

# Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Group Committee 2021 Directors Report



## Report Compiled By:

**Keith Warnke, Director (Wisconsin)**  
**Megan Wisecup, Chair (Iowa)**  
**Jeff Rawlinson, Vice-Chair (Nebraska)**

## Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Committee Members

<b>Agency/Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
Archery Trade Association	Josh Gold	Senior Manager of R3 and State Relations
Becoming an Outdoors Woman	Peggy Ferrel	R3 Coordinator
Illinois DNR	Nicky Strahl	Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Biologist
Indiana DNR	Anthony Barenie	R3 Manager
Iowa DNR	Barb Gigar	Angler R3 Coordinator
Iowa DNR	Megan Wisecup	Education and Outreach Section Supervisor
Iowa DNR	Rachel Alliss	Hunter Education and Shooting Sports
Iowa PF	Jamie Cook	Iowa State Coordinator
Kansas DWPT	Tanna Fanshier	R3 Program Coordinator
Kentucky DFWR	Oliva Dangler	R3 Coordinator
Michigan DNR	Dennis Fox	Recruitment and Retention Section Manager
Minnesota DNR	James Burnham	R3 Coordinator
Missouri DOC	Eric Edwards	Education Outreach Coordinator
Nebraska GPC	Jeff Rawlinson	Education Manager
North Dakota GFD	Cayla Bendel	R3 Coordinator
Ohio DNR	Eric Postell	Program Manager
Pass it on Outdoors Mentors	Brittany French	Director of Field Operations
Pheasants Forever	Colby Kerber	Hunting Heritage Program Manager
South Dakota GFPC	Taniya Bethke	Wildlife Division Education Specialist
Wisconsin DNR	Emily Iehl	Hunting and Shooting Sports R3 Coordinator
Wisconsin DNR	Theresa Stabo	Angler R3 Coordinator
Wisconsin BHA	Joe Steffen	R3 Coordinator
Wisconsin NWTF	John Motoviloff	R3 Coordinator
Wisconsin PF	Marty Moses	R3 Coordinator
USFWS	Kyle Daly	Region 3 Fish and Wildlife Biologist
USFWS	Fabian Romero	Region 3 Grant Administrator

# Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Group Committee Year in Review

## **January – March 2020:**

Approximately 25 agency R3 staff, NGO, and industry partners were in attendance for our half day in-person meeting held in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference on January 26th in Springfield, IL. An organized R3 Symposia was also held on January 28th. This symposium served as a venue for R3 professionals to provide updates on individual and collaborative R3 projects in the Midwest. Several staff and a few partners presented during this symposium on efforts such as mentoring, research, women-focused efforts, and learn to hunt for food initiatives.

Subcommittees continued to meet over conference calls and through email to address the priority projects identified during the annual meeting in January. Communication was routine amongst committee members until COVID-19 hit the nation in March virtually halting everything for the coming weeks.

## **April – June 2020:**

With the roll out of the Modern Multistate Conservation Grant Program and funding opportunities opening to the states, the committee was able to reconvene virtually in late April/early May to discuss potential projects. The three priority areas that rose to the top were marketing, evaluation, and mentoring. The decision was made to begin drafting a proposal for a small game diversity marketing toolkit. Taniya Bethke (SD) led a small subcommittee comprised of member states and partners through the application process and we were able to successfully submit our first LOI and full proposal for the project.

Discussions also began on potential MMSCG 2021 projects. Multiple meetings were held between all four AFWA region's evaluation subcommittee members and Matt Dunfee (WMI). Over the course of these meetings, we were able to flush out priority needs for the regions and settle on an evaluation training project designed specifically for R3 professionals. Megan Wisecup (IA) worked with Matt and Loren Chase (Chase and Chase Consulting) to draft a proposal for the four regional R3 committees. Jeff Rawlinson (NE) led a small subcommittee comprised of member states and partners through the development of a draft proposal for a mentor communication project.

A meeting was conducted between the committee chair, vice chair, Director Keith Warnke (WI) and Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA) to discuss the committee's priorities and the potential regional R3 coordinator position. Guidance was provided on the steps necessary to bring items forward to the MAFWA Directors.

## **July – September 2020:**

MMSCG 2021 LOIs and full proposals were successfully submitted for the evaluation and mentoring projects. Funding was awarded for all three projects. Project subcommittees were officially formed, and regular communication and meetings were held to kick-off project discussions.

Meeting was held between members of the Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Technical Working Committee, Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Committee and the North American Non-Lead Partnership organization. An overview of the organization was provided to committee members along with information regarding the recent decision for MAFWA to sign on as a supporting partner. The committees were tasked to work together jointly to come up with recommendations to set the framework for individual state and regional action in accordance with this partnership.

Several committee members participated and presented at the two-day virtual National R3 Forum held August 26th & 27th by the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports.

## **October – December 2020:**

Multiple subcommittee and full committee calls were held through the remainder of the year to address the MMSCG projects, annual meeting planning and general collaboration and sharing on R3 related topics.

# **MAFWA Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Group Committee 2021 Annual Meeting Recap**

The MAFWA R3 Committee met virtually during the annual Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference on February 3rd and 4th. Record attendance was sustained over the two-day meeting with over 70 R3 professionals in attendance each day. The themes surrounding this year's meeting included retaining the COVID-19 participation surge, increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in outdoor recreation and updates on the three multi-state conservation grants the committee applied for and received in 2020 and 2021, respectively. This meeting was just the start of many conversations to come over the course of the upcoming calendar year as we strive to continue to grow and collaborate more effectively as a region on various R3 efforts.

## Wednesday, February 3 - Day One:

- 09:00AM - 9:10AM: Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping Keith Warnke, WI
- 09:10AM - 9:40AM: COVID-19 Impact on License Sales 2020 Angler & Hunter Data  
Rob Southwick, Southwick Associates
- 09:40AM - 10:00AM: COVID-19 Impact on Hunter & Boater Education - A Vendor's Perspective  
Greg Gulliver, Fresh Air Educators and Rebecca Medeiros, Kalkomey
- 10:00AM - 10:20AM: Retaining the Surge of Angler and Boater Participation  
Stephanie Hussey, RBFF
- 10:20AM - 10:30AM: Break
- 10:30AM - 11:15AM: COVID-19 Induced Innovations & Successes State/Partner Highlights
- 11:15AM - 11:50AM: Marketing/Licensing/HD Panel State/Partner Representatives
- 11:50AM - 12:00PM: Wrap Up/Day Two Preview  
Megan Wisecup, IA and Jeff Rawlinson, NE

## Thursday, February 4 - Day Two:

- 09:00AM - 9:10AM: Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping Keith Warnke, WI
- 09:10AM - 9:30AM: CAHSS Update  
Steve Leath and Samantha Pedder, CAHSS
- 09:30AM - 10:00AM: Evaluation MSCG  
Megan Wisecup, IA and Loren Chase, Chase & Chase Consulting
- 10:00AM - 10:30AM: Mentoring MSCG  
Jeff Rawlinson, NE and Rob Southwick, Southwick Associates
- 10:30AM - 10:40AM: Break
- 10:40AM - 11:00AM: Regional R3 Coordination Jamie Cook, IA PF
- 11:00AM - 11:20AM: Small Game Marketing Toolkit MSCG  
Taniya Bethke, SD
- 11:20AM - 11:50AM: Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable: DEI and the Challenges We  
Face in R3 to Build Diversity  
James Burnham (MN) and Theresa Stabo (WI)
- 11:50AM - 12:00PM: Wrap Up/Next Steps  
Megan Wisecup, IA and Jeff Rawlinson, NE

# **MAFWA Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Group Committee Scientific-Based Management Needs**

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Director's Executive Committee has asked the Association to develop clear national priorities for science-based management needs. This task has been assigned to the Science and Research Committee. Because needs likely differ across the country, the Science and Research Committee is asking each of the regional associations to provide their priority challenges in each of five areas. Below are the responses from the MAFWA Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Group Committee.

## Wildlife Health Priority

Overwhelming among the MAFWA R3 Committee states responding identified CWD as the biggest wildlife health priority. It appears that many agency's research and surveillance efforts are limited due to staffing and/or operational budget constraints. Many would greatly benefit from outside funding sources and/or partnerships dedicated to surveillance and/or research. Change management is also a desired need regarding CWD. What communication approaches most effectively lead to a shift in hunter behavior towards lower-risk behaviors? What builds, lasting public support for more controversial measures? There are numerous human dimensions studies that provide insight into where the public is at. How do we start to move the needle on this? Disease management – how much actual value do various management techniques provide compared to others? Where is our best bang-for-the buck? What techniques are most effective in controlling prevalence? Of the mechanisms of transmission documented in challenge studies, which are most important in nature. In areas where environmental transmission has become prominent, how localized are these areas? Is there a way to mitigate them?

Other wildlife health related priorities/areas of interest submitted by the committee include:

- White Nose Bat Syndrome
- Chytrid Fungus
- COVID-19/SARS
- Mycoplasma Ovipneumonia
- Bovine Tuberculosis
- Avian Influenza
- Wild Turkey – decline in reproduction and perceived decline in populations – causes?

## Weather and Temperature-Related Concerns Priority

Priorities varied among the MAFWA R3 Committee states responding to what weather and temperature-related concerns are biggest in their respective states.

Some of the top challenges included:

- Shifts in species distributions in relation to weather.
  - White-tailed deer expanding north and bringing parasites that negatively affect moose.
  - Warming waters that favor smallmouth bass over walleye which are exacerbated by and interconnected to the impacts of introduced aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels.
- Shorter and warmer winters affecting outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Increase in more intense, less predictable storms that can have significant impacts on human and wildlife populations.
- Maintaining native plant and animal diversity to adapt to weather and temperature related concerns.
- Knowledge of impacts on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems – abatement strategies.
- Fluctuating water levels with particular concern for drought in managing our fisheries for the long-term, especially as it relates to angler R3. Drought impacts on other wildlife including small game directly and indirectly through grassland management amidst droughts.

### Invasive Species Priority

Priorities varied among the MAFWA R3 Committee states responding to what invasive species are the biggest priority in their respective states.

Some of the top priorities included:

- Mitigation of impacts from introduced aquatic invasive species to local lakes.
  - Limiting their spread
  - Monitoring their impacts
  - Quantifying what it means for the native species and aquatic systems where they are found.
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Zebra mussels
  - How they affect ecosystems in general along with fish culture and fish hatchery productions.
- Invasive plants
  - Red cedar
  - Honeysuckle
  - Sericea lespedeza
  - Leafy spurge
- Invasive Asian Carp
- Hydrilla
- Wild Pigs

### Emerging Technologies Priority

Funding, staffing, and remaining relevant appear to be the common themes among the MAFWA R3 Committee states responding when it comes to challenges facing emerging technologies. It is difficult for state agencies to stay on top of emerging opportunities due to rigid policies, lack of flexibility, funding constraints, and staff comfort level (or lack of training for staff to learn how to use new technologies). There are also some mild concerns regarding wind and solar energy development impacts. It is a low-level terrestrial problem currently but still a significant threat.

### Interjurisdictional Cooperation (Surveillance, Management, Assessment) Priority

A top challenge identified by the MAFWA R3 states responding regarding interjurisdictional cooperation surrounds standardizing how we communicate across jurisdictions and exchange information. It is often difficult because our internal policies and structures do not match each other so it can lead to a misalignment of resources like staff or funding to apply towards these types of efforts. Funding and capacity are needed to work across state lines for mutually beneficial outcomes. States have greatly appreciated landscape level initiatives such as the Midwest Landscape Initiative. A landscape level understanding of regional species of greatest need is important to identifying priorities at a regional or landscape level.

### Other Priority Areas of Need Identified

- Sustainably funding the operation of management and conservation. It underlies almost any discussion on management, engagement, equity in access to the outdoors or recruiting, retaining, and reactivating new hunters and anglers.
- RAWA – having sustainable funding sources to impact SGCN.
- Relevancy roadmap and be able to meet the diversity of recreational interests and balancing compatible uses.
- Total participation declines and engaging new audiences.