



Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee Meeting

April 29, 2020

Video Conference

Hosted remotely by:

North Dakota Game and Fish Department

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Meeting Time and Place

Our annual meeting took place on April 29, 2020 by video conference hosted remotely by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. The meeting had originally been intended to take place in person on April 28 and 29, 2020 in Bismarck, North Dakota, but was changed to a remote meeting due to COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions. To supplement the primary meeting, additional specific topic focused conference calls (SARS-CoV-2, RHDV2, CWD, WHISPer) were scheduled and are summarized below.

Agenda: see Appendix I

Attendance:

Attending this year's Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee Meeting were representatives from 15 state fish and wildlife agencies: including representatives from all MAFWA member states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) as well as Tennessee and Virginia; representatives from all 3 MAFWA provincial wildlife agencies: Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan; and representatives from 3 federal agencies:

- the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS-WS)
- the United States Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center (USGS-NWHC)
- the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

A total of 27 individuals participated in the meeting (Appendix II).

Executive Summary, Meeting Presentations:

State Wildlife Health Presentation Summaries

Each state or province in attendance provided an update during the annual meeting on the wildlife disease issues and ongoing research in their jurisdiction. See Appendix III.

USDA-WS and American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians (AAWV) Update, Tom DeLiberto, USDA APHIS-WS

Dr. DeLiberto provided updates during the annual meeting on a number of relevant topics including the standing of several pieces of chronic wasting disease legislation under consideration. He informed the Committee of the opportunity to participate in the government relations committee of the AAWV that helps to ensure that legislators are aware of the wildlife perspective when considering upcoming legislation.

Region-wide CWD Management, Kelly Straka and Bryan Richards and Sherri Russell

Updates were provided during the annual meeting on regional collaborative programs and projects including by Sherri Russell on the Four Corners CWD project involving Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Representatives from fish and wildlife agencies from these states met to collaborate on messaging and outreach related to high level management objectives for CWD and noted they would be happy to share the products of their meeting with other agencies. An update was also provided by Mike Tonkovich on recent meetings, including a value stream mapping exercise, and progress on the Midwest Landscape Initiative. An emphasis was placed on the need to engage hunters in CWD management.

WHISPers Update, Bryan Richards

Bryan Richards provided an abbreviated update during the annual meeting on the revised version of the NWHC's national disease tracking database. It was agreed to schedule a meeting specific to this topic in the near future with the intent of encouraging increased use of this tool to increase its value to the wildlife health community.

MSCGP CWD Networking and Information Sharing Project Update, Nancy Boedeker

Nancy Boedeker provided an update on this project during the annual meeting which initiated out of an NCN submitted by the MAFWA health committee and was subsequently funded through the MSCGP and supported by AFWA. The objective of the grant is to meet the need for increased information sharing about chronic wasting disease across North America to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of management of this devastating disease. This would include sharing information about CWD test results and out-of-state hunters. Throughout the first half of 2020, DJ Case, the subcontractee for the grant, will be conducting interviews with representatives with legal, information technology, wildlife health, and deer management expertise from all fish and wildlife agencies across the United States and Canada to identify potential concerns and limitations with regard to interagency information sharing. In the third quarter they will host a workshop to develop solutions to those concerns and by the end of the year will develop a basic framework for an accepted and effective information sharing tool. The Michigan DNR, Indiana DNR, and DJ Case plan to submit a proposal to apply for 2021 MSCGP funds, potentially with additional partners, to then build, initiate, and develop a plan for maintenance of this tool. Committee members were urged to encourage their agency's active participation in the interviews and workshop in 2020 and directors are encouraged to do the same.

SARS-CoV-2 Update and Discussion, Conference Call, 5/8/20

By request of committee members, a call hosted by NWHC was held to provide updates and an opportunity for discussion of wildlife management issues related to SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of the current global human health pandemic which likely arose from contact between humans and wildlife. Concern for the potential for infection by humans of wildlife species including bats, felids, mustelids, and other species was discussed using information assimilated from multiple sources including AFWA, NWHC, USDA-APHIS, CDC One Health Covid group, and OIE. Diagnostic testing needs and concerns related to wildlife were discussed. Updates were provided on recent and upcoming AFWA health committee documents and

discussion related to this disease as well as on the NWHC bat risk assessment and North American bat susceptibility study. Considered, proposed, or enacted wildlife management changes related to SARS-CoV-2 concerns of the state and provincial Midwest fish and wildlife agencies were discussed. Discussion focused in part on addressing concerns of wildlife rehabilitators in enacting management actions. Prior to the meeting Committee members developed an online chart for each state and provincial representative to update in regard to these actions or considerations with various species. Members were requested to keep the chart up to date as additional changes are made within their agency, state, or province so the chart can serve as a useful reference of what measures other agencies have adopted.

RHDV-2 Update and Discussion on Collaborative Management Opportunities, Conference Call, 5/20/20

By request of committee members, a meeting focused on Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus-2 (RHDV-2) was scheduled. Invited guest speakers included Tom Gidlewski from the National Wildlife Research Center and Barb Bodenstein, Robin Russell, Bob Dusek, and Katherine Richgels from the National Wildlife Health Center. In addition to SARS-CoV-2, a virus with potential impact on wildlife and demanding attention from wildlife health specialists, another emerging foreign animal disease is impacting wildlife in the United States. This virus, RHDV-2, though sporadically identified causing domestic and feral rabbit mortality in the U.S. in recent years, was identified for the first time in early 2020 as the cause of mortality in wild rabbits of multiple species as well as domestic rabbits in the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico. A risk assessment for wild rabbit populations at the national level is being conducted by NWHC but rapid spread throughout the country is currently considered quite possible. NWHC is also conducting more targeted risk assessments for endangered rabbit species populations including, in the Midwest, Indiana's state endangered swamp rabbit. Several fish and wildlife agencies are initiating discussions with their state and federal health management counterparts in agricultural and domestic animal health to collaborate on outreach and education as a preventive measure to limit the spread of this disease. Species susceptibility trials and the possibility of development of an oral vaccine for endangered rabbits are under consideration by USDA-APHIS-WS. Because RHDV-2 is classified as a foreign animal disease, testing is currently limited by the capacity at Plum Island, but options to expand approved testing facilities which would increase opportunities for surveillance of wildlife are being actively pursued. A site for Committee members to share outreach documents, stakeholder lists, and informational resources related to this disease was established immediately following this meeting to aid in collaborative and unified regional messaging efforts. We greatly appreciate that several southwestern states have contributed documents to that site as well, facilitated through the NWHC.

CWD Update, Conference Call Planned for 6/3/20

For this upcoming meeting, the agenda includes CWD related updates from all states and provinces. Committee members have been asked to focus on discussing COVID-19 related changes to their CWD management plans, carcass disposal methods in use or under

consideration, risk assessment tools in use or under consideration, and response and management strategies post-detection. Discussion will also focus on collaborative and/or regional scale management coordination, risk assessment, or research approaches in use or under consideration by the MAFWA states and provinces. This will include programs such as Four Corners and the Wisconsin USGS/Wisconsin DNR/NWHC project. Also, Krysten Schuler from Cornell University has been invited to attend the meeting to discuss her SOP4CWD project which several Midwestern states are already a part of. Additionally, Michelle Carstensen will provide an update on the Ad Hoc Committee she is leading on CWD Prevalence Tracking. A brief update will be provided on further progress and future plans for the MI/IN CWD information sharing project funded through the MSCGP. Finally, a request from SCWDS and Virginia Game and Fish for MAFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee members to participate in a survey on taxidermist and processor engagement and participation for CWD surveillance will be discussed.

WHISPers Demo, Conference Call, planned for July 2020.

This upcoming call will be led by Bryan Richards of the USGS National Wildlife Health Center. He will explain, present, and demonstrate the updated NWHC national disease tracking system and will allow MAFWA health committee participants to test out data entry procedures with the goal of increasing use of the system by MAFWA agencies.

Director Action Items:

Committee Elections

Dr. Kelly Straka opted to resign as Chair of the Committee in April of 2020. Her dedication to the advancement of wildlife health concerns in the Midwest region while Chair is greatly appreciated. She has left big shoes to fill! Dr. Nancy Boedeker, previously the Vice Chair of the Committee, was approved to serve as the new Chair of the Committee. Dr. Lindsey Long was elected to be the new Vice Chair of the Committee.

Resolutions

Two resolutions are respectfully submitted to the directors for review and consideration.

1. Resolution to Join the North American Non-Lead Partnership. See Appendix 4 (resolution and supplemental information)
2. Resolution to Promote Fish and Wildlife Agency Engagement in the One Health Approach. See Appendix 5 (resolution and supplemental information)

Director Information Items:

AFWA Federal Appropriations Recommendations for 2022 Federal Budget

Due to time restrictions related to switching the annual meeting from in-person to remote and due to great uncertainties about agency budgets and potential restrictions on work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee did not make recommendations for specific federal appropriations modifications. However, the Committee continues to strongly support the work of the programs it has previously recommended funding increases for, namely:

- Chronic Wasting Disease-Equine/Cervid Health line item for CWD surveillance, research and management on wild, free-ranging cervids (USDA APHIS)
- Bovine Tuberculosis- Ruminant Health line item for bovine TB surveillance, research and management on wild, free-ranging cervids (USDA APHIS)
- White Nose Syndrome-surveillance, research and management efforts (USFWS DOI)
- Neonicotinoids-research on impacts of neonicotinoids to wildlife species (USFWS DOI)
- Fish, Amphibian and Reptile Health-surveillance, research and management of emerging fish, amphibian and reptile health issues. (USGS DOI)
- USGS National Wildlife Health Center. The USGS National Wildlife Health Center is the only national center dedicated to wildlife disease detection, control, and prevention in the United States. Its mission is to provide national leadership to safeguard wildlife and ecosystem health through active partnerships and exceptional science.
- Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS), a state-federal wildlife health cooperative providing research expertise, diagnostic capacity, and training to agencies. SCWDS is instrumental in the protection of this nation's wildlife resources, domestic livestock interests, and human health.
- Wildlife Disease Monitoring and Surveillance program (USDA). This program provides wildlife disease assistance to states, such as CWD and bovine TB surveillance, feral hog control, and participation of wildlife disease biologists in state agency wildlife disease management activities.

The Committee is very encouraged by the ongoing efforts of AFWA in 2020 to raise awareness amongst legislators of the need for increased funding for wildlife health research and management. Support for this need is gaining traction, especially in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic which likely arose from human exposure to a virus harbored in wildlife. Several members of the MAFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee have been actively engaged in helping to define these needs as federal funding for the improvement of national wildlife health management capacity is sought through various COVID stimulus and response packages. Committee members are happy to provide MAFWA directors with further explanation and insight into these needs and their prioritization upon request.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

Many uncertainties related to the ongoing global pandemic remain. Initially the committee had hoped to reschedule the in-person meeting for later in 2020, however, this seems increasingly less likely due to the status of the pandemic itself as well as due to associated budget and travel restrictions. The committee hopes to meet in-person for our next annual meeting in April of 2021 and is considering that the location be in North Dakota as was planned for this year. The committee will continue to meet by video conference as needed to discuss timely issues of mutual interest to member agencies throughout 2020.

Despite the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's meeting was quite successful and we want to thank the Directors who allowed time for the representatives and presenters to participate in this meeting. Meeting remotely was a good alternative for this year, but it can't fully substitute for the extensive discussion and relationship building that come out of in-person meetings. We continue to encourage directors to support in-person attendance by MAFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee members at future meetings. Also, we thank the North Dakota Game and Fish for their willingness to host this year's meeting in person and the time spent on those preparations as well as their flexibility in agreeing to switch to a remote meeting.

Submitted by: Nancy Boedeker, Chair

APPENDIX 1. AGENDA

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Health Committee Meeting Agenda

April 29th, 2020 12:00 – 5:00 CST

12:00	Opening Remarks and Introductions	
12:10	Member Summaries	State Representatives
	<i>Members will have up to 10 minutes to provide highlights and answer any questions. The order of reports will be as follows:</i>	
	<i>Arkansas</i>	
	<i>Illinois</i>	
	<i>Indiana</i>	
	<i>Iowa</i>	
	<i>Kansas</i>	
	<i>Kentucky</i>	
	<i>Michigan</i>	
	<i>Minnesota</i>	
	<i>Missouri</i>	
1:30	Region-wide CWD Management CWD and Midwest Landscape Initiative; B. Richards 4 Corners; Sherri Russell	Kelly Straka
2:15	Break	
2:30	Member Summaries Continued	State Representatives
	<i>Manitoba</i>	
	<i>Nebraska</i>	
	<i>North Dakota</i>	
	<i>Ohio</i>	
	<i>Ontario</i>	
	<i>Saskatchewan</i>	
	<i>South Dakota</i>	
	<i>Tennessee</i>	
	<i>Virginia</i>	
	<i>Wisconsin</i>	
4:00	WHISPers	Bryan Richards
4:10	MSCGP CWD Networking Grant Proposal	Nancy Boedeker
4:30	Budget Recommendations, Discussion	Kelly Straka
5:00	Meeting Adjourns	

APPENDIX II. PARTICIPANT NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Participants	Affiliation	<u>E-mail</u>
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APPENDIX II. (cont.) PARTICIPANT NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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