madre, and El Triunfo) and linked to sites and Joint Ventures in the US and Canada through common priority species. **Two documents, one summarizing the projects, and a second providing details on each project, have been completed. In order to advance these and other international priorities, the US NABCI Committee met jointly with the Mexican NABCI Committee in August 2007 in Mexico City. The US and Mexico NABCI Committee continue to visit their priorities that were identified and determine how best to advance them. The NABCI Tri-national Committee met on May 12, 2008 with representatives from CONABIO, SEMARNAT, and CONANP of the Mexican federal government; the Canadian Wildlife Service; and USFWS, and TNC from the U.S.**

The Committee is developing briefing packages and conservation messages for discussion with the transition teams that will be in place in Federal Agencies in early 2009. The purpose is to inform the new administration about the priority needs for bird conservation. These messages will most likely also be used at the North American Conference in March 2009. The Coordinator had the opportunity to present key bird conservation messages at the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Deputy State Director meeting. It was an excellent opportunity to talk about potential partnerships between the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and BLM. NABCI is also participating in the development of the USFWS's State of the Bird Report that is anticipated to be out in early to mid 2009.

The Conservation Design Subcommittee helped develop three sessions at the Partners in Flight Conference in McAllen, Texas in February 2008. The sessions addressed population objectives; the current status of evaluation of bird-habitat relationships; and the greatest existing challenges in the science of bird conservation including issues of detectability, vital rates, continental connectivity, measuring environmental variables, determining population limiting factors, data management, and applications. Based on the sessions' outcomes, one or more workshops will be developed to help advance the science of landscape scale planning.

See below for information on NABCI's Monitoring Subcommittee.

Farm Bill – As the Association's Farm Bill Coordinator addresses the reauthorization of the 2007 Farm Bill, the Migratory Bird Coordinator will assist where necessary on bird related issues in the Farm Bill. Both Coordinators will work as liaison between the Bird Conservation Committee and the Agricultural Conservation Committee.

Bird Monitoring – The Coordinator continues to help facilitate the development of products on coordinated monitoring through the US NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee and the NE Coordinated Monitoring Partnership. The Subcommittee held its latest meeting in October 2007 and last two conference calls in January and February. The discussions focused on finalizing and reporting out about the monitoring sessions at the PIF International Bird Conservation meeting; the proposal to assess monitoring programs; developing real world examples of integrating monitoring and management; developing workshops that focus on certain aspects of monitoring program design and development; and providing managers with a tool that will help them determine how well their current and future bird monitoring programs are meeting their conservation and management needs. **On their latest conference calls in March and June, they discussed the importance of long term security of key migratory bird databases.** The report published in March 2007 is called the *Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring*. The report lays out key ideas and actions to improve monitoring. Although we are in a time of tight budgets, the US NABCI Committee feels that there are efficiencies and improvements that can be made to the design of surveys, the storage of data, and the link between monitoring and conservation/management action that can occur with little new resources. A final report is available on NABCI's website at <http://www.nabci-us.org/aboutnabci/monitoringreportfinal0307.pdf>. The US NABCI Committee members have signed an MOU among the member organizations and agencies that support the goals and objectives of the Report. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed a Resolution supporting the goals of the report at the September 2007 meeting.

The Coordinator helped develop and presented at two sessions on monitoring at the December 2007 Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting and the February 2008 PIF Bird Conference.

Bald Eagle Grant Advisory Team – The Migratory Bird Coordinator is a member of the Bald Eagle Grant Advisory Team developed under the provisions of the proposed *American Bald Eagle Recovery and National Emblem Commemorative Coin Act* (H.R. 4116). The US Mint released information in early December on the Bald Eagle Commemorative Coins. **The Team has begun developing a grant program through the American Eagle Foundation to support Bald Eagle conservation efforts. The Coordinator has reviewed and provided comments on the draft recommendations for the program. In late 2009 or early 2010, we anticipate grant money being available.**

Nongame Migratory Bird Consultation between the States and the USFWS – The Flyway nongame technical sections will be meeting in the summer. The Coordinator assists the nongame technical sections as needed on an issue-by-issue basis.

State Wildlife Action Plans – As the States completed the development of the State Wildlife Action Plans, the Coordinator has shifted her support from development to implementation. Currently the Coordinator is working on support for the implementation of monitoring and on the implementation of regional projects developed as a result

of the Duke Foundation grant. Extracting the regional and national priorities from the Strategies will be critical for identifying the priority issues. A first stage of this is the development of a workshop for the states within the Atlantic Flyway to identify priorities and develop a means of pulling bird conservation information out of the plans and putting it in a useful format. This project is being done in conjunction with the USFWS and is funded by NBII. A second workshop was held on May 1, 2007 to work with application developers to define what the application will look like. **Currently, we are developing the prototype for review by the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies.**

The Coordinator is working with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to discuss how States are prioritizing bird conservation objectives when implementing the Action Plans. Initial discussions were held at the September meeting in Louisville and led up to a more comprehensive discussion at the PIF Conference in 2008. At the PIF Conference, Idaho and Nevada led a discussion on bird conservation objectives and the Action Plans.

NBII – Bird Conservation Node – The Bird Conservation Node’s Strategic Plan is complete but the Coordinator continues to work with the Node to make sure state interests are represented on the Node Guidance Team that is being created.

National and International Bird Conservation Initiatives – The Association’s Migratory Bird Coordinator continues to be an active member of the WSHRN Hemispheric Council and the National Ramsar Committee and participate in Partners in Flight, and the shorebird, waterbird, and waterfowl conservation initiatives. For example, the Coordinator is keeping up to date on State issues surrounding the Red Knots and horseshoe crabs in the Mid-Atlantic. **The Coordinator hosted the National Ramsar Committee meeting in May 2008. The meeting focused on increasing the awareness about the Ramsar Convention and the connection between the National Committee and the local representatives at the Ramsar sites. The Coordinator attended the Tri-lateral meeting to represent State Fish and Wildlife Agencies on bird conservation issues.**

Bird Conservation Committee – The Committee met in Phoenix, Arizona to discuss bird monitoring, the Southern Wings Program, Farm Bill, the Birding Bird Lab, and other topics. Hot issues in the Committee that are being addressed include the Southern Wings Program and post delisting monitoring of the bald eagle.

The Southern Wings Program is being considered to provide a mechanism for States to easily engage in projects that help conserve their priority species on the wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean. The State Fish and Wildlife Agencies spend millions of dollars conserving migratory birds each year. The economic significance of migratory birds is well known. To protect millions of dollars worth of States’ investment in migratory birds and to maintain and increase the millions of dollars in revenue that flow into the States from bird watching, States should consider engaging in partnerships that conserve migratory bird species on their wintering grounds. A presentation was given to the Directors of each State Regional Association in the summer of 2006 to begin the discussion of how to develop a flexible, transparent mechanism that would make it easy for States to engage in conservation of migratory birds throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and also to leverage State money with other partners’ resources and potentially the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The Directors expressed support for moving forward with the development of a mechanism to make this a reality. To facilitate the initial stage of this process, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, American Bird Conservancy, the National Audubon Society, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are partnering in this effort. **The Coordinator helped develop two sessions to discuss the conservation of birds throughout their entire lifecycles at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting and the PIF Conference. The Bird Conservation Committee asked that a Task Force be developed to present recommendations on the development of the Southern Wings Program at the North American in March 2008. The Coordinator pulled together key state and partner representatives for the Task Force. The Task Force presented its report in March. The recommendation was for the Bird Conservation Committee to send the report along with a few key questions to State Directors for input and comment. Based on the input the Task Force receives they will update the report and provide a final recommendation at the Bird Conservation Committee meeting in September 2008. The Coordinator has received responses from most states and is compiling those responses to inform the Task Force’s June 30 conference call.**

Wind Power Development – The Coordinator is engaged with the Wind Subcommittee of the Association’s Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee. Currently the Subcommittee has decided to address a number of topics including updating the USFWS Draft Guidelines through the FAC process, development of the American Wind and Wildlife Institute (AWWI), transmission line impacts, and increasing communication with federal agencies in the US,

Canada and Mexico on wind energy guidance development. The Subcommittee met in March to discuss all these issues. **They continue to debate what the level of state fish and wildlife agency involvement in AWWI should be. A discussion will be held with the Executive Committee in June to determine how we should proceed in regards to AWWI memberships. A work group of the Subcommittee is pulling a workshop on transmission and wildlife as it relates to wind energy at the September meeting. The Subcommittee intends to use this workshop to determine if and how they will approach the transmission corridor issue. The workshop will be held on Monday September 8, 2008.** The Subcommittee is also engaged with the National Wind Coordinating Committee (NWCC). The Association's new representative to the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative is Celia Greenman from the Colorado Division of Wildlife. **The Coordinator attended the Steering Committee meeting of NWCC. It was a great opportunity to interact with and learn from Public Utility Commission, State legislature, wind industry, and wind consultant representatives.**

In cooperation with the USFWS, we compiled state energy guidelines, legislation and related information that will be useful to States as they address wind energy. Part I of the compilation was completed in the summer of 2007. Part II of the compilation was completed in October 2007. It has been merged with Part I to create one document and is available on the Association's website.

The Coordinator is also engaged with the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) as they develop the American Wind and Wildlife Institute (AWWI). The AWWI will support wind wildlife research; plan for sustainable growth; try to develop biodiversity banking for wind; and assist with education, outreach and training on wind wildlife issues. The Coordinator met with representatives to discuss the future of AWWI and what it could potentially do for the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and also to discuss the concept of using mapping to place some key wildlife areas off limits to wind energy development. Industry has committed \$2.5 million to the development of AWWI and they are asking for financial support from NGOs and states. They presented to the Wind Subcommittee and Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee at the North American meeting. As mentioned above, the Executive Committee will be discussing our involvement in AWWI in June.

On October 27, 2007 the Department of the Interior announced that 22 individuals were appointed to the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee. The Committee was created to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on developing effective measures to avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitats related to land-based wind energy facilities. There are three representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies. They are Keith Sexson representing the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Kathy Boydston, Texas Parks and Wildlife; and Greg Hueckel, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Committee feels that this effort is critical in order for us to address the myriad of issues surrounding wind energy development at a national level. Having national guidance that the States help craft will help us address wind energy development more effectively. The Coordinator is working to support the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies' members on the Committee through a number of avenues. One way is the creation of an informal working group of state agency representatives that can provide technical information and support from across the United States. Any state who would like to participate in the information working is welcome and should contact Deb Hahn. This group helped the Coordinator develop a presentation that she gave to the Advisory Committee at their first meeting in February 2008. The presentation summarized where the states are in regards to wind energy siting and provided details on some of the guidelines that have been developed at the state level. The presentation also provided ideas for topics that the states would like to see the Advisory Committee address. **The second meeting was held on April 23-24, 2008 in Arlington, Virginia. The State Agency representatives are highly engaged and were strong participants at the meeting. They also intend to participate in the upcoming meetings on June 18 and July 23-24.**

Avian Influenza – The USDA and USGS were recently given mandates to develop a management plan for avian influenza that includes a continental survey. The Migratory Bird Coordinator, in coordination with other Association staff, participated in the development of the plan to make sure States' needs and concerns were addressed. Currently, implementation of plans is being implemented through the Flyway Councils.

MULTISTATE CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM

To date, the Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) has directed over \$50 million to 138 national and regional priority projects of the state fish and wildlife agencies.

On April 1, 2008, a Request for Proposals was released for the 2009 MSCGP to solicit Letters of Intent (LOIs) to address the nine selected NCNs. The solicitation received much interest and 112 LOIs were received in early May. The National Grants Committee selected the most competitive Letters of Intent (LOIs) to invite to submit full proposals based upon responsiveness to the 2009 National Conservation Needs, scientific quality, practical relevance, value and qualifications. There were many excellent project ideas for the committee to consider. Out of the 112 LOIs submitted, 20 (18%) were invited to submit full proposals, which are due Wednesday, July 9th.

The next steps in the annual MSCGP cycle include: In late July/early August, full proposals will be reviewed by appropriate Association committees. At the Association's Annual Meeting in September, the National Grants Committee will use the committees' input as a starting point for selecting a recommended list of projects. Once the state directors approve this priority list at the Business Meeting, it will be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the mandated October 1 deadline. The USFWS can only fund projects on our list; we expect grant awards to be issued in December and funds to be available starting January 1, 2009.

For details on projects being conducted by the Association using Multistate Conservation Grant funds, please refer to other sections in this report, such as National Fish Habitat Initiative, Furbearer Resources and BMP Outreach Activities, Public Affairs, and Management Assistance Team. For information on other current and past Multistate Projects, please visit <http://faims.fws.gov>.

Please visit http://www.fishwildlife.org/multistate_grants.htm for more information about the MSCGP. If you have any questions, please contact Christina Zarrella at czarrella@fishwildlife.org.

NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN

The new website for the Fish Habitat Action plan is now up and running. Go to www.fishhabitat.org and check out all the latest news and accomplishments.

John Cooper (SD) has stepped down as Chair of the National Fish Habitat Board (Board). John was the Board's first Chair, and he did an outstanding job of leading the Board in many important, foundational decisions. His successor is Kelly Hepler from Alaska. Doug Austen (PA) and Jeff Koenings (WA) have recently been appointed to the 22-member Board, joining three other state agency representatives -- Gary Myers (TN), Rich Leopold (IA), and Hepler.

To date the Board has adopted a charter, endorsed draft national enabling legislation, approved a five year staffing and budget plan, approved interim national conservation strategies, targets, and definitions, and adopted a communications strategy. The four interim conservation strategies focus on protecting intact and healthy waters, restoring river flows and lake levels to natural patterns, establishing connectivity of fragmented aquatic systems, and producing reductions in sedimentation, and phosphorus and nitrogen runoff. **Even though good progress has been made with drafting Action Plan legislation, in coordination with Hill staff, it remains to be introduced as a bill**

At the October 2007 Board meeting, four "pilot" Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHP's) -- **Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, Midwest Driftless Area Restoration Effort, and the Matanuska-Susitna Salmon Conservation Partnership (Alaska)** -- received formal endorsement from the Board, based on successful completion of application materials. **In 2008, two additional FHP's have been officially endorsed to date by the Board, and they are the Western Native Trout Initiative and the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership. There are a total of 14 Candidate FHP's.**

The Board has spent considerable effort this year reviewing and discussing the structure and function of FHP's. The Board, at its May meeting, adopted new recommendations that will be reflected in revised guidance to the FHP's in the next few months.

The Board's work continues to be primarily funded by Multistate Conservation Grants, a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for coordination services, a USFWS cooperative agreement, and the ongoing support of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Board is also soliciting funding support from the states for the next three years. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will offer the banking services for the stateside funds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to make a significant investment in the Action Plan. **The Bush Administration requested \$5.2 million in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) FY09 budget for the Plan. This is the same amount as in the FY08 enacted budget and compares to nearly \$3 million and \$1 million, respectively, for FY07 and FY06.** The Association is recommending a FY09 appropriation of \$6 million. Some of these dollars are supporting the delivery of on-the-ground projects. The Board for example, concurred with a joint Board/USFWS team recommendation to deliver \$2.4 million to support 63 projects in 28 states within the scope of five FHP's. **An additional \$600 thousand was later approved by the Board for demonstration projects within the scope of the Candidate FHP's.**

A Science and Data Partners Workshop to address the national fish habitat assessment and the role of FHP's was held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society in San Francisco on September 2, 2007. The Science and Data Committee met in February and is closer to releasing its framework report for consideration by the Board. USGS/BRD hosted an invitation-only workshop regarding future science and data needs in early March.

The Board honored three exceptional organizations and an individual for their commitment to fish habitat conservation, science, or education at the DC-based National Casting Call on April 28, 2008. They are:

- **Outreach and Education Award: The Chesapeake Bay Foundation**
- **Scientific Achievement Award: The Fish and Aquatic Ecology Unit of the U.S. Forest Service and Trout Unlimited**
- **Exceptional Vision Award: Mr. Steve Perry, NH Fish and Game Department**

The Board has hired Ryan Roberts as Communications Coordinator for the Habitat Action Plan. Ryan joins NFHAP from the Bowie Baysox Baseball team, where he served as the Director of Communications for the past four seasons. Other staff support to the Board includes Christopher Estes (Alaska Department of Fish and Game), Tom Busiahn (USFWS), Susan-Marie Stedman (NOAA Fisheries), Janet Cushing (USGS) and Ron Regan (the Association). Gary Whelan (MI) and Doug Beard (USGS/BRD) are serving as co-chairs of the Science and Data Committee.

The Board will next meet in Washington, DC during October 7-8, 2008.

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN (NAWMP) COORDINATOR'S REPORT

It is a pleasure to report to you on my activities as the Association's NAWMP Coordinator. I would like to thank all of you for your assistance and support. I would also like to thank the Canadian provinces, Canadian Wildlife Service and the NAWMP partners in Canada for continuing to **financially** support the coordinator position at the Association. A number of NAWMP and NAWCA (North American Wetlands Conservation Act) activities have taken place in Canada, the United States and Mexico since my last report. This report will cover some of the major items.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)

NAWCA provides funding for cooperative public-private wetland conservation projects throughout North America which support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. NAWCA allocates to Canada and Mexico between 30-60% of available funds and currently Canada receives 45%.

All states have benefited from NAWCA standard and small grant programs. Thousands of projects have been put on the ground in North America, including a total of more than 23 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands in the U.S. and Canada. Partners in more than 1,600 projects have received more than \$770 million in grants. Indeed, the partners have also contributed \$2.3 billion in matching funds. There has been at least one NAWCA funded project in every state, including Alaska and Hawaii.

In July 2008, the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture will host the US North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC) for their meeting on Prince Edward Island.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee will also meet at that time. Four Joint Ventures, Eastern Habitat, Atlantic Coast, Black Duck and Sea Duck, will be reporting to the Plan Committee on their implementation plans and other matters.

In June 2008, representatives from across the Canadian NAWMP/NAWCC program met with the U.S. NAWCC staff who came to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada for the first joint council staff meeting. The Canadian NAWMP partners gave presentations on the habitat joint ventures in Canada as well as conducting a tour of some of the NAWMP/NAWCA projects in Saskatchewan.

Appropriations – The Association supports the President's FY 2009 budget request of \$42.6 million for NAWCA and recommended that Congress try to eventually achieve full funding at \$75 million. If agreed to by Congress this would mean an increase of \$666,000 over the FY 2008 enacted budget for NAWCA.

The President's budget recommended funding for Joint Ventures is \$14.8 million, which is an increase over previous year's funding and supported by AFWA.

AFWA has also recommended that the funding for the National Wetlands Inventory be increased by \$5 million to \$9.8 million annually.

As you know, Congress reauthorized the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act (NMBCIA) for five years and increased the level of authorization. The NMBCIA now provides for projects in Canada. Of the 12 Canadian proposals submitted in 2007 for NMBCA funding, 5 were approved including one that was a joint proposal with the United States. Congress appropriated \$4.5 million for neotropical migratory bird conservation for FY 2008.

Canadian NAWMP/NAWCA Initiatives

The NABCI/NAWCC Canada Secretariat has been integrated into the Canadian Wildlife Service and now is located at the Environment Canada headquarters. Cynthia Wright, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment Canada is the Chair of the NABCI/NAWCC Canada. Richard Pratt, former Executive Secretary, retired at the end of June. Virginia Potter, Director General of the Canadian Wildlife Service, is Chair of NAWCC Canada.

The Canadian program is so successful that it has expanded to include waterbird, shorebird and landbird interests through the Canadian NABCI Council. Canada has achieved 69% of its NAWMP goals since 1986 which translates into 5.9 million acres that have been secured. During that period, Canada has spent over \$612 million on NAWMP and wetland and wetland-associated habitats.

The Western Boreal Forest Initiative covers over 2 million square kilometers containing a mosaic of wetland complexes, flood plains and river deltas from the Yukon Territory to Manitoba. The region supports a significant component of the continental population for some waterfowl species of concern such as scaup and scoters. Furthermore, waterfowl produced in this region use all four Flyways. As work continues, the full importance of the Boreal Forest to other bird species is just beginning to be understood. The overall objective of this program is to conserve wetland and upland habitat based on priority areas to sustain western boreal water bird populations. Agreements have been signed with Aboriginal people, industry and Ducks Unlimited. Progress continues on expanding the program into eastern Canada while aligning it within existing joint ventures.

While the Boreal Forest is the second most significant breeding ground in Canada, it should be noted that the focus of NAWMP activity will remain on the Prairie Provinces. The priorities of the PHJV are integrated landscape

management, biological foundation, policy leadership, governance of the PHJV, marketing, communications and education, and developing a viable resource base/PHJV capacity.

The PHJV has produced a set of five “fact sheets” on policy, conservation partnerships, science, achievements and the PHJV as a strategic investment. Contact the PHJV at phjv@ec.gc.ca for copies of the fact sheets or for more information. The PHJV has also published its Strategic Plan 2006-2011 and the Alberta NAWMP partnership has published its 2005-2006 progress review on science-based implementation.

The PHJV has also completed NAWMP Implementation Plans for 2006-2011 for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They will also host a Science and Policy forum in April 2008.

An action plan for the recovery of pintail has been completed and distributed. The Northern Pintail Action Group (PAG) has established as its highest priority the reduction of cultivated land and spring tillage in key pintail breeding areas. The Alberta NAWMP partners are using both direct habitat securement and policy initiatives to meet this priority.

The PAG has identified several topics to address immediately: pintail population status and dynamics, assessment of band recovery data, and a harvest strategy and recruitment. In addition, they will also conduct research on migration and breeding ecology.

A Scaup Action Team Prospectus has been developed. The Scaup Action Team Mission, briefly stated, is to reverse the decline of scaup populations. They have identified the following management needs: scaup harvest management, improved estimates of annual survival, Joint Venture Habitat initiatives and evaluation of biases in annual breeding population and winter surveys. Efforts are underway to secure separate funding specifically directed toward surveys, banding and monitoring scaup.

All Canadian Joint Ventures continue to move ahead with finalizing their implementation plans. The PCJV and CIJV are planning from a “focus area” basis while the EHJV is undertaking provincial implementation plans. The PHJV is drafting a plan which will examine the suite of deficit and recovery targets compared against current levels of funding.

The Canadian NAWMP Committee membership now includes M. Anderson and I. Barnett (DUC), R. Milton (NS), and Wm. Gummer (CWS). David Brackett, former Director General of the CWS will be retiring as the President of Wildlife Habitat Canada later this year.

You may wish to explore the website of the NAWMP in Canada for more information, including the annual Canadian NAWMP report entitled “Habitat Matters” at www.nawmp.ca.

Association President's Task Force

I would like to thank all of the states and organizations who generously provide NAWCA “match” money to support Canadian NAWMP projects. We need to continue our work on the prairies and elsewhere in Canada to provide good quality habitat for waterfowl populations. While most duck species have recovered to well above their normal levels, some species (for example, sea ducks, pintails, and scaup) either continue to decline or they are recovering very slowly.

Since there has been a substantial increase in NAWCA funding over the past few years, we will need additional support in raising the non-federal U.S. “match” money for Canadian NAWCA grants. Without your assistance we will not be able to achieve the goals set by the NAWMP. We must not lose sight of the fact that the goals of the NAWMP have not all been accomplished. There is a significant amount of work that needs to be done in Canada to ensure the fulfillment of the NAWMP.

An Association Task Force was formed under the Bird Conservation Committee to develop strategies to increase state contributions to Canada as non-federal U.S. match for NAWCA/NAWMP projects.

The Report of the Association Task Force on State Contributions to Canada is available on the Association web site www.fishwildlife.org. The Report contains six recommendations related to maintaining the \$10 million Association funding goal: apportionment among the States; use of State/NAWCA relationship as consideration in evaluating state contributions; establishing a minimum partnership level; developing five year plans; and a review process for the draft recommendations. We have met with each of the Regional Associations; all endorsed the

Report and its recommendations. A resolution was passed in support of the Report and its recommendations at the Association's Business meeting in September 2005. We would like to thank those states which have increased their support, as well as the states that have started or resumed providing match to Canada. If you require any assistance in preparing a five-year plan, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Continental Assessment

With the completion of the first comprehensive continental assessment of progress in achieving the biological goals of NAWMP, the Plan Committee and NSST met in Memphis in January to review the activities of the four workgroups, policy, science, communications and funding.

North American Bird Conservation Initiative

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) continues to move forward in Canada, the United States and Mexico. All three countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

Canada is also involved in the Arctic to Argentina Initiative, a science and conservation strategy for bird species and habitat in the Western Hemisphere. It focuses on action for science, habitat partnership and leadership.

Other Matters

- a. Canada has passed legislation to more effectively protect migratory birds and the marine environment from the negative effects caused by the discharge of harmful substances, such as oil, into marine waters. The Birds Oiled at Sea Bill directs any fines to Environment Canada.
- b. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has developed a "National Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries."
- c. The MBCA has been changed in Canada to provide for a regulatory framework that could address the incidental take of migratory birds.
- d. Canada is renovating its migratory bird program and also developing a coordinated bird monitoring program which will be complementary to the U.S. program.
- e. Canada has developed a number of environmental stewardship programs such as Environmental Farm Planning and the National Farm Stewardship Program under its Agriculture Policy Framework which is modeled after the Farm Bill in the United States.
- f. Based upon the February 2007 report of the Joint Task Group, which looked at clarifying population objectives for waterfowl habitat and harvest management, there will be a workshop in August, 2008 on the future of waterfowl management. The workshop is sponsored by the National Flyway Council, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee and AFWA. The purpose of the workshop is to identify and elaborate the institutional needs and policy decisions necessary to improve the coherence of waterfowl habitat and harvest management.
- g. A cooperative assessment of the non-breeding ecology of mid-continent mallards will attempt to refine the understanding of their habitat needs to support NAWMP goals and improve conservation and management efficiency.

I have accepted the position of President, Wildlife Habitat Canada (www.whc.org) and will be returning to Canada. I will be working at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on a part-time basis until the end of this year. It has been a pleasure serving, on behalf of the Canadian NAWMP/NAWCA partners, as the NAWMP Coordinator at the Association for the past twelve years.

Len Ugarenko

SCIENCE PARTNERSHIP WITH USGS, USFWS AND NPS

For the past two years, Dr. Amber Pairis served as the Association's Science and Research Liaison – a position that works to coordinate the science and research needs of state fish and wildlife agencies with key federal resource agencies. Amber left the Association in February to begin work as the Climate Change Advisor for the California Department of Fish and Game. The Association is in the process of recruiting a new Liaison.

Salary is provided by the U.S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Discipline (USGS), and operational support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. National Park Service (NPS), and USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services. The Liaison identifies high priority science and research information needs and facilitates communication among state and federal partners on science and research topics of mutual interest. The Liaison works to collaboratively identify and develop initiatives and programs with fisheries and wildlife benefits that are highly relevant to resource managers on a nationwide basis. The Liaison provides scientific support to individual states and the regional associations by creating capacity-building events and activities, compiling scientific information, representing and advocating for state interests, and responding to and supporting state efforts to address emerging issues.

Current priorities include:

Cervid Immunocontraceptive Vaccine

- Since September 2006, the Association has been working with USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services on the Gonacon registration. The Association maintains regular communications with USDA-APHIS-Ws to insure that state agency concerns are addressed prior to this product being submitted for registration. While no final decision has been made regarding the date for submitting this vaccine for registration, USDA-APHIS-Ws anticipates that GonaCon™ will be registered as a "Restricted Use" product for use by state wildlife or natural resource management personnel or persons working under their authority.
- Report of recommendations, best management practices, a summary of preparedness survey, model statute or regulations for fertility control, examples of draft legislation, and label language was compiled and is available as a resource at http://www.fishwildlife.org/agency_science_GONACON.html.
- **In conjunction with USDA-APHIS-Ws, outreach materials are currently being developed for state agencies to use to communicate with the hunting community and the media on the appropriate use of immunocontraceptive tools such as Gonacon in wildlife management.**

Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee – The Science Liaison serves as the staff support on the climate change and wind power and wildlife subcommittees.

Climate Change

Climate Change is a challenging issue for the Association that requires input from the State Directors and members on how to best approach the issue in order to provide support and guidance to the states.

- In order to increase the visibility of the issue, the Liaison helped develop the **climate change general session for the 2007 annual meeting in Kentucky**. In addition to presentations, the general session was followed by a forum for state directors to discuss climate change and provide guidance and input to the climate change subcommittee and Association staff. In addition, a forum was held for federal and NGO partners to address the subcommittee and identify opportunities to work with the state agencies on climate change challenges.
- **All materials from the session including PowerPoint presentations were distributed to Directors and are also available online at http://www.fishwildlife.org/agency_science_climate.html.**
- **The Liaison is working with the USFWS and USGS to include the state fish and wildlife agencies in regional level workshops on climate change that are being organized around the country.**
- **On November 30, 2007 Dave Schad (MN), chair of the climate change subcommittee, participated on a panel that provided a briefing to congress on "Climate Change Science: Helping Wildlife, Water, and Energy Managers Respond". The Liaison worked closely with Dave Schad to prepare comments and a presentation on how state agency leaders are using USGS science and working with partners to address challenges posed by climate change.**
- Climate Change State Agency Panel Discussion – George Wright Society Annual Meeting. The Science Liaison organized a panel of state wildlife agency representatives titled "State Agency Responses to the

Challenges of Climate Change Impacts on Fish and Wildlife Resources” in St. Paul, MN. The panel featured State agency representatives from AZ, NC, ND, MN, OR and the state representative for Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC).

- The Liaison serves on an advisory committee for a project through the Wildlife Habitat Policy Research Program (National Council for Science and the Environment) looking at climate change impacts on wildlife habitat.

Integrated Wildlife Inventories and Monitoring

The Liaison works to identify and coordinate inventory and monitoring projects on a national scale that support state efforts to manage natural resources including identifying opportunities for collaboration and increasing communication with partners. Current projects include the Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership and Wildlife Action Plans Issues and Opportunities Synthesis which are collaborative efforts to improve the accessibility of monitoring information, support effective evaluation and decision-making, and identify opportunities for regional and national programs to support implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

- Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership -- The Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership (NRMP) is a collaborative effort by the natural resource management community to improve the accessibility of monitoring efforts in order to support effective evaluation and decision-making. NRMP has developed two Internet-based tools that provide information on current monitoring activities at a variety of spatial scales and serve as a reference and clearinghouse for monitoring protocols and resource assessment methodologies. The library and locator (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/brd/MonitoringPartnership.htm>) was showcased by an Open House at the 72nd annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Portland, Oregon. A second open house took place at The Wildlife Society meeting in September 2007 in Arizona, and an oral presentation was given by **Tara Bergeson (WI-DNR) at the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies’ meeting in December 2007.**
- At the business meeting in Portland, the Science and Research Committee recommended that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies endorse the Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership and that the State Wildlife Agency Directors identify appropriate personnel in their state to become familiar with the tools and participate in its use. This recommendation was also supported by the Bird Conservation Committee and the Invasive Species Committee and was passed unanimously by the directors. A letter was sent out by the Association President to encourage directors to identify someone in their staff to become familiar with the NRMP tools.
- The Science Liaison serves on the NRMP steering committee along with other representatives from the States, USGS, USFS, NPS, and other partners and is the leader of the Outreach Committee that organizes the NRMP Open House events.
- Coordination with TWW -- The Science Liaison is working with TWW by serving on a steering group for the Issues and Opportunities Synthesis of State Wildlife Action Plans. The Science Liaison is particularly interested in identifying priority research and monitoring needs and regional opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between State and Federal Agencies.

Invasive Species

The Liaison focuses on increasing communications and working to coordinate action among state and federal agencies and conservation organizations to address invasive species issues. This includes representing state interests to partner organizations and providing input on federal interagency committees, promoting coordination among partners, identifying and creating resources and capacity-building activities, and providing recommendations and guidance on invasive species legislation. **Interim Staff Contact for the Invasive Species Committee is Ms. Priya Nanjappa Mitchell (pnanjappa@fishwildlife.org; 847.672.9275).**

- **The Interim Staff Contact is assisting the committee Vice-Chair Larry Riley (AZ) to prepare testimony on the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act for delivery at a hearing before the House Committee on Natural Resources on Thursday June 26, 2008.**
- **The Interim Staff Contact coordinated and compiled comments from the Invasive Species, Angler and Boating Participation, and Fisheries and Water Resource Policy Committees on the National Governor’s Association (NGA) revised Cooperative Management of Invasive Species policy. Comments were provided to the NGA on behalf of the Association.**
- **A forum was held in conjunction with the 73rd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2008. Sponsored by the Association’s Invasive Species Committee, “Communicating and Coordinating Collective Action on Invasive Species Challenges” was designed to enhance communication and collaboration on invasive species issues across the**

work of various Association committees with input from regional representatives on emerging or priority needs.

- The Science Liaison is involved in a project with the USDA-FS and Wildlife Forever on the creation of informational videos/DVDs on controlling invasive species spread and supports the involvement of State representatives (WI DNR) on this project. This project is being created for the hunting and angling community and is focused on activities that might halt the spread of invasive species.
- The Liaison attends the meetings of federal interagency working groups including the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF), Invasive Terrestrial Animal and Pathogens (ITAP) Committee, the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Nuisance and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW), and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC).
- The Liaison is also working with representatives from USGS, NBII, and DOD on early detection rapid response projects for invasive species that could be beneficial to State Agencies' management efforts.

Science and Research Committee

The Science and Research Committee is focusing on identifying State priority research and monitoring needs based on input and presentations from State representatives. In addition, a representative from each of the regional associations has been present to participate in the committee meeting and represent regional needs.

Interim Staff Contact for the Science and Research Committee is Ms. Priya Nanjappa Mitchell (pnanjappa@fishwildlife.org; 847.672.9275).

- Based on the discussion and member feedback, priorities have been compiled into themes which serve as the foundation for the committees activities. Members discussed the role of the Science and Research Committee with a focus on identifying ways in which the committee can identify mechanisms for elevating priorities to the Association leadership. Discussion included coordination among other AFWA committees, how to help guide our partners to do research in areas that are important to the state agencies, and how to act as a catalyst for cooperative action through encouraging cooperation and dissemination of information.
- **In Kentucky the committee voted on the top three priorities and made plans to follow up with a workshop at the next annual meeting. Following the North American conference in March, the committee assembled a planning team with the intent of having a workshop in September. This workshop will be focused on decision-making in the face of scientific uncertainty, with Invasive Species as the specific topic. The committee hopes to make this type of workshop a regular occurrence with a different topic of coverage each time.**
 - The Interim Staff Contact organized a conference call on May 28th among the workshop planning team, and development of the workshop is well underway.
 - The workshop is set to occur on Monday, September 8th, during the Annual Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY. A second conference call will be held on June 24th.
- In addition, the committee recognized the importance of having regional representatives on the committee and wishes to broaden that representation to include both an aquatic and terrestrial component (i.e. two representatives per region). The Liaison provided a presentation at the SEAFWA fish chiefs meeting to request the participation of a fish chief on behalf of the region. The same request will be made to the MAFWA fish chiefs.

Threatened and Endangered Species Policy Committee – The Science Liaison worked with NatureServe to compile a list of State listed species to be used for a project being undertaken by the Threatened and Endangered Species Policy Committee.

National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) -- Current NBII coordination is managed on a project-by-project basis. Areas of interest include collaboration with the USGS Status and Trends program, NBII, and key individuals in a host of other agencies to develop a searchable, geospatially explicit reference library of monitoring efforts and protocols under the Natural Resource Monitoring Partnership. Additionally, the Science Liaison is engaged in several activities with the Invasive Species Node.

Fish and Wildlife Health Committee – The Science Liaison stays up to date on wildlife disease issues including Avian Influenza, Chronic Wasting Disease, and amphibian chytrid fungus (Bd). The Liaison remains focused on making sure that State Agencies are informed of current activities and try to facilitate information exchange.

The Science Liaison is also a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate Science Advisory Committee.

TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE

State Wildlife Grants Appropriations:

FY 08:

- In late December, Congress passed an “omnibus” appropriations bill which included \$73.8 million for the [State Wildlife Grants Program](#). In this challenging budget climate, an increase of \$6.3 million is a tremendous victory and it wouldn't have happened without hard work from the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition.
- After subtracting administrative expenses, \$6.2 million for Tribal Wildlife Grants and a \$4.9 million carve-out for a to-be-determined competitive grants program, there will be only a slight increase in formula grants to the states. We are working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to ensure this new competitive grants program is a constructive addition.

FY 09:

- President Bush submitted his FY 09 budget proposal with \$73.8 million for State Wildlife Grants. In a tight budget climate, level funding is a relative victory. The President's budget also again includes a \$5 million carve-out for a competitive grants program.
- It will take another concerted effort to protect funding for State Wildlife Grants in the face of budgetary pressures.
- Dear Colleague Letters in both House and Senate are requesting \$85 million for State Wildlife Grants in FY 09. The House letter attracted more than 150 signatures. The deadline for the Senate letter is March 27, 2009. We are working to attract at least 60 signatures on this letter.
- The Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Day on February 27, 2008, was an enormous success, bringing more than 150 people from 41 states to Washington, DC to discuss the importance of State Wildlife Grants, the wildlife action plans, and the need for assured funding to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

Long-Term Funding

Teaming with Wildlife Act:

On February 27, Senators Tim Johnson (South Dakota) and Debbie Stabenow (Michigan) introduced the Teaming with Wildlife Act of 2008 (S. 2670). This bill would provide \$350 million a year for five years to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program is the account under Pittman-Robertson that exists to fund the activities currently funded on an annual basis through State Wildlife Grants. While authorized in 2000, the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program has been unfunded since that time. Funds provided through this bill would flow to states on an assured basis for five years without the need for annual appropriation by Congress. Funding would be allocated according to the current formula used by State Wildlife Grants. However, in contrast to the 50-50 match for State Wildlife Grants, the program would operate with the standard Pittman-Robertson 75-25 match. The funding source in the Teaming with Wildlife Act would be a combination of existing federal oil and gas revenue from the Outer Continental Shelf and from onshore activities on federal lands.

The Association is working with our coalition partners to build awareness of this bill. This new bill presents an opportunity to energize our coalition and keep the ball moving forward for dedicated funding to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. Even though the Teaming with Wildlife Act is unlikely to see substantial action on its own, we should expect to see benefits for our entire legislative agenda.

Climate Change:

The Association has worked in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation and other members of the Teaming with Wildlife Steering Committee to secure dedicated funding for the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program in all the climate change bills. As the profile of this issue rises, we hope it will become

increasingly likely that a bill will pass which generates revenues for wildlife potentially through the sale of emissions credits under a cap and trade system for greenhouse gases.

- In the fall of 2006, the Association helped to gather support from 375 organizations for a letter urging Congress to include funding for wildlife in all global climate change bills.
- **On December 5, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the [Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act \(S.2191\)](#), including provisions that would provide substantial dedicated funding for the [Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program](#), as much as \$3 billion/yr. The bill aims to reduce CO2 emissions to 57% below 1990 levels by 2050 and addresses the wildlife impacts of climate change through funding for the state wildlife action plans and other landscape-scale conservation initiatives.**

Teaming with Wildlife Public Outreach Initiative

The Association's grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation ended in December 2007. The communications campaign undertaken over the last three years has been highly successful in that coverage of the state wildlife action plans has been positive and on message. The messaging, reports, templates and other products developed under this grant will continue supporting wildlife action plan communications efforts and the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition for years to come. These new Teaming with Wildlife materials include several displays (which are loaned to state agencies and others on a frequent basis), a Teaming with Wildlife brochure, and two new websites: www.wildlifeactionplans.org and a completely revamped www.teaming.com.

The Association has produced a report highlighting wildlife action plan implementation success stories provided by every state. Copies of this report will be distributed to Congress and to partner organizations. In addition it will be made available on the web at www.wildlifeactionplans.org.

Teaming with Wildlife Coalition

The Association has been working with Teaming with Wildlife coalition leaders in the states to energize the more than 5,700 member organizations to support increased funding to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered and help implement the state wildlife action plans.

- **The Teaming with Wildlife Coalition has reached a new record of over 5,700 organizations and businesses. More than half of these organizations are new members from the past year.**
- Regular emails continue to keep coalition leaders up to speed on the latest tactics and resources for strengthening their coalitions.
- Outreach through the Teaming with Wildlife Steering Committee has brought the number of national organizations in the coalition to more than 150. Already these new members have helped contribute to record Fly-In Day fundraising and in the months ahead they will be further engaged in coalition outreach, communications and advocacy.
- The newly revamped www.teaming.com includes a completely updated "Coalition Tools" sections integrating the old "Message Kit" and "Coalition Toolkit" with an extensive collection of new and updated outreach templates and examples.

For more information on the Teaming with Wildlife initiative, contact the Association's Washington office at (202) 624-7890.



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