

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Working Committee Report June, 2017

Meeting Time and Place – The technical committee met once over the last year. A call-in meeting was held on May 12, 2017 (Appendix 1).

Attendance: 12 committee members from 10 of the 13 states participated (Appendix 2).

Executive Summary – The Committee discussed multiple regional and national opportunities and challenges for addressing the needs of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) implementation. With the momentum and support for pursuit of the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations, and potential threatened and endangered species listings that will impact the Midwest, the committee will increase the frequency of meetings and agency expertise for discussions. The annual rotating of co-chair positions will continue. The co-chairs will be the SWAP coordinators for the state hosting that year’s MAFWA Director’s meeting, and the previous year’s host state. This will provide some continuity across years.

States shared the concern that national administration changes may impact State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funding. Concerns continue that allocating a larger proportion to the SWG competitive grants, while reducing the formula-based SWG allocation will reduce resources to implement SWAPs at a time when more is being expected of the SWAPs.

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are increasing collaboration and shared SWAP priorities among MAFWA states. Challenges continue as boundaries for LCCs do not align with Joint Ventures or state boundaries. Communication among MAFWA states will be increased to address this challenge.

The Committee identified the following ways that this technical committee will facilitate SWAP implementation over the next year:

- Communicate state approaches regarding national calls to action regarding Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife and Recovering America’s Wildlife Act.
- Communicate updates regarding USFWS ESA potential listings and collaborate regarding pre-listing conservation planning.
- Receive updates regarding revised guidance for SWAP revision process.
- Support USFWS Region 3 collaboration of eight states to implement shared SWAP priorities (pollinators, grasslands and mussel conservation) and interest of other MAFWA states in participating in the initiative (supported by the Upper Midwest Great Lakes LCC and Region 3 USFWS).
- Communicate and support Monarch/pollinator initiatives and opportunities. Invertebrate conservation provides unique challenges that significantly benefit from regional collaboration and integration from SWAPs.
- Continue and foster emerging LCC opportunities for collaboration.
- Identify ways to collaborate and share resources across state boundaries.
- Identify and communicate success at a regional scale.

Director Action Items

1. The SWAP Technical Working Committee respectfully requests consideration and adoption of the submitted resolution, “Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) support for the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources and ongoing work.” (Appendix 3)

Director Information Items

1. The Wildlife Action Plan Technical Working Committee’s director liaison position was vacant at the time this report was submitted. This position was vacated with Kelley Myers’ resignation.
2. State Wildlife Grants (SWG) are the primary source of funding nationally for SWAP implementation and continues to be an annual appropriation. Given the uncertainty of annual appropriations, the need to continue providing Congress information regarding SWAP implementation is imperative. In FY18, through Dear Colleague Letters, 38% of the US House of Representatives supported SWG, while MAFWA states saw 25% support. In FY 17, the US Senate overall had a 37% support rate, while MAFWA states demonstrated 26% support rate through Dear Colleague Letters.
3. There continues to be a concern given that 2010 funding levels (\$90 million) have not been reinstated. The average SWG allocation from 2011-2017 has dropped to approximately \$60 million. Match rates continue to be at the discretion of Congress, but has consistently been a 35% nonfederal match which is challenging. Concerns continue regarding potentially increasing the allocation of funds from the SWG formula-based apportionment to fund the multi-state SWG Competitive grants.
4. SWG funding is insufficient to implement State Wildlife Action Plans. The Blue Ribbon Panel recommendation of \$1.3 billion will still only implement Wildlife Action Plans at 75%. The need continues to seek opportunities to support future state and/or federal policies, partnerships, and resources to implement needed conservation. The need requires commitments, resources, and efforts far beyond any state's diversity program capacity, but has potential to yield benefits to a wide variety of wildlife species, pollinators, water, and soil conservation values.
5. As of May 2017, 18 states have passed resolutions supporting recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel (Appendix 4). Appendix 5 contains AFWA and Kansas’ resolutions as examples.
6. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is planning a national fly-in to follow up on the Blue Ribbon Panel’s recommendation for dedicated funding. The intended participants are Wildlife Agency Directors.

7. USFWS Region 3 states (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, and WI) continue to collaborate regarding effective and efficient Wildlife Action Plan implementation through 3 shared priorities: freshwater mussels, pollinators, and large grassland complexes. This effort continues to be supported by the Upper Midwest / Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3.
8. The Committee applauds MAFWA for their leadership of the international monarch butterfly crisis, and appreciates their continued support of the Monarch Mid-America planning efforts happening concurrently with implementation including habitat restoration, education and monitoring.
 - a. Implementing the pending goals of the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Plan will require coordination across states and between multiple partners, and substantial resources. Continued support is appreciated.
9. A National SWAP meeting is in the middle planning stages for fall of 2017 with Georgia as the host state. The theme will focus on Seamless SWAP Implementation.
10. The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Revision Guidance Working Group was convened in November 2016 to review, gather feedback, and suggest changes to the 2007 Guidance for Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revisions. States and USFWS are both represented on the working group, which has compiled input from State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators and agency directors, and is currently integrating suggested changes into the document. The proposed Guidance will be presented to State Directors at the September 2017 AFWA meeting. Similarly, Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration working group members will then seek approval for the updated guidance from the Fish and Wildlife Service Director.

Time and Place of Next Meeting: Quarterly conference calls are scheduled for September 5th, December 5th, and March 5th. A subset of this Committee will meet at the Region 3 SWAP meeting Sept. 25-29 in Missouri. The 2017 National SWAP Meeting will provide an opportunity for a committee meeting in October 2017.

Appendix 1: Meeting Agenda

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Working Committee Meeting Agenda

May 12, 1:30 – 3:30.

Agenda

- 1) A Director is needed to fill our Liaison position – Discussion and potential recommendations
- 2) Resolutions supporting Recovering America’s Fish and Wildlife Act for each of their own agencies
- 3) Directors participation in the upcoming Fly-In for Recovering America’s Fish and Wildlife Act
- 4) Suggested Referendums: Resolution for MAFWA to support the America’s Alliance for Fish and Wildlife/Recovering America’s Wildlife Act
- 5) Updates and continued support of Mid-continent monarch work, add monarchs to SWAPS, support milkweed planting
- 6) Greater Midwest collaboration – Role of this committee especially with respect to the LCCs and the Midwest regional SWAP group
- 7) Team Membership Expansion to reflect action items/mission and annual meeting schedule

Appendix 2: May 12, 2017 MAFWA State Wildlife Action Plan Committee Meeting Attendance

Kinthead	Karen	IA
Reeder	Katy	IA
Feaster	Brad	IN
Berens	Chris	KS
Carr	Sunni	KY
Derosier	Amy	MI
Balch	Faith	MN
Rezac	Kelly	MO
Muenks	Nathan	MO
Stoner	Kristal	NE
Dowd-Stukel	Eileen	SD
Koslowsky	Shari	WI

Appendix 3: Proposed resolution for consideration.

RESOLUTION #_

MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES
SUPPORT FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BLUE RIBBON
PANEL ON SUSTAINING AMERICA'S DIVERSE FISH AND
WILDLIFE RESOURCES AND ONGOING WORK.

WHEREAS, the states play an essential role in the conservation and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats which contribute to our quality of life and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts established a fund to support conservation and science-based management of wild birds, mammals and sport fish species financed by hunters, recreational shooters, fishermen, and boaters; and

WHEREAS, a similar dedicated and sustainable funding mechanism is lacking for the many species of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates that are not hunted or fished; and

WHEREAS, the states, territories and District of Columbia developed and recently updated historic, comprehensive and scientifically-based State Wildlife Action Plans that identified over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need; and

WHEREAS, there is a recognized need to expand the funding base for wildlife conservation throughout the Nation as effective implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans would require an annual investment of over \$1 billion; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, was tasked with recommending a new funding mechanism to support state fish and wildlife conservation to ensure the sustainability of all fish and wildlife for current and future generations; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel recommended that Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and water to the existing unfunded Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel also recommended that the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation be examined and recommendation made on how programs and agencies can transform to engage and serve broader constituencies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes and appreciates the valuable contribution of co-chairs Mr. John Morris and former Governor David Freudenthal and the business and conservation leaders of the Blue Ribbon Panel; and

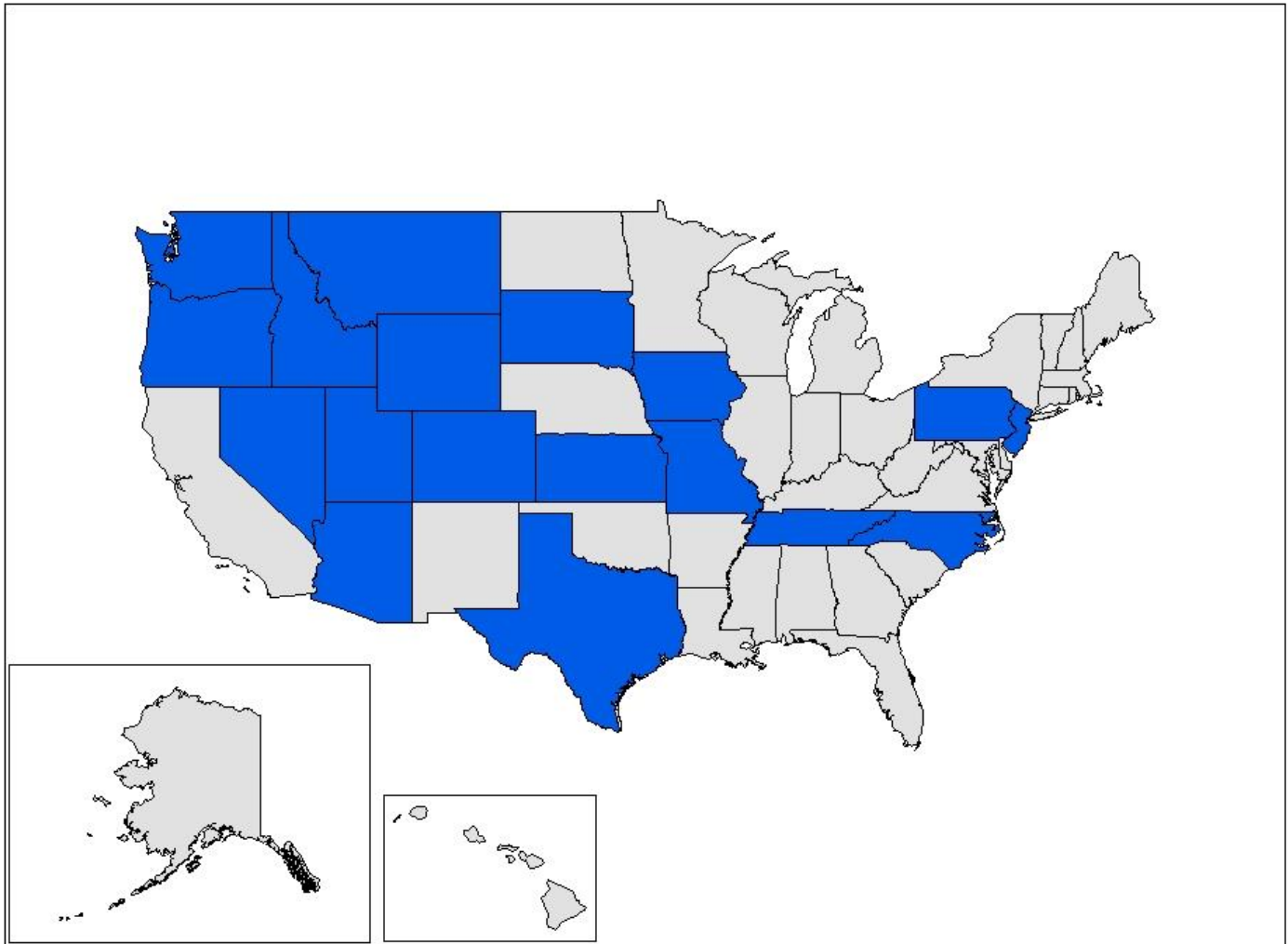
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies supports the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies notifies the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies by copy of this resolution that it stands ready to support and participate in national efforts and events of the Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife campaign and the Blue Ribbon Panel to work with the US Congress and the Administration to pass legislation to create a 21st century conservation funding model that provides states, territories and the District of Columbia with sustained and dedicated funding to conserve all fish and wildlife and their habitats; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies also stands ready to support and implement continuing efforts by the Blue Ribbon Panel to develop recommendations that will ensure state fish and wildlife agencies remain relevant and supported by all citizens into the future.

Appendix 4: States that have passed resolutions supporting Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations

As of May 8th, 2017 Eighteen states have passed resolutions. In addition to states, AFWA, NWF, TWS and AFS have also passed resolutions. Other states have sent supportive letters to their congressional delegations.



Appendix 5: Example Resolutions

Two examples of resolutions passed in support of Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission.

Resolution #2016-03

Statement of appreciation to the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources and support for its recommendations and ongoing work

The purpose of this resolution is to express gratitude to the members of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources (Blue Ribbon Panel) and support for their recommendations.

WHEREAS, the states play an essential role in the conservation and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats which contribute to our quality of life and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, the Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux Acts and the contributions of hunters, recreational shooters, anglers, boaters and their industries led to the unprecedented recovery and sustainable management of our nation's game and sportfish; and

WHEREAS, the states, territories and District of Columbia developed and recently updated historic, comprehensive and scientifically-based State Wildlife Action Plans that identified over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need; and

WHEREAS, effective implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans would require an annual investment of over \$1 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) and the national Teaming With Wildlife coalition has been advocating for nearly three decades for dedicated funding so states can sustainably manage all fish and wildlife and their habitats to fulfill their missions and legal responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel was convened to develop a recommendation to sustainably fund fish and wildlife conservation to meet large and growing unmet conservation needs; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel recommended that Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the existing unfunded Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel also recommended that the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation be examined and recommendations made on how programs and agencies can transform to engage and serve broader constituencies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association recognizes and appreciates the valuable contributions of co-chairs Mr. John Morris and former Governor David Freudenthal and the business and conservation leaders of the Blue Ribbon Panel; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association stands ready to work with the US Congress and the Administration to implement the Blue Ribbon Panel's funding recommendation by passing legislation to create a 21st century conservation funding model that provides states, territories, and the District of Columbia with sustained and dedicated funding to conserve all fish and wildlife and their habitats; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association also stands ready to support continuing efforts by the Blue Ribbon Panel to develop recommendations that will ensure state fish and wildlife agencies remain relevant and supported by all citizens well into the future.

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING ANNUAL FUNDING
FOR THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION RESTORATION PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Kansas is home to unique populations and tremendously diverse wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Pittman-Robertson Act in 1937 and the Dingell-Johnson Act in 1950 that established dedicated funds supporting conservation and science-based management of fish and wildlife financed by hunters, recreational shooters, anglers, and boaters; and

WHEREAS, a similar dedicated and sustainable funding mechanism is lacking for the many species of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles that are not hunted or fished; and

WHEREAS, Kansas created a State Wildlife Action Plan to provide a comprehensive vision for managing Kansas' fish, wildlife and wildlife habitats; and

WHEREAS, the Wildlife Action Plan focuses on 285 Species of Greatest Conservation Need and 13 priority habitat types that require prescriptive actions to ensure persistence for future generations; and

WHEREAS, there is a recognized need to expand the funding base for wildlife conservation in Kansas and throughout the Nation; and

WHEREAS, the recent Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, composed of 26 business and conservation leaders, recommends a new funding mechanism to support state fish and wildlife conservation to ensure sustainability of all fish and wildlife for current and future generations; and

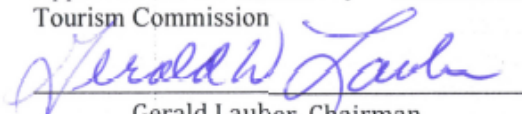
WHEREAS, securing dedicated federal funding is likely to require a non-federal state match similar to that in place for the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts.

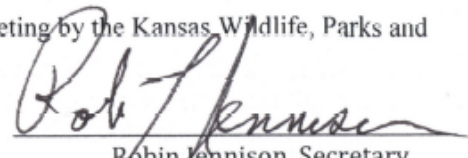
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission supports the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources recommendation that Congress dedicate 1.3 billion dollars annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program to diversify funding and management of all wildlife; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission respectfully requests that the Kansas Congressional Delegation support federal legislation, including HR5650 entitled "Recovering America's Wildlife Act" that would implement this recommendation; and encourages other state fish and wildlife agencies throughout the nation to do the same; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission supports broader dedicated funding mechanisms for wildlife conservation and implementation of the Kansas State Wildlife Action Plan, as well as to serve as the State's 25 percent match in the event that new dedicated federal funding is secured.

Approved this the 20 day of October, 2016, in an official meeting by the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission


Gerald Lauber, Chairman


Robin Jennison, Secretary