

# MIDWEST PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT WORKING COMMITTEE

## ANNUAL REPORT

### *June 5, 2002*

The Midwest Public Lands Management Working Committee (PLMWC) held its third annual meeting May 21<sup>st</sup> through 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgedale, MO. The following were in attendance at the meeting: Russ Titus, chairman (MO), Brad Jump (MO), Bill Phillips (MO), Rob Manes (WMI), Bob Dolan (IA), Jeff Hoffman (NE), Daylan Figgs (NE), Bill May (OH), Bill Bean (IN), Pat Brandon (KY), Tom Beissel (IL), Ken Herring (IA) and Robert Barbee (KS). Member states not represented include: Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Canadian provinces.

The first item of discussion was the poor representation by many states and the Canadian provinces. The committee requested that the 2002 chairman or his designee bring this to the attention of the Midwest directors. The underlining agreement of those attending was that the committee can not function without a commitment by the directors to have their representatives attend the annual meeting.

Last year's business was discussed. Three letters generated as a result of the 2001 meeting had not received a response as the 2002 meeting began. These letters were sent February 25, 2002, to Attorney General Ashcroft, Dale Bosworth, Chief USFS and Steve Williams, Director USFWS. Rob Manes advised that the International has assigned a committee to review the Midwest Director's concern that NEPA is a barrier to management and is used by some groups to stop management activities, especially on federal lands. Other issues highlighted the need for Fish and Wildlife administered lands to be managed in harmony with adjacent state land objectives, and specifically should not be more restrictive. Finally, the decreasing ability of the Forest Service to conduct management activities on lands they administer is a growing concern and should be addressed. The annual committee report to the directors should include an update on the status of these letters.

- **Action Item:** Rob Manes will ensure International is looking at archeological/historical aspects of NEPA
- **Action Item:** Rob Manes will contact Tom Neibauer and report to group.

**Recommendation:** If responses to the letters have not been received by the July director's meeting, follow-up letters should be initiated.

The group discussed the USFWS guidelines that govern activities such as field trials. Most states have solutions working that appear to be satisfactory at this time. States are designating field trial areas that don't have Federal Aid restrictions and instituting controlled hunts with put and take pheasants etc. States vary in implementation of put and take hunting and feel this should be a states rights issue. Privatization also has been a success in some states.

Committee discussion on new resource issues began with the North American Grouse Management Plan. Rob Manes discussed the need for coordinated management efforts in and among states. NAGMP has been accepted by the North American Grouse Partnership and a conceptual plan developed. While this effort is for all prairie species, grouse are proposed as □flagship□ species to implement larger grassland/prairie issues and ecological communities. The group discussed the tie in to all bird conservation and the opportunity for grazing and rangeland issues to be handled by the latest Farm Bill provisions.

- **Action Item:** Rob Manes will give a presentation to Directors in July requesting the endorsement of the NAGMP concept. Additional discussion will include endorsement of the ruffed grouse plan.

Rob Manes discussed the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Alliance . . . Forest Service land planning and management. The focus is principally about hunting and fishing on National Forest Service lands. The Alliance was established as a way to get hunter and angler needs presented to USFS. . . broadening the scope to include all federally owned public lands. This effort has the potential to be very beneficial. WMI is represented on the board of directors. TRCA was influential in North Dakota. Funds are provided through private contributions.

User conflicts and efforts to resolve them were discussed, mostly as informational subjects. Motorized vs. non-motorized vehicle use as well as secondary uses such as ATV's, snowmobiles, paintballing, easements for towers and utilities, horseback riding, remote control airplanes, etc. were discussed in a manner that would foster understanding and share solutions. Shooting ranges became the focal point of this discussion. The degree that states provide shooting opportunity varies widely from plinking on areas to supervised ranges. Quantity of ranges varies from one to many, but all agree that shooting range opportunity is a vital interest and should be protected and enhanced. Funding from ammunition sales to shooters that don't hunt may be substantial.

- **Action Item:** Rob Manes will prepare a draft resolution for directors to forward to IAFWA emphasizing that ranges are important and that dialog is needed with the shooting industry and other stakeholders to address issues including forced closures, recreational demand, funding for building, staffing, and operations as well as the role of ranges on public lands.

Several states currently have legislation prohibiting hunting within 200-300 yards of a residence. This trend could result in elimination of substantial hunting opportunity and compromise public use areas.

Organizational issues were discussed. Organization varies widely among member states, many in two or more ways . . . regional/district and divisional/sectional instead of one or the other . . . Retirements. . . New Directors were also a point of short discussions. Movement away from □hook and bullet□ organizations . . . to all species is on the move and a sign of the times.

T&E species and how that affects management was discussed. Concerns were expressed about traditional management procedures being challenged that historically benefited T&E species.

As wildlife agencies transition into ecosystems management rather than species management, involvement of all agency personnel is important. Agency organization, internal communication, and knowledge and experience about T&E species are vital to providing effective management for all wildlife. The approach towards wildlife management should be integrated from the beginning when preparing management plans. A team approach to writing plans may be the most productive method for reaching management goals. Hiring the right people and providing the right training is an important first step to accomplishing this. The committee recognized that individual states organized their wildlife agencies differently. Some agencies combine the game and non-game entities, while others separate them. The organization distinctly affects the efficiency of the operation. It appears that those agencies that combine game and non-game within the same section and that use the integrated approach to management planning are the most effective.

Next year's meeting will be hosted by Nebraska. For the convenience of those flying in, the location should be near Lincoln or Omaha. The third week of May has worked out well in the past. ***Proposed dates are May 20 - 22, 2003.***

