



**MIDWEST**

Association of  
Fish & Wildlife  
Agencies

**87th Annual  
Directors Meeting  
Proceedings**

**June 28 – June 30, 2021**

**Whova/Zoom  
Virtual Meeting**

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**Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Annual Meeting  
June 28 - June 30, 2021  
Whova/Zoom Virtual Meeting**

**ACTION ITEMS**

*Wednesday* (Completed 6/30/21)

- < Accepted October 2020 minutes from virtual annual business meeting
- < Voted to accept Investment Committee Policy Statement
- < Voted to approve Bylaws Committee Report Changes
- < Voted to approve Resolutions Committee Report  
To promote awareness of and preparedness for rabbit hemorrhagic disease
- < Voted to approve forming Ad Hoc CWD Committee
- < Voted to approve Non-Lead Partnership recommendations
- < Voted to approve Changing Banking Fees
- < Voted to approve Contract Position for helping with contracts and grants
- < Voted to approve development of Human Dimensions Committee
- < Voted to approved 2022 Proposed Budget
- < Voted to adjourn meeting

**Items heard and/or discussed, but not voted on:**

*Monday* (Completed 6/28/21)

- < Heard welcome from Keith Warnke
- < Heard State Hot Topics/State of the State Reports
- < Heard report on Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) from Kelley Myers

**Items heard and/or discussed, but not voted on (continued):**

*Tuesday* (Completed 6/29/21)

- < Presented Awards to Law Enforcement Officer of the Year; Wildlife Biologist of the Year; Fisheries Biologist of the Year; Spirit of the Shack; Excellence in Conservation; four Sagamore Awards, Dale Garner, IA, Kelly Hepler, SD, Terry Steinwand, ND and Jim Douglas, NE; two Special Recognition Awards to Doug Nygren, KS and Noreen Walsh, USFWS; and President's Award to George Meyer, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.
- < Heard AFWA State Contributions Program from Dean Smith
- < Heard Southern Wings Report from Deb Hahn
- < Heard AFWA Report from President Sara Parker Pauley and Executive Director Ron Regan
- < Heard Federal Partners Reports
  - < U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) report (Charlie Wooley, Region 3 Director)
  - < U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) report (Noreen Walsh, Region 6 Director)
  - < U.S. Forest Service (USFS) report (Steve Kuennen, Region 9 Renewable Resource Director)
  - < U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) report (Keith Wehner, Western Region Director)
  - < U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Midwest Climate Center (Olivia LeDee, Deputy Director)
- < Heard Committee Reports
  - < Climate Change ( )
  - < Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group report ( )
  - < Feral Swine Committee report ( )
  - < Midwest Furbearer Group report ( )
  - < Hunter & Angler Recruitment & Retention Committee report ( )
  - < Law Enforcement Committee (AMGFLEO) report ( )
  - < CITES report (Caldwell)
  - < Private Lands Working Group report ( )
  - < Public Lands Working Group report ( )
  - < Wildlife Diversity Committee report ( )
  - < Wildlife and Fish Health Committee report ( )
- < Heard CWD Funding report from John Fischer, WMI

**Items heard and/or discussed, but not voted on (continued):**

*Wednesday* (Completed 6/30/19)

- < Call to Order (all directors)
- < Agenda Rev
- < Executive Secretary's Report (Ollie Torgerson)
- < Treasurer's Report (Lubbert)
- < Audit Committee Report (Warnke)
- < Awards Committee Report (Steinwand)
- < Angler R3 Update (Dave Chanda, RBFF)
- < Mid-America Monarch Strategy Report (Ed Boggess and Claire Beck)
- < National Wild Pheasant Plan Update (Scott Taylor)
- < Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference Update (Pauley)
- < Midwest Landscape Initiative Report (Douglas and Craig Czarnecki, USFWS)
- < Funding Stream Survey (Charlie Booher, University of Montana)
- < Save the Date, South Dakota 2022 Meeting Update



# **Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

## ***Objectives***

*The objectives of the Association shall be to protect the right of jurisdiction of the Midwestern states over their wildlife resources on public and private lands; to scrutinize carefully state and federal wildlife legislation and regulations and to offer support or opposition to legislative proposals or federal regulations in accordance with the best interests of the Midwestern states; to serve as a clearinghouse for the exchange of ideas concerning wildlife and fisheries management, research techniques, wildlife law enforcement, hunting and outdoor safety, and information and education; and to encourage and assist sportsmen's and conservationists' organizations so that the fullest measure of cooperation may be secured from our citizenry in the protection, preservation, restoration and management of our fish and wildlife resources.*

# **Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

## ***Mission Statement***

*Our mission is to provide a forum for state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies to share ideas and information, pool resources, and initiate action to benefit the management and conservation of fish and wildlife resources in the Midwest.*

**Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Meeting Locations and Dates**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Des Moines, Iowa - Savery Hotel<br>October 28, 1934                      | 23. Springfield, Illinois - Hotel St. Nicholas<br>July 9 - 11, 1956                   |
| 2. St. Paul, Minnesota - Hotel Lowry<br>June 29, 30, 1935                   | 24. Park Rapids, Minnesota - Itasca State Park<br>July 10 - 12, 1957                  |
| 3. Madison Wisconsin - State Capitol<br>June 16, 17, 1936                   | 25. Bismarck, North Dakota - Grand Pacific<br>Hotel, July 10, 11, 1958                |
| 4. Sioux Falls, South Dakota - Carpenter Hotel<br>June 11 - 13, 1937        | 26. West Lafayette, Indiana - Memorial Center,<br>Purdue University, July 9, 10, 1959 |
| 5. Omaha, Nebraska - Paxton Hotel<br>June 8, 9, 1938                        | 27. Rapid City, South Dakota - Sheraton<br>Johnson Hotel, July 17 - 20, 1960          |
| 6. Madison, Wisconsin - State Capitol<br>June 12, 13, 1939                  | 28. Higgins Lake, Michigan - Grand Hotel<br>July 10 - 12, 1961                        |
| 7. Mason City, Iowa - Hotel Hanford<br>June 17, 18, 1940                    | 29. Omaha, Nebraska - Paxton Hotel<br>July 28 - 30, 1962                              |
| 8. St. Louis, Missouri - Statler Hotel<br>June 4, 5, 1941                   | 30. Columbus, Ohio - Neil House Hotel<br>July 8, 9, 1963                              |
| 9. Duluth, Minnesota - Hotel Duluth<br>June 25, 26, 1942                    | 31. Milwaukee, Wisconsin - Milwaukee Inn<br>July 12 - 15, 1964                        |
| 10. Fox Lake, Illinois - Location Unknown<br>September 21, 1943             | 32. Toronto, Ontario - Westbury Hotel<br>July 27 - 29, 1965                           |
| 11. Bismarck, North Dakota - Location<br>Unknown, Date Unknown, 1944        | 33. Wichita, Kansas - Hotel Lassen<br>July 12 - 14, 1966                              |
| 12. Indianapolis, Indiana - Location Unknown<br>Date Unknown, 1945          | 34. Des Moines, Iowa - Hotel Savery<br>July 25 - 27, 1967                             |
| 13. Rapid City, South Dakota - Location<br>Unknown, Date Unknown, 1946      | 35. Chicago, Illinois - Conrad Hilton Hotel<br>July 28 - 31, 1968                     |
| 14. Roscommon, Michigan - Conservation<br>Training School, July 14-16, 1947 | 36. St. Louis, Missouri - Sheraton Jefferson<br>Hotel, July 27 - 30, 1969             |
| 15. Put-in-Bay, Ohio - Location Unknown<br>July 16, 17, 1948                | 37. Winnipeg, Manitoba - International Inn<br>July 29 - August 1, 1970                |
| 16. Lincoln, Nebraska - Location Unknown<br>October 3, 4, 1949              | 38. Aspen, Colorado - Stonebridge Inn<br>July 19 - 23, 1971                           |
| 17. Milwaukee, Wisconsin - Hotel Wisconsin<br>July 24 - 26, 1950            | 39. Wichita, Kansas - Holiday Inn Plaza<br>July 25 - 27, 1972                         |
| 18. Wichita, Kansas - Broadview Hotel<br>August 18, 19, 1951                | 40. Bismarck, North Dakota - Holiday Inn<br>July 16 - 19, 1973                        |
| 19. Des Moines, Iowa - Hotel Fort Des Moines<br>August 15, 16, 1952         | 41. Duluth, Minnesota - Radisson Hotel<br>July 16 - 18, 1974                          |
| 20. Dorset, Ontario - Ontario Forest Ranger<br>School, August 14, 15, 1953  | 42. Traverse City, Michigan - Holiday Inn<br>July 21 - 24, 1975                       |
| 21. St. Louis, Missouri - Statler Hotel<br>July 8 - 10, 1954                | 43. Rapid City, South Dakota - Howard Johnson<br>Motor Inn, July 19 - 22, 1976        |
| 22. Estes Park, Colorado - Stanley Hotel<br>July 18 - 20, 1955              | 44. Lincoln, Nebraska - Villager Motel<br>Convention Center, July 18 - 21, 1977       |

45. Milwaukee, Wisconsin - Marc Plaza  
July 16 - 19, 1978
46. Nashville, Indiana - Brown County Inn  
July 16 - 19, 1979
47. Columbus, Ohio - Hilton Inn East  
July 14 - 17, 1980
48. Des Moines, Iowa - Hotel Fort Des Moines  
July 13 - 15, 1981
49. Springfield, Illinois - Hilton Hotel  
July 12 - 15, 1982
50. Lexington, Kentucky - Radisson Plaza  
July 18 - 21, 1983
51. Hannibal, Missouri - Holiday Inn  
July 16 - 19, 1984
52. Wichita, Kansas - Hilton Inn East  
July 15 - 18, 1985
53. Vail, Colorado - Manor Vail  
July 7 - 10, 1986
54. Winnipeg, Manitoba - Holiday Inn  
Downtown, July 13 - 16, 1987
55. Bismarck, North Dakota - Sheraton  
Bismarck Galleria, July 11 - 14, 1988
56. Duluth, Minnesota - Radisson Hotel  
July 10 - 13, 1989
57. Grand Rapids, Michigan - Amway Grand  
Plaza Hotel, July 16 - 19, 1990
58. Rapid City, South Dakota - Hotel Alex  
Johnson, July 8 - 10, 1991
59. Green Bay, Wisconsin - Embassy Suites  
June 28 - 30, 1992
60. Ashland, Nebraska - Eugene T. Mahoney  
State Park, July 11 - 13, 1993
61. Estes Park, Colorado - Aspen Lodge  
July 10 - 12, 1994
62. Galena, Illinois - DeSoto House  
July 9 - 11, 1995
63. South Bend, Indiana - The Works Hotel  
July 14 - 16, 1996
64. Des Moines, Iowa - Embassy Suites Hotel  
July 13 - 15, 1997
65. Lawrence, Kansas - Eldridge Hotel  
July 12 - 14, 1998
66. Louisville, Kentucky - Embassy Suites  
July 18 - 20, 1999
67. Petoskey, Michigan - Stafford=s Perry Hotel  
July 16 - 18, 2000
68. St. Paul, Minnesota - Radisson City Center  
Hotel, July 15 - 17, 2001
69. Springfield, Missouri - Marriott Residence  
Inn, July 13 - 16, 2002
70. Omaha, Nebraska - Double Tree Hotel  
July 12 - 15, 2003
71. Bismarck, North Dakota - Radisson Hotel  
July 11 - 13, 2004
72. Sandusky, Ohio – Sawmill Creek Resort  
July 11 – 13, 2005
73. Spearfish, South Dakota – Holiday Inn I-90  
July 9 – 12, 2006
74. Minocqua, Wisconsin – The Waters of  
Minocqua, July 15 – 18, 2007
75. Estes Park, Colorado – Holiday Inn  
June 29 – July 2, 2008
76. Peoria, Illinois – Pere Marquette Hotel  
June 28 – July 1, 2009
77. Indianapolis, Indiana – Hyatt Regency  
June 27 – June 30, 2010
78. Centerville, Iowa – Honey Creek Resort SP  
June 26 – June 29, 2011
79. Wichita, Kansas – Hotel at Old Town  
June 24 – June 27, 2012
80. Lexington, Kentucky – Hilton Downtown  
June 23 – June 26, 2013
81. Traverse City, Michigan – Park Plaza Hotel  
June 22 – June 25, 2014
82. Duluth, Minnesota – Radisson Harborview  
June 28 – July 1, 2015
83. Saint Louis, Missouri – Chase Park Plaza  
Hotel, June 26 – 29, 2016
84. Ashland, Nebraska – Eugene T. Mahoney SP  
June 25 – June 28, 2017
85. Bismarck, North Dakota – Ramkota Hotel  
June 24 – 27, 2018
86. Oregon, Ohio - Maumee Bay Resort  
June 23 – June 26, 2019  
VIRTUAL Business Meeting Only  
October 20, 2020 (full mtg cancelled)
87. VIRTUAL – Whova/Zoom  
June 28 – June 30, 2021

**MAFWA COMMITTEES AND APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES  
2020-21**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

**Keith Warnke (WI), President**  
**Vacant , First Vice President**  
**Colleen Callahan (IL), Second Vice President**  
**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Member**  
**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**  
**Kevin Robling (SD), Special Board Member**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE:**

**Keith Warnke, (WI), Chair**  
**Colleen Callahan (IL), Member**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**

**AWARDS COMMITTEE:**

**Terry Steinwand (ND), Chair**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**  
**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**  
**Jim Douglas (NE), Member**  
**Brian Clark (KY), Member**

**BYLAWS COMMITTEE:**

**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Chair**

**INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE:**

**Jim Douglas (NE), Chair**  
**Brad Loveless (KS), Member**  
**Dan Eichinger (MI), Member**  
**Roger Luebbert (MAFWA), Member**

**RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE:**

**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Chair**  
**Brian Clark (KY), Member**  
**Brad Loveless (KS), Member**

**PROGRAM COMMITTEE:**

**Kevin Robling (SD), Chair**  
**Keith Warnke (WI), Member**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**  
**Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA)**

**CONSERVATION FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**

**MAFWA Executive Committee (see above)**

**Jim Douglas (NE), Member**

**CEF/MFVC COMMITTEE:**

**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Chair**

**Keith Warnke (WI) Member**

**Jim Douglas (NE), Member**

**MIDWEST LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE:**

**Jim Douglas (NE), Co-Chair**

**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Member**

**John Rogner (IL), Member**

**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**

**MAFWA TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEES**

<u><b>NAME</b></u>	<u><b>DIRECTOR/LIAISON</b></u>
<b>MIDWEST PRIVATE LANDS WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>TERRY STEINWAND, ND</b>
<b>MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>PETE HILDRETH, IA</b>
<b>ASSN. MIDWEST F&amp;G LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS</b>	<b>SHANNON LOTT, MI</b>
<b>MIDWEST WILDLIFE AND FISH HEALTH COMMITTEE</b>	<b>SARA PARKER PAULEY, MO</b>
<b>MIDWEST DEER &amp; WILD TURKEY GROUP</b>	<b>JASON SUMNERS, MO</b>
<b>MIDWEST FURBEARER GROUP</b>	<b>KELLY HEPLER, SD</b>
<b>MAFWA WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>GREG LINK, ND</b>
<b>MAFWA CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE</b>	<b>DAN EICHINGER, MI</b>



**NATIONAL GRANTS COMMITTEE:**

**MAFWA President**

**NATIONAL WHITE NOSE SYNDROME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)**

**RESERVOIR FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP:**

**Doug Nygren (KS)**

**SOUTHERN WINGS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE:**

**Craig Thompson, (WI)**

**WIND ENERGY:**

**Nathan Cummins (TNC)**

**PRESIDENT'S AD HOC COMMITTEES**

**FERAL SWINE COMMITTEE:**

**Terri Brunjes (KY), Chair**

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS



**MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

**JULY, 2020**

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

## **MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

### **PREAMBLE**

The name of this organization shall be the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association). The Association shall be organized and operated as a non-profit professional association as described in 501(c)(6) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code with the purpose of promoting the protection, preservation, restoration and management of fish and wildlife resources.

The Association established a foundation, Conservation Enhancement Fund (Fund), to be organized and operated as a 501 (c) 3 charitable, educational and scientific corporation.

The Association and Fund were incorporated in the State of Kansas on August 19, 2005. The Association and Fund shall comply with K.S.A. 17-1759, et seq., known as the "Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act." To the extent these bylaws conflict with a provision of the Act, the Act shall govern.

The objectives of the Association shall be:

- (a) to protect the right of jurisdiction of the Midwestern states over their wildlife resources on public and private lands;
- (b) to scrutinize state and federal wildlife legislation and regulations and to offer support or opposition to legislative proposals or federal regulations in accordance with the best interests of the Midwestern states;
- (c) to serve as a clearinghouse for the exchange of ideas concerning wildlife and fisheries management, research techniques, wildlife law enforcement, hunting and outdoor safety, and information and education;
- (d) and to encourage and assist sportsmen's and conservationists' organizations so that the fullest measure of cooperation may be secured from our citizenry in the protection, preservation, restoration and management of our fish and wildlife resources.

The Association met for the first time on October 28, 1934 in Des Moines, Iowa. At that time the group was known as the Association of Midwest Fish and Game Commissioners. The Association first received its non-profit status in 1968. The Association's name was changed to the Association of Midwest Fish and Wildlife Commissioners in 1972, to the Association of Midwest Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 1977, and to the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 2001.

## **ARTICLE I**

### **OFFICERS**

Section 1. The Officers of the Association shall be President, First Vice-President, and Second Vice-President. The President and both Vice-Presidents shall be the duly authorized voting representative of their member state or province and shall be selected on an alphabetical rotation basis, with the First Vice-President being from the state or province next in order of rotation following the President and the Second Vice-President being from the state or province next in rotation following the First Vice-President. The term of office shall commence 30 days following adjournment of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) annual meeting and conclude 30 days following adjournment of the succeeding annual AFWA meeting. The First Vice-President shall automatically succeed to President if he/she remains eligible. If the President separates from a member agency (or is replaced by that agency), the First Vice-President shall fulfill the remaining term, followed by their regular term.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall be composed of the officers identified in Article I, Section 1 and one representative from each state and province except those represented by the officers. Such state or provincial Board member shall be the chief executive officer of the fish and wildlife agency of his/her state or province, or his/her designee. A Board member may, by written notification to the President, designate a voting proxy from the Board member's state or province. However, Executive Committee members may not designate a proxy for the conduct of Executive Committee business. All Board members are required to annually sign a conflict of interest and compensation policy form.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **OTHER ASSOCIATION POSITIONS**

Section 1. The Association shall establish the position of "Treasurer." An Association member agency may provide an individual to serve in this capacity or the Association may contract with a member agency or an individual to fill this position. This is a nonvoting position.

Section 2. The Association shall also establish the position of "Executive Secretary." An Association member agency may provide an individual to serve in this capacity or the Association may contract with a member agency or an individual to fill the position. This is a nonvoting position.

Section 3. The Association may establish the position of "Recording Secretary." This is a nonvoting position.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Membership shall be by states and provinces and representation of each state and province at meetings shall be by its duly authorized representative or representatives.

Section 2. The area of membership in the Association shall be the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, and the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario and such additional states and provinces as may request membership and be elected by majority vote of the member states and provinces in annual meeting.

Section 3. Membership in the Association of an individual shall terminate upon the expiration of the member's term of office as a state fish and wildlife administrator.

Section 4. Other professional organizations may be granted affiliate membership in the Association based upon demonstration that the Constitution and Bylaws of said organizations meet the basic standards of the Association. Application for affiliate membership shall be forwarded to the Executive Secretary at least 90 days prior to a regular meeting of the Association and shall include a current Constitution and Bylaws and a letter stating the organization's justification for affiliate membership. Affiliate membership shall be voted on by the voting representatives and must attain a majority vote of a quorum. Affiliated membership dues shall be \$75.00 per year; however, this fee may be waived by a majority vote of a quorum. The fee is automatically waived for affiliated conservation agencies or organizations that provide annual financial resources to support the Association through the following sponsorships: Major Sponsor (\$5,000 or more); Gold Sponsor (\$3,000-4,999); Silver Sponsor (\$2,000-2,999); Bronze Sponsor (\$1,000-1,999); and Sponsor (\$500-999).

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **DUTIES OF OFFICERS and OTHER POSITIONS**

Section 1. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association, appoint all special committees, preside at meetings of the Board of Directors, and perform such other duties as are naturally incumbent upon the office to serve the Association and the Fund. Copies of the annual proceedings shall be forwarded to each member in good standing, with the cost of preparation and handling to be paid out of Association funds. All other copies are for distribution at the discretion of the host state or province.

Section 2. The First Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the latter's absence, and specific duties may be assigned as deemed necessary by the President.

Section 3. The Board of Directors shall conduct the business of the Association.

Section 4. The Executive Secretary shall perform the following services for the Association:

- (1) Function as the official "Executive Secretary" for the Association carrying out liaison services by keeping in communication via e-mail, mailings, phone contact and personal visits with member Directors, or their designated representatives, to enhance the viability of the Association.
- (2) Work to obtain direct involvement and commitment of member Directors and affiliate leaders to build strength in the Association as a leading force in the Midwest on behalf of fish and wildlife issues.
- (3) Assist the Executive Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in coordinating actions and communications relevant to the Midwest Association.
- (4) Respond to inquiries for information regarding the Association and to routine correspondence.
- (5) Develop and maintain a web site for the Association.
- (6) Carry out directives of the President and/or Executive Committee of the Association.
- (7) Assist with the scheduling of meetings and conference calls and notify appropriate members.
- (8) Record minutes in the absence of the Recording Secretary.
- (9) Provide such other services as may be mutually agreed upon by both parties.

Section 5. The Recording Secretary shall perform the following services:

- (1) Record and publish the annual proceedings of the Association.
- (2) Record and retain the minutes of all meetings of the Association and perform such other duties as are naturally incumbent upon the office.
- (3) Assist other officers and positions with correspondence and record keeping.

- (4) Serve as the custodian of all permanent files and records of the Association.
- (5) Other duties as assigned by the President.

Section 6. The Treasurer shall perform the following services for the Association and the Fund:

- (1) Be custodian of all funds of the Association.
- (2) Establish and have access to Association bank accounts.
- (3) Draw all warrants for payment of claims properly presented and expend funds necessary to pay appropriately invoiced bills, provided such warrants are signed by a director selected and approved by the Executive Committee.
- (4) Invoice members and sponsors and collect dues and funds.
- (5) Review monthly account reports and monitor income and expenditures.
- (6) Prepare reports to the Executive Committee detailing income, expenditures and asset values.
- (7) Perform record-keeping, reporting and filing actions to ensure the Association complies with its governing documents and any other relevant laws or regulations, including but not limited to any required filings with the state of Kansas or the Internal Revenue Service to maintain the Association's status as a tax-exempt non-profit organization and legal entity, and provide a report of any such required actions to the Executive Committee at its next meeting.
- (8) Develop, present and oversee budgets, accounts and financial statements and reports and present such records for auditing purposes.
- (9) Ensure that appropriate accounting procedures and controls are in place and comply with the Associations' Internal Controls for Cash Policy.
- (10) Serve as liaison with any staff and volunteers about Association and Fund financial matters.

- (11) Monitor the Association's investment activity and ensure its consistency with the Association's policies and legal responsibilities; liaise with the Investments Committee and review reports submitted thereby.
- (12) Ensure independent examination or audits are executed and any recommendations are implemented; provide report of results at the regular annual meeting.
- (13) Make formal presentation of the accounts at the regular annual meeting and more frequently as requested by the Executive Secretary, the President or the Executive Committee.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **MEETINGS**

One regular meeting shall be held annually. The meeting will be held in and hosted by the state or province in which the President has administrative responsibility, or in such other locations designated by the Association. It is the intent of the Association that the costs of the annual meetings and related business functions may be paid by the Association. When necessary, special meetings may be called by the President or the Executive Secretary. Members shall be given 90 days' notice of regular annual meetings; 60 days' notice for special, in-person meetings; and five days' notice for special, telephonic meetings and telephonic meetings of the Executive Committee.

The Association may authorize members, affiliates and other groups to exhibit at its meetings, subject to the Exhibitor/Sponsor Policy approved by the Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **VOTING**

Voting shall be by states and provinces, as units. Each state and province shall have one vote. All voting shall be by voice vote, except that a reasonable request by any member state or province for a secret ballot shall be honored. Any matters of Association business requiring action in the interim between meetings may be handled by the Executive Committee, by majority vote of that committee.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **DUES**

Annual Dues shall be \$3,800 per member state and \$100 per province, payable in

advance, at, or before each annual meeting; provided that annual dues may be suspended for any given year by a majority vote of a quorum. Dues shall be adjusted annually by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the Midwest published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dues shall be adjusted using the annual change in the CPI-U for the month of January of the previous fiscal year. The annual dues for the upcoming year shall be reported at the Association's regular annual meeting by the Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year of the Association shall be January 1 through December 31.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **QUORUM**

A quorum is defined as a simple majority of the states.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **AMENDMENT**

The Constitution and Bylaws (Bylaws) of the Association may be amended at any regular meeting by a majority vote of a quorum; provided, however, a written copy of such proposed amendment shall have been received by the President and the Executive Secretary and sent to members at least 30 days before the regular annual meeting or special meeting called for that purpose; and provided that such changes shall be effective only to the extent they are authorized by applicable law. Proposed Bylaws amendments should be presented to, or generated by, the Bylaws Committee and reviewed by the Executive Committee prior to submitting to voting members of the Association for their consideration. With approval of the First Vice-President, the President may call for voting by mail (including electronic mail) in lieu of a meeting. In this event, the 30-day notice shall still apply, the date of opening ballots shall be previously announced, notice sent to each member within forty-eight hours of vote tabulation by the Executive Secretary and all ballots shall be kept for one year following the vote.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **TYPES OF COMMITTEES/BOARDS**

Section 1. There shall be three kinds of committees: Standing, President's Ad Hoc, and Technical Working.

Section 2. The following Standing Committees shall be appointed by the incoming President within 30 days after assuming office, they shall serve during the period intervening between annual meetings and at such meetings, or until the purpose of each such committee has been accomplished and it has been discharged by the President.

- A. The Executive Committee shall be composed of six members of the Association: The President, First Vice President, Second Vice-President, Past President, and two other members to be appointed by the President with specific consideration for geographical balance. Any state or province represented on the Executive Committee by more than one individual shall be restricted to a single vote on this committee. The Executive Committee shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Association between its business meetings, make recommendations to the Association as necessary and shall perform such other duties as may be specified in these bylaws. The Executive Committee shall be subject to the orders of the Board of Directors and none of its acts shall conflict with action taken by the Board of Directors. Special meetings of the Executive Committee may be called by the President as necessary. The Executive Committee may also act via conference call or by mail (including electronic mail). In the event that an officer of the Association or the Past President separates from a member agency (or is replaced by that agency), their replacement in a member agency shall serve for the remainder of their term, with the exception of President. If the President separates from a member agency (or is replaced by that agency), their replacement in a member agency will serve in their place on the Executive Committee for the remainder of the term as a Special Board Member with voting rights, and the First Vice-President will succeed to President for the remainder of the term.
- B. The Auditing Committee shall be composed of three members: The First Vice President of the Association, who shall act as chairman, and two other members to be appointed by the President. The Auditing Committee shall audit the financial records of the Association annually and report the result of its audit at the annual regular meeting.
- C. The Resolutions Committee shall be composed of three members, one of which shall be designated as Chairman by the President. Copies of proposed resolutions should be received by the President and the Executive Secretary and sent to members for their consideration at least 30 days before the regular annual meeting. Courtesy resolutions and resolutions of a last-minute nature may be recommended to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting. Furthermore, proposed resolutions for which an urgent need arises between annual meetings may be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration via mail (including electronic mail), provided members are given a 15-day notice. Members shall be notified of the vote outcome by the Executive Secretary within forty-eight hours of vote tabulation.
- D. The Awards Committee shall be composed of five members, one of which shall be designated as Chairman by the President. The Awards Committee shall administer the official annual awards program of the Association.

- E. The Bylaws Committee shall be composed of at least one member, designated by the President. The Bylaws Committee shall recommend Bylaws changes to the Executive Committee for consideration.
- F. The Investments Committee shall be composed of three members. The President shall designate one of the members as Chairman. The purpose of the committee is to review investments, including the Jaschek portfolio, the Conservation Enhancement Fund, and other permanent assets of the Association and make recommendations to the Association per the investment policy statement. The Investments Committee shall make an annual report to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting.
- G. The Program Committee shall be comprised of four members, one from the host state of the previous annual meeting, one from the host state of the current annual meeting, one from the host state of the next annual meeting, and the Executive Secretary. The purpose of the committee is to assist the host state with developing presentation and discussion topics and suggesting speakers for the non-business portion of meeting.

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees may be established as deemed necessary by the President of the Association or vote of the Members and shall serve until the purpose of each such committee has been accomplished and it has been discharged by the President or by vote of the Members.

Section 4. The Association may establish Technical Working Committees as deemed necessary to conduct the affairs of the Association. Upon establishment, these committees shall adhere to the following:

- A. Within one year from establishment, each committee shall submit to the Association for approval a Mission Statement, a list of specific responsibilities, and a description of operating procedures that will become part of the official minutes of the Association.
- B. All Technical Working Committees shall submit a written report electronically to the President and the Executive Secretary 30 days in advance of the annual meeting of the Association and may choose to conduct necessary committee business during the period between annual meetings as per their approved operating procedures.
- C. Each Technical Working Committee shall be automatically abolished by the first of August every three years unless reinstated by vote of the Association. As the end of the third-year approaches, the Association shall assess the merits of reinstating the Technical Working Committee.

- D. Resolutions from Technical Working Committees for Association action shall be submitted to the Chair of the Resolutions Committee 30 days in advance of the annual meeting for consideration by the Board of Directors.

The Association recognizes the following Technical Working Committees (year of automatic abolishment in parentheses):

Climate Change (2022)  
National Conservation Need (NCN) Committee (2023)  
Midwest Private Lands Wildlife Management Group (2021)  
Midwest Public Lands Technical Working Committee (2022)  
Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee (2022)  
Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (2023)  
Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (2023)  
Midwest Furbearer Group (2021)  
Wildlife Diversity Committee (2021)  
Hunter and Angler Recruitment and Retention Technical Working Group (2023)

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Association in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Association may adopt.

Adopted 1936  
Amended 1942  
Amended 1944  
Amended 1949  
Amended 1954  
Amended 1960  
Amended 1964  
Amended 1969  
Amended 1971  
Amended 1972  
Amended 1975  
Amended 1976  
Amended 1977  
Amended 1978  
Amended 1980  
Amended 1987  
Amended 1993

Amended 1995  
Amended 1996  
Amended 2000  
Amended 2001  
Amended July 16, 2003  
Amended July 13, 2004  
Amended July 13, 2005  
Amended July 12, 2006  
Amended July 18, 2007  
Amended July 2, 2008  
Amended July 1, 2009  
Amended December 23, 2009  
Amended June 29, 2011  
Amended June 27, 2012  
Amended June 26, 2013  
Amended June 25, 2014  
Amended July 1, 2015  
Amended June 29, 2016  
Amended June 28, 2017  
Amended June 27, 2018  
Amended June 26, 2019  
Amended October 8, 2020

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company	Position	Attendee Category	Notes
Claire	Beck	claire.beck@dnr.state.oh.us	MAFWA	Landscape Conservation Technical Coordinator		
Denise	Blankenship	denise.m.blankenship@usda.gov	APHIS/Wildlife Services		Sponsors	Sponsor booth rep
Ed	Bogess	edward.bogess@gmail.com	MAFWA	Landscape Conservation Liaison		
Frank	Boyd	frankboydllc@gmail.com	Frank L. Boyd, LLC	Contractor		
Terri	Brunjes	terri.brunjes@ky.gov	Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources	Wildlife Biologist	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Aaron	Buchholz	aaron.buchholz@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin DNR - Fish Wildlife & Parks Division	Deputy Division Administrator		
Carolyn	Caldwell	mafwtactes@gmail.com	Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies	CITES Technical Work Group Chair	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Colleen	Callahan	colleen.callahan@illinois.gov	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Director		
David	Chanda	dchanda@rbff.org	Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation	VP State and Federal Government Engagement		
Brian	Clark	brian.clark@ky.gov	Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources	Deputy Commissioner	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Christie	Curley	christie.curley@ontario.ca	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	Director, Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch		
Craig	Czarnecki	craig_czarnecki@fws.gov	US Fish & Wildlife Service	Assistant Regional Director, Science Applications		
Emily	Davis	emily.davis@usda.gov	USDA Forest Service		Sponsors	Sponsor booth rep
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James	Douglas	sheri.henderson@nebraska.gov	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Director		
Matthew	Dunfee	mdunfee@wildlifemgt.org	Wildlife Management Institute	Director of Special Programs		
Daniel	Eichinger	EichingerD@michigan.gov	Michigan Department of Natural Resources	Director		
Ken	Elowe	k.d.elowe@gmail.com	AFWA	Landscape Conservation Liaison		
John	Fischer	jfischer@uga.edu	Wildlife Management Institute	Contractor		
Ken	Fitz	ken.fitz@dnr.state.oh.us	Ohio Division of Wildlife	Law Enforcement Administrator	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Thomas	Floyd	tommy.floyd@naspschools.org	National Archery in the Schools Program	President		
DAN	FORSTER	danforster@archerytrade.org	Archery Trade Association	Vice President & Chief Conservation Officer		
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Willie	Harris	Willie.D.Harris@usda.gov	USDA WS	Regional Director		
Justine	Hasz	Justine.Hasz@wi.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Director Bureau of Fisheries Management		
Mark	Hatfield	mhatfield@nwtf.net	National Wild Turkey Federation		Sponsors	Sponsor booth rep
Kelsey	Hersey	kelsey.hersey@brandtinfo.com	Brandt	Director of Marketing		
Pete	Hildreth	Pete.Hildreth@dnr.iowa.gov	Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Division Administrator		
Jason	Hill	jhill@ducks.org	Ducks Unlimited	Director of Conservation Programs		
James	Hodgson	jim_hodgson@fws.gov	FWS	Regional Manager, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, Great Lakes, Region 3		
Matt	Hogan	Matt_hogan@fws.gov	Fish & Wildlife Service	Deputy Regional Director		
Mike	Hubbard	mike.hubbard@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation	Deputy Director		
Phil	Huber	philip.huber@usda.gov	USDA Forest Service	Regional Wildlife Program Manager		
JIM	INGLIS	JINGLIS@PHEASANTSFOREVER.ORG				
Kent	Keene	kkeene@congressionalsportsmen.org	Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever	Director of Governmental Affairs		
Sheila	Kemmis	sheila.kemmis@ks.gov	Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation	Senior Coordinator, Lower Midwestern States and Agriculture Policy		
Brant	Kiryuchuk	brant.kiryuchuk@gov.sk.ca	KS Dept of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism	Sr Admin Specialist and MAFWA Secretary		
Steve	Kuennen	stephen.kuennen@usda.gov	Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment	Executive Director, Fish & Wildlife Branch	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
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Lindsey	Long	lindsey.long@wi.gov	USGS Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center	Acting Director		
John	Lord	jlord@fishwildlife.org	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Veterinarian	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Brad	Loveless	brad.loveless@ks.gov	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Chief Operating Officer		
Roger	Luebbert	Roger.Luebbert@mdc.mo.gov	KDWPT	Secretary		
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Matt	Mitchel	matt.mitchell@brandtinfo.com	Melinchuk and Associates	President		
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Caroline	Murphy	cmurphy@wildlife.org	Wildlife Management Institute	Midwest regional representative		
Kelley	Myers	kelly_myers@fws.gov	The Wildlife Society	Government Relations Manager		
Keith	Norris	knorris@wildlife.org	US Fish & Wildlife Service	Senior Adviser for Landscape Conservation		
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Andrew	Petersen	andrew@bluefindata.com	Terra Technology Group	Vice President of Marketing		
Scott	Peterson	speterso@nd.gov	Bluefin Data	CEO		
Jamie	Rader	jrader@ducks.org	North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Deputy Director		
Jeff	Rawlinson	jeff.rawlinson@nebraska.gov	Ducks Unlimited	Director of Operations Great Lakes Atlantic Region		
Ron	Regan	rregan@fishwildlife.org	National Archery in the Schools Program	Board Member		
Anne	Reis	anne.reis@wi.gov	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Executive Director		
Kevin	Robling	kevin.robbling@state.sd.us			Speakers	Speaker - not registered
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Phil	Seng	phil@djcase.com	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Assistant Director, Science Applications		
Dean	Smith	info@woodwaterconsulting.ca	DJ Case & Associates	President		
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			North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Director		

Kelly	Straka	strakak1@michigan.gov	Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources	Wildlife Health Section Supervisor		
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Jason	Sumners	Jason.Sumners@mdc.mo.gov	Mo Department of Conservation	Science Branch Chief		
Scott	Taylor	staylor@pheasantsforever.org	Pheasants Forever/MAFWA	National Pheasant Plan Coordinator		
Bob	Thompson	bob.thompson@state.co.us	Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO)		Sponsors	Sponsor booth rep
John D.	Thompson,					
Mike	Ph.D. (JT)	jthompson@usgs.gov	USGS, Ecosystems Mission Area, Cooperative Research Units	Deputy Chief	Speakers	Speaker - not registered
Ollie	Tonkovich	michael.tonkovich@dnr.state.oh.us	Ohio Division of Wildlife	Program Administrator		
Chuck	Torgerson	ollie.torgerson@wi.gov	MAFWA	Executive Secretary		
Noreen	Traxler	charles_traxler@fws.gov	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Deputy Regional Director		
Keith	Walsh	Noreen_walsh@fws.gov	Fish & Wildlife Service	Regional Director		
Kendra	Warnke	Keith.Warnke@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Division Administrator, Fish, Wildlife, and Parks		
Keith	Wecker	kendra.wecker@dnr.ohio.gov	Ohio Division of Wildlife	Chief		
Martha	Wehner	Keith.P.Wehner@USDA.GOV	APHIS/WS	Western Region Director		
Caroline	Williams	martha_williams@fws.gov	FWS	Principal Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		
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Charlie	Wolter	faren.wolter@state.sd.us	South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks	Human Dimensions Specialist		
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Robert	Wuestefeld	awuestefeld@dnr.in.gov	Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife	Division Director		
	Ziehmer	rziehmer@basspro.com	Bass Pro Shops	Sr. Director of Conservation		

**MAFWA Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Monday, June 28, 2021**  
**10:00 – noon CDT**  
**MAFWA Virtual Zoom Conference**

**Call to Order** – President Keith Warnke, Wisconsin called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

**Quorum** – Keith Warnke, Wisconsin; Sara Pauley, Missouri and Pete Hildreth, Iowa. Colleen Callahan, Illinois and Kevin Robling, South Dakota and were not present at time of roll call but came in later. Kendra Wecker, Ohio was also not present.

Also present were Ollie Torgerson, Executive Secretary, Roger Luebbert, Treasurer and Sheila Kemmis, Secretary. Guests: Claire Beck, Ed Boggess, Thomas Floyd, Willie Harris, Justin Hasz, Jim Hodgson, Jim Inglis, Kent Keene, John Lord, Bill Moritz, Kelley Myers, Andrew Petersen Scott Taylor, Faren Wolter, Charlie Wooley, Amanda Wuestefeld, Jeff Rawlinson, Megan Wisecup and Cindy Delaney, (Attendance – Exhibit A).

**Agenda Repair** (Agenda – Exhibit B) – *Keith* – Changed order of presentations until we get a quorum.

**Electronic Vote Results/Three Items** – *Ollie* – President called for electronic vote on three items, revised Delaney contract for 2022 Midwest directors annual meeting in South Dakota and that was approved 5 yes, 1 not voting; recommendation to approve special recognition for Noreen Walsh, 5 in favor, 1 not voting; and another recommendation for special recognition award for Doug Nygren, Kansas and that had a unanimous vote. *Warnke* – A couple of those awards are coming up tomorrow.

**Financial Report** (Exhibit C) – MAFWA Treasurer *Roger Luebbert* presented the financial report – As of May 31, 2021 last report was April 21, 2021. This report shows all transactions for all of MAFWA and Conservation Enhancement Fund accounts for this time frame. I will hit the highlights and totals and pause after each page for questions. First page is **Banking Services Account**, last balance you was \$261,111; total receipts \$5,042; disbursements of \$51,353; for balance of \$214,799. This account handles special projects that do not involve federal funds and most of these funds are designated for set purposes and are footnoted, total of \$195,937. This is the account we are splitting into two accounts, move part to Pheasant program and Monarch/pollinator/landscape project will move to separate banking institution to stay under federal insured limits. That has been done so you will see that on next report. In the **Conference Account**, our main operating account, last balance of \$81,803; total receipts of \$5,289; total disbursements of \$9,018; balance of \$78,075. In **Federal Account**, last balance of \$23,788; total receipts of \$18,305; total disbursements of \$16,776; for total balance as of \$25,317. **Southern Wings Account**, minimal activity. **Credit Union Share Account** required to maintain \$25 to be a member, minimal activity. The **Money Market and Securities Account at the Broker**, dates are different because of when we receive statements; last balance as of February 28, 2021, \$812,434; total receipts of \$4,130; funds swept out of the cash sub-account and reinvested, \$1,099; change of market value was positive \$33,385 for balance as of April 30, 2021 of \$848,851. *Warnke* – What do we use money market money for? *Luebbert* - Investment Committee is discussing this, so far been building balance. May start using earnings for special

projects. Have not needed it for regular business. *Warnke* – It gives us a glimpse into the future and discussions amongst this group and how we are going to utilize that money or if we are going to and what for. *Luebbert* – Good discussion in business meeting on this.

We have two tax entities in MAFWA, they are a 501(c)(6) and the Conservation Enhancement Fund is our foundation and is a 501(c)(3).

**Conservation Enhancement Share Account at Credit Union**, minimal activity from April to May, ending balance of \$75,597. **Conservation Enhancement Credit Union Checking Account**, same with this account, haven't had much activity and May 31, 2021 of \$7,314.

**Conservation Enhancement Account at the Broker**, not using those funds and it is very small, as of February 28, 2021, \$6,377; \$15 in dividends and \$15 swept out of the cash account and reinvested, change in market value of \$342, balance as of April 30, 2021 \$6,719. We haven't been using these funds and there is some debate as to whether or not we should have it given it has such a small amount. **Conservation Enhancement Fund Summary**, shows balances we talked about and have receivables and deposits we made for upcoming conferences, total \$17,000 and broker account so total assets of \$106,632. The designations are listed and the big one is state contributions to CEF \$55,000, 11 states have contributed \$5,000 each towards this contingency fund, total designations is \$99,694 and an undesignated balance of \$6,937.

**Budget Summary**, per our internal control plan we show the status of our conference account. It is too early to make much out of this, activity picks up in the summer and fall and this becomes more meaningful. One item I can point out is line 29, tax preparation fees, we had a budget of \$1,675 and spent \$1,110 so will have a favorable variance of \$565. Concludes my report.

*Warnke* – Since anticipating a quorum later on we should move to proposed 2022 budget. *Ollie* – It depends on whether you want an action item on that one. Sometimes the executive committee does pass a motion to recommend to the board to approve the proposed budget. That tells the board the executive committee has looked at it and is in favor of it. *Warnke* – Input? *Pete Hildreth* – I would make a recommendation that the executive council takes a look at this. *Ollie* – In that case we ought to wait for Kevin to get on. *Warnke* – We will wait. Our next item will be MLI Update and we will circle back to proposed budget.

**MLI Update** – *Ollie* – Kelley is not on so no update, she will present to full board this afternoon.

**Proposed Regional R3 Coordinator** – *Megan Wisecup* – Started this conversation a few years ago and some of you on the call have been involved in those conversations leading up to today. Looking for direction from executive committee on whether or not we should trudge forward with fleshing out details on moving in the direction of a MAFWA regional R3 coordinator position or if we take a step back and take a different route. A few years ago President Hepler brought in Jeff, Keith and I at the North American and we sat down with several of the Midwest directors to do some planning ahead and see how we could work together across state lines and do more collaboration on R3 and increase communication among R3 professionals and partners in our states and directors as well. Took immediate action and Keith and his people in Wisconsin got a newsletter going that we sent to *Ollie* to share with all of you and all the states to share different projects that we could work together and collaborate on efforts. We have taken action with PR modernization coming into play and getting several multistate grants off the ground. Thanks to *Ollie* and Roger who helped us with those in the first round and in round two we have

a couple more that have passed letters of intent for 2022 round. Great stuff happening with funding coming into play to be able to do that cross-state collaboration, not only within our region but with other regions. It quickly became apparent, as multistate grants came into play, that having a designated person to help with some of these tasks and coordination of the grants and to help on Roger and Ollie as well, so we can take advantage of applying for those dollars now that we do have funding sources. We started fleshing out what a regional position would look like. It has also been a challenge to reach out to other four regions that have R3 committees as well to start exploring. You all should have received three documents (Exhibits D, E, F). One is our recommendation asking for your consideration of moving this position forward or getting direction on that; what responsibilities and oversight should look like; and how such a position would benefit state agencies. We talked about it at our annual meeting for a couple years now. We have achieved buy-in from our region, with R3 professionals and moving something like this forward. Jeff and my preferred method would be if position could be held within MAFWA but we know you have limited capacity and resources. We would entertain looking at a partnership position, like PF position you have to date and some of other ones to get something started. Even work exploring some contractual things with partners, like D.J. Case who could help with goals and responsibilities of managing the grant and other things to aid in state collaboration.

*Jeff Rawlinson* – When Keith and I approached you a couple years ago we had a lot of ideas that we wanted to move forward. We have moved forward with many of those ideas and received multistate grants for many. The Midwest R3 committee is doing incredibly well but a lot of that is transpiring work, a lot of new project efforts. Our fear is that we need to manage these new grants and are applying for new grants, will talk more about that later in the meeting. We have good idea of direction in occurring grants and where we want to go and needs we have. Our biggest issue now is to have person to help manage those grant efforts we hope to be ongoing. The projects and implementation of those strategies and tool kits. The work created in those grants will be ongoing and we believe it is time to bring somebody on in a more official capacity to start helping the team with those implementation efforts and with future grant efforts and collaboration efforts. There are so many avenues we need to go, communications, marketing strategies, coordinated evaluation efforts, that having this position on board, and buy-in from committee, to help coordinate and implement strategies and help states with implementations as well as communication. That would be groundbreaking for efforts moving forward. Excited to be at this point.

*Wisecup* – We are looking for feedback from executive committee and direction on moving forward. Can this still be on the table and relevant so that we can move forward to some sort of solution to help with that capacity. Help with collaboration and take advantage of grant dollars available to help the states or region ongoing. Or if there is another direction we should be looking at?

*Warnke* – Kevin and Colleen are on now, so we have a quorum.

*Warnke* – I like the position duties and the ideas you have put together. What is your vision on where this person is housed and how they would act in this position around the Midwest?

*Wisecup* – In talking to our committee, the least biased way and most desirable would be to have a MAFWA position. That way they work on behalf of the Association and directly with the states versus being housed in a partner organization, such as PF or whatever, that might lend itself to an unfair bias. This would make it more rounded and not working for a certain entity but

working on behalf of the states directly. That is the preferred model we would like to get to. Looking at funding structure and we were challenged a couple of years ago to work with the USFWS and pull federal dollars together for joint collaboration, key projects and deliverables. They are on board to work with us, especially since grants came into play now. We also had the model where states pay “x” amount of dollars to come into MAFWA each year to have a contractual position. We have looked at three or four areas. Definitely interested in organization who would be interested in housing person, even if temporary. *Rawlinson* – If all MAFWA states were on board we would be looking at the federal input from each state at a little over \$7,000 annually and we would have to work out the details with our federal aid folks. That contribution would be on an annual basis to maintain the position and the position would answer directly to the committee and chair of the committee, so we don’t have scrambled messages, and get direction easily. The committee is solid, evolved over 5-6 years, we are able to move quickly, get collaboration and move on efforts. It would work well to have the position answer to the committee chair. *Warnke* – You talked about funding, assessment for each state to share equally to fund this position on an annual basis. Are you talking about suggesting a three-year commitment or some time frame of committeemen? Do we have some other partners who might be on board like Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, or maybe bigger national organizations could contribute as well, give us more insight on that? *Wisecup* – Agree it needs to be minimum of two to three years commitment to get started, to see if can work and give it a good shot to see what this position can do for the region. We have had key conversations with Pheasants Forever to see if they are interested in housing them or contributing funding for position as well. I had conversation prior to council leadership changing and they are definitely interested in working with regions and supporting them so a possibility to continue that conversation. Jeff and I brought Sam Pedder into some of these conversations and she was involved in calls with USFWS and there was definite interest then and would assume there would still be support. They are looking for regional collaboration to improve and that was one of the work group challenges, working with flow of communication and working up and down the chain from local to national level, so I believe they would be supportive as well. *Sara Parker Pauley* – Megan, you mentioned early on that you were also considering contractors, like D.J. Case who does a lot of R3 coordination and multistate grant work and general work for agencies related to R3. Wondering the thinking of the group on pros and cons in MAFWA position versus a contractor, especially a contractor that has been doing this work. You also mentioned other regional associations, do they have a position like this and if so is it an association position or contractor? *Wisecup* – None of the other associations have one, this is same one we were discussing at R3 symposium, a challenge thrown out to the four regions to build capacity for R3 across the nation. The Northeast is interested in looking at this model, with corpus to moving something forward, they want to see what we come up with. It has been discussed in Western region, who have been movers and shakers in R3 and have done a lot of collaborative work in multistate grants as well. Regarding first question, contractor versus a person, definitely pros and cons in both directions. The contractor would be good with set deliverables, but don’t know how well they would do in overall continuity and communication that an actual position could bring. Communicating with states on a regular basis, knowing what states are doing and communicating that, we would lose that dialog with a contractor and would be better with a person. Contract management and grant management and specific deliverables would be good but having more organic service we would need position to provide. Contractor would be able to help us with grants and take some of that work load off but might miss out on communication an

individual body could bring to the table. *Rawlinson* – Contractor or a group, there are many of them out there, DJ Case and those types of groups, they bring an entire team to the table and tons of experience, so at implementation they can be beneficial. One of the cons is that with those contractor groups you run out of funds fast because what they charge for a meeting and what we would have invested in a coordinator would probably be very different in terms of overall cost, a challenge that would have to be overcome. There are pros and cons to both ideas, either one would work and both of them bring positives and negatives to the equation depending on what we might deem as important aspects as we move into this. *Robling* – Question on deliverables. A focus of this position in reading through primary duties. Access is one of the biggest barriers to participation, especially in Midwest states where private land is dominating. What would this position do to contribute to enhance access for hunters and anglers? That is a focus of our department and I don't see that in here at all and curious if this position could contribute to access? *Rawlinson* – Huge issue, one of top three issues in R3 efforts. Some of that depends on what direction the committee goes as far as multistate grant funding and what are some of the apples that committee can take a bite out of. One of the challenges in a regional level is that some of that is best handled at state level. If there was a regional opportunity for states to work together on access, through targeted communication strategy or what have you, then I could see this position take load off the team in doing legwork and bringing teams together within the committee and implement that strategy that is developed. *Robling* – How much does the R3 already interact with private land committees and other habitat program committees? Is there cross collaboration? I feel we are working in separate silos and I want there to be more synergy. *Rawlinson* – At state level that degree of collaboration to some degree but not necessarily at the regional level. *Wisecup* – By having someone in this capacity under the MAFWA hat I think that would help increase that collaboration across committees because you are right there isn't a ton right now. Extra for all of us and we do have the meetings we are booked at the same time so it has been difficult to do that collaboration where having a dedicated position that could help increase those opportunities. Having that person working with each state, like South Dakota and Nebraska has on the waterfowl initiative, and things like that are great opportunities to foster some of that and look for other niches and where we have opportunities, work on those pieces for access, looking at regulations, communications and strategies for those natural outdoor recreation engagement. We could do more of that. *Colleen Callahan* – Should we consider or have we considered contractor versus a MAFWA position and since it has been identified that it would be \$7,000 per state per year, would we be well served to at least inquire what the cost of a contractor would be compared to this assessment? I don't know if that means an RFP or how we would choose to approach that. I am not opposed to position but I want to make sure we do research before we make the decision. *Warnke* – That is a valid point, how would a contractor position work out if through MAFWA or a partner. Also, part of discussion is that MAFWA doesn't have any employees, they are all contractors, so we are not providing any benefits or insurance or tax payments. *Ollie* – Never had a salaried position in the association; Roger, myself, Ed and Claire are all contract positions. That means the contractor pays the full FICA tax, we don't carry insurance, workmen's comp or any benefits or retirement. *Warnke* – That is a much more straight forward way of employing people, rather than giving into the complexities of being an employer. Keeping things simple, everyone is a contractor. I saw benefits as part of this proposal, health insurance and benefits being included. Given that, do you think that needs to go back to the R3 committee? If we were to do anything this would be contract position, not MAFWA employee. Are there other options if we wanted to endorse something like this that

could perhaps go through a different partner group who has employees and could provide those things and go through them. Does the committee need to take that piece of information and mull it over? *Wisecup* – We could try to do, individual body as a contractor versus a contract with a firm like DJ Case or whatnot. We could definitely do an RFP to see what cost would be for what we have identified in priorities. Then we could definitely readjust how we had it estimated and roll benefit money into the salary so individual could cover cost on their own. That would be the logical thing to do. We could also flesh out a conversation started with PF to have those three models available; MAFWA directly, partner on behalf of MAFWA; or contract directly with a firm. *Ollie* – We had model like this with national pheasant coordinator where we started off in Midwest with assessment from each state, PF took on a chunk of that, houses the person and Scott Taylor is on the call. You are salaried aren't you Scott and get full benefits, correct? *Scott Taylor* – Yes, that is correct. *Ollie* – We do banking on it but that grew into a national program now, bigger than the Midwest Association, so several other states are involved under the National Pheasant Conservation management board so it is not managed through MAFWA anymore all though we collect the funds and turn them over to PF. We do have a model that worked like that in the past, for your information. *Warnke* – What is the difference between that model and how we are paying for MLI initiatives? *Ollie* – Ed and Claire are contractors, money comes from USFWS through a direct grant to us. We develop a contract that is signed by the President of MAFWA, Ed and Claire and spells out their employment and details of it. They are basically contract positions, not employees. That is in direct control of MAFWA. Scott is not in control of MAFWA anymore, he was originally now he is managed by national pheasant board. Ed and Claire are managed jointly through MAFWA and USFWS. *Warnke* – Originally, Scott was in the same kind of model as Ed and Claire are in. Is that correct? *Ollie* – I don't think so. *Scott Taylor* – There was a round of fundraising among the states a year before I was hired so an agreement was reached between PF and MAFWA, so I have always been technically a PF employee, funded by a combination state funds and PF funds. *Warnke* – We will see you two again on Wednesday at full board meeting. What I am hearing is there are a couple of different models, Scott Taylor model and Claire Beck model/MLI model to look into and get some feedback. I don't expect to get that feedback by Wednesday but this is exciting from my perspective, obviously biased, a ground-breaking kind of initiative and we are trying to grab the bull by the horns and get coordination done on the Midwest level. Appreciate Kevin's idea about coordinated land fishing and hunting access because there are so many different programs in so many different states. Perhaps a position is necessary to put that information together to bring it back to directors, with successes, metrics, what's working and what's not; we are all doing our own separate things over the years. Do we need to take action on this? Do we want to make a recommendation to the full board? *Pauley* – Action or just providing information to the full board that we have asked for additional information so we can make a recommendation. I feel we are not to point of full recommendation, asking for more information. *Callahan* – I agree, reflect in minutes that we are seeking further input before making a recommendation. *Robling* – Maybe outline further deliverables within the actual position description, you have duties but good to see deliverables outright and be sure we are comfortable moving forward with those.

**Approval of May 18, 2021 ExCom Minutes** (Exhibit G) – *Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to accept minutes, Kevin Robling, South Dakota second. Motion Passes.*

**Proposed 2022 Budget** (Exhibit H) – *Roger* – In the past executive committee approved recommendation of some sort for full board to consider. Not unprecedented for executive

committee to make changes. The only thing I changed is one line from what you saw before. Pages 1 and 2 are 2020 actual versus budget with background information. Pages 3 and 4 are 2021 current year budget versus actual. Page 5 is where proposed budget is. This page shows revenues, no changes to what you saw before. Key point is administrative fees, banking fees and indirect costs I did not add anything for possible fee increase for banking fees, they are still based on current 5% nonfederal or 10% indirect cost rates On the disbursement side, same until we get to line 26, added line for contract manager. What I did was from proposed budget we had receipts over disbursements of just over \$7,000, so I used that money to put a line item in here for contract manager. At \$40 an hour, the \$8,000 would be roughly 200 hours. Now we have a least a place holder and you can increase or decrease or take it out. By adding that line, we are close to a break-even situation. *Ollie* – On line 16, we approved by electronic vote different fees for Delaney contract coordinator fees. *Roger* – We can update that, this is using last year’s budget and increasing it by CPI. I should have done that but I missed it. *Ollie* – The one the executive committee approved is in the \$4,000 range so that would be about a \$6,000 reduction. *Roger* – I didn’t realize it was that much. This is for 2022 and we assume we are going to have a full conference. *Ollie* – Yes, but we revised the budget that reduced Delaney’s involvement. Cindy is on the call and she can jump in. It is in the \$4,000 range. *Cindy Delaney* – We are not on going to be on site for this event, South Dakota staff will manage state park facility themselves. That is doing administrative work for it is and I think you are right that number is too large. For this year, 2021 went up because of virtual build. *Roger* – Good catch. Can improve budget by adjusting this line and have \$5,000 receipts over disbursements and we feel we need any more money for contract manager line or any other reason we can do that. It is up to you. *Pauley* – Contract manager, 200 hours, what does that entail? *Ollie* – Get into this during board meeting. Directors active in engaging programs and our contract grant program has really increased a lot and increased Roger’s and my time. Based on our last meeting on May 18 we got into discussion about this topic. We need more help with increases in the flow of grants and contracts. R3 committee is getting much more expansive with the added \$5 million from multistate grant program for R3 programs. More actions and initiatives generated by the Midwest directors, a good thing. It takes a lot of time to manage grants, particularly federal grants. We talked about this and it is a potential position. Executive committee asked what a reasonable fee and how many hours and we don’t really know and are guessing. Roger put these numbers together, it is a guess as it is on an as-needed basis and we will have to find someone willing to work like that. If we don’t need it we won’t hire anybody. *Pauley* – I was curious about the 200 hours, that is helpful. *Robling* – Any idea what actual spending will be for 2021, I see line 18, \$36,000, that is not something we will be spending since we are doing a virtual conference? *Roger* – I can’t quite hear you; Ollie may be able to answer. *Robling* – What do you expect for actual spending of the 2021 budget, receipts are over disbursements so we are a little in the hole? *Roger* – What is going to happen in 2021? *Robling* – Actual versus budget? *Roger* – It is too early; we will know more once we get better handle on these receipts. Sponsors are fairly close maybe a little more than \$25,000. *Ollie* – It is \$36,000 or \$37,000 for this year. *Roger* – So we have \$11,000 more than what we thought. Not sure where we are on registrations at this point. *Ollie* – We might be a little light on registrations. *Delaney* – I can give you updates on that number and expense number. *Roger* – The rest of the numbers on receipt side are close. Administrative fees don’t show any Ohio projects that we have going on, so solid on hitting the receipt number. On disbursements side Cindy can probably give us an update on that. Travel for executive secretary, myself and recording secretary will probably not happen, or not much, so

will have savings there. Overall, I believe we will be at a break even situation with savings in travel and increase in conference receipts. I think we have \$80,000 in this account so have a buffer. Did that help? *Robling* – Yes, thank you. *Warnke* – Is our standard operating procedure to make a recommendation for full board? *Ollie* – It is an option. If you feel comfortable with it and feel it is appropriate. If you don't feel comfortable that is fine too and we will just see what happens on Wednesday at full board meeting. *Pauley* – I feel comfortable making the recommendation. Are we going to wait for Cindy Delaney's updated numbers? Is there a conditional recommendation there? Roger are you planning to do anything before presenting to the full board? *Roger* – I would show them this report and make a comment that there are adjustments for Delaney, reducing to \$4,000 and that would be my only change unless there is something else you want. I would not unless you want me to increase contract manager by that 6,000 and show receipts exceeding disbursements by roughly \$5,000. *Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri* – With that note from Roger, I support recommendation to the full board, *Pete Hildreth, Iowa, second*. *Robling* – You stated the budget will be balance correct and \$5,000 positive? *Roger* – That is correct. **Approved.**

**MAFWA Banking Fee** – *Warnke* – Extensive discussion at last meeting, current banking fee is 5% and from discussions moving forward with R3 and other grants that Ollie and Roger coordinate. It might be good to raise banking fee to 10% and have contractor you saw in proposed budget we just went through. Today need to talk about what we recommend to full board on how to move forward. Our 5% fee is relatively low when it comes to other institutions. This would bring an individual on board on an as needed basis to walk all those contracts through. Proceeds from increased banking fee would be used for coordinating and managing those contracts and taking off the workload from Ollie and Roger. Any input, thoughts or questions on that? We will discuss this again on Wednesday. Does executive committee want to make recommendation to full board or let them have the discussion and move forward from there. *Pauley* – From 5% to 10%, did we discuss 7.5% or any other percent. I support increase in banking fees. How does 10% compare to others? *Warnke* – It is comparative to others. We discussed 8% as starting point, Roger suggested 10%, WMI has sliding scale of 8-15%, depending on grant size they have to manage. We did not make a specific recommendation at last meeting. It is in line with other institutions are charging. *Robling* – Not familiar with banking fees but 10% seems high. If someone could provide us some cost comparable, I agree with Sara on 7.5%, that is a pretty substantial increase. *Warnke* – We can make a smaller move like that and see how it pans out in coming years and how much work actually has to be done to manage those contracts. Then if we need to increase the banking fee later to manage contracts we could take action at that time. This is a fair discussion to have with full board and may not need to come up with recommendation here today. *Pauley* – Interested to hear full board discussion. It might be interesting to know criteria WMI uses and how they make decision between 8-15%. Maybe we look at a sliding scale as well. *Ollie* – Bill Moritz is on the call and maybe he can weigh in on how WMI makes a call on how they charge on sliding scale. *Bill Moritz* – The major part is how much involvement there is in administration of those dollars and secondly we do an annual audit of expenditures and income and all sorts of things. Depending on how complex it is to track the flow of the dollars influences the involvement of overhead. If there is personnel management and those types of things comes into play as well. I don't have specific list of details that goes into sliding piece. *Warnke* – Do you know where we could get those details? *Moritz* – I can find out before Wednesday. Then I will have a better sense of details than what I

just stated. *Ollie* – Many of our states have contracts with state universities and they charge huge overhead charges, 45-50% on every contract. I believe 5% is lowest in country on banking fees. We have a couple of programs that don't require much of our time except for CLFT, they should not be 5% anymore That national pheasant coordinator program doesn't take much time, Southern Wings doesn't, just collection and writing a check passing it through and I wouldn't change those from 5%. Some of these contracts take a lot of time. Like Ohio, employing people for Kendra on a contract basis takes more time. Federal grants take a lot of time, we get 10% on federal grants, a standard, we don't have negotiated cost agreement so we take 10%. That is where Roger came up with 10%, 8% is fine, 15% is high, but it is whatever the executive committee wants. We ended up at 5% because when we were asked by the American Bird Conservancy to join Southern Wings their maximum was 5%. That was back in 2009 and where the genesis of our 5% came from. It is subject to change at your will. *Warnke* – One of the things I see coming up in the future too that is similar to other states is we are not getting any additional positions from legislature, in fact we are losing positions every budget cycle and there is no less work or services we want to provide to our constituents. We have had increases in federal funds and in license sales and huge holes to try to fill in respect to customer service, research programs, management programs and fish stocking and all of this takes people. So, it seems prudent to have this discussion because we may all have need for people and going to contractor or outside institution to provide that position has become really our only ability to increase numbers of people we have to provide services. I will throw that out on Wednesday as well. In future this will become a bigger issue. *Robling* – We are seeing same thing in South Dakota and one of the big things is we need 15 biologists and are only able to hire 10. We are definitely getting more into the contract world. *Warnke* – Good, timely and ongoing discussion we need to have. Whatever we settle on Wednesday with full board, the executive committee can always review at future meetings.

*Ollie* – Have Dane Huinker on the phone from Prairie City USA, Wildlife Forever. When Kelly Hepler was president of MAFWA he asked Ed Boggess and me to represent MAFWA on the board of Prairie City USA. Dane is going to give an update. I was originally asked to put Wildlife Forever on the annual board meeting agenda and I forgot. To make up for my mistake I asked Dane if he would make a presentation to the executive committee and we would put him on the agenda for the 2022 meeting in South Dakota for the full board to hear. *Warnke* – Welcome Dane.

*Dane Huinker* – I appreciate the opportunity to update the committee on our new program that we are fortunate to have Ollie and Ed Boggess on the steering committee for this national program (PowerPoint). I am the conservation program manager. We started a new program a couple of years ago called Prairie City USA. We have been doing prairie restoration projects for our whole history at Wildlife Forever, just like so many of you are doing on the landscape scale. We saw a huge opportunity working with cities, towns and municipalities to integrate prairie habitat within city limits. A big piece of that decision was aligning efforts with MidAmerica Monarch Conservation Strategy which has a piece that is developing urban habitats. Not only for more acres of habitat monarchs, other pollinators and wildlife but also to get people engaged. Many of these habitats are out of reach for a lot of folks to feel and see and take part. This program is trying to get at those issues and that is what we are after. Much like other programs, like Tree City USA, who developed programs have developed a set of standards that cities who

get a grant from the program choose to adopt. You can enter at different levels depending on what the communities are able to do. First is getting them interested and meeting with city leaders, forming an advisory committee to work on application at the local level. After group is formed, it is looking internally to see what they have for ordinances that allow or prohibit prairie. As we are finding a lot of communities have certain ordinances that don't allow grass to be over a certain height in inches, that would be a change to be implemented. Last is adopting city resolution of Prairie City USA which does include a management plan. What makes Prairie City USA different from some of these other programs is terms we are building off of like the Mayor's Monarch pledge and others is that we are looking to certify cities off of percentage of acres they are able to convert from green space they maintain that they mow, fertilize and spray with pesticides and convert to prairie, levels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. We build off that percentage and convert those acres. If you take a microscope and look within cities there are a large number of acres that can be converted. We have Fergus Falls, Minnesota as our pilot city. Within Fergus they mow over 250 acres within the city. We identified, sitting down with the mayor and public works director, 110 acres; not ball fields or recreational areas they are just mowing, almost recreation mowing. We have identified those acres as potentially restorable. Right now, we are developing the management plan on how to tackle those acres. So, staff, instead of mowing, find grant to get established and teaching city staff how to maintain that on an annual basis. For example, in Fergus they have a public golf course, 17 acres and they want to convert golf course to less mowing by incorporating prairie habitat, just a small chunk, one of a dozen sites out there. A big metric we are looking to build into this is tying it into monarch strategy is stem cells. How can we measure these impacts and tie to natural strategies? We are looking to gain support and make sure people know about the program, looking for funding opportunities for cities to match. Finding funding for cities for implementation. Looking for any advice this committee has beyond promoting the program and spreading the word is what we are after. Feel free to reach out to me if you have interest or questions or ideas. You can learn more on our website, [prairiecityusa.org](http://prairiecityusa.org).

*Warnke* – Are you doing any active outreach to cities? *Huinker* – At this point no, finalizing the protocol document for what it means to be a Prairie City which will be out outreach mechanism, something we can send out as a flyer or email. Our first step we will use primarily for outreach is working with League of Cities. Ben Schrier, Fergus Falls mayor is a member and having it be sold from the mayor level is going to be key. Beyond that targeting cities that already participate in other programs and are low hanging fruit. If there are ideas where we could help these committee members help spread the word I would be all ears. Not sure how to connect but would like to.

*Pauley* – Benefits for a city besides certification and they can advertise the fact that they are a certified city, obviously all of the environmental benefits, you briefly mentioned benefits of maybe helping find match and other benefits to a city? *Huinker* – You mentioned ecological benefits, but also financial savings prairies can offer, the cost to maintain 220 acres in Fergus Falls, there is a cost per acre there and if you convert that to prairie there will obviously be, in long run, saving money. That is where cities like Fergus, are able to contribute some to the program, based off of that saved future funding. That is a piece of funding we can take advantage of but we need to find other sources too because usually that is not enough for initial costs for establishment. Obviously you know prairie is a long term investment. The first year it looks like weeds, the second year it looks like weeds and the third year you start to see what you want to see.

*Robling* – Savings in mowing costs, what is that savings for Fergus Falls, that has to be quite an amount? Mowing five acres every week just savings in personnel FTE alone. Do you have that figure? *Huinker* – We have some rough figures now that Fergus is starting to do some of

this, some in phase one and starting to look at what it does to their budget, it depends on time of year, but we are going to get down to that exact number. Some literature out there says \$500 an acre for residential. There are still costs associated with prairies, you still have to mow periodically or burn but we have estimated \$400/acre/year. We will get down to brass tacks in Fergus. *Robling* – That is significant. That is your hook to get other cities interested in cost savings and equalizing benefits. An exciting project, appreciate the efforts, keep up the good work. *Warnke* – Thanks, plan to contact my city officials to see how we can get started on that.

*Warnke* – Circle back to Kelley Myers to see if she has anything. We have jumped around on the agenda today. *Myers* – I apologize for not being on the call earlier, I didn't understand I was going to do an update this morning. I will save my update for the hour during the meeting.

**Next Meeting Date** – *Ollie* – Normally we meet in person in September at the AFWA conference. That is a different conference this year and I don't know if we can carve out some time we can meet in person in Providence, Rhode Island in September. It has been a long time since we met in person and it would be good if we could but it may not be that easy. *Pauley* – I think the only option you have is after breakfast on Monday morning. We have a 9:00 or 10:00 starting time so going earlier than that I and Ron Regan saw. Let me email you and Keith with that. Cindy, maybe you know, what is Monday morning start time? *Delaney* – It is 10:00 with the plenary so there would be a window early Monday morning. *Pauley* – So we could do an 8:00 to 9:30 or something like that. *Ollie* – Will that work for everybody? *Delaney* – That is September 13. *Ollie* – Set for 8:00 am, Monday, September 13 in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Adjourn** – *Colleen Callahan, Illinois moved to adjourn, Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri and Pete Hildreth, Iowa second. Meeting adjourned at 11:43.*

DRAFT

**Minutes**  
**MAFWA Annual Meeting**  
**June 28 – June 29, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**

*Full Agenda – Exhibit 1*

**Monday, June 28, 2021**

MAFWA Executive Committee Meeting 10:00 a.m.

*Meeting starts at 1:00 pm*

**WELCOME REMARKS and STATE HOT TOPIC SESSION**

**Welcome** – *Keith Warnke, Administrator, Wisconsin DNR and MAFWA President* – Welcome to first ever virtual MAFWA meeting, hopefully the last because we like to be together in person. We need to stay on schedule. Try to remember to say your name when speaking so Sheila can capture it properly for the minutes. Special thanks to Delaney Event Management for putting this all together, for getting us set up on Zoom and making it all run smoothly. Errors from now on are my own. We are honored to have Martha Williams, principal deputy director of the United State Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), previously state agency director from Montana. She is here to give us a sense of her direction and what she sees happening in the future.

**Special Address** – *USFWS Principal Deputy Director Martha Williams* – A lot of you I know and look forward to meeting the rest of you. Keith promoted me in my introduction, I am the secretary of nothing. Honored to be here and in this role. Thank you for opportunity for me to visit with you. Look forward to your questions and the conversation. Work you are doing in the Midwest is tremendous, USFWS value our close partnership and we could not achieve our mission without it, a key part for all of us achieving our collective missions. Work in Midwest is special on a lot of levels. It is my understanding the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) is leading out with development of regional species of greatest conservation need (RSGCN) list. It is proactive work and wish we could put most of our money there before species need to be listed as threatened or endangered. My background is to honor your work in improving habitat for monarchs and pollinators. The list goes on, chronic wasting disease (CWD), wind energy and invasive species are all topics that are foremost in our minds at USFWS. We support you and all you do and are genuinely interested in how we can best work with you and coordinate. Coordination critical in getting our jobs done. This administration, day one set out four overarching priorities: COVID 19 pandemic; economic recovery “build back better”; climate change; and social justice and racial equity. We think USFWS has an integral role in all four of these priorities. The COVID 19 pandemic sadly still remains a challenge for us across the country and I would emphasize the health and safety of all of our employees, volunteers and visitors is a top priority as the USFWS, along with other federal agencies begin to normalize our operations. We are seeing visitation in our public lands increase and more of our employees are in the field this summer continuing important field work. At the Department of the Interior (DOI) and all bureaus within the department are developing plans to guide on how we return work force to in-office work. We are trying to say, not return to work because everyone has been working incredibly hard throughout this pandemic, it is thinking about the future of our workforce and applying lessons learned to make us do work better and change some of the things that haven’t worked so well. For example, look forward to having meetings like this in person. We all know

there are times where you can't beat face-to-face interaction. The department will submit a consolidated future workforce plan to the White House by mid-July for review by Office of Management and Budget and get detailed instructions back. I recognize it is a bit of a challenge, not only for our employees and visitors but for partners as well. We haven't known how we will return people to the offices or just what that will look like, a work in progress. I have been working from Helena, MT. I am trying to wrangle a giant agency from my little office in Helena, Montana. Plan to return to Washington DC by mid-September. Another priority is economic recovery and "build back better" and that is exciting for USFWS and DOI because we hope to and look forward to taking into and addressing inequities in our economy and provide relief to those who have struggled during the pandemic. We are identifying steps to accelerate responsible development of renewable energy on public lands and waters. Also beginning to establish the climate conservation core initiative that will put a new generation of Americans to work conserving and restoring public lands and waters. We are thinking of that also as a lead to get more interest and engagement in conservation. Great people support that which they helped build and love. To make climate conservation core a diverse core and engage more into what we love, we are so committed to conservation and share that with others. USFWS also wants to invest in infrastructure and improve access to our public lands. What an opportunity to implement the Great American Outdoors Act and permanent funding for land and water conservation fund. It was so long in the discussion and it is really exciting to say we are now in the phase of implementing that and what it means for public lands, national wildlife refuges, for local parks. When my family travelled we would find areas in the middle of nowhere supported by Land and Water Conservation money. Climate change is the third priority, we all know it is happening around us. An example of that is the documented increase in water temperatures and decrease in oxygen levels in lakes across the Midwest. Trends like this have an impact on our fish and wildlife resources and understanding and addressing those impacts of climate change is critical to USFWS. Often largely to our Science Applications program but certainly through other programs as well. Thinking about climate change in three-pronged approach that includes land acquisition or land conservation, habitat conservation, collaborative conservation and building a new clean energy economy. We are shifting our land acquisition to meet President's goal of "America the Beautiful" to protect 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. I just got off call with Congressional staffers on "America the Beautiful" talking about how it amplifies and supports those efforts where we have seen success. We see it as an investment in partners of USFWS, partners for fish passages, increasing our grant program to states and tribes. So, those collaborative pieces are critical. Looking forward to working side-by-side with states and other partners to amplify those new tools that have been available already and think about new tools we ought to be considering. Racial equity is fourth priority. There is no order of preference, it is who you are and where you are thinking about it. It is really to shared effort that we share with each of you to improve social justice, racial equity and having our work, conservation and public lands truly be inviting and inclusive of all. I would argue for USFWS that is making our workforce and our culture inclusive, inviting and welcome to all. We need to start there and expand. Our urban wildlife conservation program will be focused on this. We are also committed to improving our relationship with Native Americans and recognizing tribal sovereignty, self-governance and coordinating with tribes earlier. That we don't wait until we have a formal consultation, but we engage everyone early on. As with most complex conservation issues we need to work together if we are going to make progress and racial equity is one of those areas where we all need to come together. I often hear about how strong our working relationship is with agencies in the Midwest. I hear this from biologists, land managers, law enforcement agencies and from senior leaders. This respectful collaborative relationship means so much to us and it allows us to get more done. I am always curious how we can continue to improve that, not rest on laurels but something that takes constant tending and full commitment. Highlight from

Ohio, there is a pair of endangered piping plovers nested this month at Maumee Bay State Park on the shores of Lake Erie. This is the first documented nest in Ohio in last 80 years. Thanks again for what you do and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and opportunities where we can do even better.

*Warnke* – You mentioned DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) and social justice, both important initiatives in Wisconsin. It is fair to say that our profession as a whole is very male and very white and any kind of guiding leadership from you or thoughts on how we begin to address that? From my perspective I think it means we need to start with building the bench, don't know that we are going to make changes at the top if we don't have the bench built. *Williams* – Federal agencies, certainly in USFWS, we work with AFWA and regional associations, where we lock steps. We are better off because we are telling a consistent story and providing consistent message. We see benefit there. Don't we always have to build our bench, that is our job, to make sure there is depth in the bench when you need it. With diversity, equity and inclusion we are starting at USFWS to call it, acronyms keep changing, but now JEDIA, justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. We are always learning and it is okay to show vulnerability here and recognize we are learning. On every one of these calls, we have employee resource groups and I learn from them each time we speak. There is still a lot to learn and how nice it is to be my age and learn a lot every day. That we realize that we have an issue we must address and have so much to learn from different layers within our agency. Building our bench and it needs to come from the top down too. Struck every day by how meetings with employee resource groups or my kids, for first time see ourselves in “blank”, having Native American secretary of the Interior, I couldn't have known, you could guess, but didn't realize just how powerful that is to native kids, saying we didn't know we could do that but now see ourselves there. That is across the board getting diversity within our leadership is very symbolic and groups will see themselves as part of conservation and what we do. I don't have even half of the answers, we are all learning from each other and cool that we all realize it is something we need to learn. No disagreement there. *Warnke* – Huge learning experience and steep learning curve. Thanks to my kids too for keeping my eyes open and on straight and narrow about these kinds of things, a huge asset to me. *Jim Douglas, NE* – Martha, thanks for everything you do. What kind of conversations are happening in Service and Administration regarding furthering the brokering of carbon sequestration on a large-scale basis? Do you see any opportunities for that in the future on conservation lands? *Williams* – Absolutely there is a future for that. I am not engaged in those conversations. Yet I have to admit, we have been so focused on so many other issues. I think those conversations are happening, but I am not key to it yet. I have just started to have briefings on the topic and thinking about what role the Service can play or who we should engage in the discussion. The question back to you is what are your ideas on how to have a conversation in a way it is inclusive and who are the parties we ought to include? There is lots of interest to make sure we tap into that. *Douglas* – To get to an answer to that I need to describe recent events in Nebraska that are distressing but there are mitigating factors. Our Governor in Nebraska, has taken it as a personal political mission to come down hard on 30x30 and “America the Beautiful”. Trying to lead a charge to create an atmosphere in the state of no cooperation. The mitigating factor that is encouraging is that our Governor has gotten push back from conservation partners and newspaper editorials. In a lot of ways, push back comes because there has been a lot of participation in conservation programs in the state. The public that utilizes those realizes they have been beneficial. Carbon sequestration could go hand in hand with other things that have to do with keeping grass in grass and creating cover crops, etc. Which also go hand in hand with local led conservation efforts. I think if it develops, there is more conversation that develops around it and prospects for it and is another potential benefit we could tout to do good conservation practices on the land and could resonate well with private landowners. *Williams* – I mentioned my call before this being with Congressional staffers, majority and minority; the

minority questions were focused around the definition of conservation versus preservation. I would argue preservation is going to be a facet of conservation but the “America the Beautiful” initiative 30x30 specifically says conservation and lists how inclusive it is meant to be. There was also a question about designations. It is not my impression that there is going to be designations under “America the Beautiful”, that is not the purpose. At USFWS, “America the Beautiful” 30x30 means a budget request to put money into our partners for fish and wildlife programs, put money into state grants and tribal grants and that is what we are thinking. How we support those already collaborative efforts. Like each of you, I don’t care who gets the work done, more than happy for credit to go somewhere else, lets come up with durable solutions and get work done while we have the opportunity. *Douglas* – The guiding principle that were outlined in “America the Beautiful” have been essential in pushing back on narrative proposed by those that didn’t understand it or have been misled by those who want people opposed to it. It comes right out and talks about respect for private landowners and right to choose. Back on carbon sequestration, it is important for all of us to know and become involved in conversations occurring so we are well informed so we can reach out quickly to Farm Bureau, Cattleman, etc. in a state like Nebraska. If in fact we deem it is going to be beneficial we do have to get right on the stick and insert it into conversations in our states. *Williams* – Was in Big Hull Valley this weekend where I have gotten to know some of the producers and ranchers there through work. Their comments were that they were more economically viable, producing more, are more successful through these conservation investments. The changes they made to help protect arctic drilling, help wetlands, etc., also helped their bottom line. This valley is incredible and you see at the edges where we didn’t work with certain ranches next to five-acre parcels and recreation houses. The demarcation couldn’t be more clear, that is what we are talking about and that wouldn’t have happened without partners, USFWS, NRCS, without state partners, NGOs or Trout Unlimited, TNC, watershed groups, etc. That was a picture worth a thousand words. Thank you, duly noted on carbon sequestration. *Sara Parker Pauley, MO* – In conversations with you I am a little bit more up to speed but for benefit of MAFWA members, all of whom have a strong interest in CWD and where we are headed with federal partners and entire conversation on CWD, task force and study. I thought you might spend a few minutes from your perspective on where you think we are related to CWD. *Williams* – Thanks for your engagement on this issue, all of your states have said it is a key topic and glad to see interest in this administration. The USFWS, USGS, USDA, BLM and I can’t remember who else, had a meeting to make sure we would fund this requisite study going forward with National Academy of Sciences. The scope of that I am not totally sure of because we all want to put our money where it makes the most difference. For those who aren’t engaged on that topic, before we get much more done, we really need to get task force running more robustly. We need to have study, past literature of what has transpired on CWD to get that going. That should happen soon. There is the task force that I have a meeting this week with new appointee, my counterpart at USDA, Robert Bonnie. There are more people in place there to get this rolling. Those are the two places to start. Obviously also support for ongoing research for CWD as well. Sara and I have been taking to heart our conversations and suggestions from AFWA to make sure we are tracking and taking those productive next steps. As you see more opportunities and needs, feeding them through your association and AFWA has been helpful. A conduit for me to make sure we are tracking at the Service as well. *Pauley* – That provides a good update. *Williams* - Excited to finally see some movement on this. To have support to do this and now it is right in front of us, for a while now for most of us, but now a priority and I think we will see some movement, at least under those three topics. *Pauley* – Appreciate your leadership in that regard. *Warnke* – Welcome news, especially here in Wisconsin, a big challenge all around. *Kevin Robling, SD* – Piggyback on carbon sequestration conversation. I would like to add that it seems we are in constant bickering, cows produce methane and contribute to climate change. There is no better story to tell than the

one about the cow, cattle and the grass and how that works together. There is no better way to sequester carbon than perennial grass and I think if we could get the federal government suggesting that piece of it that would be great. Perennial grass on the landscape is the best way to sequester carbon in a lot of ways and that includes the cow because land has to be profitable to the producer or the whole circle does not work. I am in the same boat as Director Douglas is in. We all want the same thing but how we talk about it or what path we take. Message is the same, the end product. We don't want to put ourselves in opposite corners and it feels like that has been happening with this carbon sequestration conversation. There is a heck of a story to tell, but we have to tell the story. *Williams* – Kevin and Jim, I could learn more. I would like to know how we could go about this where we don't polarize or further politicize it. What is that pathway we move forward with a way we all have a role. I ask that wondering what have Associations done on carbon sequestration and is there an opportunity for you to get together and send a letter to me or the Secretary saying we would like to see this move in this fashion. Sometimes that is a catalyst to help me do something as well. When the Service moves forward or when we are working on a topic I am going to want to know if we are doing it in a way that is productive and helping you in your states where it might otherwise be more difficult. The last thing I want to do is make it more difficult. I want to figure out a way to navigate doing it in a way that helps you in otherwise challenging circumstances. *Pauley* – Curious from Jim's role in Ag policy committee and if committee has ever forwarded communication or recommendation in that space? *Robling* – Want to hear Jim's comments, he has been at it longer than I have. *Douglas* – Discussed various potential aspects of carbon sequestration through program activity of USDA might come to be. There is also a lot of private brokers trying to trade credits and the like. Not aware of at what venue we have gotten the conservation community, USDA and private industry and private ag representatives together to talk about how it would be beneficial. I think there is some opportunity, come September through Ag Committee and other venues associated with fall meeting of AFWA to have more of that conversation. We all have to keep track of what is happening and perhaps we need some venue to get together and discuss it further. *Williams* – It seems you or AFWA should convene that, better than USFWS, better to play a supporting role. *Douglas* – My original question to you was that I didn't know how much conversation was happening at your level between USDA, the Service and other entities. *Williams* – Carefully coordinating with USDA and NOWA and trying to with EPA. There were past tensions that doesn't serve any of us well, so trying to work through a number of traditionally tense areas to better coordinate. CWD will be an example of that, where we have to find a way to be productive. *Douglas* – I see there was a message from Olivia that there has been some forums from climate alliance. Maybe it is time to get engaged in places we haven't been. *Robling* – Happy to hear conversations cognizant of polarization some of these conversations have created. It has, they have been political in nature, unfortunately the world we live in. At the end of the day, we want all the same things. Continue conversations, it is the same conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion, we all want the same thing, it is how do we tell that story and get there. On one hand cows are contributing threat to global warming but on the other hand they are sequestering carbon because they are on the land and that means grass is on the landscape and that is how we have to thread that needle. I think this organization, and others we are associated with, can help form that message that would not create so much polarization. The byproduct is all the things we all are talking about, like habitat, obviously a big conversation we want to continue pursuing. Get ag groups in same room at same time having same conversation and that is important and it is time. *Warnke* – We have a full agenda and Dir Williams has another meeting, any other points or questions?. Thank you thanking time to spend with MAFWA, we appreciate it and you are always welcome at our meetings, Zoom and certainly in person. Look forward to meeting you in Providence in September. On behalf of MAFWA Board, wonderful job we really appreciate it. *Williams* – Thanks for your leadership, I know this adds to your day

job. I sat in on last North American Wetlands Council meeting that Terry Steinwand chaired. I want to give a shout out to Terry and his leadership. It was fun to hear support you engendered while you were chair. Thanks to all of you for all you do. You have my email, don't be strangers. Look forward to seeing you in person.

### **State Hot Topics Session**

***Keith Warnke, Moderator and Facilitator*** – Each state will give a short report.  
(*State of State Reports - Exhibit*)

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO*** – Great to see everybody, wish we were in South Dakota in Custer State Park. Look forward to seeing everybody in Providence. Three topics to share. Pandemic, point of discussions and sharing, what are big ticket items eating our lunch, where we are trying to make a difference or make change and how we have done that, lessons learned, etc. Start with the pandemic, my guess we have all learned a lot as leaders, how we do work and how public has responded to the outdoors and areas we care deeply about. Internally, big lesson learned is that distributed work does work, I admit to my bias prior to the pandemic. I thought people had to be in a chair and in an office in spite of the fact that we have been an organization for more than 80 years with successful models of remote work (or hybrid work) in way of our agents or private land specialists work out of their house or out of NRCS offices or agents who are home domiciled. We knew it worked but had a bias about many positions. We found there are a few exceptions and we fixed those, but for the most part work was beneficial and saw increase of work in a variety of areas. We looked at all of those positions we thought could be remote or hybrid status, whether coming into work on occasion, maybe not private office but workspace and those positions that really needed to be in the office. Our Commission approved that distributive work plan at May meeting so Governor's office is reviewing that. With our Commission's approval we feel we have approval necessary to implement by end of summer. Online programing went through the roof. Education and private lands folks tried to turn out as many online programs as we could. I think we ended up with 230 during the year and saw huge increase in participation. One example is pollinator online program where we thought we might have 50 in-person, we had over 500 participate, that was huge. Communication methods, how we keep in solid communications with teams. We learned some tools are okay, like middle-of-the-week two-hour staff meeting was effective first thing in morning where you might get hundreds of your staff on for that. They can ask questions in the chat and engage on a particular topic. I am doing every other week director's messages. Trying to change up to get greatest participation. Solid communication during the pandemic was critical and we tried a lot of different methods to do that. Externally we saw an increase in participation, including 9,600 more spring turkey hunters compared to 2019. We surveyed first time deer and turkey hunters to learn more about motivation. In the past when we surveyed, time was always one of the barriers but when we asked motivations for first time purchasers, more centered around desire to spend more time outdoors, with family or for meat and food. There is hope we can keep them engaged and trying to do that with different media campaigns. Nationally we are working with industry to do the same thing. We do a survey with D.J. Case and Associates to survey 600 Missourians every quarter and we extrapolated those numbers and we believe an additional 750,000 Missourians were engaged in the outdoors in 2020, that was significant. Our private land specialists found increases in private land visits because people had more time on their farms to ask questions about how to improve it. The One Health message is front and center, that healthy people, healthy wildlife, healthy environment are all interconnected so trying to message that in a way that resonates with different audiences through our education branch and communications branch using social media and other things. The next topic is reorganization, implemented a year ago

this week, took four years to get to this point. Tried to respond to increased silos over 80 years, different divisions having different priorities, saw increased financial needs with CWD and feral hogs and infrastructure and no mechanism to make sure we were spending finite dollars on the most important priorities. There were a number of other cultural things as well that we were struggling with. No new challenges, nothing coming off the plate, etc. We had a team spend about a year developing this new organization structure which was based on a model of centralized guidance but empowered regional implementation capacity because ultimately they were the ones in the field responsible for implementation. Gained feedback from partners, all staff had an opportunity to talk about things they thought were working well or that were not. The new structure featured consolidation of traditional management, such as fisheries, forestry and wildlife into a statewide resource management and regional resource management. We still have those disciplines but now all part of consolidated management structure so not getting back into those silos. The new organizational structure, in spirit of regional empowerment, identified new positions of regional administrators and they are the face of the agency in our eight regions, they have supervisory responsibility for the majority of staff in the field, except law enforcement and education, but for most part they do have supervisory responsibility and interdisciplinary decision making authority within the region. We also have a new branch, Relevancy, we brought in three efforts but adding capacity related to identifying and including new audiences. Part of that includes new positions in the field and central office related to recreational use, we have recreational use specialists in the field that liaison between the customer, our citizens who engage on public lands, and the department. In the past it was up to area wildlife manager if they had interest in trails or engaging the public on additional recreational opportunities then it happened but if they didn't want people on their area then that is what happened. We now have the capacity focused on needs of people we are serving, where we can accommodate additional recreational use, not everywhere but there are areas we can, so those specialists are focused on that. We have new regional planners focused on natural resources, where they are, how do we apply new tiered approaches to habitat management, to infrastructure management and try to prioritize and set clear criteria. We have operational excellence capacity, now focused on customer service, customer experience and internal operational excellence and making sure we have processes in place, governance in place. If you have interest in understanding more on the reorganization, I would be happy to set you up with folks who have walked through this for us. The last thing is our new compensation plan. Talking earlier, how do we recruit or retain, we are having a difficult time finding foresters. Having more challenges finding people graduating from colleges who want to live in more rural parts of the state. We are struggling with not only recruiting but retaining the best. One thing I want to mention is compensation, two years ago moved to new plan which has three parts, market-based salaries, do market evaluation every year as a whole and provide market adjustments on an annual basis if revenue allows and every three years every position gets a deeper dive on what is competitive for that particular position. This year, for example we provided a three percent across the board market adjustment. The other two components of compensation plan are years of service increases, so if had a successful performance evaluation you get a bump into the salary range for successful years of service. For top 30% we have moved to performance pay. A big change for this agency. What it does, over time adjustments are permanent adjustments, salary range is salary range, but years of service and performance pay allow us to move those successful performers through their range more quickly. In the way of recruiting and retaining we focused on leadership development, have program we started three years ago of trying to bring those new and emerging leaders into the fold and take them through leadership training 2.0, taking folks that have been through MCI or other training or state leadership academy and giving them special projects and monthly communication with me, etc. Ways to keep our leaders developing is important priority of mine and hopefully good recruitment and retaining tool. *Amanda Wuestefeld, IN* – When doing

position market value analysis, did you do all positions? We did one five years ago, and are redoing it again this year, supposed to do it last year. I have a hard time getting them to look at anything other than biologists and property management. I can't get them to look at my outreach specialists, education, clericals or labor-type positions because they impact people outside of DNR, they impact state government. Were you able to do everybody or just specific agency professionals? *Pauley* – We contracted the work out and it was for all positions. Obviously some positions are more challenging than others but those business positions are not without their thorns because the people that benefited the most are higher level business positions like, IT, our architects, engineers and the resource folks didn't see increases like some of those business functions. But those are the competitive market positions that we need as an agency and that is the reality of the market. We did do all positions. Now as we go back every three years, split all positions into thirds, we will do one-third where we will go into a deeper dive to see if market has changed. Internally HR staff will do those, but they will use very common resources to get to that market data.

***Terry Steinwand, ND*** – Tough picking one hot topic. North Dakota, like all Midwestern states is primarily private land. When you talk about hunting access of public wildlife with 93% private lands it can be a contentious issue and has been for a number of years. This is a 4-year project where many landowners, all ag groups, have said that we should have automatic posting, meaning they don't have to let anybody know it is posted. The argument on hunting and fishing club side was we don't have a problem with asking permission but need to know who to ask. This has been going on for four years, but much longer than that, I have been director for 15 years and every legislative session it comes up. What we did four years ago was put out the idea of electronic posting. What we have heard from landowners is the time and expense to post land and in western part of state there are large ownerships and rough terrain making it hard to post. The hunting groups said that was fine, but they wanted to know who to contact. We came up with the idea of a way for landowners to electronically post their land as an option, aside from physical posting or in addition to physical posting. Is there a way a landowner can electronically post his/her land and the hunter would then have access to database saying the land is posted? What we came up with last legislative session is essentially that. Two sessions ago, the automatic trespass came within four votes of actually passing. Which put the push to getting on board or they would lose everything. It would have been a massive change from what we have experienced since statehood. On our licensing platform, we added an option where landowners could go in until July 15 of this year to say they wanted to electronic post their land. It shows up in real time on our private lands website as electronically posted. All they are required to do is put their name on, but 55% of the people are putting contact information, email or phone number. Time will tell if this will settle things down and this is the first time I can remember in my tenure with Game and Fish, almost 40 years, that ag groups, conservation groups and hunters have come together trying to get something done. There is probably 10% on each side disagreeing with it, hunters and landowners, but it has settled things down and is working at this point. Had meeting with management team this morning, for this fall, how should we get this out to the media and should we advertise this, that it is posted. We haven't come to any conclusions but not a cheap project. One of my contingents was, as a game and fish department we cannot pay for this, so two sessions ago, legislature actually gave about \$1.3 million to North Dakota Information Technology to gather every data parcel information and consolidate in a consistent form, not just for this effort but for tax department, mineral resources, state trust lands, highway department and others where they could utilize that information. We seem to be the focus at this point but there are other uses for it. Right now, it seems to be working but time will tell if it will backfire on us. Ultimately this is the first iteration of how this is going to work. My vision into the future, is it will almost be like a toggle switch. If outside of pheasant or deer season you can

go out there anytime. That option is not out there right now. I can talk about CWD because it is advancing in North Dakota too. We did have one new CWD area this year where we impacted four cervid farms and we are getting guff over that. All we were doing was reporting it, how it affected them was up to them. We had been pushing for years for double fence. I got a letter last Friday from the Board of Animal Health that they recommended doing DNA analysis. I don't know what that is going to do, CWD is CWD and where its shot is where its harvested. We expect that to be a hot topic for years and decades to come. *Pauley* – Back to posting, are they posting if they are open to allowing hunters or posting or saying no hunters? What, besides their name, are they communicating by posting? *Steinwand* – Communicating closed to hunting unless permission is granted. In the vast majority landowners were good in North Dakota, if you contacted them and they didn't have family hunting or anything like that they will give permission. There is always somebody who has to screw it up. Someone who gets permission to hunt on their land and brings a dozen people, never a good issue. If it is not posted physically or electronically it is wide open for hunting in North Dakota. I think there are only 16 other states in nation that have something similar. South Dakota, since 1973 has automatic trespass and there are good and bad things about that. Change is hard. We are hoping this change is positive. When looking at nationwide surveys, one of the top three is why did you quit hunting and access is always one of the issues. *Robling* – Similar to conversation we had with legislature three years ago. We have 250,000 acres of private land inundated with water in the last 10-15 years and it was open to public access and landowners had no ability to keep folks out if they wanted to. Now they do. Today we only have about 3,000 of those 250,000 acres that are publicly accessible, they are posted closed. They just wanted the choice to close waters down. This conversation is similar because all they want is the ability to close their land to hunting if they wish. The vast majority are going to allow access. It does come down to landowner rights, they lost control of it with water on their land. Kudos to you, hope it is working out for you. *Scott Taylor* – How are you dealing with land owned by trusts and LLCs? *Steinwand* – Good question, that was one of the issues. If you go to a plat book all is said was such and such trust. If you are in a trust only one person could be on there and it had to be an actual name to post the land. A trust or limited partnership will still have a contact on there. What it requires is you have to have tax id number or legal description in order to do that. I know people were saying anyone could go in and post anyone's land if they had the right name to put on it, that is right, the law currently exists that you can't post anybody else's land without their permission but tough to tell if you have a sign up with a name on it you don't know who put it out there. Now we are going to have an IP address of who actually went into their account on the Game and Fish licensing system to find out who posted. That will be a lot easier to follow up on. For trusts and those types of things there will be an absolute contact name at a minimum.

***Dave Olfelt, MN*** – With the killing of George Floyd in May and trial over the winter and March killing of Dante Wright focused a lot of attention on our state. We pride ourselves on being a progressive state and this has really shined a light on who we are as a society and as an organization. At the same time, in our fish and wildlife division there were some tough HR issues that coalesced. We had racial, ethnic, diversity issues happening at same time as unhealthy specific things that happened that garnered attention. It has created a charged atmosphere throughout last summer and into the fall. Folks started asking what we, as an organization, were going to do about it as the director and how the agency was going to respond to these racial equity kinds of questions. There is anger and impatience expressed by some and a fair amount of intolerance and different viewpoints within the agency. It mirrored society in a lot of ways but maybe not so much because we are really white and really male. How do we start to tackle these issues and what is the appropriate response? We started wrestling with that. We are part of a super-agency so whatever we do has to fit into the agency context but must have

relevancy to what we are doing as an organization within that agency. We want our efforts to build upon and compliment what our commissioners are saying and we want what we do to have meaning. I was resistant to saying something. There was lot of churn this summer and a lot of people speaking out, our Governor, our commissioners and I was trying to think about what my role was to add in a way to set the stage so we will be creating something long term, not just an email of the day but something that is going to last. We identified needs to help us throughout this work. We needed to raise the profile of conversation in our division. We are not racially or ethnically diverse, so we needed to start to work with diversity we have within in our organization. Thinking about gender equity and range of diversity, making everybody feel they can be part of this organization and feel they are welcome. We also identified need for division management to be involved, but it couldn't just be come from management or the director's office. We needed to find leaders from across the organization to help lead and provide voice to this work. There are some things we have done and some we are doing. We started being deliberate about messaging from the director's office. There were important topical points and I would write a reflection about how I was responding to some event in the news. Maybe just giving voice reflecting some of the pain or bewilderment or uncertainty. There are no right answers but being willing to talk about it and be present in uncomfortable space was I role I took in the director's office. One of the things I did was back centrality of this work to our mission, not something outside or nice to do, but something that if we want to be successful as a conservation organization we want to be successful in sustaining natural resources in the future we need to look more like the people we serve. We need to understand those perspectives and have it built into our organization. Some of the things we did to help with messages, weekly coffee talks at 7:30 in the morning to talk about things fairly loose but a fair number of those would touch on issues of the day and we talked about equity inclusion kinds of things. We used regularly scheduled meetings to emphasize things important to us. Even with limited hiring we reinforced what entry level qualifications are and whether they were helping us get more diverse or get the best people for our work or was there some unnecessary barrier. Another tool we used, a lot of monthly emails, called emails for allies, in this work with our peers. Once a month send email out, try to get staff from across the divisions to provide input and content and Pat Rivers, our Deputy, will curate that so there is a level of consistency and appropriateness. We solicit ideas from across the division. We have had messages that range from, what is it like to be a woman in the division of fish and wildlife and ways a woman might be made to feel in male dominated organization. We had one that reflected on first black fire fighters who were integrated into Minneapolis fire department in the mid-1960s. One of our staff members' father was a fire fighter and was friends with this pioneer. I did one when I started adding pronouns to my signature block, I have a transgender daughter, so talked about why I did that and how by including pronouns I start to signal to other people that hopefully I am a safe person. Also, creating learning opportunities across the division, took basic step of requiring all of our employees to take annual diversity equity inclusion training. Upper level management, about 25 of us, are embarking on a year-long inquiry based around intercultural development inventory, understanding how we think about others and how we respond. We think it will help provide a common language so we can talk better about issues. We have created a group of 15-20 staff from across the agency that are going through a similar process. What have we learned? None of this is earth shattering or profound, brings it home to us on what we need to work on. Our staff comes from all different perspectives, some grew up urban, some rural, all kinds of perspectives and it can be challenging to bring people together to talk about these things in a respectful way the emphasizes listening to rather than talking at. It is easy for folks to use triggering language and start to be accusatory of our colleagues. We are finding leadership is coming from different places in the organization, it can't all come from me or my deputy or the regional managers. We found we just needed to start to do something. There were some folks advocating needing to start

a plan and on reflection and consultation with folks who have done this, we just needed to start. We are going to do some things that hit the marks and some won't. We found we could leverage resources working with other divisions in our department who also care about this work; HR people, partnering with them and leveraging opportunities. Talked about financial resources. Feedback, some staff saying it is about time, hearing stories from staff who are feeling confident enough to talk about experiences or talk about what it like to have a different skin tone; I am encouraged by that kind of response. Some are frustrated or angry that we are talking about it and saying we are hearing too much about it and we need to talk about the real work, the critters. Which makes me think we are hitting on something important. In this for the long haul, start on a journey that is going to take many years to get where we need to go but we are taking steps, celebrating where we have some positive outcomes and will continue down this journey. *Warnke* – DEI is an enormous effort and a big unknown and lift. Appreciate that we just need to start. *Olfelt* – I was a DEI coordinator, don't worry about getting it all right because you are not, but people will recognize you are taking steps.

*Amanda Wuestefeld, IN* – We have a lot of big initiatives coming at us this year. Try again at bobcat season in Indiana; working on fee proposal right now, get adjusted fees for first time in 16 years hopefully in a few months. Want to share, I am approaching my second anniversary as director in fish and wildlife and when I took the helm, I started a reorganization of the division and shook up the top and put pieces together differently. Still all the same pieces we started with and some additions of increased capacity in some areas. Changed the structure, trying to break down those silos and come out with a different approach. Then COVID hit and things got crazy and a little distracted from where we were going with reorganization. We are getting back to it now because things are starting to normalize. My executive team and I have talked in last couple months about where we want to end up, what strides we have made to get to those places, what we are still missing. We have some big challenges, a lot of it is we are still struggling with what relevancy is, how we get our staff to embrace the idea of doing different things not just doing the same things differently. We also struggle with budget we want to do a lot of change but when you look at the budget you can't. What we have had to do is reset and went to zero based budget, reworking timing of our grants so that zero based budgeting actually starts to work for us. When we do that then we will be able to look at things and ask ourselves and staff if spending money in the right places, making the right decisions on how to spend those few precious dollars we have available to decide to do something different. Tremendous frustration for staff. Get in habit of doing the same things just because that is what we do and when you don't it makes people anxious. In process of all that, we have been reevaluating every position as they become vacant which then makes staff really nervous when they have vacancies in their piece of the world. Right now, we haven't been filling a lot of assistant biologist positions and assistant property staff because we talk constantly about engaging with the public or being present and then when we look to see who is going to do that I don't have staff with those skill sets and resources to do it. We are thinking long and hard about hiring differently and hiring different types of positions. A lot of change conversations happening. My team is up to the challenge, but I am not going to sugar-coat it and say we have it all figured out, we have a lot of work to do with staff as you go deeper in the organization. We just started a new team, fish and wildlife management team, which is lead supervisory group at regional levels. Working through change management and have had a couple of good meetings with them, positive with where we are at but still have work to do as we drop down into the organization. Fingers crossed the fees happen; fingers crossed we get through bobcats without crazy blows up like we had six years ago. Then we will see if we can really work on change, doing different things, not just same things differently. *Warnke* – I can sympathize with we are going to do things differently or there are things we aren't going to be doing anymore, change is hard.

**Jim Douglas, NE** – This is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of state park system, not all have state parks in your purview but it has been a great opportunity to celebrate that in Nebraska because it has allowed us to bring together a lot of different disciplines within agency, wildlife, parks, communication, education, etc. to get together and find best way to celebrate with our public. Our theme has been, these are your state parks and allowed us to do a lot of special events to emphasize how much we depend upon our citizens to support our park system. We have 68 state parks and several state historical parks. It has also been a time we can reengage decision makers in state government in legislature and Governor’s office to celebrate this and reflect upon value to everyone in the state that parks bring to them. They are adding to their quality of life and economic vitality of the region. For those of you who have state parks or have a close relationship with those decision-makers who do, at one point in time in my career, through the wildlife side, I had some misgiving about state parks being part of our agency for a variety of reasons. What has happened over time is I now appreciate the opportunity to have collaboration between parks, fish and wildlife and law enforcement and our parks are a great venue for enhanced outdoor education activities we have developed over last few years. Also, for wildlife habitat development in state parks, pollinators being one of more recent things that provided great opportunity. Also, we have beginner shooting ranges in our state parks, pellet gun ranges usually associated with an archery range as well, outdoor setting covered indoors. What we have done with those is many of them are developed by a few companies that create arcade-type shooting ranges where you have ducks going around in a circle or pipes to knock over or whatever specially designed targets that will knock over with a high-powered pellet rifle that has an air hose attached to it. Have been extremely popular and we have a captured audience in state parks and families and kids use them all the time. It is one of the beginning elements of R3 and it happens in our state parks. At one point in time, we didn’t have naturalists in state parks, but we are developing those and naturalist programs in all of our park settings. The combination of collaboration that can occur internally and within publics is really great. There was a point in time where our state park system was in great need of infusions of dollars for capital maintenance and at that juncture we were having difficulty. It depends on whether you are an agency that is part of super-agency or under direct control of Governor and his executive branch. In Nebraska we are not. In consultation with my Commission, trying to strategize how to bring more dollars to the state park system, we tried lots of different alternatives, funding mechanisms and copied what other states have been able to enact. We had some luck but not all the luck we needed. Commission asked me if we needed a lobbyist. As director I consulted with the legislature, the way things were going we felt it would be helpful, but we had restrictions on that. In conversations with past Commissioners, they decided to start an appropriate 501, besides the work I and the deputy do as well as division leaders do there is a friends group formed who hired lobbyist and we are able to work with that person but can’t sponsor them. The ex-commissioner and as commissioners retire they rotate into this role and raise money to pay the lobbyist. Since we’ve had lobbyist, 12 years now, it has assisted us greatly, brought over \$75 million to state park system. I feel funny having a lobbyist but don’t feel funny about money to work with. Additionally, in Nebraska we have an engaged Foundation and our Foundation has brought same amount or more dollars to the table in raising private funds. Most of which has gone into our park system, but some goes into wildlife endeavors as well. They are contributing to conservation in Nebraska. If anyone wants to talk more about either of those aspects, Foundation in particular and how to start one, I would be happy to talk to you about them. **Warnke** – Looking at parks, infrastructure, backlog and how we are going to pay for it and what our priority is going to be. I like lobbyist solution although I can’t lobby for a lobbyist but that is creative.

**Kendra Wecker, OH** – Thanks for support you showed me when we had officer shot in December, today we honored the three wildlife officers that were with the officer that was shot, with the Director's Valor Award. One more step in the healing process. That officer is still recovering, is in a wheelchair and he has a long way to go. Had one in parks division a few months later who died during a recovery, he had a heart attack. The primary topic I want to share, important for all of our agencies, we recently partnered with Sportsman's Alliance to create a conservation curriculum to take into school systems. That is our dream, to work with kids more and connect with people at different levels that may not be coming to us as customers and constituents. The teacher, Calvin Vanderboon, wrote the curriculum; he started with two courses, soil conservation science and conservation history to talk about conservation to address high school age people. It is an elective course and is aligned with state science standards so you can hand it over to a teacher and show them where it meets the standards and also meets state English and math standards. You need to make that connection for teachers, to meet the standards they have to teach. In Ohio, electives are up to individual school systems to determine. As we have progressed we reached out to all curriculum directors in the state, over 600 school systems, email came from me as chief of wildlife and that garnered a lot of support, or at least a reaction, because we were endorsing a curriculum. That got a lot of attention versus the Sportsman's Alliance reaching out independently, they are a hunting and fishing organization and may not get the traction we would hope. Division of Wildlife says there is something new for students and endorsed by the agency it got their attention. The other thing we did, found out Vo-Ag or FFA teachers did not have a set curriculum in Ohio. It is up to each Vo-Ag teacher to create their own, so they are starved for curriculum and there is a huge gap. This sounds like it is something across the country. We sent out a direct email from me to Vo-Ag teachers and got a huge response. We have over 60 schools signed up to teach this curriculum in fall 2021; we have another 130 schools interested in year two, with COVID they wanted to wait for year two and try then. They have a curriculum workbook, online resources, connected schools with local conservation clubs because they have facilities where you can fish or shoot and things like that. One example would be teaching anatomy lesson, butcher a deer and talk about the anatomy, muscle groups, skeletal system and things like that. It is project-based learning at its finest with hands-on experience in the classroom and ideally there will be a club created after this. The club would be an after-school club and the teacher, Calvin Vanderboon, already has created this model on his own before he brought it to us. After-school club is perfect for students that may not be involved in a lot of other things but want to be part of conservation club. In Ohio, as long as you have 15 students and a willing teacher you can create an after-school club. The agency has put about \$90,000 into this project, Calvin is the hired hand, the Sportsman's Alliance has dedicated staff members talking with school districts and they have also talked to a number of other states. They did a presentation with Amanda from Indiana and they are interested and other states as well. I see this potentially growing across the country. You might wonder how this meshes with Project Wild, we did ask Sportsman's Alliance to touch base with their leaders and AFWA and I know they talked to Tony Wasley as well as others. They understand the differences in the programs, they will be complimentary, not competitors. We are not trying to outcompete somebody else to educate kids about wildlife conservation. Learning the history of wildlife conservation and how to apply it in today's society is important. More information coming out soon. This school year will be first time, so there will be growing pains and we will learn and adapt. Conservation Adventures and is a project-based learning program. The second thing I want to mention is relevancy, having success, a number of years ago we had serious water quality issues, Governor has dedicated resources to improving water quality. Our push and component of it is to restore wetlands, finally, coming from general revenue fund and not just sportsmen. We are in budget cycle now that will pass July 1 and we are expecting another healthy dose of funding for wetland restoration. The total package will probably be \$50 million,

using \$20-\$25 million, some goes to Department of Agriculture and EPA. We have 44 wetland restoration projects on the ground in a year and a half, we are cutting ribbons, showing people the improvements, reducing nutrient loading from agriculture communities and improved water quality. Improved water quality is something everybody can agree on regardless of walk of life or where you are from, everybody wants clean water. We feel this is aiding us in relevancy quest, beyond hunting, fishing and bird watching and focusing on the core values of clean water, clean air and green space, things everybody wants to enjoy. A dream come true for some staff that we are restoring wetlands on an active basis. It is a heavy lift, busy doing contracts, engineering plans so we are stretched a little thin. Amanda mentioned restructure, have something similar but smaller scale. I chose to tackle law enforcement, observations from 25 year career, took it slow and took a lot of input and had numerous meetings, which continued through COVID which made it more challenging but we persevered and we rolled out a restructure, that so far, 120 days in, going well. I told them there would be growing pains and that we would tweak and make adjustments as we can. Two goals, to provide more of a presence in the field supporting our wildlife officers, what we call our county officers, and making sure they have the support they need and more uniformed supervisors in the field supporting them. Not just staying in the office, I want them out in the field and in uniform. People respect the uniform and staff appreciate that as well and our conservation clubs like to see the uniform. We reduced our investigative unit, we had 22 officers, reducing overtime to 15, no one is losing their jobs, losing through attrition. They were doing things that weren't the best roles for an investigator. They were doing some things the county officers wanted to take on and we split those duties back out. My final topic is shooting ranges, we have made a huge investment, we unveiled two renovated Class A ranges last year which were in the works for a number of years. We upgraded them, have a lot more shooting stations, have 3D archery target courses. The one primary range, Delaware Wildlife Area in central Ohio went from 10 shooting positions to 90, a massive renovation. Beyond that we partnered and hired on, through my MAFWA agreement, an African American named Corey Tucker to do in-person video and experiences. He did not grow up hunting and fishing, but he has an interest in it, so we are having him go out and have experiences, video-taping it and talking about it. Love to show video he made, will send it to you. It is connecting well with diverse audiences because it is from his perspective, filmed by him and in his words and going over very well as far as outreach. People are looking and seeing themselves in the imaginary. Happy to have him on board and helping us out in that regard. We took him fishing and other activities too, fun getting to know him. He is a pastor and singer, is outgoing and expressive and speaks well on camera. Trying different things to help us with our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. Some things will work, some might not, but we will learn, adapt and improve for the future. *Warnke* – Shooting ranges will eat your lunch if you let it.

***Kevin Robling, SD*** – Post COVID, the outdoors are open and open to everyone. Expanding audience base because of new folks that experienced the outdoors, millennials in particular. If we can get mom involved in the great outdoors we get the family involved so we are focused on creating outdoor families. We are targeting mom in particular. I have a three little kids three and under and if mom is involved then all three of my little kids are highly involved. It is definitely something we are seeing in our parks. The outdoors is a place millennials are turning to. The data I saw recently was we are seeing many more folks under the age of 35 starting to step outdoors and a lot of it has to do with the post COVID world. We are trying to continue focusing on the output and not so much the outcome. An old cowboy saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink, is something I tell my staff every day. Making sure the opportunity is there and no barrier to participation. We are seeing that pay dividends, seeing new users buying licenses and parks extremely full, bursting at the seams. I know other states are dealing with that. The other issue I would like to talk about is reorganizing staff internally, habitat and access. I

have put a lot of emphasis on those two things. I believe if we build it they will come, wildlife, hunters and anglers. Spent a lot of time on that the last three months, looking at how we can do more with private landowners. We are going to be creating habitat armies, folks within districts, counties and localized areas reaching out to producers, not meeting them where we are at but meeting them where they are at. We are going to their door, having coffee, creating a relationship, sitting down at their kitchen table is how we are going to start this conversation about conservation in general, habitat and that might lead to access. I believe that Midwestern states which are predominantly privately owned, this is a huge issue. I am a public land weekend warrior myself and I see it in my own experiences every time I go hunting or fishing. I don't think that issue is going away for the next generation. A huge focus of my department, realigning resources, personnel and budget to focus more on habitat and access. I am a true believer in it. It is the foundation of wildlife management. We have 1.4 million acres in private land enrolled in public access and I want 2 million acres. They are high bars, but I think if we put a lot of folks and a lot of effort towards it, we can make it happen. We are doing it with the private landowners themselves, talking to producer each day, having those conversations about taking marginal lands out of row crop production and putting them in perennial grass. Throughout that entire conversation is about profitability to the producer, that needs to be front and center. We can't lose focus on that private landowner is raising the wildlife for the vast majority of our users. It is something we have been focusing on heavily. This shift not going to happen overnight it is going to be a generational thing. It all comes down to dollars and cents, to our federal farm bill and program, and opportunities out there. CRP is huge in South Dakota and other Midwestern states. Those will be major focus points moving forward. Creating outdoor families and habitat and access. I talk about it every day. Four priorities in the department and I mentioned three, fourth is internal excellence, it is about providing exceptional customer service.

**Colleen Callahan, IL** – One of the things we have been working on is our climate action plan we developed and shared with our Governor's office. We are eager to begin the implementation. One of the things we identified early on during COVID, we started keeping track of miles that weren't driven by our staff to and from respective offices, whether state headquarters in Springfield or a field office and we were able to document not only the savings as far as mileage was concerned but also how that impacted the environment and the carbon. We now have our own internal research on what a difference that makes and we will utilize that as we go forward to establish some of the new procedures and policies that we may be implementing soon so we can reduce our carbon footprint. At the same time, promoting sustainable agriculture. I can't speak for other states, in Illinois our department is separate from the Department of Agriculture. During the transition period from one governor to the next when I was involved for rural development was agriculture. As I sat in that room, listened and took notes and talked about environmental initiatives, talked about nutrient loss reduction strategy, I kept thinking aren't soil and water natural resources and shouldn't agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources be working hand-in-hand, so we are beginning to do that, particularly with the farm ground we manage, 35,000 acres. We are working with those producers who have leases with us and changing those leases as they come due. There will be more cover crops grown on that acreage and working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service as well identifying that. Also, looking at marginal land that we have and consideration of putting solar on that property. Clearly more income can be generated from a solar array than row crop production. That is also part of climate action plan we are considering. Certainly, to increase the capacity for our state's forests and other habitats as well. Rethinking the agencies business practices and our culture while we are doing this. As it relates to solar and energy efficiency we have been working with the University of Illinois and their Smart Energy Design Assistance Center and they have helped us evaluate our lands and some specific sites, we have identified parks that will be in a pilot that

will be our carbon neutral. That is a relationship that has been developed that we didn't have before and one that has been beneficial to us and the University. When we think about all of the different aspects of that we also learned that it would not take much of our acreage that we manage in order for us to become completely self-sufficient and offset all of the electricity use we have in the department. With the assistance and guidance and collaboration with the University of Illinois that is the path we are on as it relates to sustainability in agriculture on those lands and regenerative agriculture as well. We also have been head-long with many Great Lakes states that are involved with the prevention of invasive carp into Lake Michigan. Since the barrier has been proposed in the state of Illinois we have been working closely with state of Michigan and Army Corp of Engineers in developing that barrier. Just last week there was a four-day meeting at our headquarters, with the Corps and stakeholders and designing exactly what that barrier will look like and making modifications from originally was the plan. Also, reaching out with Great Lakes stakeholders to provide updates and get their inputs on how we work together. Is it financially, working across engineering and gifts in kind or contributions to that billion dollar project? Working on several things, not the least of which is our strategic plan with emphasis on DEAI, we include accessibility there because not just about mobility but access to many of the sites we have. Also working on training with emphasis on impacts communications has across all the aspects of what we do. *Warnke* – I am interested in becoming electricity neutral. We will talk more about that.

***Pete Hildreth, IA*** – Iowa is 98% privately owned and as Kevin mentioned, habitat loss and public access continues to be one of our greatest challenges. Private landowner interests remain strong for Iowa's Habitat Access program, IHAP. It provides public hunting on private lands. During 2020 and 2021 hunting season we had 160 IHAP tracts, totaling 22,000 acres open to public hunting. Iowa received its third USDA voluntary public access grant in 2020 and thanks to that grant and all the hard work from staff during the COVID pandemic we were successful in enrolling 78 new sites that opened an additional 15,000 acres. Now 233 sites and roughly 36,000 acres. Exciting to us because that is in 70 of our 99 counties, proud of that and this is something supported by our Governor. We continue to see an increase in interest in hunting as a source of protein. Iowa deer hunters support food bank of Iowa by donating harvested deer to what we call, Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program. For 2019/20 deer season hunters donated 3,750 deer to the Iowa food bank, just under 650,000 meals. Those are processed by 60 participating lockers. During 2020 meat locker participation in our HUSH program dropped from 60 lockers down to 35. We identified this as a challenge in order to get protein out to folks that needed it. In response to this drop in meat locker participation the Iowa DNR launched the Iowa deer exchange in August 2020, modeling after successful effort in Nebraska to connect hunters with people interested in receiving venison. The Iowa deer exchange registered 91 hunters interested in donating meat and 558 people interested in receiving. The donors were more interested in donation of field dressed deer which are about 73%, but also showed significant willingness to provide quartered or boned out meat. Recipients most frequently requested any condition, about 50% with an additional 13% requesting field dressed deer, 7% quartered or boned out. Overall, 81% of hunters were interested in donating the entire deer and 74% of recipients were interested in receiving meat from an entire deer. Excited with efforts because it continues to show there is value in wildlife and it helps get venison to the right people and places. Successful pilot and looking for success in the future. Back on August 10 we had a Derecho, an inland hurricane swept through Iowa and left behind widespread destruction. According to aerial surveys and USDA Forest Service data over 57,000 acres may have been impacted by the storm and 1.9 million trees damaged or lost. Twenty-seven counties were included and 16 of those were considered federal disaster areas. The most heavily impacted area saw sustained winds of 70 miles per hour which caused damage to tree branches and over 100 mile per hour winds in

shorter bursts which uprooted trees. The peak gusts were measured at 126 miles per hour. More than 1.3 million Iowans call these 27 counties home and most of their communities are small, rural and underserved. Seven of the ten largest communities in Iowa were impacted. Cedar Rapids, the second largest community in the state lost more than half of its tree canopy and will be forced to remove upwards of 23,000 severely damaged or destroyed street trees. We talk about challenges, so what are some of the opportunities? With funding from the USDA Forest Service and the state of Iowa in partnership with Trees Forever we have hired a storm recovery coordinator to assist with tree wrecks caused by the storm. They coordinate debris management and urban wood utilization networks from storm affected trees to develop network of donations for planting and work with volunteers on projects that collectively help the communities impacted. Finally, they provide education and outreach on tree plantings. A lot of our wildlife management areas were damaged and public access was impacted so a lot of our staff conducted virtual public meetings to have timber salvage sales conducted at these sites in spite of the challenges of COVID. The final thing that is going to help us with the Derecho is recently the Governor signed our appropriations bill that provides \$250,000 for clean-up and working with forestry professionals to develop our community tree grants program in an effort to replant and replace trees that were lost

**Keith Warnke, WI** – Relevancy has been a big topic here and our fish, wildlife and parks leadership team has undertaken a relevancy project for the entire division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, called “how are we going to remain relevant into the future”. We are using the relevancy roadmap. The team is interested and we are finding it is turning out to be an exciting opportunity for folks, they started to bite in once we got the relevancy roadmap in their hands. We found synergy where you have one person who volunteers and says they are going to do it and things take off. One thing I learned once we had our strategic directions out there for the year that involved relevancy, DEI, staffing engagement and information technology was when we started getting into the relevancy part as a team we quickly discovered relevancy incorporates all of those things so it has become an overarching guide project for us. Excited to see what the outcomes end up being. We do not want this to end up being another file put on a shelf we want it to be guiding document. It doesn't so much have to be a plan as to be almost a relevancy mission. Among a host of other issues, I thought I would be alone diving into wolf management when the USFWS announced in October and officially delisted wolves in January. In early December we had announced we would be planning for a wolf hunting season beginning in the fall of 2021. We had plans out to develop a harvest advisory committee and a wolf management planning committee as our current plan is 22 years old So starting down that road when wolves were delisted and we reiterated the talking points that we were planning on a season this fall. Bear with us, help us out, participate. By Valentine's Day we were being sued by an out-of-state organization who sued in Circuit Court to make us have a wolf season because our wolf season on the books didn't officially end until March 28 or until the quota was met. We lost that and it is still under appeal to get a final decision or judgement. We lost in the first court hearing and immediately, credit to all of our hardworking, knowledgeable staff turned on a dime and made wolf season available and started it three days after that court decision came down. That included quota, permit numbers, application deadline, drawing and for the hunt starting sometime in late February. Meanwhile that did not allow us to do our due diligence and did not allow us to consult with the tribes the way we should and the way we are this year. Harvest, due to perfect conditions, quickly blew past the state quota we had established and we ended up killing 219 wolves. They were using dogs; snow condition was perfect and weather was nice and amenable and the hunters were utilizing large packs of dogs and large groups of hunters and snowmobiles. We have a 24-hour window, once you kill a wolf you have to register it. Once we think the quota is going to be met we can close a zone but we can't close it until 24 hours after we make the

declaration. We immediately saw zones where we knew harvest was going to go above and beyond quota, 24 hours later we shut them down but it was still two days out from closure, so they ended up going well over quota. It was a learning experience and allowed us preparation time moving forward but also exposed flaws in our system that we are working to fix and it remains a hot topic. There are daily articles in the news media and elsewhere, both pro and con. Our harvest advisory committee had people from all across the spectrum, from wolf protectionists to wolf hunters, and they gave input for quota for this fall, which was appreciated. The wolf management planning committee meets for the first time later this week to start looking at four professionally facilitated meetings to provide input and guidance on writing next reiteration of wolf management plan.

**Brian Clark, KY** – not present at this time

**Brad Loveless, KS** – not present at this time

**Dan Eichinger, MI** – not present at this time

**Break**

## **MIDWEST LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE**

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**Kelley Myers, Senior Advisor for Landscape Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – (PowerPoint - Exhibit 4) – The Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) was conceived in 2017, building off other work happening in the region. You might recall northern long-eared bat and monarch work and strong relationship we have had in the Midwest. MLI was launched in June 2018 at the meeting in North Dakota. What started as an awesome conversation about the future of landscape level collaborations turned into something big. Back in 2019, we made decision to invite USGS as important partner as well. We have been developing MLI over the last couple of years consistent with a resolution adopted at September meeting of AFWA in 2018. We have been using an adaptive approach but basically our whole purpose is to provide a forum where we can identify and implement collaborative approaches for our identified shared regional conservation priorities. Back in 2019, the MAFWA Board passed a resolution where you directed MLI to develop a comprehensive regional conservation work plan. We have been working since then laying the foundation of what to include in that work plan and what our priorities are. Wanting to make sure that whatever we are building is rigorous. Started with four priorities; prioritizing at-risk species and species in greatest conservation need (SGCN) across the Midwest region; developing a habitat inventory and assessment tools across the Midwest that are integrated and operable so we can evaluate the effects of our conservation management actions; wind energy has come up a lot in our region and wanting to make sure we were doing things as we expand the use of renewable energy to avoid and mitigate negative wildlife interactions that can occur; and making sure whatever we are developing is long-lasting and doing it with unifying conservation vision across the Midwest and have something that is durable and lasts from administration to administration and changes in our leadership. We have also served as a forum where we can bring together different jurisdictions on these really complicated issues, like CWD, PFAS and COVID and we can foresee other topics like maybe use of biotechnology and others as we go forward. We have been this unique forum where we can pull together those with legal responsibility for management of fish and wildlife resources. We can pull those partners together quickly and others as we need to get at some of these issues.

We are set up with a steering committee and a technical committee. Our steering committee is comprised of members of the MAFWA board as well as regional Fish and Wildlife Service leadership and members of USGS. We have a robust large, frequently meeting, technical committee and a series of sub-teams from the technical committee and then we have different workgroups working on key priority areas. This is a conservation framework put together during development of the 2018 AFWA landscape conservation resolution. You set your priorities, conduct assessments, set goals, engage and design, figure out what science you need, get people to adopt actions and start implementing ultimately to monitor and evaluate how effective you are, make adjustments as needed and then review your priorities to make sure you are going down the right path. All of these are circles unto themselves and you can cycle through until you hit a stopping point and go back through the cycle. The goal is to go through the entire piece but we have been churning, for last year and a half, working through priorities and figuring out what we need to know and how we need to set goals, what our vision is and what we need to do to move forward. In the center of the work is Midwest vision and around it is MLI priorities. Claire will talk more about Midwest RSGCN and regional needs that are forming the core of what our conservation action plan could look like going into the future. We are not doing this in a vacuum because we know we have all these other plans, like state wildlife action plans, NAWMP, CHAT in the west, SECAS in southeast, Nature's Network in the northeast and any of the other federal agencies that we work with plans. We have AFWA Science and Research priorities and all of these different data standards that need to be accounted for and then things that we don't know yet but will discover as we continue the journey. All of this coming together to form our Midwest Action Plan or Conservation Strategy going forward into the future across the region. Our trajectory is that we are in the process of setting our vision, finalizing Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN) and hopeful that the next step is to get to that action plan and what that will look like and then figuring out what spatial planning or modeling resources we need to put all of this into action. Conservation framework sets the stage for what the MLI is trying to do across this broad landscape. Where are we today? I am going to turn it over to Claire to talk about at-risk work group and RSGCN which is not due until August but we have a lot of work product that we are excited to talk about. Then we are planning to start working with other groups to figure out our next steps. This was not an effort to create a list it was an effort to create the next step on how we can use this list.

*Claire Beck* – Midwest RSGCN project is near an end of first phase. We have a consulting group called Terwilliger Consulting helping our at-risk species working group with this project to create the list or database. Essentially we took over 3,300 species identified as SGCN in all 13 MAFWA states down to 340 species identified as RSGCN. That means there are species that are particularly of concern in 13 MAFWA states and/or have high regional responsibility for conserving those species. The process of identifying the species is complete we are just doing final checks on that. We have also engaged in identifying the threats and multiple habitats for each of those species and building database that will give us a lot of information going forward. The final report is due the beginning of August. This particular RSGCN project, Terwilliger has led Northeast and Southeast Associations through similar projects. We have the benefit of being third region to go through this, Terwilliger has learned a lot from processes in other regions and we were able to develop a more expanded product for the Midwest, including 13 taxa groups and four of those were not included in other regions. Those are all native bees, stoneflies and cabbage flies and mayflies which have great commonalities. We also have a new category of proposed RSGCN, species that have been identified as being very important to conserve in the Midwest region but aren't yet listed as SGCN in any state because they are data deficient, mostly in stoneflies, cabbage flies and mayflies category. Another important thing about this project is there is going to be a lot of data in database and that will provide resources for the SWAP updates that are occurring over the next five years. We have already heard from all of states this

will be useful for them as they go into that process. Next steps, once we have this database complete, is using that information in the MLI to evaluate our priorities, both in terms of geographies and landscapes, look at threats and opportunities we can turn into priorities or projects based on that habitat and species identified. Right now, we are going into a multiprong process of outreach and application and what we are going to do with this data now that we have it. We have several ideas in the works and one is a workshop with taxa team participants, over 100 individuals that participated in this project. Going back to them and showing them the results of their work and finding out what would be helpful for them to do with this information. Get ideas from them on moving forward and hopefully keeping them engaged as we move forward. We also want to present this information to a partner meeting that is currently in process that Kelley will mention later. Get more input from more individuals who haven't yet been involved in this project about what they see as valuable from the RSGCN database and how they could use it moving forward. Similarly, we hope to have a symposium or workshop at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference next February, to get more input from various people, hopefully more taxa teams, people who have been engaged and those who haven't and keep reaching out to get the word out on the resource we now have and how we can use it. Finally, we have participated in a grant pre-proposal with National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to engage more broadly through their local chapters or affiliates to use that network to engage more broadly with public and other members of conservation community. Graphics from consultants show area results and total number of species in each state identified as RSGCN. It is concentrated in the middle of our region and Western Association has not yet done this project so states on the western side of the MAFWA region have fewer species that have been identified as RSGCN because they might share more with the Western Region than with MAFWA. There is a chart showing how many species in each state and there are a lot of species that only occurred in one or two states which means they are probably Midwest endemics so they ended up on RSGCN list. A nice spread of species that occur in all MAFWA states which is what we would be looking for from a regional SGCN list. There is a map showing how many RSGCN species are shared across state borders and mirrors first map that showed sheer numbers in each state. Again, on western side, this would look differently if we were incorporating a theoretical RSGCN through WAFWA. The final two are example graphics and consulting team is going to work on the colors to make them easier to understand but they show some analysis we can do when looking at what kinds of taxa were identified as RSGCN in each primary habitat types. They have done these for natural habitat types and anthropogenic habitat types. The same information is also shown in a pie chart. Example of things included in the report we will get in August. We can do more of this as we move forward because we will have the entire database at our disposal.

*Myers* – In conversations we have had, sparked so much inspiration, biologists seeing this and it has sparked a lot of conversations about next step applications. The other work group, habitat assessment has conducted an inventory across states of all the different types of tools and data sets and modeling systems that you might be using. The idea is we are trying to get a sense of who is using what and why. We have a social scientist who works with that team on that inventory and trying to get sense of what is being used so that as we start to think about how we build our next steps in a spatial way, we communicate our priorities using special context so anyone could understand what we are talking about. We want to know what people are using and what existing tools might be able to help develop what we are looking at across the region. Working on getting that inventory done and now we are looking internally to the Service and then USGS to see what we have so we can get systems talking more. With wind group, they have developed a community of practice and have inventories of best management practices, mapping resources and trying to open communication across states and Service members, a place where government can share with government what is going on. We have Ohio to the Dakotas represented, so we have some off-shore Great Lakes issues, bat issues and bird issues and it has

been a great group to share what is going on and learn from one another in a detailed way. There are some complimentary efforts happening at AFWA in the energy committee with some of their wind working group. The Midwest was able to dive a little deeper with lesser number of states we have participating. We do share with that wind working group what we are up to so if anything is valuable on a national scale it can have utility there as well. With respect to PFAS, forever chemicals showing up in the news more and more, the governors and premiers of the Great Lakes states have created a task force group looking at all aspects of PFAS from human health to implications in water quality. There is a fish and wildlife sub-team so we have been helping to hold those meetings and pull that group together and provide forum where they can talk and figure out who they are and what they want to discuss. Holding monthly meetings, more movement at EPA and with that governors and premiers some organization. We have been staying together to figure out what we need to do in this short term waiting for other organizations to provide more direction. In the meantime, the group has been meeting and trying to figure out what research and science priorities the fish and wildlife community might have around PFAS. A good group to share information and prioritize research. Social science discussion later but last year you might recall Kelly Hepler had asked us to use MLI as forum to ask the future of social science. Do we need a committee in MAFWA, an initiative out of MLI and what does it look like? Over the last year, with help of Faren Wolter in South Dakota, we have been holding a series of meetings to scope out what this group needs and where it would best exist. That group has made some recommendations about coming back to MAFWA but we definitely created connections between that group and the MLI so as MLI encounters challenges we now have a pool of people to pull from. We were happy we could serve as that venue to have this good conversation and link in groups of people who hadn't been talking before. We also developed, through Claire, communications and engagement team, a cross-regional multistate team of people, communication professionals from around the region. They were given task of developing a communications engagement strategy. MAFWA enlisted help of Judy Stokes Weber, a communications professional, who walked the team through a rigorous process to establish a robust communications strategy. That was finalized and delivered earlier this month so that team is going the next step, what to do with strategy and how to prioritize actions and implement and what capacity is needed to do that. We are working through those questions now. Implementing the plan and top of the list is a website but added benefit of team approach we used is that we now have a network of communication professionals from across the Midwest. It is a deep bench of creative individuals who have lots of good ideas and have privilege of being in communications role and knowing what is going on across our agencies. It is a powerful group of people in terms of information they can share with one another and how they think. We will be excited to see them stay together. We have expanded participation this last year, particularly through RSGCN, every state involved in that process. We have some changes going on with representation from the states, the Service and across the country. We have people in regional offices and working in different remote locations and USGS. We have broad representation but always looking for more and I will come talk to your state to diversity managers or anybody in your organization about MLI. I want to highlight leadership, Jim Douglas and Craig Czarnecki are our co-chairs. All of our committees and teams have a federal and a state co-chair. We have Samantha Brooke with Denver region, Pete (Hildreth) from Iowa, Sara (Parker-Pauley) from Missouri, John (Rogner) from Illinois, John Thompson from USGS and Bill Uihlein out of Atlanta southeast region of USFWS; these are your staff. We are going to start going through a process to capture human capital involved in this. Claire, Ed and I try to make it so that we don't rely on these people to do a lot of work between meetings because we understand we all have other priorities. For the hour they are with us we get a lot from them. Some people do jump in and provide extra support. We are going to start tracking human capital component of all of this so we can articulate how many hours people are spending on this, what time they are giving to it

and you can all see the contributions of your staff. We also have work groups. We have contractors, MAFWA has a cooperative agreement with FWS and has engaged with WMI and Judy Stokes Weber for communications work, Terwilliger Consulting for RSGCN and Kearns and West is consulting firm helping us with wind energy work. We couldn't do without all of these people and I feel so fortunate to work with every one of them. There are so many great ideas, meetings are well attended and dialog is good. What is more important is what we are able to do with that dialog and hopefully move into action. A special thanks, a year later we have had some departures and I am proud every one of these departures was because of retirement, new job or new position, no one has just left, good discussion and debate but no one left angry. We have had tremendous leadership, Dale Garner, Iowa; Kelly Hepler, South Dakota; on the steering committee who retired. From technical committee and other work groups we had Dave Azure, refuges Region 6 of USFWS and has taken a different position and is tremendous; Pat Deibert, Denver office and she is tremendous but moving into a different position Scott Hanshue, Michigan retired; Scott Larson has retired and Nate Muenks has gone to the Forest Service. We will be adding to this list next year. Sad to be losing some of the ones we will be losing this year but don't want to ruin any retirement announcements or make any statements I shouldn't. We have a lot of tremendous people and big shoes to fill. Working on our vision. I mentioned earlier, at the core of all of this is our Midwest vision, what we see as a successful landscape. Bill Moritz, through agreement with WMI, has led technical and steering committees through a robust process of identifying challenges and where we need to work in next 15-20 years and what we see as success. Not ready to reveal vision yet. We have steering committee meeting in August. That is underway and next steps are to adopt the vision, communicate it, incorporate it, using a thorough process and lots of conversation with technical committee making the foundation and more work with our steering committee. Other work going on, engaged with AFWA Task Force on landscape conservation and science and research priorities. There are a couple of recommendations that came out of that work last year. We used our technical committee as a place to vet science and research priorities MAFWA states had come up with, another place to have dialog and have additional perspective, worked close with Russ Mason on that. With RSGCN, WSFR and SWAP, Bill Moritz was able to put together a survey that is pretty comprehensive, asking questions about SWAP, work with WSFR and how we might utilize the RSGCN and we got 100% participation from the region and report the generated has had national importance because what is happening in the Midwest is happening other places too. Some of the questions raised and ideas your staff put forward has helped spark conversation, particularly in group looking at RSGCN regional SWAPs. Happy that work is going on and Ken Elowe is on the line to talk about his recommendation to MLI.

*Ken Elowe, AFWA* – Working with AFWA task force, especially collaborative conservation building durable collaboratives around the country. I am involved in science and SWAP planning also because they are integral to that whole idea. Everything Kelley has talked about today should give you great comfort that you are covering the bases. My role is to stimulate conversation between different regional associations and to share ideas back and forth so I have been working with Kelley, Craig, Jim Douglas, Bill Moritz and Ed Boggess on helping review documents they are coming up with, sharing ideas from other regions on integrating those. Also, taking good ideas MLI is generating and taking them back to Northeast, Southeast and Western Associations. This whole idea of landscape collaboratives is building something durable. Everything Kelley has gone over have been components of that baseline resolution we put together in 2018. In the post-LCC world, what we learned and what would make things better between the Service and the states. When you look at some of those components that are succinctly articulated, things like peer to peer relationships, shared priorities, durable governance for decision making and inclusion of other partners. Everything Kelley and Claire have been going over has been in light of those recommendations. The part each of the regional

associations are wrestling with is when the states and the Service come together, how do we then include other partners. I will be giving a little more information tomorrow during AFWA section of your meeting. I wanted to affirm what Kelley and all the participants in MLI are doing and give affirmation of soundness of the process and scope you are creating here with MLI, it is wonderful.

*Myers* – We wanted to make sure you had an opportunity to introduce yourself and talk about connections to other regional and national efforts. Before Ken came on we had a loose group of people who would talk across the regions with other initiatives and it has been good to have some more connected tissue, someone who brings us together and can ask critical questions. Pleased AFWA has brought Ken on. *Pauley* – Adding to that. I know a few rumors are abounding that maybe the LCCs are coming back and the great work we have been doing with MLI and SECAS and others might be for naught but Ron and I had a conversation with Martha Williams and she assured us there is no such intention. I am reflecting on your presentation and even Ken's position as one of the Association and really representing the states. This is such a different model, a collaboratively created, developed and implemented model and I know at some point in time we do want to talk about other partners coming on. Those who had concerns of LCCs and the way that was a top down and Service directing, we couldn't be further from that model from what you have done, Claire and others and with Jim's and Craig's leadership and Ken is latest example of where the states have key coordinating roles making sure we continue to be collaborative in our work together. Shout out as well for Ken's position and Kelley for your great work. *Myers* – What we have been trying to do is, what leadership and all the participants are doing with leadership of Craig and Jim, is taking the things that worked in past efforts, pick good relationships and give them action. That is what we have been trying to build on going forward. Jim and Craig are also going to be addressing you on Wednesday during the business meeting and sharing more next steps and vision. Back to the update. We are engaged in conversations with WSFR/SWAP/RSGCN, trying to pull those pieces together and figure out what next steps are. As Claire mentioned, working the National Wildlife Federation on a potential grant on outreach around RSGCN. We have also been involved in a number of other grants. Members of technical committee and work groups are working on different grants. They bring them to MLI to vet them and I love that in all of these different forums we created have become places where there is a value-added conversation to the work going on across a couple states or maybe within one state. So, involved in a lot of grant discussions, even if not coming into the MLI, but grants working for the region. Upcoming activities: work groups have workplans and they tie through actions they want accomplish, working to revise and update those now. When we get RSGCN and vision completed we will be doing an intensive priority review. Right now, we have big priorities that are pillars of our organization and we want to refine into specific habitat types or specific groups of species or sub-regional geographies, that is the work we are going to do; use the resource and align that with our vision. We have a steering committee retreat coming up in August where we will talk about a lot of this and we have a number of RSGCN planning meetings, including potential partner engagement round table possibly in October. We have a small team assembled to work on that and hopefully will have a save the date soon. The question of, we have done so much and so many conversations going but we want to make sure we don't get too far away from our partners, who might not be in government and make sure they feel they are connected with us and have a place. Looking at Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC) in February In Des Moines to have a robust workshop on planning for the MLI and how we can utilize that group talking about science and research done and bring in planning group to decide what to do with it all. As we mentioned, with communications work, a website where you will have all of this information and we are transparent. Next seven months, lot of work going on in a lot of different places, will update and hopefully working with partners. There will be a series of RSGCN and planning meetings going

on this fall and working on taking all of this information and sit down at MFWC and have engaging planning session where everyone feels connected. Want to talk about CWD a bit. Thank you to people on committees, special shout out to Claire, I was on a detail earlier this year and she stepped up and took leadership and was amazing and I really appreciate all you do. Thank you to Ed, any comments?

*Ed Boggess* – Add all the great work that is being done by you, Claire, consultants we contracted through MAFWA and the Service, being able to provide that support for these regional efforts has really been remarkable. We've got a lot of things in our work plans and are on track, some we thought we would be to a little sooner but everything is being laid in a strong foundation for a durable approach. With a bias for action, I am always looking for what we are going to do on the ground. Getting there and within next six months we will be well down the road towards that. I want to emphasize the importance of prioritization and we have a framework for MLI priorities and there is a bunch of good things we could be doing out there. It is going to be really important now with RSGCN and all the other products to figure out where we can make the most impact, where we can focus and where we can move the ball forward. We probably can't do everything we would like to do but hope whatever we decide to do we do really well. Excited about where we are at and proud to be part of this team. *Myers* – Appreciate being given the space by my leadership in the FWS, so Craig, Charley and Noreen offer so much support for us to have these conversations and I appreciate that.

*Noreen Walsh, USFWS* – I appreciated your presentation and impressed with thoughtful and deliberate approach that you, Ed and Claire and the whole team are taking in building this. It seems really clear you are working to build a truly collaborative approach and something that is going to last for the long run. While I love what Ed said about us for action, I appreciate thoughtfulness you all have put into building this and building it at appropriate pace to make sure it is going to be transformational for conservation. Thank you for your leadership.

*Myers* - Talk about CWD. MLI is now officially giving this back to MAFWA. We held event in December 2019 before the pandemic and the world went haywire. We had a great meeting in Columbia MO where we locked ourselves in a room for a week and really worked through a lot of information, using some traditional business process improvement methodologies through what is known as a kaizen event, a business process improvement event. We went through a specific process to address the scope of our meeting and objectives. It was essentially just to get better coordinated in the Midwest around CWD across all the different organizations. We had a large participant list and we worked as much as we could during that week and we were going to try and finalize things over calls, having been thrust into a virtual world and none of us were that great at it. We worked diligently across phone calls to get to where we had results and then the pandemic happened so we put it aside for a bit. We picked this back up last summer and into the fall and have come up with a good solution. I presented this last fall and we have been working on how we implement it going forward. We have a team working on implementation plan. We have had some awesome good old-fashioned arguments and disagreements about how we move forward. I love it, with my legal background I believe discourse is where growth can happen. It was always professional and courteous but strong and good and we got to a place where not everyone is in complete agreement on this is the direction we should go but everyone in support of it because it will allow us to continue to have these important conversations in an organized way. I say it was full of conflict but it was because we were getting at the heart of the issue. We have the numbers and get to the end of the meeting and say that one thing that made us all go back and second guess everything we had done. It was all good and we needed to have those conversations. This group made a recommendation that MAFWA should establish a special working group with members of the wildlife health committee, deer and turkey committee and if you agree the human dimensions committee to come together as a small working group to

address a number of the recommendations we laid out. Sent Ollie a potential charge for this group that would meet, develop and propose for adoption an official position with respect to CWD. This group would look at external communications and figure out what is needed to craft messages. Looking at internal coordination and figuring out how you get these committees to work better together because you have a lot of resources existing within MAFWA across the committees and how can they interact more and also with federal partners that are very involved and interested in getting more engaged on CWD. Then there are all these different surveillance systems coming online, all the national conversations and making sure this group tracks a lot of those and also makes you all aware of research priorities, grants and funding needs for the Midwest region so this group can endorse some of those actions. This is all spelled out in a thorough document, the ideas for this group to pursue and there are some recommended actions for individual states. Things like sharing success stories, having one point of contact for CWD so no confusion when trying to have internal coordination. Some states are holding summits, like four corners, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri and Iowa, some states entering into partnering with neighboring states so there can be some shared surveillance or information, looking at those and recommending those actions. In terms of the logistics, the bylaws provide for you to approve an Ad hoc committee, Sara has agreed to be director liaison to that committee and she can designate a person to be her chair. It takes a charge from the board. I mentioned this group wants all three of those committees represented so Sara's designee would work with the committee chairs to figure out who needs to be on there. We were thinking it makes sense for some of the people on this implementation team to also be on this committee for consistency but opening up to others as well for a well-rounded perspective. For CWD, create this working group so if the Board decides to do that the next steps would be to populate that group and having them start looking at the charge for how they want to address it and report their progress to your executive committee and this meeting every summer. *Warnke* – Ask you to run through hierarchy of CWD committee and how they will prioritize how they make decisions on items they are going to work on or would like to work on? *Myers* – Group has come up with a robust set of what actions they think this committee would need to take. The issues they would need to address and actions to take. The first step for this ad hoc committee of the MAFWA Board would be for Sara to set designee, who would chair this group and that person would work with all those committee chairs to populate the group. Then the group would come together and meet and decide how they want to attack this, whether they are going to work within their committees. The way it is laid out is with very specific action items. It doesn't contemplate they will finish them all in a year. There are some items on there that would come back to you for annual review or for update on progress annually. It is incumbent on them to continue to work on them and led by this chair. Something the group felt was important was providing those regular updates to MAFWA ExCom so there was accountability. We need to be able to report our progress at next quarterly meeting so you will get quarterly updates. The challenge is we talked about having a regional CWD coordinator position so one of the elements is to annually evaluate the need for a coordinator. That was one point where there was disagreement, some said it would confuse things and others said they needed it. The group decided not going to say they don't need one now but that is something they are going to annually review. If committee only lasts a year, by the end of this year they would make a recommendation as to whether they need a coordinator or not. Who will be responsible to do all these things and have that professional responsibility to get it done? At this point, more of the group felt like a lot could be done by aligning committees and empowering this work group. It provides a lot more direction and strategy than any of the efforts to date have provided. They felt like they have direction. *Pauley* – Number one, this group would be doing nothing that would be mandating anything to the states. As you already know in your role that the number one challenge, a significant challenge over many years state has dealt with CWD, has been the lack of coordination. The greatest asset of this working group are the players that are

living, breathing and dealing with this every day. They will have the form and template for this coordination. *Warnke* – I agree, huge challenge. Thanks for updates, look forward to future updates and future collaboration.

*Warnke* - Make sure you are able to come back, the mixology event is sponsored by Brandt Information Services and the mixologist will show us how to manufacture three custom cocktails. Remiss, I would like to say welcome to Christie Curley from Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Welcome Christie and thank you for attending. Any words of wisdom?

*Christie Curley* – No words of wisdom, thanks for warm welcome. Fascinating discussion and appreciate all of the perspectives. If ever there is anything I can add from Ontario I definitely will. *Warnke* – Appreciate that, glad to have you here, great to have wide geographical diversity of attendance at these meetings.

***Welcome Social & Mixology Event*** – *Grab a snack and a beverage of your choice and join your colleagues for a virtual social.*

Tuesday, June 29, 2021

Starts at 12:30 pm

*Warnke* – Welcome to second day of MAFWA 2021 Conference Zoom meeting. Hope to never replicate but we are making the best of it and it is going great. Welcome S3 who is sponsoring the awards ceremony, Sovereign Sportsman Solutions, Eric Dinger is going to give us an introduction.

*Eric Dinger* – Thanks for letting S3 be a part of this event. Like everyone else we cannot wait until these are happening in person and we can do the fun things we do together, most of which happens after the event itself. My job is to tell you about S3. We are a license vendor and the exciting news in our part of the world is we have launched our new Customer Relationship Management (CRM), which has been around awhile. We are excited about ours for two reasons. It was live in Missouri and live now in Ohio and focused on two different things, both of which are cool. We have solved one of the challenges technically when it comes to a CRM in that we got what we call hard and soft attributions figured out. That means we can attribute a marketing attribute to a sale where the marketing activity creates the sale, we call that hard attribution. We have also solved the soft attribution part where any marketing activity we do through our CRM and any sale that comes through the licensing system can be combined back together and we can pick a window. In Missouri we picked three days, so anytime sale happens in licensing system that sale looks for marketing activity that person interacted with over the last three days and it attributes that license sale to that marketing activity. That is giving us a chance to measure all kinds of things that we weren't able to before. Ohio is doing something different than Missouri with their CRM to begin with, they are promoting their shooting ranges in a neat innovative way. Appreciate the chance to say a couple of words and look forward to being part of the conversation. *Warnke* – Excited to see S3 CRM system too. We are getting a briefing in Wisconsin in a month or two and excited to see what S3 can do for us. Thanks for sponsoring these awards presentations.

### AWARDS PRESENTATION

*Terry Steinwand, Awards Committee Chairman, Facilitator* – (Award Winners – Exhibit 5). Thanks to nominators for all of the great nominations they sent in even though I know there are more out there that are well deserving individuals. Thank fellow committee members Jim Douglas, Nebraska; Kendra Wecker, Ohio; Brian Clark, Kentucky; and Pete Hildreth, Iowa. It takes a little bit of time to go through all the nominations. This year was no different, great nominations and tough choices to be made but we boiled it down to what we needed to. I have to thank Sheila Kemmis. She is the glue that holds us all together, takes all the scores and boils it down for us so we can make a final choice. (Technical difficulty with PowerPoint presentation). I boiled down the nominations and apologize if I missed any high points. Tried to boil down to 2 to 2 ½ minutes and if any of the award winners want to say a few words afterwards they are welcome to. Encourage everyone to congratulate all the winners on chat or with virtual applause.

**Law Enforcement Officer of the Year** – This year the award goes to individual with Michigan DNR Law Enforcement Division since 1999. Since that time, he has worked in various positions and with his skills, personality and demeanor he is constantly looked to for advice by officers and supervisors. He is the go-to person in law enforcement division when it comes to investigating private land cervid facilities, known as deer farms. He recently spent over a year investigating a facility that had illegally imported animals and tested positive for CWD. He

identified 14 felonies the operator committed in illegal trafficking of white-tailed deer and as result of his work the owner was forced to depopulate his facility and he plead guilty to a number of misdemeanors. In addition to his other talents this individual was the only skillful forensic data extraction analyst within the law enforcement division. To date he has performed over 50 examinations on his cell phone. These examinations have led to officers obtaining much needed evidence and ultimately leading to convictions. He is always willing to assist an officer in search warrants, interpreting data extracted from a cell phone to help himself and everyone else and is beginning to train another detective on that. In addition to that he carries a strong case load and is in the midst of two multi-year covert investigations, one involving the trafficking of wolves involving multiple states. He continues to make progress and has dealt with investigators from around the country. The second relates to taking of illegal deer and will likely result in several felony charges. Another example of the workload is he assisted in the conclusion of an investigation regarding a suspect who had snared and sold multiple wolves. After completing cell phone forensics on suspect's phones, he used his extensive trapping background to lead officers to locate the remaining snares so they would not continue to kill animals. He is looked up to by his peers and supervisors and puts his personal leave second. If a job needs to get done he will sacrifice his life and plans to make it happen. He is a humble leader and an outstanding and accomplished detective and overall a good person. Please help me congratulate **Detective Brian Lebel, Michigan DNR** law enforcement division, this year's winner of Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Congratulations Brian.

*Brian Lebel* – I am honored to receive this. We have some great leaders here in Michigan and part of a great team, they make me look good. Honored and thank you for your time.

**Wildlife Biologist of the Year** – This year's winner is well-traveled and is currently furbearer biologist for Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). She has also worked for Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game for eight years, working as furbearer biologist, black bear project leader and ultimately the assistant chief of wildlife before coming to Missouri in 2016. She has many duties as furbearer biologist, but primary focus is on research and monitoring of black bears. Initial black bear research in Missouri began in 2010. In 2012 the statewide population was estimated at about 350 bears. This individual has helped finalize the black bear management plan, part of which was to initiate a project to measure reproductive survival rates of female bears in order to model statewide bear numbers and predict growth and trajectory of Missouri's black bear population. As a result of her work an updated population list in 2019 determined Missouri is home to 840 black bears and population is growing at approximately 9% annually. Black bears are important for Missouri for contributions to regional biodiversity and ecosystem health value as well as potential game species. However, as we all might know bears can also be regarded as a nuisance by the public. While much of this individual's time is spent on research aspects of bears, a third of her time is spent on outreach and education efforts. While she is an excellent research biologist her strong suit is talking to the public. She has educated the governor and first lady, legislators, county commissioners and private landowners with tours of bearing trapping events. Finally, she dealt with numerous public bear issues that could have blown up given different views of the public seeing bears. The most potentially explosive public bear event occurred on July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend last summer when a black bear nicknamed Bruno became a social media star when his movements were being documented by the public during his journey from Wisconsin to Missouri and unfortunately the bear found itself in a tough spot in St. Louis suburb on the morning of July 5. The bear had cornered himself in the vicinity of two major highways and being "a social media star" he attracted more than 400 onlookers which further complicated the matter. Missouri Department of Conservation staff made the decision to immobilize the bear and move it to a nearby area of suitable habitat and this caused public concern. This individual deescalated the public concerns in a calming nature and

professional presence and helped staff move Bruno. Finally, this individual has been instrumental in the working the past few years on framework identifying population methods that would support the highly regulated hunting season for black bear management strategy to maintain a viable black bear population compatible with habitat and humans. Recently the MDC commission approved a bear hunting season for the fall of this year in southern Missouri. Without the leadership, guidance and public trust of this individual this season wouldn't be happening. Join me in congratulating **Laura Conlee of Missouri Department of Conservation** as this year's winner of the Wildlife Biologist of the Year award.

*Laura Conlee* – This is a huge honor. I appreciate the kind words and the nomination. I work with a great team here in Missouri. All of this wouldn't be possible without that whole crew. Thank you.

**Fisheries Biologist of the Year** – This individual currently serves as a manager of the Farlington Fish Hatchery and Kanas Aquatic Biodiversity Center in southeast Kansas. He started at the hatchery as a fish culturist after completing a temporary assignment at the department's Meade Fish Hatchery in 1986. He has managed the Farlington Fish Hatchery since 2013. Throughout his fish culture career, he has been devoted to advancing fish culture with state-of-the-art technology and procedures. The programs at Farlington Fish Hatchery have varied over the years but all have involved producing warm-water and cool-water sport fish. Two years ago, the Kansas Aquatic Biodiversity Center opened on the hatchery grounds, culminating a long planning and development process that this individual was central to. The center will expand the hatchery's production to imperiled aquatic species, including fresh-water mussels, non-sport fish and other aquatic animals. This individual doesn't simply do his job managing the fish hatchery he is also involved in other leadership roles in the local chapter of American Fisheries Society and recently elected to serve AFS fish culture section president-elect. He will assume that position at the 2021 annual meeting of AFS in November of this year. If that isn't enough he also volunteers his time to participate in both private fisheries and extension organizations. While doing all of this, in his spare time, he volunteers to coordinate the local county 4-H shooting sports program and is current chairman of the Kansas 4-H archery steering group and is vice chair of Kansas State Extension shooting sports advisory. He also promotes youth shooting sports programs as part of the National Archery in the Schools Program as a basic archery instructor trainer specialist. Join me in congratulating **Dan Mosier II** of Kansas as this year's winner of the Fisheries Biologist of the Year.

*Dan Mosier* – This is quite an honor for me. I appreciate the nomination from my agency and appreciate all of the work the Association has put into these awards. Thanks also to folks at S3 for sponsoring this. Beside myself to even be nominated for this award and will enjoy it immensely.

**Spirit of the Shack** – We have two awards. This was one where we really had a tough getting it down, they were that close. Like Leopold, this individual hails from Iowa and has been a forester for a good portion of his career. And, like Leopold, has taken a career path that has made him a leader in efforts outside the realm of forestry. He is an agent of change and a promoter of Leopold's land ethic in all his endeavors. This individual's early career with the MDC brought him through the ranks of the forestry division, but in 2014 his career took him away from forestry, as he was promoted to private land services chief for the Ozark unit. Not only did he supervisor many private land staff, but he was also in charge of community conservation efforts. In addition, he was on detail for four years addressing governmental relations during the Missouri legislative sessions, by communicating information and department views on conservation issues to the general assembly. This individual has extensive training in the Incident Command System (ICS), with much of his experience gained leading diverse teams on western

wildfires and making life and death decisions for his fire crew. As a result of this skillset, he was assigned as feral hog operations incident commander, leading department-wide efforts to eradicate feral hogs in southern Missouri, where his leadership has contributed to reducing the feral hog range in Missouri by 50%. This individual understands the give and take necessary to develop new partnerships with non-traditional partners and maintain relations with traditional ones. His vision for partnerships will help address resource needs now and into the future. With his leadership a unique partnership has evolved between the department, the Missouri Department of Transportation, and the Missouri Prairie Foundation to eradicate invasive species along highway rights-of-ways through areas of highly diverse natural communities in southeast Missouri. He is a team player engaging his staff and digging in to help meet the challenges the teams he serves on will face. Innovation and initiative put him in the lead for many agency efforts. He clearly communicates overall direction to his staff, the key outcomes desired, and the principal strategy to reach those outcomes. Like Leopold, he understands how vital landowners are to the success of conservation and the restoration of habitats and species in Missouri. Although he is a forester by trade, he has become an expert in wildlife habitat establishment whether it is for a native bee or white-tailed deer. He is a key promoter of Leopold's land ethic in department programs and efforts with landowners and partners. He keeps this mindset whether working with feral hogs, communities, or landowners. Join me in congratulating **Jason Jensen of Missouri Department of Conservation** as the first Spirit of the Shack award winner.

*Jason Jensen* – Now I know why I received the invite to attend today's meeting. It is humbling and very much appreciated. It is humbling because everything we do involves teamwork so hearing some of the things I was nominated for and thinking about all the people I have had the opportunity to work with is humbling. For me it is never about awards, it is about making a difference but at the same time nice to be recognized for those efforts.

The second **Spirit of the Shack** award. Much of this individual's career is focused on advancing stewardship of lands for wildlife across the landscape, on public and private land, and with private landowners to trained biologists. He has advocated at the national level and has been a leader in developing policy priorities for including strong wildlife habitat components in the Farm Bill. He has worked with national conservation partners such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency, state agencies across the country, and state agencies in Michigan, as well as grass roots organizations like the local county Conservation Districts and one-on-one with private landowners. He sat in suit and tie in Senate chambers and a week later in Carhart's helping plant a prairie, all the while sharing with people from all walks of life his passion for wildlife and their habitats. Throughout his career he has made connections with people to help them better understand the value of stewardship and wildlife conservation. He has talked to hundreds of private landowners to help them manage habitat and provided scientific testimony to Michigan House and Senate committees regarding conservation legislation. He is skilled in building partnerships at the local, state, and national scale. On any given day he can be seen jumping from calls with national partners providing input and guidance to Farm Bill programs as part of MAFWA and AFWA committees or working on agreements with local conservation districts to get more Farm Bill biologists on the Michigan landscape. In his spare time, he will go out of his way to find a place for an elderly women's first hunt because she emailed our HAP program. This past year during COVID 19 work paused for Farm Bill biologists and the hunting access program. He personally called all 32 partners to break the news to them and when work was able to be restarted he worked tirelessly to coach and support the Farm Bill Biologists and Conservation Districts during this difficult year to ensure their success. His impact on wildlife conservation can be seen on the ground in thousands of acres of diverse grasslands that provide habitat for pheasants and monarchs on public and private lands in Michigan, in national and regional policies that have

brought more funding for habitat to the Midwest, and in the training and molding of aspiring young biologists. He exemplifies a great conservation that is dedicated to wildlife conservation and to connecting people to wildlife and their habitats. Join me in congratulating **Michael Parker of Michigan DNR** for this year's second Spirit of the Shack award.

*Michael Parker* – This is a huge honor. Thank you to the person who nominated me and to the committee who considers these. There are a lot of great people doing great things and great teams and I feel grateful to work for a division and department that are supportive and allow us to be creative, identify things and work with great teams to do great things for wildlife and the public. I am honored. Thank you.

**Excellence in Conservation** – Ohio is blessed with several birding locations that attract birders from across the country and around the world. For example, Magee Marsh Wildlife Area boardwalk has been voted a Top 10 birding location in the U.S. for more than a decade. During discussions about expanding the agency's relevancy, staff better connecting with bird watchers was identified as a top priority. The Ohio Birding Academy was developed to overcome barriers for staff. It included diverse topics for staff to engage birders and be more comfortable working with a broader constituency. This week-long in-person training program was planned for the spring of 2020. Just prior to its launch, the academy was transitioned to a virtual platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team did an incredible job to swiftly transition from in-person to a virtual learning environment. Over a dozen webinars were held throughout 2020-2021, and topics ranged widely. From Human Dimensions of birding to spring migrants, fall migration, basics of birding, waterfowl identification, over 16 different topics. Hundreds of staff were reached and participated in the webinars. In addition, the team collaborated with key partners, the Ohio State University Extension, Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, and Cornell University. Many staff participated in the Christmas bird count and interacted with new constituents, broadening the agency's ability to be a resource for bird watchers. Staff was also permitted to participate in another citizen science program, the Great Backyard Bird Count, to enhance their participation in bird watching. Additional webinars have been conducted that include a partnership with a local bird observatory to exchange presentations and foster partnerships. This team, the **Ohio Bird Academy Team** definitely deserves the Excellence in Conservation award because of their diligence and ingenuity of creating a platform that can reach far more staff than the original plan for the in-person academy and they also strengthened partnerships with key organizations, both essential elements for expanding the agency's relevancy. I will mention the team members: Joseph Lautenbach, Scott Butterworth, David Kohler, Aaron Brown, Laura Kearns, Heather Bokman, Jamey Emmert, Justus Nethero and Jen Dennison.

*Scott Butterworth* – On behalf of the team I want to thank everybody for the award. Specifically thank Chief Wecker for her support. This was a great way to help with relevancy for our organization and get our employees more comfortable dealing with birders. As much as we don't like talking about positives of the pandemic, having to go virtual was definitely a positive and we were able to reach many more staff and give them an opportunity to participate. I would highly encourage other states to consider something like this and if you have any questions we would be glad to help you out. This is an honor for us to receive this award. It was an agency effort and in everybody's interest to participate. Thank you.

The last two awards are both **Sagamore** awards – (PowerPoint up – Exhibit 6) The Sagamore is given to any director or upper-level staff that has contributed to MAFWA. To qualify the recipient must have four years of service to MAFWA, have 75% meeting attendance rate and serve on one or more committees. The first one goes to **Dale Garner, Iowa**. I met Dale 12 years ago, he was part of the Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Working Group and we had meetings in North Dakota. I was very impressed with him. Dale retired September 30 of last year after more

than 25 years serving the people of Iowa. He began as a research biologist with four wildlife species in the Sheraton office in 1995 before moving to Des Moines in 2001 to become the coordinator of North American Wetland Conservation Act programs and other special projects. He was promoted to Chief of Wildlife Bureau in 2004 and promoted to administrator of the division that houses fisheries, parks, forests and preserves, engineering, land and water, law enforcement and wildlife bureau in 2017. It is a privilege to present this to Dale. A great individual and I consider him a great friend.

*Dale Garner* – I had a great career and everyone that is in this type of career are exceptional people and so fun to work with. I want to thank all of you directors especially. The deer and turkey folks and health committee are really a blessing to work with and all the things we got to do. Thanks to Iowa DNR for upper management and all the staff there and everyone at the Service it was a privilege to work with everyone. No one does this on their own, it takes a team effort. Thank you again. Last ones for Ollie, Go Packers!

**Sagamore** – I have known **Kelly Hepler, South Dakota** for a long time, well before I became director in North Dakota. I was very impressed with him from day one. He retired December 15 of last year and he worked 35 years for Alaska Department of Fish and Game before being named in December 2014 the South Dakota cabinet title. Kelly is one of those individuals where it could take a year to talk about all his accomplishments and what he has done for fish and wildlife across the United States. Kelly you have been a great friend, a great Secretary, great Director and appreciate all you have done.

*Kelly Hepler* – I want to say how much I appreciate seeing everyone today, I miss you all. Our accomplishments are our accomplishments, we have great people coming behind us, like a finger in the water, you move the finger there is no evidence you were even there. That tells you how good our agencies are. I do miss seeing everybody. I enjoyed MAFWA in particular. I have been active in AFWA and WAFWA, but MAFWA was special to me. Ollie and Sheila and all the people that do all the work has been good, but directors themselves and the interaction you guys have, excitement you have and the way you conduct business is outstanding. It is such a privilege. When you start out in these organizations, back in 1978 when I started you never dreamed you would get the opportunity to lead quality organizations and South Dakota was outstanding to me and still is. I love where I live and will be here the rest of my life. On the fish side, as Terry said, the people we got to know coming up through the ranks was really exciting. You look at positions like this, like Jim Douglas who is one of the leaders, Sara and others, when running an organization, they make it easy for you because they are so outstanding in what they do. All this is humbling. It is neat for me to be invited and awards you handed out were truly outstanding recipients today. Also, I want to thank S3 for their support. Thanks Terry and Keith and everybody, I miss all of you. Come to South Dakota and we will go pheasant hunting.

*Steinwand* – This will be my last awards ceremony as I am retiring the end of July. My plans are to be in Custer State Park next year to see all of you again. Kelly, I hope you are there also.

*Warnke* – Congratulations to all of the award winners, it is really a great recognition to be noticed and recognized by your professional agencies and directors. I have three more awards to go through.

We have two **Special Recognition** awards this year. – The first one goes to **Doug Nygren, Kansas**. Doug has worked for Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism since 1980 and has spent all but one of those years in fisheries. He is currently one of the longest standing state agency Fisheries directors in the nation, serving in that position for 25 years. Developing programs and regulations backed with science and data has been a hallmark of Doug's career.

One exciting angling opportunity developed under Doug's guidance is the blue catfish program. The program provides exceptional trophy-class fisheries attracting anglers who want to try their hand at catching a 30- to 80-pound blue catfish. Doug and his staff have been involved with R3 before it was even called R3. They established an aquatic education specialist position, certified volunteer angling instructors and facilitated fishing events for people of all ages. Additionally, Doug and staff developed a private land access program now known as the walk-in fishing access program. It has provided access to 189 sites enrolled statewide including 1,600 pond acres. As a result of Doug's consistent and dedicated leadership as well as his unwavering commitment Kansas aquatic resources have never been more robust and with the development of new programs and fisheries infrastructure enhancements the future of Kansas fishing is brighter than ever. Join me in congratulating Doug Nygren as recipient of the MAFWA special recognition award for 2021.

*Brad Loveless* – Doug couldn't be with us today he is on an R3 activity, taking his grandsons fishing. We are proud of him as well as Dan Mosier with the award he got and the leadership he has displayed. We are proud of those individuals and our fisheries program is strong, in fact it has been extraordinary as you saw from a few of the things mentioned. Doug has been an incredible leader for us in Kansas and across the nation when it comes to the reservoir fishery programs and habitat work he has done. We are blessed to have these kinds of folks working for us. His leadership has been extraordinary and we hope he never retires. We are lucky to have him and appreciative of being able to accept the award on his behalf. *Warnke* – Express our congratulations to Doug next time you see him.

*Warnke* – Our second **Special Recognition** award – **Noreen Walsh, USFWS**. As many, or all of you, know she is retiring effective at the end of July. In her role as regional director, she has been a valuable partner for those states in Region 6 and MAFWA. In her time as a regional director, she has had to deal with some very challenging issues and done so with calmness and rationality. Some of the more challenging issues have been grizzly bears, sage grouse, lesser prairie chickens, wolves, wetland delineations in the prairie states and the list goes on. We all know Noreen as the Region 6 region director since 2012 but she worked her way up the ladder and we need to recognize that also. She started her career with USFWS as a research biologist working out of Fairbanks, Alaska; she then moved to a biologist position in the fish and wildlife headquarters in Washington, DC; then as assistant regional director for ecological services in the southeast region; and up until 2012 she was the deputy regional director for Region 6. Noreen has been a stalwart partner and we will miss her advice and calm demeanor. We wish her the best in her retirement and today we present Noreen Walsh with the MAFWA special recognition award for 2021.

*Noreen Walsh* – Thanks to you and all of the directors. Since I came to this region about 12 years ago it really has been a pleasure to work with all of our MAFWA states. An honor to be recognized by you all. Like so many people have said, as directors you know that everything that gets done gets done because we have great staff, great teams and across MAFWA states teams have been working very well together. I am very appreciative of that, thank you all very much.

*Warnke* – Congratulations again, we appreciate your long service.

*Warnke* – The next award I have the honor of presenting is the **President's Award** – This award is close to me since the president of MAFWA gets to select it and I have selected a long-time conservation legend from Wisconsin, **George Meyer, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation**. George was raised on a dairy farm in east central Wisconsin. He worked for the Department of Natural Resources for 32 years including eight as the Secretary of our department. He taught conservation law and policy at Lawrence University and since then has served 18 years as the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Executive Director. During George's tenure he oversaw the

purchase of over 150,000 acres for public use, substantially increased funding for controlling run off, assisted in releasing the first elk into the state, lead in establishing wetland protection regulations covering five million acres, he led effort to pass mourning dove hunt in the state, he authorized introduction of experimental recovery of whooping cranes and many more accomplishments. George has also had the illustrious experience of issuing violation citations to Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight and Minnesota governor Rudy Perpich in his career, both for fishing without a license. One quick story about his ticketing high profile people. In the 1980s Wisconsin's tribes kept pushing to have USFWS do some shocking surveys on some of our inland lakes. As an agent of the tribes, DNR told the USFWS they could not do so without obtaining a permit. One night, FWS was shocking a Wisconsin lake and George determined this was a violation of state law and decided the warden should issue the citation. The warden issues a \$200 ticket to the leader of the fish and wildlife crew who just happened to be Hannibal Bolton. I'm sure there is a lot more to that story. His connections run deep and his conservation credentials run deep. We could go on about George's many accomplishments in protecting natural resources in Wisconsin and around the country, but I think it fitting to say George is a conservation legend and a strong upholder of the title of North American Conservation. For your long and dedicated service to conservation, MAFWA, Wisconsin and hunting, fishing and trapping I am honored to present you the President's Award on behalf of the MAFWA Board of Directors. Congratulations.

*George Meyer* – I am a little speechless and it is good to see several people I know on this call. I have been away from Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for some time. Sara, I have had the pleasure of being in a few meetings with her; Justine Hasz is on, the director of Wisconsin fisheries; Dan Eichinger, my fellow compatriot in UCC in Michigan affiliated Wildlife Federation, we had many good endeavors together; Ollie Torgerson, who I have known all my life, his dad and my dad were friends and he has done so much for conservation in Missouri and now MAFWA; and Ron Regan, he and I go back to the "International" Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Ron has stood so actively involved assisting fish and wildlife directors throughout the country and helping fulfill their missions. As far as this award, someone said earlier, no person wins an award like this, it is the people they work with that did. Wisconsin DNR is a large agency and has combined environmental and fish and wildlife agency and 3,000 employees. They are the most dedicated, professional people a person had the pleasure of working with as peers. We treated it as a family and many of those great accomplishments are theirs and I just happened to have the opportunity to be head of the agency when they took place. I truly appreciate Keith and his thinking of me for this award. Keith was a valued employee at Wisconsin DNR when I was there and obviously has shown his mettle and worked himself up to the head of fish and wildlife and parks division of DNR and he does a superlative job in that position. No one starts work for any agency to get awards, they do it because they love it and stay with it because it is a pleasure to go to work every day and accomplish those kinds of things. I have won other awards and recognition but there is no more meaningful award than receiving it from people that are walking in the same shoes you did as a conservation leader. That is why this award is so precious and I thank you all for thinking of me to receive this award. Hannibal and I were good friends at the time and still are. *Warnke* – Thank you George, appreciate having you as a terrific mentor in the beginning of my career.

*Warnke* – I have two more awards that you may not have been aware of. They were not on the agenda intentionally. First, I have the honor of to present another special recognition **Sagamore Award** to **Terry Steinwand, director of North Dakota**. Terry was raised on a small farm east of Garrison, North Dakota and started with the North Dakota Game and Fish as a seasonal in 1976. He started full time employment in 1982 and was appointed chief of fisheries division in 1990 and ultimately as director in 2006. He has served as representative on the biota task force in

1991, Devils Lake working group in 1996, in 2005 on Ad Hoc committee to work with council on environmental quality on Devils Lake outlet issues, appointed to North American wetland council in 2006 and has been the vice-chair since 2008. Terry is co-chairman of Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative since 2010, appointed to Devil's Lake outlet advisory committee in 2014 and continues to serve. Terry has been a champion for North Dakota hunters and anglers for nearly four decades, spending the last 15 years as the director, an amazing feat. From expanding hunting access to growing state's fishing opportunities, including a world class stocking program, Terry's love and respect for the outdoors shines through in his work every day. MAFWA directors and staff are deeply honored by his leadership, friendship, mentoring and legacy of responsible, effective direction and we wish him all the best in his retirement. We will miss him. Terry, I am humbled by the opportunity to present this award in recognition of your dedication and commitment, not only to North Dakota but to the entire Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Thank you and congratulations.

*Terry Steinwand* – Thank you Keith, unexpected. It has been so much fun working with MAFWA and directors from across the nation. This past year has been tough with all the virtual meetings. It has been said before, I was asked in my retirement interview what my legacy was. I never done this job to leave a legacy but if I were to pick one it is hiring the right people. I think we can all say we all have the best staff in the world, they are passionate about what they do, care about what they do, not only presidents but members also and they love to hunt and fish. Keith, Ollie and everybody, thank you so much and I hope to see everybody in Custer State Park.  
*Warnke* – See you there, congratulations.

*Warnke* – One final MAFWA special recognition **Sagamore – Jim Douglas**, for his 47 years of service to Nebraska and many years of exceptional leadership at MAFWA. Jim served as the Nebraska director for nine years. He has been a strategic leader and manager with the vision to lead in Nebraska and a work horse for MAFWA. Jim's ability to look to the future, share a vision and find resources has been instrumental to our success as an organization and to success in Nebraska. Jim took the lead on R3 several years ago. Some of Jim's accomplishments include creating a communications division, expanding wildlife research for big game, small and upland game, increasing agency law enforcement, leading the charge to upgrade fish hatcheries and enhancing parks across the state. Creating and planning a programing division to help best prepare the agency for future success. Jim has always been a hands-on participatory, involved and engaged leader. One example, at the start of one NASP tournament Jim was asked to fire the first arrow so Jim brought out his Jennings bow, which Jeff says is one of the first compounds ever made, came to the front of the line and launched the first arrow with well over 100 onlookers behind him. At the same time one of the competitors at the NASP tournament, a young girl probably 7-years-old wanted to shoot an arrow with him. Jim was sitting at full draw and the youngster takes her time setting up and when the fire command was finally given the kid drills the balloon right down the middle, but Jim's arrow hit the wooden target frame making a resounding thud that could be heard for a quarter mile. The little girl leans over to him and says, "don't worry it's okay". Jim, please accept my deep personal gratitude and respect of the entire MAFWA Board for your dedicated, untiring service. Also, please accept this award and our deepest heartfelt congratulations on your retirement.

*Jim Douglas* – Thanks Keith and thanks to everyone. I am humbled by this recognition. I like that you told one of the lighter stories because those kinds of things, that was a new youth tournament you were talking about, but those kinds of those moments are the ones that help make everything we do worthwhile. I saw a quote recently that said, "You don't remember days we remember moments" and I think that is true and there are so many great moments in any of our careers. It is a noble profession and we all take our satisfaction from making small differences and building upon accomplishments that went before us. It was great being on the

awards committee the last couple of years because you see of the nominations and understand all of the great talent that is out there working hard every day that we depend on for all of us to get more done. As I approach leaving the agency, I take great pleasure in knowing those who come after us and those presently working will carry on and continue to make great progress in our endeavor. Thanks everybody for your friendship and collaboration that we have had. Warnke – We can't say how much we appreciate you for all of your service. One final note before we move on. Thinking about this and going through the awards list and putting together some of these remarks and it came to me that these four retirees we are honoring today are titans for the MAFWA. Jim and Terry right now, before their retirements, chair or liaison to at least 10 MAFWA committees, task forces and initiatives. Dale and Kelly have led committees, chaired initiatives and task forces for years before their retirements. Those commitments will be a huge lift to replace. Dale, Kelly, Terry and Jim, thank you and keep in touch and we wish you the best. Eric with S3 thank you for your sponsorship.

*Eric Dinger* – Offer my congratulations to the award winners today. As a sportsman myself who loves to hunt and fish in the Midwest, the chance to grow up in this part of the country and enjoy the outdoors is near and dear to my heart and your work as leaders over the generations you have led has produced another generation of people, because of your work, who care about and love the outdoors and love their states in this region. Individually, thank you guys for what you have done and as a business we are proud to be part of this conversation.

## AFWA STATE CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM

### **AFWA State Contributions Program**

*Dean Smith, AFWA* (PowerPoint - Exhibit ) – This is an update on the Fall Flights program which some of you may know as the state contributions program, however AFWA renamed it a couple years ago to the Fall Flights program. It started along with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan to provide U.S. non-federal match to projects in Canada which provides 70% of the breeding waterfowl in North America. Ducks Unlimited (DU) said they would match dollars states provided. In 1991, AFWA established a resolution, a goal of \$10 million a year. In 2005, there was an examination of history and recommitment to \$10 million goal and again in 2011 for reaffirming that goal and encouraging states increase their participation. There has been a leveling off by states and Canadian provinces on habitat. Last fall President Sara Parker Pauley established another task force. Over the history of the program \$90 million provided by state agencies has become NAWCA eligible match in Canada. The Mississippi Flyway and Central Flyway states is where some of the biggest contributions have been made. The leveraging power of the program, using last year as example, state agencies provided \$3.66 million, DU or Delta Waterfowl and Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation matched that and that \$7 million got matched by NAWCA plus a bonus of currency conversion. What was interesting to note, the NAWCA dollars available in Canada over time, state contributions are a small portion that gets matched but there is lots of room yet to provide additional match and it is all based on habitat need in Canada Obviously the intent of the President's task force is to help grow the program and make good use of all the available funds from various sources and improve waterfowl habitat. Once money moves into Canada, you are probably asking how it is decided where it is spent. We take a strategic approach, based on four pillars; science-based planning; targeted and flexible delivery approaches; ongoing monitoring, evaluation and adapting programs; and utilizing diverse and coordinated partnerships across the country. We end up allocating about 70% in the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture, which is the prairie parkland region of Manitoba/Saskatchewan/Alberta. This is where the bulk of the money goes; 10% goes into the joint ventures in British Columbia; 17% into eastern habitat joint venture; and 3% in western boreal forest, which gives us a northern reach above the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture. Refining

that allocation, a little, based on estimates for 2022 and NAWCA proposals being written right now. Based on what states have indicated they are going to contribute through DU/Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation/Delta Waterfowl it is allocated by province by DU Canada and Manitoba Habitat Heritage. The NAWCA allocation estimate, in 2022 is \$37.5 million so obviously the state's Fall Flights investment is a key element that begins the matching process, but there are a lot of federal U.S. funds that are available and ultimately when that match all plays into it there is \$75 million that will be invested in habitat. President Parker Pauley established a task force last fall, we had four members from the Midwest directors, Colleen Callahan, Amanda Wuestefeld, Terry Steinwand and Jim Douglas and their input and advice is invaluable. The task force is co-chaired by J.D. Strong and Chuck Sykes and we are tasked with a number of different activities to review the habitat need in Canada, look at the allocation, that \$10 million goal, build the Fall Flights brand and enhance the ongoing management and report with recommendations to the AFWA business meeting in September. In terms of reviewing actions in the past we consolidated those into six priority actions; 1) Focusing in on meeting with you and other program contacts, reengaging state champions for the Fall Flights program. 2) Working with you in terms of organizing Canadian site visits when the border reopens. 3) Distribution of annual report, key messages around the program. 4) Making sure everyone understands the conservation value and information about leveraging of funds and importance that it all begins with state dollars. 5) Developing other resource materials to help you justify decisions made in your state and making sure you have proper resources to be able to make your decisions. 6) Documenting benefits for other nongame migratory species that benefit from wetlands work in Canada. One of the things we have done with the current task force, with the assistance of Amanda's staff in Indiana, we did a cluster analysis of all the states based on publicly available information on how money is spent on outdoor recreation, particularly on role the states play in migratory waterfowl breeding, wintering, status, and etc. Ended up with six clusters; four states in cluster one, they have moderate level of expenditure and outdoor recreation and a bunch of other factors not shown, these are the ones that drove clustering process. Group 2 had high breeding/wintering habitat and all had a duck stamp program. Cluster 3 had strong traditionalist values, based on work done by Colorado State University, they had high number of resident bird watchers, etc. Down to Cluster 6, which are typically the states that have been the strongest and longest supporters of habitat work in Canada. That cluster analysis is going to help us to communicate better with you about the program. We did a survey of directors and wildlife chiefs, we had 34 states responding. One of the questions we asked was, what are barriers limiting the agency from increasing investments in Fall Flights? We saw a diverse number of reasons but obviously program/agency budget limitations are affecting how much you are able to invest. What is important is that it tells us most of you understand the program to some extent. Really only a few of you have legislative or policy issues creating a barrier and little lack of agency support. Lots of positives came out of that. It tells us what you feel is important to overcome some of those barriers, so we will use that information and responses from the rest of survey to build the program and help you increase investments in Canada. We also are going to propose a new governance structure. Previously the Fall Flights program was under Waterfowl Working Group in AFWA and we are proposing a governance structure that will be based on consultative governance approach that will provide advice and assessment of the program and how to make adjustments to build the Fall Flights program. There will be more detailed recommendation coming this fall. One of the key elements will be a request for a director appointed from each regional associations to be serving as part of the advisory committee for the program. We were tasked with looking at goals for each state, how AFWAs \$10 million goal is allocated among the states. Previous task force looked at this in 2011, the goals were established based on trend of harvest numbers from 1970 to 2000. What we are going to do moving forward is recommend that the new goals be established based on more current 20-

year period from 2000 to 2019. The trends of the most recent 20-year period are probably a better reflection of the current state of waterfowl hunter and harvest across the U.S. What we end up doing with all of the program money, not possible without your investments in wetlands and waterfowl habitat in Canada, is driven by need for Canadian breeding ground habitat that provides a Fall Flight for you and your hunters and all your constituents. We are just redoing NAWMP implementation plans in Canada and are going to have some new habitat-need estimates by sometime in mid-July and those will be factored into the Fall Flights report. Hopefully you all received a hard copy of Habitat Matters 2020. Saw graph showing your assistance and all of the other NAWCA dollars that come to Canada and other private investments that provide match for NAWCA. In Canada, we have been able to secure 23 million acres of habitat, protected by at least a 10-year agreement; there has been influence on 176 million acres, impacted land use but doesn't have long-term agreement; and 3.8 million acres of habitat that has been enhanced and increased in carrying capacity. There is a page on AFWA's web site for additional information on Fall Flights. Feel free to reach out to me. Thanks for your investment in Fall Flights program.

## SOUTHERN WINGS

### Southern Wings

*Deb Hahn, AFWA* (PowerPoint - Exhibit 8) – Great to follow Dean on Fall Flights, I am covering basically some of the same concepts, but south of the United States. He covered the concepts, basically same idea, talking about international collaboration for conservation of shared migratory birds. Although Fall Flights has a connection legislatively, which Southern Wings doesn't have. We use the same idea and Fall Flights and waterfowl conservation efforts have been so successful that we felt we wanted to implement some of those for our declining shared migratory birds heading south of the United States. Have a map from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for the grasshopper sparrow which is a species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in 9 of 12 MAFWA states. Maps share a couple of different things, they remind us of our connection to people and birds, people in other countries and show us importance of all the stop-over points along the way. They move through a large area across the U.S. in their migration and a little bit into Canada. What this also shows is areas that birds winter in is much smaller than where they breed in, so impacts on non-breeding wintering grounds can be very significant and have positive impacts on the population of these shared birds. Grasshopper sparrows are just one of them. While you are working hard to conserve all these shared birds in your states, this program complements that by working in another aspect or part of annual cycle. It leverages state funds, leverage at least 1:1 but usually more. It helps keep birds from being listed by the Endangered Species Act. Connects states to conservation projects and colleagues across the hemisphere. We have 39 states participating, some in groups like the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Pacific Flyway Council as entities and other states participate individually. Through these states, we have been able to contribute over \$3.2 million to the conservation of 81 shared SGCN species across 11 countries. Key to what we do is communication with the states. We actively support conservation of SGCN that are a priority to MAFWA states and the find important areas to work in to conserve those species. Trying to be as strategic as possible once we know species of greatest importance to the states. A short list of six species I used as an example of key species benefiting from Southern Wings projects important across a number of MAFWA states and also in Canada and provinces that are members of MAFWA. In total it is probably more like 60-70 SGCN that are benefitting. I will touch on a couple of projects to give you an idea of how our projects get created. Cerulean warbler is a SGCN species for 35 U.S. states including 10 MAFWA states. It is listed as endangered in Canada. It was petitioned for listing by the Endangered Species Act in 2000 and in 2006 the

USFWS said it did not warrant threatened status but it also noted it wanted to pursue other initiatives to help reverse the massive decline. Southern Wings took a look at cerulean warbler and its 70% population decline in past 50 years. There is a strong interest in the states to pursue reversing this decline and we also had some great information on non-breeding grounds of what focal areas were important to work on for conservation in Columbia. We worked with a number of partners to create a project that lasted 10 years that created a six-mile conservation corridor between two reserves. We worked with thousands of landowners on education in conservation, on working to plant and restore native forests, working on Agroforestry, working to develop a landowner working with coffee, for example, for economic reasons, work to help put native plants on that farm to make it a shade grown coffee to support the conservation of cerulean warblers. We have been monitoring the restoration and conservation success. Two take-aways, states are just one partner, you provide key leadership and partner facilitation role by putting that money forward and that brings together local partners on the ground, usually a U.S. partner, American Bird Conservancy, and a number of other government partners to help make these projects a reality and bring together match and leverage for the state funds. Although cerulean warbler is the focal species, there are tens of other SGCN benefiting from these projects. Grasslands, another huge priority for the states and also provinces in Canada and states in Mexico, working across our three countries if we are to reverse the declines in these birds is critical. In Iowa, for example, they designated a bird conservation area, the Kellerton Grassland Bird Conservation Area, and have been working to manage that area for key grassland birds. While many of those grassland birds winter in non-breeding grounds in a place called, El Tokyo Grassland Priority Conservation Area. These species are being conserved in northern Mexico by great partners, Pronator and Oreste and a number of states and so far we have over 150,000 acres of grassland habitat secured for conservation. This includes working with local landowners which south of the U.S., is a critical component to conservation and if not working with local communities it is hard to expect that long-term conservation value. Looking more at water birds and shorebirds, it is about restoration of wetlands and mangroves and Southern Wings has not worked much in this area but have worked to support partnerships that are planting mangroves in order to ensure these key species have places to go on non-breeding grounds. We have an amazing partner in Guatemala called Fundecco and they have a landscape scale strategy they have been developing over the past 7-8 years to identify vital habitats for shared migratory birds that are also key to their local biodiversity and native biodiversity. These areas happen to be stop-over and wintering habitats for at least 140 species of shared birds that Guatemala shares with the U.S. and Canada. We have been helping them through a number of states, like Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and Indiana to conserve almost 11,000 acres of habitat throughout Guatemala. Along with these conservation efforts is the need to work with Guatemalan government so we make sure these are permanent conservation areas. Some of the key messages when it comes to Southern Wings is that we are a critical component to work being done in the states to meet state wildlife action plans objectives; we try to be as easy, transparent and flexible as possible; have incredible partners on the ground with great monitoring and reports; leverage state wildlife grant money and Pitman-Robertson funds; we use some of the great connectivity data that we continue to enhance to get to a better place to make strategic and biologically relevant decisions on where to work. Similar to Fall Flights we did a survey recently of wildlife diversity program managers and state wildlife action plan coordinators and identified key things the states would like to see. Helping integrate annual life cycle conservation in next state wildlife action plan revision; providing non-federal match, which is something we already do but need to communicate better; learning to show benefits to your state for SGCN; and helping to address limiting factors outside when species are not within your states. Lastly, we also heard the same top reason as Fall Flights, for not being able to participate, was financial. This coming year we are going to enhance use of migratory connectivity information to continue

to make strategic priority decisions, work with all of you to do that; develop a template annual life-cycle conservation section for birds that could be modified for a state in the new state wildlife action plan; and also we are looking to create a one-stop-shop for states, a Southern Wings guide, where each state would have its own page that would identify some of that key migratory connectivity information. We did put in for a multistate grant to start to do that but we did not get asked to do a full proposal so we are starting to talk to our state agency technical committee about where else we might go and how else we might work on creating this state Southern Wings guide. We may get some help from Cornell Lab of Ornithology on some mapping and also from Pete Mara who works at Georgetown who also works on migratory connectivity initiative. A lot of exciting things in next year or two. Thank you for your continued leadership on Southern Wings and annual life cycle conservation of some of our birds that are declining. *Warnke* – Interesting and fascinating the way time of use can be overlapped amongst the species. Do you use that as a method of identifying what the most critical areas might be to try to preserve and protect? *Hahn* – That is one piece of data, the map I showed that Cornell Lab of Ornithology created is extremely useful to hone in on broader areas for a lot of species and in particular for grassland species recently. We also have geo-locator data which allows us to better connect the birds in Kansas or Wisconsin to specific places, for a state. For example, the golden wing warblers, everyone thought they all went to Nicaragua and Honduras and what we are learning is it is from Wisconsin and Minnesota and some of Midwest states are going there, but from Virginia and some of Appalachian states are actually going to northern Columbia and northern Venezuela. Very different approaches to the conservation of those species. That is the kind of information we are trying to utilize more to make those strategic decisions.

## **AFWA REPORT**

***Sara Parker Pauley, AFWA President; Missouri Department of Conservation Director*** – It is hard for me to believe I am on the home stretch regarding my presidency with AFWA, the year went quickly. I had the opportunity last week to meet with Ron and Tony Wasley, who will be succeeding me in this position. We met in Des Moines and talked about succession planning and initiatives that I tried to carry on and I know Tony will as well. He will have his own priorities and I look forward to his year as president. I appreciate this last year, with the many important activities that I tried to lead and carry on. Many on the call were very involved in a lot of important initiatives for the Association and I am grateful for your efforts as well. I thought I was going to be the first all-virtual president, but travel has started again, grateful to have opportunity to meet with many partners. Last week we met up with J.D. Strong and Chuck Sykes in Texas for the first ever DU expo which was fantastic and a great opportunity to meet with many of our friends in the DU community. I also had the opportunity to present to the DU Board. In next few weeks I will be going from eastern states to western states gathering with partners at key partner meetings and rounding out my tenure that way. I look forward to seeing most, if not all of you, in Providence, Rhode Island at our annual meeting. I promise it will be special and an intimate time of reunion for our conservation family. We have all been through a lot, but not alone thanks to Zoom and other technologies. Not the same as meeting face-to-face, especially for newer directors, it is a wonderful opportunity to develop those relationships we have come to count on. Looking forward to having an in-person fireside chat in Providence. Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), we have an important milestone on the horizon, the introduction of a Senate bill with bipartisan sponsorship on, or about, July 12. I have been involved in negotiations on Senate side, so to reach this milestone I am sleeping better. There was a virtual fly-in last week, appreciate participation of states. We now have over 60 sponsors in the House. Key partners who have been involved in this effort for a long time feel this is looking increasingly positive, we will get it done. In preparation we are working on RAWA ready initiative in

partnership with the WSFR program and that would include formation of a joint leadership team. Here in Missouri, we have our own RAWA-ready team looking at how Missouri would implement the funds. We are so excited to get this joint conversation going. I recently co-hosted with Steve Williams, WMI, a four-hour video conference on outdoor recreation in post-pandemic world. There were 36 participants which included industry associations, the outdoor recreation round table, state outdoor recreation coordinators, state fish and wildlife directors and federal agencies including the National Park Service, USFWS and the Forest Service. This is all in an effort to keep up, in post-pandemic world, the engagement and increased involvement in the out of doors. Four hours may seem like a long time but it went very quickly because there was lots of enthusiasm and excitement, with non-typical partners, even though all in outdoor recreation space, this group hadn't met before in this forum to talk about shared opportunities together. We are looking forward to shared opportunities and more to come on those conversations. On tap is a session on One Health, beginning the conversation on how to better integrate state fish and wildlife health considerations, and vice versa, so engaging with national partners and others. I appreciate Sonja Christensen, AFWA staffer, helping to put this important conversation together with other agency partners. It is great to see MAFWA continue to step up on landscape conservation with the MLI, thanks Kelley Myers for the great presentation. Working on 30x30 as well as supporting regional associations with landscape conservation planning. We are now evaluating options for a state/federal national task force on landscape conservation with the help of Ken Elowe. We heard a little from Ken yesterday, but I will turn it over to Ken now to share more remarks about his work.

*Ken Elowe* – A lot going on with this. Thanks all of you for your support in carrying on the work AFWA has been doing, and you in all the regions have been working on, for so many years now. All coming together at the right time. So many things are happening that are setting us up for success. The task force report outlined three legs of the stool that were essential for success on landscape scale conservation. One is to have joint shared priorities and the team is working on state wildlife action plans to set those plans up to help build foundation for shared priorities. They have come up with a vision, looking at recommendations and meeting on by-weekly basis and will be drafting a resolution for your perusal at the AFWA meeting in September. The other side of that is, once you have shared priorities you have to have some kind of good science so you are talking apples to apples across the range of these species. Russ Mason from science research committee is heading up an effort to grow science priorities, identify them and bring them into some kind of order. They have been hearing from all of the regional associations, setting up a joint session with Health Committee in September to go over some of the tools for CWD. They are also working with USGS Cooperative Research Units to identify their capabilities across the country. The third leg of stool is durable collaborations, heard a lot yesterday from Kelley and the MLI effort you are supporting. The important point is the MLI Steering Committee and staff are incredibly creative and absorbing of all the information out there. It has been encouraging for me to have discussions with them and share ideas from other regions and have them not only completely open but absorbing it like a sponge and trying to incorporate best ideas into your efforts at MLI. That is the vision behind why I am here with AFWA, with your support, is to help share that information around the country. One of the things we come up with, coming up in every region, as we work through governance of these collaboratives is what is the role of the state and Service together and role of all the other interested and capable partners that we need to accomplish landscape conservation. If you remember back to the resolution that is the template for this effort. One of the first items it identifies is peer to peer relationship between states and the Service. That is easy to say and it is very attainable, we got one of the best relationships between states and Service that I have ever seen over the past 20-30 years. That is encouraging. We know from history that the states and the Service are not lock-stepped on what we think is important and what we need to do about it. It is

difficult to incorporate all the different partners to the effort in an efficient way. The discussions are going in parallel in each of the regions about how best to build a durable partnership between states and the Service and how to effectively incorporate other organizations and agencies that all have some work to contribute to landscape conservation. Your steering committee is doing that, but it is also happening in all the other regions. This Friday, the Northeast region is having their first meeting on governance. I have taken many of the ideas you have put on the ground in the Midwest as well as from the Southeast and putting together a document for them to use on Friday. A lot going on and I could talk at length about this. *Pauley* – I think you have done it Ken and there might be questions coming but I think the members understand how lucky we are to have you with your passion, enthusiasm and experience. Your timing coming into AFWA was perfect on this regard, we just keep building thanks to you. Turn over to Ron Regan.

***Ron Regan, AFWA Executive Director*** – I see Charlie on the call, not sure about Noreen, give a big shout out to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Science Application part of the Service under Deb Brock’s leadership because it is through the Service’s collaborative generosity that we are able to bring on two highly competent professionals. Ken being one of them and Sonja the other. We wouldn’t have the financial capacity to do that on our own, but it points to interest and making the notion of working together, real. Please let Martha know how grateful we are for that support. *Charlie Wooley* – Glad to do that. *Regan* – As happy as Sara is to travel I am so delighted she is getting out and doing what she does. She is special, the real deal, she is in-fatigable and never seems to run out of energy, never seems to not have the time to shake another set of hands. We were with Carter Smith in Texas last week and one of the jokes was, Carter won’t walk out of a room until he has shaken everyone’s hands, Sara is not far behind him in the joy she gives and receives in being able to represent all of you and AFWA. A big shout out for me personally for how easy she makes my job. I have two things, one about annual meeting, make sure this is on your radar. Cindy Delaney emailed me that room block is filling up, if you haven’t reserved your room at Omni in Providence Rhode Island do it today or tomorrow at least get your reservation made. If you have the luxury of being there the whole time, we suggest you come in on Saturday afternoon, September 11 and try to stay through Tuesday evening. That means you will be there right from the beginning when we hope to do some special things on Saturday, including potentially an in-person fireside chat with Chip Robertson that evening, it will get you through the special director events on Sunday morning, the retreat with USFWS on Sunday afternoon, the awards ceremony, in-person president’s reception and business meeting. For those of you who aren’t on the executive committee and you come then you might wonder what to do Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning, probably 90% of executive committee meeting will be in open session. One of the treats of this year’s meeting is we will be in one room together to the extent if you had an interest or can participate in the executive committee as a director and as an observer you can ask questions. You will have a unique opportunity to do that because your time won’t be competed for by committee meetings that would normally be on top of the executive committee. This is going to be a special event, more intimate and more time to interact with one another over meals, during receptions and special things we are going to do to keep productive. Second, to let you know that we have hired one of your own, Kurt Thiede from Wisconsin to be our new director of Government Affairs. Sara was part of the interview team with me and I think she would readily attest to the fact that we interviewed some great people, a strong slate of candidates for that job. Kurt rose head and shoulders above them all. He and his wife were in town a week or so ago looking for a home, they are going to relocate and Kurt will be starting on July 14. In the meantime, we will have Jen on retainer contract through the annual meeting in September to help with transitions and introductions that go with an important and big job like that. We have finally hired someone to take over portfolios that Pria had a number of years ago, Carrie Wickstead, she works for Maryland DNR and has a graduate

degree which focused on invasive species and her portfolio will be reptiles, amphibians and invasive species. We know Carrie well; she was on detail with us last summer when Patti Allen was out on maternity leave. She will be positive and dynamic addition to the team. Finally, doing recruitment to replace Judith Scarl who was an exceptional bird conservation leader at AFWA, staffing all of our committee work as well as staffing the North American Bird Conservation initiative, she had an amazing job offer, which she accepted, as Executive Director of American Ornithological Society based in Chicago, Illinois. That concludes my remarks and glad to answer questions with Sara and Ken if there are any. *Warnke* – Look forward to Kurt starting.

## FEDERAL PARTNERS SESSION

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

*Charlie Wooley, Region 3 Director* – What a great hire of Kurt Thiede for the position at AFWA, I had a chance to work with him when he was in Wisconsin and his most recent position in EPA in Chicago, a great hire, congratulations. Also, congratulations to recent retirees Dale and Kelly recognized earlier and retirees-to-be Jim, Terry and Noreen. Yesterday we had a chance to hear from Martha Williams and she noted how proud she was of the working relationship USFWS has with MAFWA states, directors and staff and I want to recognize that some of the finest moments I have had at USFWS has been working with all of the state directors on a whole host of issues. I am proud of the working relationship we have. I am happy that in my relationship with all of you I have had Ollie Torgerson in the background whispering in my ear asking me to think about certain things and giving me guidance in the region and with regional directors, thanks for your help over the years. I want to recognize the significance, from my vantage point, of Dave Olfelt's comments yesterday. Dave was very eloquent in talking about what we have seen here in the upper Midwest, particularly in Minnesota and greater Minneapolis/Saint Paul area. I thought his comments on equity, inclusion and racism were heartfelt. I think it is important for us to recognize this as a new component of our responsibilities as leaders in the Midwest, no matter where we are working or who we are working for. The last 15 months or so I viewed my job here in the region as taking care of our people, as it relates to the pandemic, making sure they are safe, making sure as we begin to open visitor's centers and hatcheries and start to engage with the public one-on-one that everybody is safe, public and staff and volunteers that work at our refuge visitor's centers are safe. The idea that Dave talked about, and how he has been dealing with it and his staff, it is real and we all are experiencing this idea of taking care of our people. Listening and being open to discussions about tough, difficult subjects is also a significant part of what we are responsible for. I have been involved with this directly with our staff. In our regional office in Bloomington back in June a year ago I could see three different fires in Minneapolis for 2-3 days in a row. We talked about this as a region. We had different voices and different views on what was happening. Words describing what I was feeling as a riot versus others viewing it as civil disobedience, which came to forefront using the term murder versus somebody dying or death. It sparked very difficult and heartfelt discussions amongst our staff. Again, I want to recognize the courage it took for Dave to talk passionately like he did in a leadership role about significant issues with his staff. Some of the same experiences and emotions I felt. Proud of the Midwest Landscape Initiative and Kelley did a great job of talking about this yesterday. I am proud of great working relationship and I want to say thanks to Jim Douglas, Craig Czarnecki and Claire Beck for all of their help. It is nice to see the development of LCCs moving into an arena that is much more collaborative. That is what we are seeing with MLI and I can't be happier with leadership role that Kelley and Craig have played here working with a lot of your staffs. Thank you to them. RSGCN is a wonderful benefit coming out of that and it is going to do nothing but advance conservation in the Midwest and we are glad to be a small part of that. Also, want to say thanks

to Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy developed with all of your staff's input, particularly Ed Boggess and Claire Beck. It is a collaborative way of moving conservation forward and it shows what we can do working as partners and I am proud of limited role we have had working with Ed, Claire and others. We still have a long ways to go with monarch conservation but there is a lot of great habitat restoration work out on the landscape and it is going to pay off and going to help monarchs and a whole host of other pollinators. As everyone is aware, pollinators are probably one of our biggest challenges out on the landscape. We are seeing from the Secretary of Interior all the way down the staff to the Director's offices a renewed emphasis on pollinators and what we can do to help pollinator conservation. We all know if we help pollinators we help grassland birds, help water quality, help a whole host of species working there. Our message to our folks is, do it wisely, smartly, collaboratively, particularly with private landowners and we are making a difference and I am proud of that. Our wildlife and sportfish restoration side has had a tough year with COVID, thank you all for the way you have dealt with us as we rode out TRACS and Grant Solutions, etc. We have had a few bumps in the road but professionalism you and your staffs have shown our folks here in Minneapolis and headquarters staff is noted and we thank you for your patience, particularly as we work through this in COVID environment. With our delisting of wolves late last year, I have been contacted by seven Midwest tribes and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) and the subset there of joint task force, as well as the Chippewa/Ottawa resources authority (CORA) to get involved in formal consultations with tribal chairs on aspect of why we delisted wolves, what is going to happen with wolves, particularly in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin over the next couple of years. I have two formal consultations scheduled for the end of July and third week in August with GLIFWC tribes and CORA tribes. I will be talking directly to tribal chairs about where we, in the USFWS, see wolf management. Obviously where we see wolf management is in the hands of the appropriate managers, which is states working cooperatively with tribes to get tribal input as wolf management plans are developed. I will probably be reaching out to a couple of you as I get closer to those formal consultations so I can completely understand where the three respective states I just mentioned are in wolf management into the future. Thank you for opportunity to address everybody here, I look forward to hearing from my other compatriots.

***Noreen Walsh, Region 6 Director*** – I decided to share my short time left with a few thoughts about appreciation I have for ongoing work in MAFWA states and partnerships we have. I will start with North Dakota; Terry appreciated your friendship, leadership of you and your whole team at Game and Fish. Always providing prairie conservation. A big congratulations to you also on your recent success in getting the meadowlark initiative funded. I understand that USDA RCPP bringing in \$7 million of USDA funds along with a lot of other money from 14 other partners to address a lot of objectives we all care about. Like enhancing connectivity and supporting sustainability of working lands while conserving native grassland. That is huge and congratulations on large landscape-scale conservation we are all excited about. I also appreciate that Game and Fish is specifically investing in recovery of the Dakota skipper, chairing the recovery council. Thank you for partnerships with us on pollinators and while helping them we are helping a lot of other species at risk as well. I feel for North and South Dakota with the drought you are experiencing this year and appreciate the close coordination between our agencies with regard to drought relief requests. I know our folks have been coordinating with Jeb and others on your team because we are getting requests for emergency grazing and haying on our lands and your lands, good coordination to ensure we support each other with similar approaches. Remiss if didn't mention long standing partnership that we have had with both North and South Dakota with prairie pothole conservation, we have appreciated your support of our grass and wetland easement program. Sometimes in our history it is easier to

support the program than others, but we have always appreciated you being there with us. Also, through the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV), Terry, you, Jeb and others on team have really been leaders on that management board and technical teams. Again Terry, thanks for your friendship and leadership, best wishes in your retirement and I hope you get to spend a fair amount of that hunting and fishing. South Dakota; Kevin and maybe Kelly are on too. I am grateful to Game, Fish and Parks for also working closely with us on PPJV over the years. Tom Kirschenmann was a long-time board member and now we have Paul Coughlin on the board and your agency's recent efforts to secure funding for restorable wetlands database. That is going to help guide all of our collective wetland restoration actions across the state. I also wanted to note some congratulations to Game, Fish and Parks for \$2 million NAWCA grant for eastern South Dakota prairie conservation. I understand that is a 10,000 acre goal in key portions of the prairie potholes for all of us. I understand this is nothing new because I understand this is the sixth NAWCA grant that our two agencies have partnered with Pheasants Forever on over the last decade or so. Just the fact that we have that kind of partnership history on NAWCA grants is worth celebrating. Right now, our folks are working together with Game, Fish and Parks and a couple of NGOs on waterfowl hunting access plan to remove barriers to participation that comes from a lack of access to lakes to hunt waterfowl. We are grateful for your team for the support on that and working with local refuge staff to improve public access on our WPAs for both hunting and fishing. Nebraska, Jim, similar story in Nebraska, history of great collaboration for both wetlands and grasslands. I am grateful for the way you; Tim and Alicia have been such good partners with us and so instrumental in leveraging your own resources to support strategic conservation of those habitats. I understand you all have recently supported a national wetlands inventory remapping in the sandhills, which is hugely important to both of us. As well as hiring a GIS analyst that is going to be co-located with us in the rainwater basin joint venture office. All of these investments will help us continue to be collaborative so we are appreciative. On hunting front, you have worked with us to open and expand hunting opportunities on more than 115,000 acres across five refuges across Nebraska. Thanks for working with us on Fort Niobrara during elk management plan, we have now lowered four miles of boundary fence there and looking forward to working with you to evaluate the elk and deer hunt program on the refuge. The last thing I wanted to say is you have all been great partners in working towards recovery of some beetles, the American burying beetle and the South Creek tiger beetle, appreciate that, not everybody goes to bat for insects but we have appreciated the dedication you and your team have shown. We know you have been instrumental in keeping alive some efforts to propagate and reintroduce these species and that is huge and it speaks volumes about your dedication to all public trust species. I also wish you the best in your upcoming retirement. Kansas, Brad it has been a pleasure to get to know you. Your agency has been a valuable partner on a lot of different fronts. Your private lands program and biologists have been excellent partners with our private lands program in the playa lakes area, particularly through the joint venture and I know it was your private lands staff that really delivered one of the most successful playa lakes restoration projects to date through the butterfly, bird, pollinator safe CRP practice. It enrolled over 11,000 acres of playas and buffers to CRP. It was your folks that made the contact with the landowners and did the restoration planning. We are grateful because that is making a difference for prairie wildlife in the playa lakes region, including those grassland birds I am worried about. Also, your private landowner folks have established partnerships that have really addressed invasive salt cedar and Russian olive on many miles of stream that lead into Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. That has been important for water availability in those streams and for eliminating seed source of those invasive species and keeping them off the refuge. I was told by our partners that it was your private lands folks that paved the way for our biologists to deliver 23 private land agreements in that area that wouldn't have happened but for the work you did. Quivira, you have been tremendous support to us, your advice and counsel and moral support, as we work to try

and ensure Quivira National Wildlife Refuge obtains the water resources it needs and is due by right. I have personally appreciated your willingness to share and advise us about how we go about doing that in way that is mostly likely to be successful. We are counting on your advice and council as we continue to try to do this in the Rattlesnake Creek basin. Brad, a lot of gratitude for you and your team working alongside us to develop to develop statewide aquatics safe harbor conservation agreement. I recall this was your idea in the first place and we are looking forward to bringing it across the finish line to give assurances to private landowners. Thank you for your leadership. In each of our MAFWA states, through this region of the Service, we are fortunate to work with each of you and your teams. I personally want to say thanks to all of our directors for the partnerships we had. I have always appreciated that I could pick up the phone and have a discussion with each of you about whatever the issue of the day was. Thank you for that. I am a short timer; Matt Hogan will be acting regional director upon my departure in a few weeks.

*Matt Hogan* – Follow up on Charlie’s comments on MLI and great work the MAFWA states are doing there. I know reorganizations aren’t really something you care about, but I did want to share something Noreen and I did in our region because it helps us align better with the work you are all doing. We have assistant regional directors over each of our programs and as it turned out we had vacancies in both our science applications ARD and migratory bird ARD at the same time, so we have nested both of those programs under one ARD. Since then, two other Service regions have followed that same model. Once we established that position, we asked our science applications ARD, Samantha Brook, to establish a cross-programmatic team focusing on being strategic about how we invest in the grasslands. We felt that while we were all doing a lot of work it wasn’t always strategically invested and as Noreen alluded to, the need for grassland birds outstrips the need for any other guild of migratory birds in the country. In 18 months, since reorganizational structure in place we have invested about \$2 million in a much more strategic way, focused on grassland birds and we intend to keep building on that success. I think it will dovetail nicely with all the work with the MLI and work you are doing. When LCCs went away, the focus on large landscape conservation didn’t and by making this organizational structure realignment we are trying to be strategic on money we have and helping to compliment other efforts. In addition to MLI, the grassland roadmap, work the joint ventures already doing, etc. Appreciate your leadership on grassland bird front. We will continue to be strong partners going forward as well as our colleagues in Region 3. Congratulations to both Terry and Jim as they ride off into the sunset. We will miss working with you, but great careers and well deserving retirement. Kelly, I think we already wished you well. It is almost a clean sweep. I am glad you are sticking around Brad so we have some continuity on our eastern border. Congrats to all of you, we will miss working with you. *Warnke* – Look forward to continuing strong partnership in Region 6.

### **U.S. Forest Service**

*Steve Kuennen, Region 9, Renewable Resource Director* – I have been invited to MAFWA for five years and this is the first time I have been able to attend virtually. I am excited to be here to listen and hear all the great things ongoing. Thank you for time and space. Challenging and eye-opening year, echo Charlie’s comments. While we didn’t feel the exact same things in Milwaukee that were occurring in Minneapolis/Saint Paul, a lot of those same tensions were present. COVID has been challenging and difficult time for all of us and our employees and stretching us as leaders in how we live in a space where people are virtual. Or operate in an environment where conservation, which to me is you go out in the field and get your hands dirty and kick some dirt. Here we are talking and having great conversations in virtual environment with everybody’s cool pictures in the background. It is a challenge for me to stay connected with everything going on with people and with conservation and how we move

forward. We have been spending a lot of time at the Forest Service trying to figure out how to stay connected to our employees, with our conservation mission and bring that mission and connect it to other people outside of who has traditionally used our national forests. One of the priorities that has been set forth for us, with new administration, is how do we bring equity and social justice to all American people; that is a priority we as an agency will work on. New chief has been selected, Randy Moore, is the new chief of the U.S. Forest Service. He most recently was a Region 5 regional forester, served in many different capacities but his first posting as a regional forester was in eastern region, based out of Milwaukee. Some of you may know him. He was also a forest supervisor on the Mark Twain in Missouri and I believe he spent some of career time in North Dakota. So, he does have connections to the Midwest. Even though he has been steeped in everything fire in the Pacific southwest region for the last 14 years, it will interesting to have him. We are excited as an agency to see him move forward. In FY21 the agency priorities were laid out by the new administration. The priorities are a radical departure, not see significant changes to what we do on the landscape, at least in the near term. A big group of our priorities were the COVID 19 response, tackling climate change through the use of science, fighting wildfires and sustaining resilient forests, spurring job growth to help the economy, especially in rural areas where things are challenging with mills shutting down and different things that are ongoing. How do we maintain economic growth in rural areas? Boosting economies and rebuilding infrastructure. The last one, which is on everybody's mind, advancing racial equity and creating an inclusive workplace. Those are the big themes and priorities we as an agency are trying to focus on. The question is, how does that tier down. At a local unit level, we don't anticipate any huge changes at this point in time. The agency has, for the last four or five years, focused on vegetation management program and fuel reduction. The idea is we need to balance, back away from that focus a little and figure out how everything reconnects now. How are we connecting work we are doing in forest management to terrestrial ecosystems, to aquatic ecosystems and connect to climate change and climate science. How are we creating healthy and resilient forests that are adaptable to the oncoming changes we are seeing in the climate? Those are important things we are starting to focus on. As you tier down to our region, under last administration we were focused on shared stewardship, which ultimately is working in partnership, from our perspective. We have opened the door to working in partnership with states. Our work has been primarily with state foresters and for the most part haven't had nearly as much connection with state fish and wildlife agencies. A part of my desire to be here, and listen to things going on, is how do we make a more real and visceral connection with things going on with state fish and wildlife efforts. It is important for me to hear and understand things going on and start looking at broad across landscape efforts you guys are undertaking and figure out how we, as an agency, tie in and connect to and use our resources to facilitate bigger missions and things going on. We do have a couple examples of things we have been doing across landscapes that are exciting that we are thinking about trying to stay focused on. We have a lot of good neighbor authority agreements throughout this area, a lot focused on vegetation management, but in Minnesota they are actually looking at landscape and trying to figure out what state and we are doing and how we can bring it together to look at landscape holistically. The idea in Minnesota was to be more inclusive to bring other people to the table looking at landscapes across ownerships together and being more effective to leverage. Good neighbor authority is one way we do that. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative across broad landscapes to accomplish good restoration work on the ground. The most recent thing we were funded for was the American Great Outdoors Act, which is essentially an infrastructure build that looks at aquatic organism passage, looks at facilities and roads and bridges and things that we have been chronically underfunded for. There is a lot of effort being put on how we deal with our infrastructure backlog. That tiers down to regional priorities and what we are looking at. Restoration and resilience across the landscape will still be a priority, some through vegetation

management and other means. Trying to figure out how exactly that plays into the things going on now. Recreation is another big thing happening. Many of you have probably seen, over the last year or two, a huge influx of people into national forests. I have heard much of the same thing from our state partners. How do we deal with that and how do we work in concert with states, counties and other public and private land entities that deal with that huge influx and be effective at delivering recreation to the American people as they come to visit? Hopefully, in a lot of ways viscerally connect with the land in a way that we have been seeing a decrease in over the last several years. Racial equity and social justice and what that means to us and how we connect with people regionally and locally and bringing people out to their landscapes. Work across boundaries we have been working on. Working on in eastern United States with USFWS around four bat species, two listed and two that we think are soon to be listed. Working with Regions 3, 4 and 5 and part of Region 2 to take a look at consultation around these four bat species and thinking about how we could be more collective in thinking about species, how we manage and how we continue to conserve these species across the landscape. With potential listings coming, little brown and tricolored bats, we would want to work with these regions to figure out how we can do a better job of conserving species across landscape. A smaller example of across regional boundary work is, we have been working with George Washington Jefferson, outside this region, in West Virginia and Virginia, on a conservation strategy around rusty patch bumblebee. Trying to figure out what we can do in advance of listing rather than always being reactive, how can we do a better job on conservation in thinking of these species before they are listed. If there are examples of things we can be doing in the Midwest that is something we are trying to encourage and figure out how to do a better job and thinking across landscapes. Another small example, we have a species that was delisted in 2019/20, the Cortland's warbler and how do we maintain and keep focus on that species, keep and maintain it as a success story. Recommitting to those efforts and making sure we keep focus on those things. Keep momentum going from 30 or 40 years and maintain so that can translate to other species. For the last number of years, we have been doing an aquatic organism passage training and that has been utilized by any number of national and international groups to figure out how we best design those passages with culverts, bridges and things like that. Last year that training was cancelled and this year it is back on and we have people come and utilize that training, something that Trout Unlimited and Forest Service has been working on together to bring in people to help figure out how we do better design work and maintaining good habitat and streams for aquatic organisms. Recently, we had a Rise to The Future Challenge and we have award winners, a competition for excellence in leadership in fisheries, hydrology, soil and air. Within in the region we had two winners, one was Wagon Wheel Gap hydrology award winner, Jim Mineau, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and Trent Wickman won the Paul Miller Air Resource Management award, from Superior National Forest in Minnesota, two cool awards. There is a lot of focus outside of vegetation management program by the Forest Service and a lot of cool people doing a lot of great stuff. Thanks for space and time to connect and hear what is going on.

*Warnke* – Looking forward to continuing partnerships.

### **USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services**

***Keith Wehner, Western Region Director*** – New regional director in western region. I started this role in September and all I know is COVID, everything is virtual in my new role and still trying to get feet under me. I have a couple of updates. I am in Fort Collins, Colorado but grew up in Michigan in a farming community in Huron County so I am familiar with the Midwest way of doing things. I attended Michigan Technological University up on Lake Superior and spent a lot of time throughout Tennessee and Kentucky in my career, I am tickled to be back with this group of folks in the Midwest and looking forward to interacting today and in the future. When I first started with Wildlife Services in Kentucky and Tennessee and I helped

to build the rabies surveillance project in those two states, went on to be field coordinator and worked from Maine to Florida dealing with oral rabies vaccines and rabies variants and trying to stop the westward spread. I also was the assistant state director for the Tennessee/Kentucky program where I was honored to help them build an aviation program that could address some of the feral swine issues that so many states are dealing with today. I ultimately worked on the Mississippi Flyway Council so I have met some of you before and looking forward to future meetings where can get together and shake hands and see each other face to face. In Fort Collins for two and a half years, from North Carolina where I was the state director for Wildlife Services. I have been in this role for about seven months. I can't wait to work in collaborative nature in my new role. Several big national projects we work on and I wanted to share some of the details and give you Midwest perspective. Our feral swine program, Wildlife Services has been working on feral swine control at a national level for a number of years. We have some good news in that two new states are going to be reduced to lesser level of feral swine activity as we have made a lot of progress. I want to thank states of Kentucky and Indiana for all your help with that. All the work we do could not have been done without state fish and game agencies. By reducing the level of feral swine, is indicative of our success of being able to whittle those animals down and make progress and saving natural resources and agriculture and reducing some damage they cause. The other good news is Wildlife Services is finishing up their experimental use permit, the nontarget work we are doing on sodium nitrate testing. We are hopeful we will have all of our studies, research and data collected and reports ready to go by end of calendar year. With any luck, Wildlife Services part will be done and hope to turn over to EPA for final registration package we can move forward with getting that registered and out on the street soon. The second big change recently is chronic wasting disease (CWD) research and operations. APHIS has been able to give our cooperative agreements for a couple of years to various state programs for in the field work. Last year was first year we were much involved in CWD so APHIS determined that Wildlife Services would get involved evaluating, managing, administering the cooperative agreements for CWD when it came to free ranging wildlife. Vet Services is still going to maintain their traditional role in farm and domestic animals. All of the wildlife related activity is coming to us and our state directors will be the main point of contact with the states and will be working more closely with individual states. Last year we didn't have too many programs that applied for that on the Wildlife side, but this year of 13 states in MAFWA, 10 have proposals in. The deadline for those proposals is past and we are in the process of going through a decision process and trying to get those turned around as quickly as we can. The other update is with black vultures, the Southeast folks can understand this, but we have seen a pretty big expansion of black vultures, both in population and in geography where they are at and damage they are causing. About five years ago Kentucky started a pilot project in which the Farm Bureau in Kentucky was able to get a permit from the USFWS and have sub-permittees within the state, individual farmers and producers could be a sub-permittee. It really cut down on time to get permits and able to provide some immediate relief to those individual farm owners. That pilot project has been transitioning and evolving for the last two years or so and have three more states in Midwest come on board with something similar where either the Farm Bureau or state fish and game agency has gotten a permit and they are able to respond much more quickly to those black vulture damage issues. The USFWS is helping out with form 37 and facilitating some of those conversations to make sure that this particular species can be managed when it is doing damage. We continue work on Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. We have six states that are working to protect brook trout, lark sparrow, Blanding's turtles, least terns and piping plovers, busy in spite of COVID. We took a couple of weeks where most of our field staff were not allowed to get out but once we were able to figure out the process we have been working hard to make sure our field staff are out there doing good work and meeting with folks when they have problems. We continue our disease surveillance, every state seems to have

a little bit of different flavor to what they are doing but we continue to work with state agencies on CWD surveillance, continue to work on bovine tuberculosis, rabies management and we have started doing a lot of looking for SARS COVID 2. Primarily in western states currently but expanding operations and thinking about where we need to start looking for antibodies for SARS COVID 2 in wildlife populations and seeing what is out there as we move forward. *Pauley* – Thank you to Wildlife Services, for your assistance on black vulture permit effort and great thanks to Charlie with USFWS for moving forward on that regard on those depredation permits. A huge step in the right direction and our stakeholders appreciate that. Also, Wildlife Services help on feral hog front has been magnificent, we really appreciate your partnership. Thank you. *Wehner* – We couldn't do what we do without the support of the state fish and game agencies and our cooperators and federal agencies we work with. We get a lot of funding, but we really value relationships we have and realize we couldn't get it done without everybody else. *Wuestefeld* – To add onto Sara's comments. I too want to thank Wildlife Services for work on feral hogs here in Indiana. One day it would be great to say we don't have hogs in Indiana. We would not have gotten there without the help of Wildlife Services, thank you. The effort your team has done is tremendous and we appreciate it. *Wehner* – Fingers crossed we can eradicate them completely. *Warnke* – Echo the thanks. From working with Wildlife Services in Wisconsin on wolf depredation since the delisting it has been a great partnership. We look forward to moving forward with wolf management. Charlie, give me a call anytime and we can talk about direction we are going with wolf management. We are in the midst of rewriting our wolf management plan.

### **USGS Midwest Climate Center**

*Olivia LeDee, Deputy Director* – (PowerPoint - Exhibit 9) – Thank you for support of our program over the years. We received a 50% budget increase in FY20 for our programs and that money has been invested in new climate impacts and adaptation science, including the Midwest region. One thing to put on your radar, there is potential for 100% increase with new green book and a lot of that would be technical support for partners, including states. The Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center has launched and will be fully operational in the fall when we have university and consortium partners on board. We have an interim science plan informed through focus groups and listening sessions with state, federal and NGO and fish, wildlife and land managers in the regions. I will tell you the top five priorities. We have put \$5 million on the ground, we are a lean program and that money goes out the door, not into overhead, on the ground in Midwest region on applied climate research. We will continue meaningful engagement with states. Many of us worked for state agencies, so we get it and we make sure our colleagues in USGS and our program get it. The key thing to look at is we are going to be requestion participation on Science Advisory Committee. For future options for budget outlook; right now, about \$40 million program, in the President's green book the request is \$80 million. We often do two-year projects which makes it a little difficult to get traction on climate issues, so larger long-term research projects are needed especially when looking at pros and cons of different management interventions, get you to management goal in an experimental format. Direct technical assistance to federal and state agency partners; we are doing this with USFWS and have a dedicated person in the Midwest region working on species status assessments. We have the capacity to expand that to our state partners as well as tribal partners. We have tribal resilience liaisons that are spread really thin and we also need more technical assistance to help with vulnerability assessments and adaptation plans. The potential to offer training for federal and state agency partners on climate change to make it consolidated and providing the best available science. The difference between a projection and a prediction and all of those things that become important once you get into regulatory setting, is an area we can offer help. In FY20, \$4 million was in House report and went into creation of Northeast Climate

Adaptation Science Center. It finally happened, we had a few fits and starts so didn't get fully up and running but that money was earmarked. We have a call out for a host university now. The Midwest region will be broken off from the Northeast so additional resources through that \$5 million agreement with the consortium; reviewing proposals now. And the extra dollars that go into research that we call for proposals every year. That call is out now, typically it is a university and a variety of partners. It will go through a rigorous review process and we hope to have that in place in September this year. That is recompeted every 5-7 years, typically land grant universities in the region and other partners. Our timeline; we have projects going. We have a partner coordination call going on with folks like Wisconsin Climate Change Impacts, Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership, Great Lakes Integrated Science Assessment and other federal and state partners in climate services arena. We have an interim science plan. Have a call for fiscal year 2022 project proposals, due soon. We will be setting up the Advisory Committee before we select our host and make decisions on FY22 projects. Some of you are involved in discussions about FY22 projects. The science priorities, five of them and under each of the five science priorities is about 10 more specific topics. The two things eating our lunch in this region related to climate change are heavy precipitation events, flooding and loss of winter. We added drought this year as everyone can see it is a feature of the landscape. We do expect to be problematic in the future. We are talking not only about effects on fish and wildlife but also altered nature based recreation and habitat management. Also, altered hydrological regimes, not just impacts to fish and aquatic communities but how people are managing the landscape, tiling and altering and also falls into novel terrestrial landscapes. The adaptations humans are making in turn are affecting fish and wildlife. We are not taking land change out of climate change. Novel terrestrial landscapes are focusing on terrestrial wildlife and effects and barriers to opportunities for adaptation. It is changing traditional management tools like controlled draw down to use of prescribed fire to what our restoration goals are, that is what fifth priority speaks to. We have 17 projects up and running and I always make sure there is a balance of fish and wildlife. We have substantial investments in inland fish work and some in the Great Lakes as well. For wildlife, it is everything from pollinators to moose to snowshoe hare to waterfowl and not breeding distribution. Been looking at climate reform restoration in northern forests that have already been experiencing some changes and looking at expansion of woody invasives. Also, work on harmful algae blooms and have a great project on wild rice management in close partnership with tribes, aquatic invasives and public acceptance of adaptation, whether or not managing for bass is going to be acceptable to folks who want walleye in their lakes. A couple of projects I want to flag, two of most interest to you, well over \$1 million invested in lakes, the biggest part of our portfolio. We invested in Gretchen Hansen who used to work for both Wisconsin and Minnesota DNRs, who is now at University of Minnesota who does great work in partnership with Midwest Great Lakes Partnership and others. This is a new project. A few years ago, Jim Leach was looking for Minnesota results, had output for optimal bass and walleye lakes for future in Wisconsin and wanted to know where they were for Minnesota. That is up next and should be delivered soon and that will be the case for other states as well. Excited about that project. We have one on moose and deer, came out of disease workshop we hosted at National Wildlife Health Center on whether or not we can do management for spatial segregation to reduce transmission of brain worm in response to stress of climate change and looking at modeling and restoration. Great project and Deahn Donner from US Forest Service is leading that one. We have several other projects. We will continue to engage the MAFWA Climate Change Committee, AFWA committee; Midwest Landscape Initiative is involved in developing a couple of the projects. We offered some assistance for SWAPs for climate change integration and will be reaching out and talking to Ollie about the best approach. We have space for multiple folks from states on the Advisory committee coming up. It is really about developing science plan and making sure we are implementing properly.

*Warnke* – I know there is a lot of interest in Wisconsin on climate change adaptation.

*Ollie* – I want to thank all of the federal partners for wonderful and continuing sponsorships in the Midwest Association. *Warnke* – Thank you for continuing sponsorships. Thank you to USFWS, Charlie and Noreen; U.S. Forest Service, Steve; APHIS Wildlife Services, Keith; and Midwest Climate Center, Olivia, thank for taking the time to update us today.

*Stretch Break*

## MAFWA COMMITTEE REPORTS

***Ollie Torgerson, MAFWA Executive Secretary, Facilitator*** – We have 11 active committees, with a three-year sunset, reauthorized by directors if functioning appropriately. Each committee has a director liaison assigned to it as an advisor and mentor. These committees are very important, they stay abreast of current issues in their area of expertise, they advise the board on these issues, they recommend programs, projects, resolutions, letters for approval and are a forum for each of these experts to get together and form relationships and learn from each other. Your support as directors for travel for these committee members to attend their meetings is very important. All committee reports are posted on the MAFWA website. These reports fire off very quickly but that does not diminish the value of the work they do or why they exist (Committee Reports - Exhibit 10).

*Ollie* – Dan Eichinger, MI is director/liaison.

**Climate Change – *Amy Derosier, MI DNR*** – We met twice this year virtually. The first meeting we talked about updates from states so we can learn from each other, share best practices and things of that sort. The second meeting we talked about research priorities to respond to the call from AFWA Science and Research Committee. We had about half of the states participate in meetings we held. A couple of things came up over and over in our discussions on research. The idea of thinking about starting to connect more with climatologists and folks with real climate knowledge for wildlife health and wildlife diseases. The more we can better understand and connect with those two might help us the better we can predict diseases in the future and allow us to be more prepared going forward. Another thing we talked about was that climate change and things happening could be starting to impact our effectiveness of our management in unlikely ways. We need to start thinking about how to watch out for those and how we might be thinking about impacts and how it will help us think better about our on the ground management and those decisions we make and where we put our limited resources. The third thing we continue to talk about is novel ecosystem communities. With both climate change, invasive species and species distribution shifting we are more likely to see different novel ecosystems going forward and what that means for management is unclear. We will have to think about how this impacts our decisions on where we put our money for management and what we do there. Continue to talk about novel ecosystems and think about ways to help guide our agencies in thinking about our management and where we focus. Olivia LeDee gave you presentation earlier. Our partnership with USGS and the Midwest Climate Center has been great. We asked for help and USGS stepped up and set up the Midwest Climate Center. They work closely with us and Olivia participates in our meetings proactively asking us what our needs are and putting funding to research projects. We have been happy with that partnership and wanted you to know that and they really fill the need we don't have in our agencies. If there is anything you would like us to work on this next year please don't hesitate to reach out and we can talk through that. We will continue to have conversations on novel ecosystems, scenario planning, helping us as agencies think about our infrastructure as well as habitat management going forward in light of climate

change. Ollie – Are you going to meet in person this next year? Derosier – Haven't talked about that, waiting to see what guidelines were going to be from our agencies. Ollie – Has this committee ever met in person? Derosier – I think they have in the past. LeDee – Once at Midwest meeting. Ollie – I think it is important to meet in person if you can get travel approval just to build relationships and get to know each other and perhaps impact with climatologists if possible. Thank you for report and leadership of this committee, it is appreciated.

Jason Sumners, MO is director/liaison.

Deer and Wild Turkey – **Michael Tonkovich, OH Division of Wildlife** – Our meeting was a virtual event and was our 44<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, hosted by Nebraska because they ran the Zoom function for us and organized by Ohio. We had every intention of having an in-person meeting at Maumee Bay where you had your MAFWA meeting in 2019 instead we had virtual meeting in August. The good thing, if there is something good to say about virtual meetings, is we were able to have all 13 member states and Ontario participate, 37 state and provincial biologists were part of the meeting. The format was different, instead of a multiple day meeting we met in a single day meeting so we didn't start out with joint session like we typically do. Instead, we went right to concurrent deer and turkey sessions for state reports. In deer side we had invited presentations and they were excellent. Since we were hosting it, I had a big say in who we invited. We talked about CWD. We had presentation from Emily McCallen, biometrician with Indiana DNR, title of her presentation was Regional CWD Risk Assessment for the Midwest. I would like to say it was a novel approach to developing or characterizing the risk of CWD introduction into our states. It wasn't new, but nonetheless it involved expert solicitation and consensus building to describe the risk of CWD within each of our Midwest states. Amazing work modeled after Dr. David Lahams and on John Cook at BNC Quantitative Lab at Michigan State University. All 13 states in the Midwest participated in solicitation portion of the project. I know that Indiana has deployed it in their state and talking about next steps in getting the model rolled out to the rest of Midwest states. Kelley Myers was second speaker, Senior Advisor for Landscape Conservation at USFWS, gave us an update on project I am excited to say I have been involved in-- CWD Midwest Landscape Initiative Value Stream Mapping exercise. On turkey side, state reports dominated much of their discussion. There were some research updates and Luke Garver from Illinois DNR led discussion on results of turkey hunter satisfaction survey. Our joint business meeting capped the day. We talked about a few things. First, host state for 2021, as it turns out it is going to be Nebraska but a virtual meeting again. Another thing we talked about was timing of our annual meeting. We recognize that of the eleven groups we are the odd ball in terms of meeting time in late August. We talked at length about changing it ahead of directors meeting so when we present at director's meeting we aren't giving you information that is eight months old. A slew of obligations that time of year, late winter and early spring ahead of the director's meeting makes meeting that time of year difficult. Many of us are still cleaning mud from boots from sharpshooting or CWD surveillance, summarizing harvest figures and getting ready for next year's regulations, etc. It is very difficult time and fact that we are dealing with two species that dominate a lot of our time made it difficult to justify moving the meeting. We talked about banking needs, had trouble finding a banker able to handle the money for our meeting so we had discussion about moving to a permanent banker, an NGO, like the National Wild Turkey Federation to serve as banker. As it turned out most of the states felt ours was an isolated situation and they generally have no problem using their state chapters of The Wildlife Society to fill that need so it was decided to table that discussion. No information or action items but I want to mention that a number of the deer and turkey biologists from across the Midwest did participate in AFWA's science-based management needs survey coordinated by Ollie and with Russ Mason's help. Sincere thanks on behalf of deer and turkey for your continued support of not only this group but all the MAFWA committees.

*Ollie* – MAFWA President is director/liaison.

Feral Swine – **Terry Brunjes, KY** – I am the new chair, took Steve Backs place after he served six years. The annual report consists of individual states and provincial reports. We primarily function as an information exchange network among states and provinces. The number of feral swine removed continues to increase in more heavy wild pig populated states in the Midwest. We are seeing significant reductions in some states with lower pig numbers. Most of the work in the Midwest states is being done by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services through cooperative agreements as part of national feral swine damage management program. We held a joint meeting with SEAFWAs feral swine working group in April during wildlife damage management virtual conference. Justin Foster, Texas Parks and Wildlife, he is research coordinator and he provided some information on several research projects, which fulfills director action item two to promote and encourage research on economically feasible and effective methods for feral swine control. He updated our hog gone experimental use permit in Texas and Alabama. Non-target species were affected in the first trial, specifically passerines so bird deterrents were implemented for the second trial which resulted in zero non-target kills. In this experiment 140 feral swine were killed in one night. Updates were also provided on CWD research in which mice were inoculated with CWD-positive tissue. Results indicated that although the mice didn't contract CWD some of them did die of atypical nerve diseases. Justin also shared research on effects of cottonseed mill on semen motility in domestic boars. Results showed with 60% inclusion of cottonseed mill semen motility significantly reduced. Moving onto individual state reports; several states have made progress in eradication efforts. Indiana has shifted into detection phase; it appears while pigs may have been eliminated from all three counties they were previously in. Kentucky was reduced from a level 3 to level 2 state at the beginning of fiscal year 2021 by the feral swine damage management program. This occurred after extensive surveillance efforts that determined wild pig number have continued to decline across the state. Michigan DNR maintains a voluntary online feral pig reporting system and they only received 10 reports in 2020. Because of this low number they started to ask hunters reporting harvested deer about feral pig sightings and that is providing additional reports--44 additional reports this year from that. Missouri feral hog elimination partnership has strategically increased their removal efforts in high density areas using up to 50 additional staff specifically in southeastern Missouri now that hunting is prohibited on U.S. Forest Service lands. Nebraska is still free of feral pigs after they removed incentives in 2003 for release and possession through statutory changes that prohibited pig hunting; the most important factor for allowing complete eradication of feral pigs. Ohio has increased their aerial surveillance efforts using drones and that resulted in increase in verified damage sightings specifically in areas of difficult terrain that had previously not been able to be surveyed. Manitoba staff is working collaboratively with local wildlife association to pilot corral trapping of wild boar sounders; this project has received funding from the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement fund, Manitoba Pork Council and Manitoba government. We do plan to have another joint meeting with SEAFWA wild hog working group at 2022 International Wild Pig conference in Nashville in April. *Ollie* – Thank you for stepping up to assume leadership of this committee. It was formed by a former Kentucky director, Jon Gassett, several years ago.

*Ollie* – Director/liaison position is Keith Warnke, WI, replacing Kelly Hepler.

Furbearers – **Adam Bump, MI DNR** – This was Michigan's second year in a role hosting because we did a virtual in 2020 and 2021. Had a little more time to plan virtually and decided to do two days, April 28 and May 5 to give ourselves breathing space for teams and virtual meetings. We had 13 of member states and 3 provinces, who we don't often see due to travel restrictions, that participated. Our workshop is usually standard format, discussion about states

issues and we send out call for papers and have a lot of presentations. This year we focused just on presentations about research projects funded by agencies. We ended up getting 16 presentations either directly about research funded by state agencies or were agency biologists with topics of interest they wanted to present. Report shows list of topics that were wide ranging in terms of type of material we covered. Had a few director information items. One is with COVID 19 being something that can impact some of our furbearing species, mostly mustelids. We are interested in seeing continued research particularly in potential population level impacts that COVID 19 could have. We continue to have lot of support for continuing trapping BMP work which is critical to most furbearer programs in terms of keeping ability to have fur marketed in Europe. We had some CITES issues, the USFWS did again issue a no-detriment finding for bobcat harvest programs. They issued that in February 2021, so states can continue to have ability to harvest bobcats and use management programs working with CITES the same as in the past. The otter no-detriment finding was also reinstated. There is a spotted skunk Endangered Species Act review underway, was supposed to be a meeting scheduled May 27, targeting decision in 2022. If spotted skunk are listed in Endangered Species Act it could have serious impact on trapping in states where they have spotted skunk populations. That is something the work group is watching closely. The work group has also been pretty active in looking at research related to the cause of muskrat declines. States around the Great Lakes have been looking at some joint projects to look at broad scale research that can help identify some of the causes of national muskrat declines. Those were main topics of interest. Traveling to Nebraska this coming May, considering doing our meeting in fall rather than the spring, depending on type of activities beyond the meeting that we want to do, like turkey hunting or look at sandhill cranes. Most of our meeting was discussions about research priorities in four categories we were given. The work group had 17 research priorities that we spend quite a bit of time talking about and developing that are in the report. Ollie – Thank you, long--standing important committee in the Midwest.

*Ollie* – Keith Warnke, WI is the director/liaison.

Midwest Hunter & Angler Recruitment & Retention and Reactivation (known as R3 committee) – *Megan Wisecup, Iowa DNR* – Our committee is looking at revamping its name, we also want to be inclusive of shooting sports as well who has been very active, maybe shorten to MAFWA R3 Committee. Appreciate director's support working with individual states. This issue has been around for about a decade now, gaining momentum and funding coming into play so an exciting time to look at addressing some of these challenges. How to get more people outdoors recreating, particularly with hunting, angling and shooting sports communities. It is a great time to be working with agencies as part of this committee. Even in spite of COVID we were able to stay active this last year, not able to meet in person but able to meet more frequently. We met almost bi-monthly and we had engagement from almost every state and in all those calls had a lot more conversations about opportunities to collaborate. We did hold a virtual meeting in conjunction with Midwest F&W Conference earlier this year and we were fortunate to have all 13 states and several partners that have joined our committee. We have diversified more over last couple of years, some of that due to states having joint positions with Pheasants Forever and NWTf, so expanded to bring in some other NGO groups. We had a two-day meeting, broke it up into two half-day meetings to make it more palatable. We sustained 70 people each day, the highest we have ever had for a committee meeting. Virtual made it good to have more staff and multiple staff participating. Busy regarding working on multistate grants with the PR Modernization Act passing and some of it earmarked specifically for R3 efforts. Our committee is jumping into that and was successful at applying through MAFWA or indirectly to advance the first two rounds offered last year. One of those was diversity project involving small game tool kit with DJ Case and Associates. Also, doing marketing out of Michigan to work on developing some imagery and

messaging that could be more attractive to get persons of color involved in small game hunting. We had a delay on that project and had to go out for extension due to COVID restrictions with travel that prevented us from getting out there and doing those photo shoots last fall. but, allowed us to reach out to states to get some existing photos, so think we will end up with better product and will be able to hone in on what resonated well and take those dollars and maximize them to get those exact images we are looking for. Also working with WMI and DJ Case Consulting on evaluation designed for R3 professionals, something lacking as far as specific training for folks in our positions. There is really no college degree for an R3 person, it is being a jack-of-all-trades; looking at marketing, licensing, education and biology so trying to get training that works with diverse mix of roles we are trying to fulfill in these positions. We need help to effectively be able to look at programs better and make better program decisions based on good evaluations. Intercommunication also a big one, a way we can make a difference by working with existing hunters and anglers that are out there and empowering them to get new folks out there participating. Working on communication piece of that project and discussing preliminary focus results from DJ Case. Vice Chair Jeff Rawlinson and I should be meeting with our committee in early August to show those preliminary results. Put some of that into action as we are working on this. A lot of great projects out there from these initial grants. Excited to move forward on another round. We learned we had one of ours funded through AFWA, passed intent phase and is in for full approval that will be actual implementation phase of the small game tool kit so we will be putting in a full proposal for that. Will work with Ollie to get a solid draft to ExCom for final review before we submit at the end of the month. We are also co-sponsor for piloting with some other entities that were also invited to move on to the full round. Work with Ollie next week as we get those finalized so ExCom can have final review. Highlights, working in conjunction with Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health technical work group committee on nonlead partnership, we have that on the agenda tomorrow and it is great having two committees working collaboratively over the last several months to put together recommendations on how to get started addressing that regarding education, outreach and wildlife and fish health perspective. Also had several states take advantage of COVID by working with virtual programing and definitely will be tool in toolbox going forward, the way we can reach larger audiences. Don't want to get rid of in-person but virtual perspective gave us new angle to reach some of these new audiences, excited to delve in deeper. That is one of the grants we are working on with Southwick to dive in deeper and get best practices built around virtual programs. We know virtual is around to stay for next several years and how can we do that better and maximize our virtual opportunities. Other highlights, took advantage of being able to take time, more time in office, than we typically would last year and worked on translation things, put out a lot of documents and booklets translated over to Spanish. Several states took advantage of office time diving into evaluation. Highlights from states: Missouri has new relevancy branch, which this group is familiar with, and value mapping they have done there. This is a department approach to R3 and how they can get it integrated into their staff. Another key highlight, a lot of states are looking at Kentucky's IMR3 for their employees to go through, work on agency culture piece and get everyone integrated with R3 as working online hunter ed. Multiple states in our region have had that in place for years but COVID pushed other states to explore that option. Whether it will turn into permanent solution is being evaluated in a lot of states but looking at different ways to deliver hunter ed on virtual platform such as Zoom. This is a busy committee and want to thank directors for allowing staff to participate. Looking forward to hopefully getting back together in person. Our next scheduled in-person meeting is slated for Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Iowa, February 2022, a two-day workshop. Ollie – Thanks for all you do and congratulations on promotion. *Wisecup* – Ollie, thank you for yours and Roger's help and Keith's guidance.

*Ollie* – This committee is the oldest committee in MAFWA and has been in force since 1944.

Shannon Lott, MI is the director/liaison.

Law Enforcement (Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO) – *Ken Fitz, OH Division of Wildlife* – I believe everyone has access to the annual report we do. There are 23 agencies in this organization, 13 provided info for that report. We recently held our annual meeting virtually and had 17 agencies participate, which included 12 states and 4 provinces and the USFWS. Common themes across the board. Several, if not all, of the agencies reported a number of new challenges this past year. COVID and its effects on how we train, interact with each other and with the public had a tremendous impact. More in some state more than others. There was civil unrest across the country due to different social issues. Resulted in participation and duties outside of normal operational expectations for wildlife enforcement, including riot control, protection details and things like that. There were some police reform bills and new training requirements that are coming in across the country that will have an impact on us and a more combative response from some of the constituents we encountered in the field. The response has been, in a lot of cases, from agencies to wear body worn cameras, in some cases already required, is a valuable tool and helps provide protection for the agencies and the public but it is expensive, especially because of data storage associated with it. When you couple all of that civil unrest along with burn-out from COVID some agencies reported it caused a lot of difficulties for officers with support teams getting a lot of calls and getting put to use. They are seeing higher resignations or retirement rates due that increased stress. A new challenge for us is several states are facing challenges to open field doctrine and the ability to enter private property to take enforcement action, to inspect licenses and bag limits. This is concerning for us because wild animals don't know or care about property lines, so we have felt we had to ignore property lines to be able to protect them. That is causing some issues in some states. When it comes to budgets, everyone reported their budget remained neutral or status quo, looking at hiring in several agencies and some states reported they did hold a cadet academy or are preparing to, including Alberta, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Saskatchewan, Texas and Wisconsin. All the agencies who are hiring reported increasing efforts to hire diverse candidates and several had a hiring freeze and high number of current or expected vacancies. The timing has to do with hire class and all the training, state certifications and things that go into that. You hire as groups so when they go into retirement they all go at once, so it causes a large number of vacancies. Several agencies have gone into complete or partial restructuring of their enforcement divisions for efficiency and cost savings, including Alberta, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Sometimes that can be a painful process but in long run usually works out well and does save money and makes things more efficient. Training efforts obviously were hampered due to COVID restrictions, we couldn't gather in-person and couldn't do a lot of the hands-on exercises like defensive tactics, firearms training and some of the things we would normally do in person. A lot of folks adapted to Zoom or Microsoft Teams or other platforms when they could but that doesn't work for everything. Another trend everyone experienced was marked increase in outdoor activities from the public and participation. That is great but results in higher number of boating and off-road vehicle accidents and fatalities and there were a lot more people out hunting and fishing. That is what we want but it does cause more work. Surprisingly, don't know if related to pandemic or what brought this on, but several districts noted increase in timber theft, both on private and public properties. Another trend we have seen for a long time is agencies using technology. Great technology out there we can use from enforcement standpoint, everyone carries a cell phone with them, it tells you where you are all the time, so we put up a geo-fence, a warrant to determine where that person was located within a certain geographical area and allows us to track the violators. Surprisingly a lot of people like to get on social media and post their illegal activities, post photos and brag about it, so agencies starting to watch social media and making really good cases that way. On the other hand, there are a lot of folks that like to stir the pot and post pictures of things that are false and

fake, for whatever reason, but we still have to spend time investigating those to make sure they are not fake, but it takes a bit of time. Something we found out recently, more details later, big investigation in Ohio moving to internet for wildlife trafficking and there is a lot of that going on. A lot of it involves invasive species being moved around in the pet trade, watching that and had virtual meeting a couple weeks ago that was one of the topics of discussion, aquatic invasive species and how to track this, communicate and work with each other. Normal technology everyone talked about is upgrading radios, rugged computers for use in vehicles and trucks, cell phone trail cameras that send everything through a computer through a phone for surveillance and protection of public lands. One agency noted they are purchasing hybrid vehicles to help save on fuel expenses, body worn cameras are pretty routine. Lastly, there was a lot of discussion about cooperative efforts, across state lines and borders and a lot of good cooperation back and forth, making cases and tracking violators and good work together. *Pauley* – MAFWA members, what percentage of states in Midwest region are wearing body cameras now, rough estimate? *Fitz* – At least half, maybe or in the process of moving to them. We did send out emails across the country with that question because we are looking at them here and people who aren't wearing them are looking at wearing them. If don't have them are going to get them, was response we were getting back. *Ollie* – Difficult year for conservation officers across the Midwest, thanks for your leadership.

*Ollie* – Carolyn Caldwell has been CITES rep since 2003. MAFWA President is director/liaison. CITES – ***Carolyn Caldwell, MAFWA CITES Representative*** – CITES is international treaty that deals with legal and sustainable trade of plants and animals listed on the three appendices. There are 182 countries in the European union that are signatories to this treaty. In 40 plus years the treaty has been in effect they have never considered what to do if you can't actually meet in person. In 2020, because of lack of any rules of procedure that allowed for virtual meetings they had to postpone all international CITES-related meetings in 2020. Typically, they have three meetings per year, none of which occurred in 2020. They got their act together and developed a virtual platform with approval from their standing committee, which is the executive branch of CITES. In early May the first virtual meeting ever was held. It was an abbreviated agenda and was complicated, to say the least, because meeting here in the Midwest started at 6:30 am, our western representative started at 4:30 am and they met for three days. The good point of that was they had the largest attendance ever, they had 800 participants, more than 100 countries and 100 plus NGOs and IGOs that participated. From that standpoint it was successful. In terms of being able to get work done for the treaty and for moving things forward internationally it was limited. They put off many of the decisions they typically make throughout the year, had to postpone those or develop intercessional working groups to try to move some of the less controversial items forward. We, as a work group, the four of us, we joined some of the intercessional working groups to monitor and provide feedback from the state's perspective. We have been successful from that standpoint but in terms of virtual meetings and our ability to engage with other countries, to engage with our own country, IGOs and NGOs is problematic. From positive standpoint virtual meetings have allowed for greater participation but in terms of being able to fully function and represent the Midwest this was not best possible outcome. We are hopeful in 2021 possibly, even though they have made no decisions as to when the next in-person or virtual meeting will be, we are hopeful they are going to go to some type of hybrid meeting format so they can have face-to-face participation as well as virtual meetings. The one intercessional working group we were fortunate to get selected to participate in is one that deals with zoonotic diseases and there has been a great deal of interest in trying to minimize international trade of wildlife that could potentially be related to future zoonotic pandemics. CITES is a treaty that deals with sustainable and legal trade. Most of the wildlife species that potentially could be a zoonotic disease concern aren't even listed in CITES appendices. We have joined intercessional

working group trying to monitor that and provide as much feedback as we can in terms of what direction the CITES treaty takes. We are hopeful that is not going to be detrimental to legal and sustainable international trade species from our standpoint in the U.S. Ollie – Thanks for all you do for us and longstanding leadership on CITES, very important.

*Ollie* – Terry Steinwand, ND is the director/liaison.

Private Lands (PowerPoint - Exhibit 11) – **Cody Strong, WI DNR** – Thank co-worker, fellow Wisconsin DNR person, Anne Reis, for doing all the hard work on overall coordination on this and public lands working group meeting. We held the event May 12 and hosted virtually. Member states were Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. We had the good fortune of all member states except Minnesota, 19 people in the meeting. Greg Pilchak, AFWA ag policy staff person was there as well and he provided updates on government affairs, the 2023 Farm Bill and Conservation Reserve Program policy changes. We also had Scott Taylor, PF National Wild Pheasant Plan Coordinator, who provided update on pheasant plan. And we had a few local conservation partners who also attended from Pheasants Forever and Ruffed Grouse Society. The discussion focused primarily on structure and capacity of states' private lands staff and opportunities and challenges provided by these different structures. There are details provided in the private lands work group report. We also had a robust discussion about innovative private lands initiatives in each member state, also in the private lands report. I recommend you take a look if you have an interest in private lands management, there is some impressive work represented for each state and I can't do justice to any of it here with limited time. Also, we discussed federal programs and impacts to state initiatives or programs. Amazing work going on across the Midwest. We also discussed federal programs and policy related to private lands and impacts to state initiatives and priorities. We have no director action items but do have some information items. The work group expressed concerns on certain aspects of voluntary public access habitat incentive program (VPA-HIP) funding and complicated implementation. For example, a maximum of 10% of the work can be used for technical assistance, and that being the portion of the award that is actually used for paying for staff time to implement the program. There is no funding across and between Farm Bill periods and since these agencies are trying to maintain consistent staffing this can cause some issues there. Private land work group members recommend considering these challenges for 2023 Farm Bill platform. An additional item, many states are currently or have recently reorganized private land units so there is great opportunity potentially for AFWA to provide guidance or training on best practices for these units. The working group did identify there were some parallel efforts occurring in AFWA private lands work group and it would be best addressed there. VPA-HIP funding expansion is currently part of the AFWA 2023 Farm Bill platform. It was identified by Greg Pilchak that member states should begin evaluating whether they will have capacity and opportunity to use expanded funding. There will be an opportunity for states to provide feedback on whether or not there is a need and ability to utilize that funding. Time and place for our next meeting is May 2022 in South Dakota. Ollie – Appreciate your leadership.

*Ollie* – Pete Hildreth, IA is the director/liaison.

Public Lands (PowerPoint - Exhibit 11) – **Anne Reis, WI DNR** – Cody and I coordinated a bit and had concurrent meetings of private and public lands working groups in early May. We had a virtual meeting and the last time we met in-person was in Ohio in 2019, so this is my third MAFWA working group meeting. Shout out to Pete Hildreth and Claire Beck on monarch work. We had a great turnout, 12 of 13 states attended and folks from our DNR and a member from National Wild Turkey Federation. We also actually met last fall in October to have larger discussion about noenicitinoid insecticide which we talked a little about in our report. So, we

have met twice in the last year. Our agenda items were state updates, a 5-10 minute round robin, a presentation about relevancy roadmap initiatives, Wisconsin has gone into a little bit of detail on our efforts aligning with the roadmap and wildlife management strategic plans. We are looking at where we align with those items and where we don't and where we can do a better job. We had a great presentation by Mary C. Anderson, who is our agriculture and grazing specialist with the Bureau of Wildlife Management, looking to expand grazing on public lands. Not a big deal out west but a little different and new tactic for land management in Wisconsin. We also had a period where we had a round robin of different types of discussions about nonresident hunters on wildlife management areas, looking at other things such as neonicotinoids and R3 initiatives. Then we discussed some of our action items, opportunities and issues. One of the big things we noticed, common themes across the states, that want us to take a deeper dive into overcrowding issues on public lands. Specifically wildlife areas and user conflicts on public lands. We know this last year has really seen an uptick in number of people visiting our public lands so that has created some conflicts. What we noticed is we don't have a great way to quantify recreational use on wildlife areas. Some states have done some pilot projects and Wisconsin is just getting our report out on that. But it would be great to have standardized process or some application to use across states, MAFWA and beyond, to quantify short term and long-term recreational use on wildlife areas. This could include various demographics, residents and nonresidents hunters, urban and rural users. This action item, is that we recommend that the AFWA Technology and Data committee evaluate existing applications and explore developing new solutions so that states can have consistency and standardization in data collection and reporting. Additional information items ran the gamut of continuing to monitor neonicotinoids insecticide use on public lands, specifically wildlife areas. Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri, Minnesota and Ohio have all moved towards neonicotinoid discontinuation. Some states are going through transitions to stop using neonicotinoids, Including staff or cooperators. We hope to have continued support on discontinuation and controlled usage. We are also hoping to get more analysis and reporting of R3 outcomes. It is great there is a lot of evaluation coming out of that group and we would be interested in learning about that. We also recommend an after-pandemic review of emergency preparedness plans, maybe MAFWA could spearhead that and help states implement those. We were all scrambling last year to implement those. If there are some standards we can apply in the future may be something we do need to consider. It was an abbreviated concurrent meeting with private lands, 4 ½ to 5-hour meeting. We are meeting next year in person in South Dakota, so we reset chronology of who is hosting. *Pauley* – Besides emergency preparedness, have there been discussions on an after-action version of what we all saw on our public lands related to pandemic increased use? The silver linings, lessons learned and that sort of thing? *Reis* – I think that is a great idea and I think that would definitely go hand-in-hand with quantifying the public land use. I agree that is a great idea. *Ollie* – Thank you Anne.

*Ollie* – Greg Link, ND, is director/liaison.

Wildlife Diversity (PowerPoint - Exhibit 12) – *Eileen Dowd Stukel, SD Game and Parks Department* – The Wildlife Diversity committee used to be known as Wildlife Action Plan Committee, requested name change last year. We met via Zoom, had a full agenda and all 13 states represented at some point. I picked out a few information items we felt were the highest priority items we were working on. I want to thank Greg Link who is our director/liaison. Some of these you have already heard about, but we wanted to share from our perspective what we think are critical. Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) was reintroduced into the House in April of this year. There were at least 10 changes from last year's version and AFWA put out a nice summary of those and is a good way for you to understand how negotiations are going and how the bill is getting more inclusive or reflecting different priorities. Pick out three of those to highlight; increased emphasis on state agency work or work at state level on federal T&E

recovery; the definition of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) now includes flora and that is going to amount to a 5% signing bonus for those states that now include rare plants or vulnerable plants in their state wildlife action plan, eligible of up to 5% more funding under this current version; and more emphasis on competitive innovation grants funding. Do not fear the match, we hear a lot of concern about that, it is a good problem to have. We are having a second Wildlife Diversity program management meeting this summer, typically have one in the winter but adding one and match will be the only thing we are going to talk about. It will be the end of July, so we hope we can bring the directors some good examples and innovative ways to meet this match. I did a rough calculation of how much, with current version, this will mean to the 13 MAFWA states per year and that will be \$237 million in federal match funds. That is without the plant bonus. Pretty significant funding as you are aware. Second thing a lot of us are involved in, which is tied closely to RAWA, is wildlife action plan revisions. Almost all the states within MAFWA had their plans approved in 2015, so revisions will be ramping up to meet that mandate that you revise at least every 10 years. I know you have heard during this meeting and we heard lots about it in our annual meeting, there are lots of things going on that are going to improve coordination and effectiveness. Lots of tools and evaluation, MLI, work on climate change and a lot of our members are actively engaged in these priorities. We hope that is two-way street that we are bring some perspectives to share but also learning from the rest of you so we can share that within our committee. We also have developed a spreadsheet to help us all understand what generally is in each of our wildlife action plans and what schedule people are on. That is a work in progress and we will continue to edit that as things change. We would be happy to share that with anyone that has that interest. Regional SGCN list, an MLI initiative contracted to Terwilliger Consulting Inc and that same firm did the same process in NEAFWA and SEAFWA and the delivery date is August this year. The list had more than 1,800 SGCN across the 13 states, she and we formed 12 taxonomic teams made up of more than 140 experts. We made some changes and improvements for MAFWA and had expertise to share that allowed us to include mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies, which was not done for the other groups. And we had two other lists we added; one was species that should be considered in the future, not on the list yet but there are things going on that make them subject to a better look by states as they are going through their revisions; and we also had a watch list of species, another tool that is going to encourage cross-state coordination and landscape level conservation. Things are coming together at the right time, from wildlife diversity standpoint that is so true, we are getting so much better discussion, better teamwork and leadership across boundaries to make impact rather than being in state silos. I hope you reach out to wildlife diversity people as you tackle things like RAWA and allow us to help you interpret things and hopefully integrate it into agencies if it isn't happening. *Pauley* – Comment, you mentioned revisions, perfect timing and alignment. I want to further emphasize that MAFWA is represented on the national working group recommendation three coming out of the president's task force looking at potential revisions to the eight elements of statewide action plans. Those recommendations will be coming to full AFWA membership at the fall meeting. Critical timing, you mentioned it and a lot of good things happening at the same time. So, we are trying to take advantage of the timing of RAWA likely coming on board to look at those eight elements as well. We appreciate the work of this committee and national working group looking at eight elements. *Ollie* – Honored to let you know I was part of bringing Eileen on in professional wildlife employment when I worked in Missouri.

*Ollie* – Sara Parker Pauley, MO is director/liaison.

Wildlife and Fish Health (Exhibit ) – **Lindsey Long, WI DNR** – Fortunate to be a member of this committee and representing them today and thank you for support you have given us over the past few years and hopefully we have more good information and topic sharing to provide.

We had our meeting in May, we had all 13 states, two provinces and three guest states as well as multiple federal agencies and some invited speakers. Due to wildlife disease related events this year we have had multiple meetings throughout the year to address diseases such as RHDV2, rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus as well as SARS-CoV2. SARS-CoV2 is part of our executive summary. One of the action items from last year our committee brought forward and was supported by the directors was in support of One Health in our agencies. As an outcome of that some of the agencies have done outreach with their state partners that work in domestic and public health. We were invited and incorporated into One Health interagency COVID 19 coordination. So, for the first time I can actively think of, wildlife health was incorporated, both state and federal partners, into a One Health interagency program. All of our states had a member represented who was invited to participate, either in working groups, weekly and bi-weekly calls as some of the information has waned and action items have waned and are less active. Great to see that incorporated and I wanted to make sure it was recognized that supporting One Health mission has already been validated. One thing that has come up, was the urgency situation and now how do we address it as people start to feel fatigued towards the One Health concept-. How do we address that and move forward. Supporting and looking at One Health as wildlife health, ecological health and human health instead of just disease. Dr. Sherry Russell from Missouri provided some great examples and we can't wait to move forward on that further. We will probably have additional meetings throughout this year before we have a recommendation to move forward. We also talked about SARS-CoV2 update, some of our states had mink farms that were positive. Wisconsin and Michigan both utilized USDA APHIS Wildlife Services who assisted with doing some trapping and surveillance around those properties and again One Health coordination with state domestic and human health agencies as well as CDC. A well-received cooperative effort and we did not find any corona virus SARS-CoV2 in species around these three facilities. We are looking further into corona viruses that may be naturally occurring in some wildlife species, working with USGG National Wildlife Health Center. Another thing discussed was CWD prevalence. Dr. Michelle Carstensen from Minnesota brought up how it can be difficult to talk about CWD in Midwestern states or even comparing Midwestern states because of differences in prevalence and how it might be assessed based on spatial analysis or different sexes or age classes that are being looked at. We are looking to move forward on that as we work with larger research efforts from the Midwest. How we start addressing how we work with researchers to develop some type of qualitative discussion that is more consistent across state lines in the Midwest. One of our action items is that we are looking to review our charter and identify some inconsistencies within the document as well as determine some changes and recommendations we would like to make to directors as we move forward. Have an action item to present. I am new to this so asking Ollie to help me out. *Ollie* – Go to “now therefore be it resolved” portions. This resolution has been sent to Midwest Resolutions Committee for review and perfection. It will be reviewed today but voted on tomorrow at business meeting under Director Pauley's report from Resolutions Committee. *Long* – As I alluded to earlier last year the committee had meetings regarding the finding of rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2) in wild rabbits in western states. RHDV2 is different in that it actually causes disease and mortality in wild rabbits, whereas previous renditions of this virus has not actually shown to cause issues. One of the things we would like to resolve, is that we urge MAFWA directors to support, adopt and permit appropriate precautionary measures, whether outreach or other ways, to let public know about this virus and traveling outside the state and bringing it back. Have some kind of baseline population level monitoring of rabbit species within their jurisdictions and implement and enhance surveillance in monitoring to promote detection where it can be found. We also recommend that states who have threatened or endangered or limited populations in their jurisdictions develop response plans should this virus be translocated to their jurisdictions and encourage development and promotion of informational

materials. We provided one example from Wisconsin. We have been working with our Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection to develop some more items as well as including outreach materials to both domestic and wild rabbit user groups. Again, consider working with agriculture authorities. That is overarching topic of the resolution. *Ollie* – Thank you for your work and your report, appreciate it. A very important committee in the Midwest and has been active for a long time.

*Ollie* - Thank all of committees for their work on submitting science priorities as requested by AFWA, a big lift but you all did a very good job. It is much appreciated by the directors. Thank you very much. *Warnke* – Thank you for your work, it is much appreciated.

## CWD FUNDING

### CWD Technical Assistance

*John Fischer, WMI* – This is one of the products of the multistate conservation grant being conducted by WMI, titled “National Coordination and Technical Assistance for Prevention, Surveillance and Management of CWD”. When we met last year, we were conducting a survey of all 50 states’ fish and wildlife agencies soliciting their greatest nonfiscal CWD related needs and the best ways we could assist them in meeting those needs. We had an excellent response to the questionnaire and it was easy to prioritize the greatest needs. Most of priorities are best illustrated spatially because they are individual state and province specific information items such as location of CWD affected free ranging and captive cervid herds, CWD related regulations such as carcass transport, baiting and feeding and use of urine-based lure restrictions. Our approach is a series of interactive informational maps for U.S. and Canada. Once we have vetted these maps with the states they will be assessable at the CWD Alliance website.

*Matt Dunfee, WMI* – As Dr. Fischer indicated we have been working on this project for quite a while and really focusing on what state fish and wildlife agencies want, need, desire and wish for when it comes to representing CWD-related information that can be used by the public, whether it be hunters, wildlife viewers or just generally interested public. There are a couple problems we face and have always faced with CWD-related information. 1) Accuracy and 2) timeliness. The products I am going to show you arose from an effort to do that once and for all in a way that empowered state fish and wildlife agencies. Essentially makes series of spatially organized information that most importantly state fish and wildlife agencies individually could have access to and update on their own at any time and have all those data related in real time. For instance, a piece of legislation passes and baiting regulations change, an agency has a portal and can go in and update information and it goes live to the public and all the nuances related to that can be presented to the public. It doesn’t have to be washed through another state fish and wildlife agency, another survey or something like this CWD Alliance. What do some of these look like, location map, data analysis units that agencies use to document where CWD has been found. Two information types, orange indicates areas where wild cervids have been found positive for CWD and blue highlighted areas indicate where captive cervids have been found. A problem with aggregating these data is that states collect data at different resolutions. Colorado collects data for wild positives in game management units, but the State Ag Department collates that data in counties. So, we had to figure out ways around that to satisfy agency requirements that is most accurate to the public. Another thing this map allows us to do is put some nuances on some things, like Toronto that had CWD found in a zoo but haven’t found it since. We still need to locate that as a positive. Problems within these mapping systems is states getting

overrepresented in CWD positivity. What this type of a map allows us to do is draw a polygon around an area and insert a little bit of history in text box and put some nuisance into those positive locations. The other thing about these maps is these can be linked to agency websites. The media can take snapshots of these, they can zoom into a particular state or county and use these data for more accurate reporting of news stories or accurate representation on multiple partner websites, such as NGO partners that are looking for accurate maps. A second reiteration is taking some of these data and turning it into useful tools, a CWD import regulations map that a hunter could use to understand what they are allowed to bring in. For instance, if you live in North Dakota and want to go to Springfield, Illinois to harvest an animal, I can zoom in and it tells me what I am allowed to bring back; click on state of residence for regulation related to importation, links to agency websites and other information pertaining to those regulations, but also, since it is color coded blue he can slide backwards and it tells that person they can't bring back anything besides approved cleaned carcass parts from that state or state I move through back to my home. All regions will have a chance to look at these maps and vet them and we want USFWS health committees involved in this, we want to get this right and want it useful for states. Aside from things like importation or CWD location there are a lot of other associated regulations that are important for the public to know. This tool is designed for mobile use and if you click on regulations the map moves to state centered on the pane and brings up all the regulations that surveys from state fish and wildlife agencies, surveys from AFWA and independent interviews of all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies have told us for the past year are what needs to be represented. The data fields you see are what all of those surveys and interviews have told us that agencies want represented in the way they want them represented. Shout out to Paul Johansen and DJ Case and Associates who are working on another grant that we partnered with on aggregating these kinds of data. They have been helpful in making sure we get it right. Listed are all the regulations that could be of interest to the public. If we go to general info there are links to agency response plans and a pie chart somebody can use to see what percentage of the counties are positive for CWD versus not positive. The final map is shift to agency staff from previous maps I showed which are public facing maps. All of these data can also be used between agencies, not available to the public, only agency to agency to help them understand the CWD management environment that exists within. We put together a dashboard that allows an agency to explore what other states are implementing what kind of regulations, urine restrictions, baiting and feeding, etc. This dashboard allows an agency to look at other agencies to see where they fit within that picture and perhaps understand where they might need to go in the future. This is one of a handful of these types of tools. As you can see all of these represent individual maps that we created through this project. Hopefully some are useful, many in development to see if they are useful. Where this project is heading is that we are at point we are ready to review all the public facing maps with folks like MAFWA fish and wildlife health and other fish and wildlife health committees that have offered to help. Once we get those finalized we can continue on with agency facing tools to discover which are most useful to states, which are not useful to states and spend some time helping agencies understand how to interact with these map layers so that all we have to do in the future is maybe quarterly remind a contact within an agency to go to their Esri account to make sure everything is up to date, let us know if they need help if anything needs to be changed and we can make an accurate up-to-date state-approved CWD information data warehouse finally available. *Warnke* – When do you envision this becoming for use by the public? And when we can start promoting it and using it? *Dunfee* – Within next month or so. I want to give that amount of time to make sure all of these are washed through AFWA committees and agency experts to make sure they are comfortable with it. Once that is done and we get thumbs up we can go live. *Warnke* – Great stuff, really interesting and looks like a useful tool. Gathering big data, we have and applying that for informational purposes is going to be helpful. Have you thought at all about prevalence rates?

*Dunfee* – So much. It should be worth noting there are a duality of other projects out there, one at Cornell, one at other multistate conservation grant that are exploring those things. We are in coordination with those groups trying to unpack that thorny package and figure out how it is most useful to do that for agencies and most importantly what part of that surveillance data do they want made available to the public. There are two problems there, one is can you use this system to present surveillance data in a meaningful way, we have explored that and the answer is yes and we can combine with other projects to make a very rich tool. The second question is, do agencies want data shown to the public and if so, how. We were going to originally look at that in this project and we realized that is a pandora's box that is going to need to be more thoughtful and we should probably see how agencies respond to this level, how comfortable they are and if they want to go to that next level we can absolutely do that.



**Minutes**  
**MAFWA Annual Business Meeting**  
**Wednesday, June 30, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 30, 2021**

Starts at 8:00 am

*Warnke* – Thank all of our sponsors again, played short video from Sovereign Sportsman. Thank you Meg and Delaney Event Management, meeting has flowed incredibly smoothly. All of sponsor videos are available on Whova. Photo contest is closed.

**MAFWA BUSINESS MEETING**

*Keith Warnke, MAFWA President* – Officially called to order at 8:04 AM

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

*Ollie* - Illinois, Kansas, Missouri did not answer roll call – came in later in the meeting. Manitoba and Saskatchewan were not present at any time. Warnke – Kansas and Missouri entered meeting. For Christie Curley in Ontario, I think this might be the first meeting in a while that we have had Canadian representatives present. You are a full voting member of this board so please bring action and input.

**Agenda Review**

*Keith* – On Executive Secretary’s report, we have Ollie loaded and sharing his Zoom screen this morning so while it is fresh in his mind we want him to go first right after minutes approval and before treasurer’s report. (*Agenda – Exhibit A*)

**Approval of October 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Annual meeting minutes (*Exhibit B*); *Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept minutes as printed, Terry Steinwand, North Dakota second. Motion passes.*

**Executive Secretary’s Report**

*Ollie Torgerson (PowerPoint - Exhibit C)* –Gave a report in October. 2020 year of pandemic but also the year of Zoom. This year is year of vaccinations, and all of this caused us to postpone our meeting planned for Custer State Park last June, postponed it to October, then canceled it and decided to hold an in-person conference in June 2021 in Custer, South Dakota. This was the first time in our history since WWII that we did not have an annual conference. Virus impacts sustained, so executive committee met and decided to go virtual and here we are today meeting online. We did have virtual business meeting last October and you just voted to approve those minutes. In process we bid farewell to Dale Garner and Kelly Hepler, welcomed Pete Hildreth, Iowa and Kevin Robling, South Dakota. Had president transition from Kelly to first vice-president Keith Warnke. Jim Douglas stepped up to replace Kelly as co-chair of Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI). They say change is good but I am getting tired of juggling. Steady

assistance of Ed Boggess and Kelley Myers to trudge forward with MLI as our liaisons and MLI continues to roll on as well as monarch work under Ed and Claire. MLI branched into value stream mapping by request of Director Pauley to learn if that was a useful tool to effectively deal with highly complex, multijurisdictional issues. Kelley Myers has been the guiding hand on this. MLI also branched into PFAS, the forever chemical, at request of Wisconsin and Kelley is the guiding hand on this under MLI. Minnesota DNR hosted successful Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC) virtually in February, and registration numbers equaled in-person conference numbers expected. That surprised me as we thought we would have higher attendance virtually. Our foundation has assumed oversight responsibility of MFWC under the guidance of this committee, chaired by Sara, with Keith and Jim as members. Iowa is hosting next year in Des Moines, followed by Kansas and South Dakota. Grant and contract work continues to escalate, now managing 20 plus grants or contracts. Directors are making things happen and making things move forward. Discussions are underway to hire a contract manager. MAFWA is a small organization and we have an annual budget of \$159,165, I am half time and Roger is quarter time so more help is needed. Fully engaged with Director Robling and his staff to plan the postponed, then cancelled and now revived meeting in Custer State Park. It is a beautiful park but is on expensive side. Kevin and I will work hard to recover our sponsorships which were affected by COVID. We have come back but have a ways to go. Appreciate sponsors who are staying with us. We will meet in Custer SP, June 27 – 30, 2022. Wrap up by thanking Dale and Kelly for their stellar service to the Association and beyond. Thank Roger and Sheila for steady work and loyal commitment to the Association. Thank Keith and Wisconsin DNR for providing me office space and computer service. Thank directors for privilege of serving you. *Warnke* – Thank you, great to hear about changes and everything we have been able to do even with pandemic and vaccines. Looking forward to Custer SP next summer.

### **Treasurer's Report**

***Roger Luebbert*** – Passed out two reports, Treasurer's Report (*Exhibit D*). I want to give thanks, I am fortunate to be surrounded by a lot of very good staff, Ollie in particular who is always quick to respond, Sara Parker Pauley takes time out of her busy schedule to sign all of our checks. Ed Boggess and Claire Beck are project leaders for MLI. What I have learned over the years is that federal projects work well as long as you have good project leaders and we are fortunate to have that. That is also true of Megan Wisecup, with new R3 federal grant and Scott Taylor for pheasant plan, he helps a lot, we send invoices to many states and without Scott riding herd on that I would be spending a lot more time than I am. Thanks Sheila for everything she does, Cindy Delaney's staff, who are quick to respond, USFWS staff have helped a lot with grant solutions, John Lord and John Bloom with AFWA who are also quick to respond when I have questions and staff from all the states. Also, want to thank employees of Conservation Credit Union for use of space and technology. Without those people this would be a much tougher job. When CPA auditors were done they said we don't have a lot of money but we move in a lot of different directions. We keep ourselves organized, have good software and do a good job of staying on top of things. Historically this treasurer's report shows all transactions for MAFWA and CEF for most recent completed fiscal year. Our fiscal year is on a calendar year basis so this report shows all the transactions for calendar year 2020. First page is

summary of account balances and then it goes through each account. We have two tax entities, the first is our 501(c)(6), our Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife, MAFWA for short and our 501(c)(3), our foundation, Conservation Enhancement Fund or CEF for short. In MAFWA tax entity the first one is the Banking Services Account, this handles all special projects that do not involve federal funds, and the major player in this one is the National Pheasant Plan Coordinator. The next is the Conference Account, our main operating account, receipts are conference receipts for this annual director's meeting, membership dues and banking and administrative fees and federal indirect costs. The expenses come from this conference, executive secretary and treasurer pay and travel, recording secretary travel, insurance, tax preparation fees, website maintenance and that sort of thing. Southern Wings Account, as the names suggests, handles Southern Wings receipts and disbursements. Federal Account, handles all of federal grants we have going on. Credit Union Share Account, is where we have to maintain \$25 in that account to remain a member. The last one is the big one, the investment account, Money Market and Securities Account at the Broker, this is the account the Investment committee is going to be talking about. It was just under \$800,000 the end of December, now over \$800,000. It increased quite a bit in CY2020, about \$99,000, which represents a 14% increase. We did not make any deposits or withdrawals from this account, so this is earnings and change in market value; 2020 was a good year overall for investments. For example, the FNP 500, the index of the top largest 500 companies in the U.S., that index rose a little over 15% excluding dividends. In Conservation Enhancement Fund we have a checking account, a share account and we also have an investment account at the broker but it doesn't have much in it. This one may be something the investment committee might want to discuss as to whether or not we keep this account. Our current broker has mentioned more than once that for this small amount it is more hassle than what it is worth to have this account. We could move it into the share account and eliminate this account as there hasn't been much activity. The footnote at the bottom is that we have designations for these accounts and you will see them on the individual pages. Almost all of the banking services, all but about \$10,000, is designated for special purposes. The largest one is for national pheasant plan coordinator and almost all of the CEF accounts are designated. *Warnke* – CEF funds held at the broker you suggested perhaps we move that money elsewhere. Where would we put it. *Roger*– Since it is so small and such a hassle, a good discussion for investment committee. We could move that balance into the credit union share account and that would reduce the number of accounts we have. It did earn pretty good last year but when you have down years it would go down as well, so it may not yield many earnings. **Banking Service Account**, on receipts side we have National Pheasant Plan Coordinator contributions and then we transferred from the federal account remaining state contributions from NFWF III project we finished and moved them to this account from the federal account. The reason we did that was because these are state funds and we did not want to give the impression they were federal funds by leaving it there. We designated those funds, as approved by committee, for future monarch/pollinator or landscape conservation efforts. On disbursement side you see Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow, Pheasants Forever for pheasant coordinator, one Ohio project we finished up in 2020, then we transferred to CEF the monies left from previous Midwest F&W Conferences, which is now handled by the foundation fund. The balance as of December 31, 2020 was \$137,671.61 with all but about \$10,000 of that is earmarked with the big player being the National Pheasant Plan Coordinator. The **Conference Account**, is our operating account. Receipts are from sponsors, registrations from last year and as you know that conference was cancelled so these funds were received prior to cancellation. These funds are being applied to the budget for the 2021 year. Affiliate dues, membership dues, banking fees and indirect costs and a small donation and total receipts of just under \$107,000. Disbursements include expenses for the conference before it got cancelled, executive secretary pay and travel, treasurer pay and travel, insurance, tax preparation, CPA audit done in 2019 that

we paid for in 2020, website maintenance and miscellaneous items. Overall, the balance as of December 31 was \$105,000. Right now, about \$80,000 but a good cushion there. **Southern Wings Account**, we have contributions from the states that we turned around and paid out to the American Bird Conservancy. **Federal Account**, had federal reimbursements from the USFWS, a little from NFWF finishing up that project and on disbursements side USFWS state liaison and monarch coordinator pay and travel, NFWF III remaining state funds we transferred, Minnesota needed to have their contribution returned to them so we did that and we had WMI contract. Our balance as of December 31 was \$10,000. This is not really designated and is MAFWA funds there to serve as a buffer. The USFWS is extremely fast at reimbursing us which is one reason why we can carry such a low balance. **Credit Union Share Account**, maintaining \$25 in that account. The **Money Market and Securities Account**, there is interest and capital gains and we have some funds that were swept out of our cash subaccount within this fund and they were reinvested so it isn't really true disbursement. The market value of the securities we hold has increased significantly as the market overall has increased. Our balance as of December 31 was just under \$800,000. Now to the Conservation Enhancement Fund. **Conservation Enhancement Credit Union Checking Account**, we transferred money from share account so we could make some payments and on disbursements side we made some deposits for 2021 MFWC and for Illinois conference we paid the profit out to the Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society in the north central section, tax preparation fees and trademark renewal and the balance as of December 31 was \$7,312. **Conservation Enhancement Share Account at Credit Union**, we had monies coming in from Illinois and we transferred monies from banking account those earlier balance from previous conferences, now all in CEF; and transferred from here to the checking account and transfer to MAFWA for MFWC fee. Balance as of December 31 was \$75,503. **Conservation Enhancement Account at the Broker**, not using those funds and it is very small, and this is the one we might consider eliminating, a topic for discussion. **Conservation Enhancement Fund Summary**, shows assets and designations, we talked about these balances and this is as of December 31. Receivables for deposits we made for conferences for Minnesota and Iowa total \$17,000, brokerage account total assets of \$106,098. Designations are listed and the big one is the \$5,000 the eleven states have contributed for a total of \$55,000 with total designations of \$99,000 and undesignated balance of \$6,404. For later discussion or by CEF board is we do have two designations here that we maybe can clean up and pay these out. We have \$5,000 for student travel grants and monies transferred from one state to another for conference and states involved said it was okay to designate that as student travel grant. I'm wondering if we ought to pay that out to Fisheries or Wildlife Society so it can actually be used rather than just have it sit here. Also, line 19, Wisconsin monies from 2018 conference they contributed to Illinois in 2020, it is only \$740 and maybe as we pay out the Illinois profits we could pay this out as well to take it off the books. The longer we keep it the less we are going to remember about it. *Jim Douglas, Nebraska* - Can you remind me and others what the genesis of that brokerage account was and the thought behind establishing it in the first place. *Roger* - That was before my time but I will tell you what I know. For the last six years I have been involved it has had very little activity. I think when we first set up the foundation we had hopes of getting a lot of contributions and investing those contributions. *Ollie* - Many years ago a man in Milwaukee, Wisconsin passed away and his estate distributed about a quarter million dollars to us, a quarter million to National Audubon and a quarter million to Ducks Unlimited. His name was Anton Jaschek, nobody knew him but he obviously had a heart for conservation. The MAFWA board at that time invested the money with the concept of letting it grow for special projects. Over time there has been a few special projects that have been funded from this, back in CARA days when we were trying to get a national bill for increased funding for state fish and wildlife agencies, we contributed a chunk of money for that; to AFWA's Aware program; funded CITES travel one year when we

didn't have a multistate grant to fund that; might have been something else but I can't remember but those are the projects funded out of this account. In recent years have not funded anything, the objective has been to let it grow to get a sizeable corpus which to utilize in future years. Investments committee will report on this later. A good hearted man from Milwaukee Wisconsin who decided to give us a chunk of his estate. *Douglas* – That is good information but the question I actually had, was that broker account, \$5,000 that Roger indicated that we might need to transfer those dollars. Why do we have that account? *Ollie* – When we set up the foundation Pheasants Forever gave us \$5,000 as a sponsorship designated for this and it was invested. Is that correct Roger? *Roger* – Thought we would get a lot more donations and we didn't. *Douglas* – Do you want to consider prospect of transfer now or Investments committee to deliberate that? *Roger* – That was before my time. That makes sense that was when we set up that foundation. We probably thought at the time we were going to get a lot more donations but we haven't. *Ollie* – I am pretty sure my memory is accurate. *Douglas* – Do you want us to consider that prospect of transfer now or do you want investments committee to further deliberate on that and create a future recommendation. *Roger* – From my opinion it would be good for the investments committee to have a discussion and not make decision right now. *Warnke* – What would it take to pay out the two accounts you suggest getting those paid out? *Roger* – To get brokerage account off the books may not be that difficult. When investments committee gives their report there is some talk we may bid out brokerage services and that might be a good time to move that money. We can see what new investment broker says, see what his thoughts are in terms of keep it or not. If it is not worth keeping move it into savings account and only move big investment account over to the new broker. Not hard to move money either way. *Warnke* – I meant those two small accounts, one was Wisconsin and one was student travel, do we need investment committee to recommend that or motion from the board to eliminate those two accounts? *Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri* – Or is that a CEF board decision? *Roger* – You are right Sara, that is a CEF decision. *Pauley* – We will call a meeting and make sure those are agenda items.

### **Audit Committee Report**

*Keith Warnke, WI* – Roger will have to refresh me on when next CPA audit is but we did do a desk review with our CFO here at Wisconsin DNR. She reviewed 20 transactions back in February of this and found everything was really in order and our finances looked good. It was a short report. She had question about 5% banking fee which initially her review assumed we were paying and not that our accounts were charging and receiving these fees. That got cleared up with Karen who did the desk report. Other than that, all things positive in her eyes. *Roger* – That review she did was for last six months of 2020, so I will give them another report in July or August, it is on a six-month cycle.

### **Investments Committee Report**

*Jim Douglas, NE* – Committee also consists of Dan Eichinger who is going to assist in the call, Brad Loveless and Roger. Thanks to them for great work going on with the committee and thank Roger. He has a good handle on finances and accounting for us. Essential for investments committee to also do good work. A year ago, investments committee decided to take a deeper dive looking into our investments, investments

strategies and communication with our investment advisor, Shane Hessman in Kansas. Going into this I want to make the statement that we have had good performance from current investments as conducted by Shane Hessman. The fact that we want to take a closer look at everything doesn't reflect poor performance from Shane. I will say as we took a look at investments and strategies there was one aspect of service from Shane Hessman that we wished was stronger, on the reporting side. Not that reports weren't forthcoming upon request but reports weren't made as a matter of course that were really robust to the extent that it was easy to ascertain not only what current investments were, what quality of those investments and what overall state of affairs in investment climate in the nation was. Investment advising companies and financial service companies provide more robust reporting. That is one thing we should look for since the investments committee acts in a fiduciary role. It is important that investment committee, executive committee, full board and treasurer have good understanding of investments. In looking at investments we currently have we began with an end in mind. In that regard we started with review of what our corpus was, where it came from and what it's purpose was. As noted by Roger, it has grown substantially over time. In looking at the strategy we have to look towards how we may want to use earnings in the future. You have to establish a philosophy and a purpose for the fund and any earnings from the fund that are expressed in an investment policy statement. We have had an investment policy statement but we should refresh it and enhance it. Dan Eichinger did a great job of investigating from similar entities how their investment policies were stated and how much background information was included, etc. We would like for all of you to potentially ratify the refreshed investment policy statement that Dan will go over. It does include some of the distribution of investments in a broad sense. We ask that you discuss and potentially, as you look towards ratifying investment policy statement, ratify distribution of funds portfolio statements as well. In addition to that we would like you to ratify our current endeavors, which involves looking towards creating requests for proposals. Look at what investment advisors may be interested in applying to represent MAFWA. That will include a direct invitation to current investment advisor who would reapply and without any preconceived notions that we are necessarily going to change. There will be, in the request for proposals, certain provisions related to reporting aspects we think are important. We anticipate, with ratification of current efforts, we would begin immediately to develop a list of potential firms to solicit proposals from.

*Dan Eichinger, Michigan* – As Jim mentioned the Investments Committee has undertaken a review of our current policy statements. We felt it was important for us to consider some updates to that. Policy statements do a couple of important things, especially if considering issuing requests for proposal of advisory services it articulates to those prospective respondents what it is that we, as an organization, are going to be looking for in terms of their stewardship, reporting and management of our resources. A good investment policy statement gives direction to investment committee and executive board about what their responsibilities are with respect to managing and overseeing an advisor, the funds and use of those funds. We as a committee endeavored to develop a policy statement that did that (*Exhibit E*). I will go over highlights only. The introduction is self-explanatory, we were beneficiaries of Mr. Jaschek's benevolence and at this time we are in a good position where we have a good amount of money in those accounts. We articulate the duties and responsibilities of the investment committee, akin to the charge

the committee has for what our objectives are, what policies of our funds are going to be and what the role of the committee is for reviewing the investment policy. We are directing or charging the investment committee with reviewing this policy on an annual basis but then identifying that changes to this policy can only be effectuated by the MAFWA board upon recommendation of investment committee. What is the point of our investment and what are our spending policies? We proposed language that says the fund is to be invested to the objective of preserving a perpetual and permanent endowment for MAFWA. What this reflects is the good position we are in; we are not operationalizing any of the funds we have in our investment. We don't need to live off of our interest and earnings, we don't operationalize any of that into our operating budget. Any investments and earnings we currently accrue get reinvested back into the fund. The fund currently essentially exists as permanent endowment. If we get to a point where we want to make any distribution of funds, we set up a sideboard that we can't erode the corpus. We envision that we have a principal amount in our investment account and we are never going to spend that principle. The organization, the board and whatever our spending guidelines might ultimately be we only have our interest or earnings available to us to spend or disperse. What that does is preserves in perpetuity the corpus or integrity of that fund. We identified the role of the MAFWA board as retaining sole discretion for authorizing and determining the distribution of fund assets, so, only MAFWA Board of Directors can make a decision about how, what policies or guidance we are going to use for distributing fund assets. This put an asterisk by this item, that is not a hill we have to climb today, the MAFWA board doesn't have to make any decisions about disbursement policies or anything along those lines today, we are not proposing that. This simply identifies that when we get to a point where the board wants to come up with policy or guidance for how we would distribute interest and earnings that the board is going to need to adopt a policy to direct those activities. Portfolio investment policies gets into what kinds of things we are comfortable investing in and how we would like to be invested. Subsection A talks about that broad allocation of assets and sub-asset categories to account for risk, return; essentially we want to have a diversified portfolio. We understand that returns and return volatility are going to vary depending on market conditions on some kind of temporal scale. That we retain flexibility to make changes to portfolio asset allocation, but that is not something we intend to do on a regular basis. The investment committee retains the prerogative to say our allocation matrix isn't quite right and we need to take another cut at that, our investment objectives have changed and we need to review that. That is not something we anticipate doing, even on an annual basis, only do on much more periodic basis. Primarily we intend to invest our funds into two major components, equity and fixed income portion. The purpose of the equity investment is to maximize long term growth of portfolio assets. If we are in agreement that this is a permanent endowment you can tilt heavier towards equity side of asset allocation. The role of the fixed income is to provide for underlying stability in the fund so we can weather variability in the market. We don't foresee holding any investments in cash categories but we reserve that as an option if we are liquidating out of one asset and into a different one we can temporarily hold some in cash if needed. E is area we wanted to draw everyone's attention to. Right now, the majority of investments are in corporate bond categories. What we are proposing is different from that. Consistent with what we outlined earlier, the idea of permanent endowment, we have a corpus that we only ever

intend for it to grow, we do not intent to spend that down to zero. That would suggest we could be invested more aggressively on the equity side. We propose allocation of 70% equities, pretty aggressive, but it is consistent with idea that corpus to grow and make money for us. The temporal scale is from now to time immorial so consequently we can be invested heavily in equity side because the variability in the market at the end of the day we are going to net out and be fine. In fixed income side, propose 30% allocation to ensure we guard or check against extended periods of volatility or periods of decline in the market that might impact the value of our equity assets. F talks about that we are not going to get into weird kinds of investments, not going to play in venture capital or advisors can't purchase hedge funds, real estate investments or trusts or anything along those lines. There is some opportunity to do that but it is well controlled within this policy. Diversification this gets into what we mean by diversified investment strategy, gives direction to advisor that we don't want to be over-invested in one single fund or type of asset. We have some limits on that. You can't represent within a single investment security or single mutual fund; we can't put more than 5% of our portfolio into a single fund. We need to spread investments in an asset category across a variety of different vehicles so we are never over-exposed. If one mutual fund goes belly up and we lost 30% of our assets, you never want to be in that position so we will never expose fund or assets to more than 5% exposure in any single investment. B and C are variations on the same theme, talking about passively managed investment vehicles, like index funds and bond index-type funds. You can't allocate very much of the portfolio below investment grade, so no junk bonds or anything like that. We will rebalance from time to time and that investment manager is directed to provide a recommendation to the committee regarding rebalancing portfolio. This is an important delegation of authority that we have nested within the investment policy where the MAFWA Board of Directors is authorizing investment committee to approve rebalancing recommendations. This isn't asset allocation where we are going to change 70% to 60% in equities what this is if through market performance we are allocated at 70% but through market performance our actual asset allocation ends up being 75%, this gives the committee the authority to rebalance portfolio back to target allocations. Other policies, is good behavior stuff we want from our advisor. We are not going to invest in shorts, pledge on speculative securities or loans or other types of things like that, we are going to stay out of speculative investing. Monitoring portfolio investments and performance sets out expectations for how frequently the committee will meet with the investment advisor and receive updates and information on portfolio performance and investments. The kinds of things we want to see in terms of those reports include things like what long-term real return objectives are, how we are doing relative to a bunch of different benchmarks used to evaluate investment performance. C talks about how frequently we are going to evaluate the performance of our advisor. When we pick an advisor, we intend to enter into a long term relationship but we are going to evaluate that performance at a minimum of five year basis for what is considered a full market cycle. Investment reporting, important for the investment committee to be seeing a little bit more regular and normal reporting for our investment performance. We will receive those reports on a quarterly basis and at least once per year our investment manager is expected to meet with the committee to review our portfolio structure, strategy and investment performance, other items contained in section eight. Because investment committee has talked about this for

several months I probably skipped over some things you may have questions on. Pause and see if Roger, Jim or Brad have anything they want to add. *Douglas* – Excellent job articulating. I believe everyone needs to know Dan did a lot of legwork on investigating what a really good investment policy statement needs to include and providing examples on how others articulate all of these important elements. He deserves a lot of credit for his work on this. We consulted with other informed persons as well including staff from AFWA, thanks to them for helping on this.

*Brad Loveless, Kansas* – Appreciate Dan’s work in pulling together this thoughtful document. A couple of things Dan mentioned, we can defer until later to figure out how we are going to spend this money. This is a pretty aggressive approach because we are going to set aside the corpus but still aggressive. The benefit of that is that it is going to produce money for us. As a board we need to decide what good things we are going to do with that. If at some point we decide we have a small need for revenue each year to disperse then we might recommend we adjust this policy. On the other hand, if we say we have some big disbursements that are important to us to promote conservation in the Midwest then we may add fuel to the fire as far as being aggressive. It will be important for the board to start to develop that vision for how this money is going to be put to good use for conservation. We talked about us going out and sending out an RFP for investment entities to work with us on this. One of the things that complicates this that we anticipate people saying they want to work with us because we want to support conservation, so we won’t treat you like an ordinary business. It may be a little complex to navigate the responses we get, it may not be the normal level playing field because they may say they want to donate a portion, or all, of their time to support MAFWA and the good things we are doing. It will be interesting to see where that comes out once we get to that stage where we can send out requests for proposals. *Douglas* – At some point today, worthy to have that discussion. We would like to see more eyes on evaluation of proposals that we get and that will take the form of keeping in close contact with executive committee for example but also wise to consider asking for volunteers or President to assign additional persons to work with investments committee on the evaluation aspect of proposals we receive. *Loveless* – We had discussion on this in committee, Dan and Jim have good grasp on these financial issues and how they work, to evaluate these proposals we get some of you might suggest people like Roger or people in your organization who have talent when it comes to investments and may give us good advice. *Roger* – Dan did excellent on this and on the investment committee you have strong individuals and I support what is in front of you right now. *Warnke* – Echo that, great work, a lot went into this and we appreciate the detail. When you were discussing mutual funds and other potential index-type funds, does proposal consider expenses related to those funds? They can vary a lot and end up costing a lot of money in the end and that might be an important consideration. *Douglas* – An important consideration as we move forward. It all points backward to what our expectations are for growth level of the fund and in consideration of that expenses are part of that equation. *Warnke* – Difficult to even exceed cost of expenses with a good returning fund sometimes. From my own personal experience, I have always looked around for low expense funds in mutual funds and other types of investments. That is in addition to what brokerage or advisory expenses we might incur too. *Loveless* – That is a great point. In figuring out how to navigate this we visited with an investment person that I worked with on another

board here in Kansas. He got right to that point, to be successful you've got to keep expenses low, even lower than you and I do in our personal investments. He was top of that and I fully expect, as we entertain proposals, others will get to that exact point because it is such a key point. You can take away all your gains if those rates aren't low enough. We will make sure they are extremely low and that will be part of what we will see in terms of proposals. *Warnke* – Glad to hear that. In discussing balance, that brought to mind conversations I have had over the years, there are many balanced long term index funds out there. Some that plan for retirement out to 2075 and they automatically rebalance as you get near the goal end date. I wonder if we would be open to considering, when we talk about those kinds of funds, we could always invest in one of those automatically rebalancing funds with up to 20%, or whatever is approved. The guidance here, as that automatically rebalances as they get close to maturity date can then switch that investment out into a longer automatically rebalancing fund with a longer maturity date. Those are the kinds of questions I would have for any firm we bring on board. How are they going to manage those funds? That controls expenses too when you are automatically rebalancing. Something to think about for the future. *Eichinger* – Good to think about, are there different temporal scales that MAFWA wants to think about for investing, like the funds you are talking about. As you get closer to those dates, what happens in those funds, the genesis is you might be heavy, maybe 80% on equities and as you get closer to that long term date you have way more shifted into fixed assets and start lacking those gains. Those are all kinds of things we will want to unpack with our advisor. We can always be talking about those things. The thing about this policy, the MAFWA board is the owner of the baseball team here, so if future boards want to view income differently or a need arises for us to address there is nothing here that precludes that. We want to compel that act of ongoing conversation through annual reviews of our policies to make sure everybody sitting in these seats understands what we have historically tried to accomplish and be able to graft into whatever future goals might be as they define it. *Warnke* – Great policy and prudent move to institutionalize MAFWA's investment strategies. The reality is we are all short timers here and there is so much turnover and we need to have this policy in place. *Ollie* – Has the Investments Committee considered recommending a corpus goal to the board? You mentioned you are not going to spend below the corpus, but what is the goal of the fund? Is that something worth doing? *Douglas* – Current proposal is we start now considering the balance of \$800,000 as the corpus. I know at one time there was a thought from MAFWA board to grow that to a \$1 million and consider that the corpus. Our proposal is \$800,000 but that doesn't preclude future decisions that might come from earnings, which could go back into the corpus or might go into grants the committee decides they want to make on a regular basis. Those future decisions policy doesn't preclude that but it is not our proposal that we do nothing different until we get to \$1 million. We are proposing we proceed with activities we are talking about, \$800,000 as current corpus. *Eichinger* – In my mind when I think about the fund there isn't a goal for the corpus, the goal is continued growth. If we set a million dollar objective what that implies is once we get a million dollars we are always going to spend trying to preserve that. In order for that same million dollar corpus, say we hit that in 2025, in order for that money to spend the same in 2045 that has got to grow because that million dollars is not going to be worth the same 25 years from now as it is five years from now. We don't have to worry about that right now. The

near term actions are considering adopting the policy, get investment RFP out the door and then consistent with what the policy would adopt, get our funds reinvested according to those asset categories. Let's get a couple of years of fund performance there for us to know what the market is doing, what kind of income, interest and earnings we are generating and then once we have a sense of that then what the board would want to do is see if investment interest and earning we are generating off of our portfolio. Say we were going to take 50% of that and reinvest that into corpus, half of what we earned and put it right back into the corpus so we are always growing it. Then we can put 50% on grants, fellowships or scholarships or whatever it is we want to do. But we are always paying ourselves and corpus first. Not discussion we have to have today. We don't have to operationalize any of the interest or earnings from our investment. That is kind of conversation we want to have in two to three years, once we have everything reestablished then we can look at what we want money to do for us and if we want to start taking disbursements then how do we keep feeding the corpus and what are our other spending objectives we want to have. That is not a Rubicon we have to cross today.

*Loveless* – We have been working with WAFWA on lesser prairie chicken (LPC) problem for years to try and straighten out the finances. One of the problems we had early on was we didn't have enough money set aside to generate revenue to keep administration going so we have had to rebalance that. Right now, we have come up with a number, for about \$1 million you can expect to generate, on an average year, \$50,000 a year investment-wise. If we said we had \$50,000 worth of grants we wanted to disburse every year that would help us see where that target is, what minimum amount we want to keep in that.

*Warnke* – What we would like to do, as Jim talked about earlier, is have some volunteer directors to review this policy and help review the RFPs when they come in. We want to take action in the future on how to issue an RFP. That is my request for volunteers interested in participating. Keep that in mind and send your volunteer information to Ollie and he will coordinate that. Do we need to take any action?

*Douglas* – Defer to Ollie but you may want to approve this policy statement.

*Ollie* – This is definitely a change in board policy so it does require board action. The board meets once per year so if board members comfortable with what the investments committee has presented then a motion is in order.

**Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept report and recommendation, Dave Olfelt, Minnesota second.**

*Eichinger* – Ollie, was this document shared with the board?

*Pauley* – I don't believe it was, I think this is the first time we have seen it.

*Douglas* – We shared with executive committee earlier this year but not with full board.

*Pauley* - Could we do an email vote so full board was given an opportunity to review it.

*Ollie* – That is my mistake for not sharing with the board in backup materials. Yes, the bylaws do allow for board action by electronic mail with the president's approval. If you would like to recommend a date for that it would be helpful.

*Warnke* – Do we need a friendly amendment to Brad's motion to make it an email vote or can we just say we are making this an email vote and by July 15 we want to have this resolved.

**Pauley – I will offer that friendly amendment to Brad's motion to July 15.**

*Warnke* – Any opposition to friendly amendment? Brad accepts friendly amendment so we are going to authorize email vote on approval of this policy by July 15.

**Motion carries.**

*Warnke* – Don't forget to volunteer to help out with the investments committee in reviewing RFPs.

*Douglas* – Can I presume that investments committee plan, once policy is approved, assuming it is, that we utilize the RFP process that we continue to have

permission of the board to pursue an RFP? *Warnke* – I think so. Do we need discussion or motion on that? *Ollie* – I don't think so. *Warnke* – Pursue the RFP once the policy is approved. *Douglas* – Do we have anything in our founding or bylaws that requires us to have an advisory entity stationed in Kansas where incorporated? *Ollie* – I don't have the answer to that question. I assume you can have a financial advisor anywhere in the country. Interesting question. Sheila Kemmis, Recording Secretary – I don't believe we do have to have it tied to Kansas. I think it was that way because that is where the main force was, Joe Kramer and myself who had control of the books that is where it was set up. *Ollie* – I can ask Lane Kisonak from AFWA and get a legal opinion if financial advisor has to be in state incorporated and let you know. *Douglas* – Appreciate patience and consideration of the board and again want to thank all the people contributing and those that will as time moves forward. There will need to be new chair appointed in the near future and perhaps an addition to the board. *Warnke* – Thank you for your service and to the entire investments committee as well for all your hard work on this. Very much appreciated.

### **Bylaws Committee Report**

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO*** (*Constitution and Bylaws with proposed changes - Exhibit F*) – Easy, friendly revisions to the bylaws, changing date on cover page and changing dates on committee lifespan which we do on three-year cycles. Amend private lands management group to 2024 and for Midwest furbearers group and Wildlife Diversity committee and revision date amended to June 30. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri made a motion to accept revisions; Dan Eichinger, Michigan second. Motion passes.***

### **Resolutions Committee Report**

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO*** (*Resolution to promote awareness of and preparedness for rabbit hemorrhagic disease – Exhibit G*) – Appreciate Lindsey Long, chair of wildlife health committee yesterday presenting this resolution from that committee on awareness for rabbit hemorrhagic disease. I hope our members had the opportunity to go through the future resolved clauses. Obviously nothing mandated just strong encouragement for our members to develop appropriate response plans, encourages members and provinces to consider appropriate development of informational materials, encourages member states and provinces to consider working with agricultural authorities as appropriate to develop and implement appropriate restrictions on movement of domestic and wild rabbits and asking for adoption of this resolution. Nothing mandated, strong encouragement. I am just beginning to work with this committee, they are very engaged and involved committee and focused on their responsibilities related to wildlife. ***Kendra Wecker, Ohio moved to pass resolution, Pete Hildreth, Iowa second. Motion passes.***

### **Awards Committee Report**

***Terry Steinwand, ND*** (*MAFWA Award Winner Nominations – Exhibit H*) – Thanks to committee members Jim, Kendra, Brian, and Pete. We had 23 nominations which is about the same as last year. Encourage directors to encourage their staff to put those in. There were some great nominations and some were tough to choose. Thanks to Sheila, she does a lot of heavy lifting on this. Other than what I said yesterday, great people and I think we need to do more to recognize great people working in this field. *Warnke* – What

tremendous choices we have and opportunities to recognize great staff around the Midwest. I agree that if we can do more to recognize people that goes a long ways in the end. Future award committees can be thinking about what we might do for future awards.

*Break*

## OLD BUSINESS

### Angler R3 Update

**Dave Chanda, RBFF** – I can't wait for virtual meetings to stop and we can all get back together again and catch up. Thanks for time on agenda. We just finished our annual survey of how participation is going (Exhibit I). It is posted online. Had banner year, 55 million people went fishing and we all know the pandemic gave people free time for people to get out there. We have been active promoting and that is one of the reasons we were successful in that. When we count anglers, our surveys at RBFF are counting people six years and up, not same as the Service is counting. Boating was just as productive, new boat sales reached a 13-year high and the industry was doing well as a result of that. One of the most rewarding things we saw last year is that participation is up in some of the segments we are all interested in, youth up and female anglers up to 35% of all anglers and Hispanics and African American participation is up as well. These are all demographics we are interested in. Based upon the research we found it is a mixture of new participation and reactivated, which is really good news. The bad news for directors, RBFF focuses efforts on recruiting new anglers and the fact that you are getting new and reactivated and you have to retain, you have to focus on all three buckets, recruitment, retention and reactivation. We are still having trouble with churn rate. The last couple of years we have been losing anglers at significantly higher rate than we would like to see. Some of that is coming to fruition, from reports you have all seen, we are beginning to age out, seeing older population. Back in 2017, we were losing on average five million anglers and the last three years it has been 9 million, 9.3 million and during COVID it was 8.8 million that did not fish. We still have a lot of work to do on retention rate and churn rate. As we start to understand who these people are and where they come from it is not entirely the elderly population. Another thing we saw in demographics, which is good news and something we have all worked hard on, we are seeing these participants skewing younger, more diverse audience, which is important and is also trending more urban. All good demographics we are happy to see. You probably had the same happen for you as we did with our website, the views and hits to our website skyrocketed last year. One of the things our website does is if people are interested in fishing, especially when it comes to getting a fishing license, we drive them directly to your site, we don't sell anything, we connect them to you. Last year during COVID we know that nationally you sold over three million more licenses and I would like to think we helped in some small way because from our website we referred over two million people to your websites, those asking or interested in acquiring a license. The only thing I don't know is once they jump off our site on to yours if they went through to purchasing a license. Your teams are all working hard on this and going back to the new normal, whatever that might be. I have seen that soccer opened back up, baseball and all the other activities you compete with on time. What we are seeing is great opportunities for us because in the

surveys we have done we know Americans have gained a much greater appreciation for the outdoors. They realize it is a great way to get out, do it safely and decompress. As we see people now doing a hybrid, work from home and work from office, here at RBFF working from home since March and not going back until September and may be hybrid where we are in the office three days and home two days. That is going to give me more time to do what I want in the outdoors and I think your customers/constituents will be the same. They are going to have more time, have money and looking to do things outside. We have great opportunities to grow or maintain growth we had. I want to bring to your attention because some of the states are participating in this program. I have two programs going on right now. One I am getting ready to try and roll out nationally, great opportunity to you folks, like to pitch to directors so you will know if you want to participate and you will find the commitment from your staff to do it. The first is mobile first catch center project, Kansas and Nebraska have active trailers and I am working with Illinois and Wisconsin to develop trailers. The whole idea behind the program is that RBFF, along with Cabela's for the first ten trailers, have put together a trailer package full of all the gear you need to take the show on the road. We have given that to states I have just mentioned. I have actually worked with 16 states that have operational trailers, by the end of the year we will be over 21 states operating close to 30 trailers. Our only ask was that they try to do at least eight programs in urban environment where big part of audience can be. The District of Columbia is going all over the tidal basin all summer doing fishing education programs and reaching out to a good audience. We are going to grow and expand the program the best we can, given our limited resources. We are in every region of the country on that program. The other program that presents an opportunity for you as directors is I have piloted a what we call adopt a lake or adopt a stream program. I piloted it with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources in the city of Alexandria. This isn't your typical highway project where you are picking up trash. What we have done in Virginia is we adopted a small lake right on the edge of town, Virginia puts in trout in the spring and catfish in the summer and the whole idea behind the partnership is we do a cleanup, a couple a year, but we also do habitat projects and fishing education and it has been successful. I now have the capacity where I can help states develop this type of project. When you think about it, a great opportunity to focus on urban areas, get agency brand out there, great opportunity to reach a more diverse audience. Anyone who goes to Lake Cook at Alexandria now knows, because of signage there, that Virginia Department of Wildlife and RBFF have partnered to try and bring something to the urban community. Not difficult for states to take on because you all have volunteers that could run a program like that for you. I could see states with mobile trailer being able to set up an adopt a stream or lake anywhere you want in an urban area. My capacity would be for states with a mobile catch center, I have about \$5,000 set aside for any states that would like to participate. I would love to see a program set up with you partnering with your local community, with volunteers where you are visibly in that environment. Perhaps set up a fishing rod donor program and that is where the capacity on my end could come in with that \$5,000 I have budgeted for each state that comes into the adopt a stream or lake program. That would cover the cost of either habitat project, acquiring fishing equipment, putting signage up or whatever you would need to engage in the program. An innovative way to reach into urban environments, make your agency more relevant to that community, whether putting fish

in there or not, every area probably has an area close by where people want to go fishing. Give thought to that and anyone who wants more information, shoot me an email and I will give you a two-page summary of what the adopt a stream/lake program is all about. I already have the District of Columbia interested in developing the program, Anacostia Park, across from Nat Stadium, right along the river, you can imagine the exposure to be in an environment like that in front of all of those people that know what great work they are doing with conservation. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you, I wish it was in person, have a discussion over a drink and talk about expanding your programs, but that is coming soon. *Douglas* – Comment, shout out to Dave and RBFF, Nebraska has worked with Dave and staff for a number of years, many of you have. Shout out to personal attention you can get by communicating with Dave and staff there. Somewhat unique to RBFF that they have a discussion about how you can work together and are offering their programs and assistance into your desires to enhance and develop fishing programs. It is a lot more than the dollars they also bring to the table. It is personal discussion and attention and strategic direction discussions you can have. I want to thank Dave, staff and leadership for what they do. *Chanda* – Thank you, I appreciate that. You are heavily engaged and we are coming out in August helping you develop your R3 plan. For any of the states in the Midwest that don't have an R3 plan if you need help developing one RBFF has set aside money and will bring in facilitators to help you do it. In Nebraska in August, Jim's team is already pulling all of the players together and Matt Dunfee with WMI and Phil Seng with DJ Case will be out there. We are not telling them what to do or how to do it but just facilitating the conversation between their group. Nebraska is doing the comprehensive plan, fisheries, wildlife, shooting sports and have advantage with their parks system. The money I can bring to the table covers costs on fisheries side, so if doing a comprehensive plan other funding comes in to cover shooting sports and hunting side. We are funded with sportfish money and can't spend it on helping develop a shooting plan. Keep that in your mind if you are a state that doesn't have an R3 plan and want help getting there we will help. Thanks for kind words. *Warnke* – Ditto what Jim said, we have had a super strong relationship in Wisconsin with RBFF. I came from R3 program into this position. There has been a lot of transition but we have at least one of the mobile fishing trailers and also have a television show called, Wisconsin Foodie that every year does an episode or two with DNR staff and we take them out hunting or fishing and create a nice meal afterwards. The mobile fishing trailer will make an appearance on the program we are filming in early July. Deploying that trailer around the state and urban centers are especially important as we hire two more urban educators near the Milwaukee area that may become important and we will have an even bigger need. Thanks again Dave for partnership and time. *Chanda* – In Wisconsin I am helping you build another one to get on the road. There are states thinking outside the box so don't think in terms of not having capacity to do this. I am working with Arizona on developing a trailer. I am learning most of you have trailers and I am amazed by how many are already on the road, we are just trying to steer you into urban environment. Arizona put their trailer in parks section, a separate entity, they will own trailer and gear, will train parks staff in Phoenix area to do fishing education. What I found interesting in dealing with staff and if this is really successful next year we will move trailer to Tucson. I told them no, if it was really successful we were leaving it in Phoenix and we will figure out a way to get another trailer for Tucson. There are creative ways to get this done, it

doesn't have to be all on your team, it can be volunteers with oversight by your team. Give me a shout or send me an email. Again, thanks for time on agenda.

### **Mid-America Monarch Strategy Report**

*Ed Boggess – (PowerPoint – Exhibit J)* – Claire Beck will be helping me with this. I have been working with monarch issues since my retirement from Minnesota DNR in early 2016. Started part time as a liaison on monarch conservation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and MAFWA. This issue has raised back up on radar with recent developments. Current status and background, for some of you this is a refresher and for newer ones I want to emphasize how engaged AFWA and MAFWA have been with this issue and member states, some before concerns of listing in 2014. What is driving reemergence of this issue? Work with people who care about monarchs and pollinators, who get excited that they can do something to help and a great issue to engage people in conservation. In my career haven't seen anything that engendered excitement this has gotten to try and do something for a species. Unfortunately, the species is continuing to not do well. The eastern population represents most of the monarchs in the world although they are found in western populations and in several dozen countries around the world. The high 90% of monarchs in the world are in this eastern population. The primary breeding area is the Midwest but breed in eastern U.S. and southern Florida but strongest production is in upper Midwest. An important species in terms of our responsibilities in this region. Unfortunately, it's been in long term decline; the tri-national goal is six hectares occupied in over-wintering habitat in Mexico over a long term basis. Population bottomed out in 2013-2015, some increase since then but just when it looks like we are making good progress we take a couple steps back. Western population is in worse shape; there has been some extrapolation backwards that estimated that at one point there were over three million monarchs in this population but last fall/winter they only found around 2,000, which is an amazingly strong decline. A quick retrospective for you. A lot of you realize that in 2014 there was a petition to list, USFWS responded to that with a 90-day finding end of December 2014. They set about doing species status assessment, a complex and big project to do. There was a lawsuit to compel them to do a 12-month finding, which is listing as warranted to make that finding more rapidly. There were settlements, originally to make it by June 30, 2019, there was another settlement in 2019 that moved that to December 2020, which is what actually happened. They found them warranted but precluded, which Claire will talk about later. I want to talk briefly about evolution of how we got to where we are now and the development of the strategy and the key role MAFWA played in that, also the Service, AFWA and all the member states. Within a few weeks after listing petition I was chairing AFWA Wildlife Resource Policy Committee and USFWS brought this issue to the policy committee and we worked with Ron and Jonathan Mawdsley and the resolutions committee. Within three weeks after listing petition AFWA issued a resolution supporting monarch conservation and Jonathan told me that was the first resolution by AFWA on an invertebrate species. That was followed up the following March by a joint memorandum from AFWA and USFWS to all the states encouraging collaborative efforts to conserve monarchs and other native pollinators. This was also a time when there was a lot of concern about pollinators and pollinator conservation, both native and honeybee. Also, AFWA commissioned a report, Jonathan led production of the report that surveyed

state's efforts for monarch butterfly conservation. A lot happening right out of the gate. There was also funding to support of work for monarch conservation. In 2015, I happened to be in the rotation cycle to be president of this organization and we were just coming off of a lot of good collaborative work across the range of the northern long-eared bat, which extends far beyond the Midwest, 35-40 states. Worked very well with USFWS. So, in 2015 we jumped into monarch issue. At the annual meeting in Duluth, we voted to support funding for a monarch conservation workshop which Iowa volunteered to host, Kelley Myers was the Iowa director at the time and Dale Garner was also involved in that. We upped money for that and also applied for, with Pheasants Forever, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and AFWA, a NFWF planning grant to do regional strategy for monarchs. That was partially successful, we got money to do some state support for monarch conservation summits and templates. The following year, after I retired, Kelley Myers picked that up and we resubmitted for a second NFWF grant that was successful for developing a regional strategy to hire a technical coordinator and we brought on Claire Beck at end of 2016. We had our first organizational meeting in January 2017 which coincided with Kelley Myers leaving Iowa and going to the USFWS. She is still very much engaged with all these issues. We got a third NFWF grant to do technical implementation and we hosted big monarch conservation partners meeting in Nebraska and had technical meeting in Missouri for state staff from Mid-America region which includes the southcentral states of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas plus the Northeast Association. There has been a lot of support. With all the turnover I thought it was important to emphasize the role this organization has played in monarch conservation. The Mid-America Strategy figured heavily in the USFWS finding and with renewed interest with the decision being made that it is warranted but giving us a little time to work on it, that is where our focus is shifting now. Claire and I have moved on under USFWS grant to MAFWA through a cooperative agreement to continue working a little on monarchs but mostly now on Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) work. We are trying to scope out where we go and do we need additional resources to work on capacity.

**Claire Beck** – The USFWS did make their listing determination in December 2020, warranted but precluded. This means monarchs are candidate species and their status will be reviewed every year until 2024, where they are on listing workplan where they will decide to move forward with rule making process if they are still warranted. The Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy was completed in 2018 and part of that strategy includes commitment to update it every five years, which puts us at official update and revision of the strategy in 2023. With all of that in mind we held a 2-day virtual meeting in May of this year with all, or most, of the participants of the Strategy. We reconvened everyone involved in the process throughout 2017 and 2018. We wanted to discuss several things including what the implications of that listing decision are now that monarchs are candidate species. We got updates from the Service on science behind monarch species status assessment and their modeling efforts and what that suggests for monarch conservation strategy going forward. We heard updates on other current monarch science research that has come out since we did the strategy. We also heard about regulatory assurance options and what options states and other partners have moving forward. We wanted to talk about what states foresaw for how we should revise the Mid-America strategy going forward. What kind of timeline do we need, hurry and do

it so Service can take a look at that as they are coming to their 2024 deadline for the listing decision? What capacity do we have for updating this strategy as we no longer at this point have someone dedicated to just organizing monarch work in the Mid-America region? We didn't summarize outcomes of that meeting and we didn't get to answer all the questions we had. We are still in the process of identifying what our call to action is from all the information we heard at that meeting. What is the role of Mid-America strategy in Mid-America states in addressing the listing finding? What impact can we have from that finding and is there a way we can influence the monarch population and conservation efforts to get a not-warranted finding? Still working on that conversation. Talking through a timeline and approach for how we would like to update the strategy document or strategies themselves. We have already been holding follow-up discussions with small groups of state agency folks and the Service on potential next steps on how we can work together in terms of implementation, monitoring and reporting of conservation efforts. We are planning to reconvene the Mid-America Monarch Strategy Board, which is the 13 MAFWA states plus Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and a representative from the Northeast Association as well as some ex-officio partner members. That board hasn't met in quite some time so we will need to reconvene them as we have proposals for how to make changes to that Mid-America strategy over the next few years.

*Ed* – As Claire said this board has not met in person for a couple of years, we used to meet in conjunction with North American and AFWA meetings. We were in a wait and see mode for where finding was going to come down. This board was created by MAFWA, there was a resolution passed that created this Mid-America board. It is the 13 Midwest states, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and the Northeast representative out of West Virginia as a group, their directors did not choose to do individual state plans but as a region they offered their contributions. For Christie, who is on call from Canada, there is obviously implications for monarch conservation in Canada and I know there is trilateral discussions going on. That is something where climate projections could be more important in the future as the range of milkweed right now is slim and the range of monarchs is projected to move farther north in Canada. We have state directors or their designees in the 17 states, the ex officio members are other agencies or conservation partners, USFWS, USDA, Monarch Joint Venture, Keystone Monarch Collaborative, National Wildlife Federation and Pheasants Forever. This structure was approved and it has functioned. The executive committee and technical steering committee. The technical working groups were formed to create the strategy and they are no longer active and the technical steering committee is functioning as part of state's monarch team and Claire meets with that team every other month. That group has continued to meet but we need to get this board back together when we have a clearer idea of what sorts of actions we are going to follow up on. Bill Moritz was chair of this board when a Michigan director and for a little while after he left, so we need to have board select another chair. The way the governance is set up is that this is not an official committee of MAFWA but it is an existing structure from the plan that was approved by MAFWA. When we get this board together it will be the people on this board plus. We are going to be looking for volunteers to be the chair, which according to the guidance document, is selected by the Mid-America board itself. Be thinking about that. *Warnke* – Thank you Ed and Claire. Great work and look forward to getting restarted and seeing action items we can begin to implement.

## **National Wild Pheasant Plan Update**

***Scott Taylor, Executive Director – (Exhibit K)*** – We have a funding partnership to support my position as plan coordinator and that is run on 3-year terms and my second term is coming to an end at the end of this year. We did some fund raising last summer to garner support for funding a third term which would start next April. That happened at the height of COVID nervousness so we weren't sure what sort of responses we would get back but almost everyone hung in there. The only state we lost out of our funding partnership was New Mexico who has about 500 pheasant hunters and probably 500 pheasants in their state so no hard feelings there. Everyone else was very supportive, all of MAFWA states in pheasant range agreed to another three-year term. Thank you for that support. Thanks to Pheasants Forever (PF), who is also a funding partner, and MAFWA, our banker, Ollie and Roger and everyone on financial side of PF who make everything work surprisingly smoothly, it has gone very well. Shout out to retiring directors, Terry has been a supporter of the partnership from the beginning and your staff, Jay and Jeb, have been in the mix from day one and we appreciate that. If there is a godfather of Pheasant Plan partnership it is Jim Douglas, he did all the hard work at the very beginning in 2015 and 2016 contacting state directors, twisting arms and cajoling or whatever it took. The strength of our partnership today going forward is a testament to that hard work and vision. A big thanks to Jim for setting this in motion and mentorship during my career at Nebraska Game and Parks. The original national pheasant plan was approved by AFWA in 2013, two farm bills ago, before coordinator and management board. Our management board is made up of administrators from funding states as well as PF. We got together in October of 2019 in North Dakota to discuss directions for the partnership and to lay a path going forward. We had two days of conversations with 17 states represented. In weeks and months after that we turned conversations into a problem statement, three objectives, six issues and 25 work items for the partnership and me as the coordinator to push forward. We wanted to encapsulate our thoughts into a revised plan, so we have been working on that since. The technical committee is made up of pheasant biologists across the pheasant range and myself have been hard at work on that. We wanted to not only prioritize those 25 work items but wanted to do some of those and incorporate some of the results into the plan itself. Over the last year the tech committee and I have been working on those items and those include current estimates of hunter participation and expenditures in each state and nationally; some key considerations for estimating return on investment, pheasant management interventions; and estimates of pheasant habitat contributions at selected ecological services, carbon sequestrations. Those three bullet items are in our pheasant economics chapter. We also wanted to ascertain the state specific and national trends of nesting habitat and pheasant populations during last three years of CRP era and locate relationships between those variables. We wanted to produce state specific and national estimates of individual habitat contributions. For each state, how much of pheasant production is coming from CRP as opposed to small grain pastures or other habitats. Nesting habitats states have in their portfolios. Finally, state and national estimates of habitat acres needed to meet our state determined conservation goals. We had a process by which each state determined what their goal was, in terms of pheasant conservation, and created a model to estimate habitat quality and quantity needed to meet those needs. The main policy implication of all this is

how much national CRP acres do we need enrolled to satisfy those state and national nesting habitat goals. That was a product of model we created as well. The tech committee and myself produced a first draft of the plan this spring, management board reviewed and provided comments and I just sent the second draft, and hopefully final draft, to the management board yesterday. We are scheduled to meet on July 26 to discuss that draft and with any luck approve that draft with minor revisions. Once we get that done those figures we have calculated can then be turned loose in policy debate running up to the next farm bill and interjected into AFWA's platform discussions as well that are currently taking place and will come to a head this fall. After that we will be working our way down through identified work items. *Warnke* – Definitely a landscape scale endeavor. We can see CRP is going to be very important. *Robling* – What is final enrollment goal number going to be for CRP? Is it 40 million acres, do we have that quantified or do you have a recommendation? *Taylor* – There is a recommendation in the draft and I think that is going to be one of the major points in discussion amongst the management board at our July meeting. I don't want to get out ahead of that discussion. I will say there is virtually no enrollment level, national level, that will completely meet every state habitat goal. Several states with lofty goals and some states which CRP isn't a big part of their habitat portfolio. That makes it difficult to reach their goal through CRP. The recommendation in the draft is somewhere in the neighborhood of 45 million acres and that is a long way from where we are now but not all that far from where we have been historically at our peak. That is a topic of conversation for the board, where do we want to set both our realistic goal and a goal that gets most of the states where they want to be. *Warnke* – Look forward to seeing the final product and interested in discussion in July.

### **Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC)**

*Sara Parker Pauley, MO* – Ollie provided some background during his presentation. We are appreciative our colleagues in Minnesota for hosting of first ever virtual conference. We did see quite a profit, about \$86,000 in surplus, about \$67,000 in net profit from that conference, on the positive side. We were hoping for greater attendance since virtual but there were 936 professional full time conference registrants and another 218 registered as students. Students was one area we were hoping to see greater attendance and that is even with offering of scholarships. We had about 19 sponsors with a total of 45 sponsor registrants. We had fewer contributed papers with this conference probably related to low student numbers, fewer posters as well. Attendance was up for Fisheries Society members, which was promising. Good return on the investment but I do think we were hoping for greater attendance as a virtual conference. Some nuggets for next members in Des Moines, Iowa for the 2022 conference February 13-16. In the conference report their will be some nuggets there for next committee to consider. I appreciate Keith and Jim Douglas serving on the Foundation board with me and we will be looking at conference numbers and making decisions on how much to provide in way of scholarships for the upcoming conference in 2022. Expecting conversation in the next few weeks on that. *Ollie* – Very successful conference, Minnesota did a good job. Comment from chair of the conference from Minnesota was that the student attendance, it appears the lack of engagement that you get with an in person conference is one of the things that kept student attendance down and also there was Zoom meeting fatigue by students, another

reason perhaps why student attendance had declined. *Warnke* – Additional contributing factor to attendance of students was that so many universities were all online at that point and people's schedules were different and they didn't have time to block out the amount of time for Zoom conference.

### **Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI)**

*Jim Douglas, NE* – Most of us listened to presentation by Kelley Myers yesterday, she did an excellent job of bringing people up to date on where we have been and where we sit on the planning process, on governance development over time, and leaving the correct impression of where we stand with MLI. We are in a good position but are also coming up to some decision points we need to make. Personally, I am a great advocate of good planning, I tell my staff they need to have a plan or you are going to be in somebody else's plan and you won't like it. If you don't know where you are going then any road will get you there. One interesting thing to me is how much benefit that has accrued from all the planning that has gone on so far in the MLI world. I was looking for a quote the other day when looking at history of Dwight Eisenhower and he said something to the effect, a plan might end up being useless but the planning process never is. I don't think the plans we are developing and will develop in the future will be useless but it is certainly true that the planning process so far has provided tremendous benefits. Not only all of the information has been selected, sorted and in oration for being in a good position for actions in the future but also relationships between the Service, states and all of the technical and working group personnel. The collaboration across states, so far even in planning process, is one of greatest collaborations I have seen in my career. Kudos to Kelley Myers for being the facilitator and glue that keeps all of this going along with Ed and Claire and kudos to Craig and others in the Service participating in this effort. The relationship developing will serve us well as we get farther into picking our priorities moving forward. The relationships are building upon the strong relationship with states and USFWS in the Midwest and are only getting stronger and developed more fully in my mind. Knowing where you are going, it was Craig who used the term that we have a north star; a long ways into developing our vision statement thanks to the work of Bill Moritz at WMI and facilitating with everyone involved. That will be finalized in near future with both steering committee and great technical teams and work groups oriented around our priorities, at-risk, wind, governance and habitat assessment. We have a lot of strengths, Ken Elowe is great addition by AFWA to the whole process, not only with what is going on in MAFWA on large landscape initiatives, but in other regions as well. Our strengths, he mentioned, we have a lot of trust and great structure development, governance and planning development going forward. There are other strengths other regions have, Craig and I and others discussed the ability to put in something visualized, like Southeast SECAS project has. Visualize what opportunities are moving forward which will help a lot of our potential partners as we move towards not only development of priorities, but implementation to allow people to see what opportunities are across the whole region. We plan on looking at recommendations and continuing the communication with other regions, Ken and other Service personnel to add to strength in MLI and move forward. Some of the things that have developed so far in MLI, as far as actions, are relative to early items. Efforts on monarchs gave us an idea of governance models that emphasized the unique responsibilities the Service and states have in species

management and the model that created personnel that are shared financially and structurally between the Service and the states, such as Ed's and Claire's positions. We are bridging communication and planning gaps to make sure we are both on the same page. These have been tremendously influential in developing governance model for MLI and they continue to be successful. Some of the questions we are going to be facing in near future, in full steering committee and full MAFWA board, we need to consider opportunities with identification of species of greatest conservation need that are shared across the region. And with issue development shared across the region to work in both kinds of arenas, large landscape level community and ecology and species directed initiatives and a combination of those two but also issue management like CWD. As we move forward we will need to decide if we are issue-based or landscape-based or both and if both, how much bandwidth do we have to tackle all the priorities you might develop within those arenas. Another favorite saying of mine is if everything is a priority then you have no priority. One of the big questions that I have discussed with Craig, Kelley and others, is what process we will use moving forward to develop our priorities. I think we are going to push questions a lot in next couple of months. We will have meeting in August and will have more discussions in the meantime. How much capacity we will need moving forward depends a lot on how we decide we are going to develop priorities. How are we going to allow, invite and welcome participation in MLI for other government agencies and non-government entities that can be instrumental when helping to choose priorities but even more so, influential in helping us implement priorities we choose. That on-ramping of others is a big question mark. It is my view that sooner rather than later we need to have a forum and meeting where we invite interested parties to answer that question, how and when do they want to be on-ramped into the process. You can be afraid of that answer because we have unique responsibilities and authorities as states and as the Service and the guiding principle as we look back towards large landscape conservation, reflect on the need to recognize that and keep that uppermost. It complicates things a little on how and when we on-ramp some of the other partners into the process and where we allow them to intersect with the process. An important question we have to start dealing with sooner rather than later. Along with how we are going to create our priorities moving forward and what does that mean for our capacity building in MLI and MAFWA.

**Craig Czarnecki, FWS** – Most comprehensive and articulate ramble I have ever heard, I appreciate it Jim. I had notes in front of me and Jim hit all of them. It did make me recall something Kelly Hepler said several years ago as MAFWA was contemplating a what comes next moment after LCCs. He used the line; it is a second chance at a first impression. The idea of this kind of collaboration is sound but maybe the second iteration may be what we are about to launch here. We take some lessons from the past and apply them, I think that has been the case. We heard from USFWS standpoint, Martha, Charlie, Noreen, Matt and USFWS is all in on how we are approaching this. We understand this is an adaptive challenge. There are a lot of experiments going on as we proceed and a lot of learning. The work of Kelley, Ed, Claire, Bill Moritz, Katy Reeder, Kate Parsons and the more people you mention the more you miss. All these folks are setting the conservation table for providing input to tough decisions and something that hopefully becomes durable. Ollie, you have always noted, as many of us have, the relationships as they have

related to northern long-eared bat or monarch butterflies, regional species of greatest conservation need effort gives us a sense of the landscape of the future that keeps us working in between those moments where we rally to a single species. To Jim's point about the choices we have, are they issue-based or landscape of the future based or are we both? I think we are both and able to juggle that pretty well. More input needed from everybody on the phone but it seems there are things that eat our lunch that we have to attend to that MLI can assist with and then there is that longer view that all of us know we have to do and something to focus on and I think MLI can help us there. I have heard the phrase, "cognitive overload", all of our employees weathering the last year and half and learning how to work in a different way, now transitioning to hybrid models and lots of question marks and it has been tough for employees to pick out a consistent path forward sometimes. But is saying that I think about Kelley's slide where she lists all the employees from across the states and Fish and Wildlife Service and despite that cognitive overload they are all in. Across technical working groups and they are preparing us for the next steps Jim has noted. *Douglas* – Welcome questions or comments. *Warnke* – Important initiative.

#### **Forming Ad Hoc (Chronic Wasting Disease) CWD Committee**

*Kelley Myers, FWS* – Invite members of value stream mapping implementation team and original task force on the call and Sara was our sponsor through this whole event and I welcome any and all of them to speak. I am the spokesperson of this but this was thoughts and work of this group (*Exhibit L*). As I mentioned on Monday this was a really challenging effort in so many ways, from logistics and transitioning through pandemic and trying to use a business process improvement structure that is very structured, providing flexibility for us across the distance. We were able to use it. Is this value stream mapping process something that is valuable when we are trying to take a big complex issue and find some organization to it? Yes, we had to modify it a bit and will continue to do so across regional expanse but the tools we used were valuable and we arrived at a strong result. I showed you in my presentation who was on the team and who did what but I want to run through where we have arrived. This is more evidence, as Jim said, we find MLI in struggle of are we forward focused and looking at broad landscape level planning or do we work on issues we are encountering that are urgent and emerging, something important and we need to get more coordination on. We find ourselves in both and working hard to make sure we don't let one take over the other. We look forward to conversations about for MLI, what our scope is. For now, we are working on CWD. In trying to scope the problem and trying to figure out what problem we are trying to fix, we never got together thinking we were going to cure CWD. This wasn't about how can we get more science or what research is needed, this was how do we as wildlife professionals, people who are responsible for some aspect of fish and wildlife health, how do we work together in the most coordinated way possible. There was an extra challenge which is the whole world around CWD and wildlife health has been shifting as well. How do you take the orbits we are creating and make sure they tie into these national and international discussions? CWD is deer disease but also the larger health issues. We found ourselves spinning in a lot of different spheres. These conversations weren't always easy and we are not in complete agreement but from that good discourse came a good plan forward. From my seat with USFWS I get pulled into national

discussions on CWD, health issues and different frameworks we are trying to put together and I have appreciated being in all of these different seats. To be part of different conversations and recognize that having unified position in the Midwest is not competitive with what is happening across the nation, it is meant to supplement to make sure the voice and needs of the Midwest are represented. None of the members lose their voices. There are a lot of different national initiatives going on and they are open to state and different organizational participation. It is meant to recognize the Midwest is in a different place than maybe some other states or organizations dealing with CWD and it is important. And how the Midwest works together is important. It is not meant to compete; it is meant to flow into conversations on CWD and health. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the opportunity we have right now, however horrible and whatever loss we have experiences through this pandemic, our population has a much better sense of health and what it's like to respond to health crisis. We are able to work across these boundaries better than ever in terms of being able to me. I know we all want in-person meetings but I appreciate that we have been able to have so many robust conversations because we figured out this virtual world. It isn't a replacement for in-person but certainly a tool we can add to our toolbox. All that comes together to where we landed as a team. The team came up with recommendation last year and you asked us in October how we were going to implement this. All signs at that point were pointing to how we figure out how to fund a coordinator and that is where we started our dialog in implementation team. Thankfully, several of the members challenged that assumption and wanted to know what we can do with better direction from MAFWA board and what would be possible. Maybe we do need to have a coordinator, this issue or health in general is just so big we do need the coordinator, but maybe we don't. Maybe we can do a lot coming together and trying to develop what we think we need. The question of a coordinator was put to the side and we looked at what we need to do to be better coordinated. The first recommendation was that this board would establish a CWD working group. As mentioned before we talked to Ollie and the way we can do this is you have the authority to create an Ad Hoc committee, not a standing committee, that would establish this working group that essentially would be a super group with members of health committee, deer and turkey committee and newly formed social science committee, if that happens, and come together to come back to you with additional recommendations and actions you can take. Always looking at this collectively as MAFWA and individually as states. Sara, as sponsor of our event and staying involved all throughout the process has agreed to serve as the initial director liaison and one of her staff members, I assume, would lead the committee. They would have the responsibility to make regular reports to MAFWA executive committee, opening communication to say this is important with big issues happening over the next year and big conversations with CWD task forces and different funding mechanisms that might come available. Make regular reports for next year with executive committee and the board. They would have authority to seek advice, talk to experts in the field, work with AFWA working group and all the different people working on it. But they have no authority to spend funds. They can come to you with ideas on what more could we fund, maybe coordinator or research position, but that would be this group coming together to say that. We took recommendations we had originally proposed that were organized around outreach and engagement with hunting publics, industry and others and in-reach and internal coordination and planning and took

those ideas and put them into this charge. These are the types of things we want this group to work on. Assisting MAFWA with change management, support public engagement, looking at how we do CWD management strategies and looking at public engagement communications and there is no shortage of surveys that have been done; taking a look at those again with input of social science community to evaluate management actions and maybe identify some additional science needs. Really working through the lens of knowing what management professionals and disease professionals think, but what do our publics think and how do we incorporate that into how we manage. Working more with landowners and industry groups and really looking to use industry group media personalities and how can we use hunting shows to get messages across so it is not just government talking. Some of these types of ideas and how they can pursue that. We had great presentation yesterday from John Fischer and Matt Dunfee of WMI about information resources. Matt was part of our original event and we talked about early ideas of that system they have created. How can we make sure we are using systems like that to share and what does that mean? Some states have other systems coming online and how will they integrate and how can we make sure we are utilizing the best systems in trying to share information around CWD. Using that as a guide, how can we make sure we are sharing what research is happening and what is going on out there and tie into research consortia. That is a lot of looking outward. Looking internally at how this group can create more formal forums for those groups to be talking. What we have found is that we have some shared membership across committees but don't have a chance with ANS, deer managers to just come and talk to deer health people on a regional scale. How can we create some of those opportunities for more enhanced learning and sharing? Some of that has started to happen since this event but how can we really formalize that? Also, talking about committee roles. This is a challenge in coordinator for anything big where you have all of these different committees, like climate change, but CWD is no different. There are any number of these groups working on CWD and going through exercise to clarify the roles and remove some of that duplication and ensure those groups are talking the way they need to. Creating additional opportunities for feedback with all of you and also working with USFWS, USDA, Forest Service, EPA and everyone has something they are doing with respect to CWD and making sure federal partners have a mechanism. When we were putting together this original VSM we had EPA and Forest Service dying to be there, it didn't work with schedules but there is a lot of interest in work they are doing to coordinate. Facilitating reviews of existing and ongoing research. We know there is some consortia arising in the region and making sure we are touching base with them and part of prioritization process. Also giving you an opportunity to endorse some of those to bring to this group and say this is the kind of thing we need to be looking at in Midwest. Talking about funding looking at funding and capacity needs in long term. There is already an economic impact analyses ongoing that was not there when we started this. We started talking about the need to understand all of the resources going into CWD in the region and what do they need to be? Jump in on some of those activities and made sure Midwest interests are accounted for. Looking at long range CWD management plans. Something we have heard a lot about during this pandemic is how important it is for the public to have trust in government leaders who are making decisions. We all look to point in the future where it is possible, no one wants to talk about it, but it is possible that there could be a public

health implication to CWD. What are we doing to prepare for that moment if that occurs? This group would look at what long term preparations are and how are we planning for changes that might happen in hunting deer management world, if that should happen. There are a couple of prescriptive information items the group is going to bring back to you. Creating an official position in MAFWA with respect to CWD, so this group will work over the next year to May executive committee meeting and this full board meeting on either a resolution or statement to adopt about the position of MAFWA. Also looking at utility and value of establishing a CWD coordinator position. The group also talked about wildlife health since it is bigger, stay focused on CWD or stay bigger and allow it to grow, that is all part of the discussion going on. The rest of the document talks about away from the committee. Talking about engaging with big information sharing resources and investigating how that can happen and give to committee to come back with recommendation. Endorsing multistate grants as they are brought to you. Engaging in emerging CWD research consortia. Use different groups and hear from them what is going on. Then building on some of work individual states can take. The item before you is recommendation to create this Ad Hoc committee to pursue items like the ones this group came up with. *Pauley* -Outstanding job, the only think I will add is to Jim's point on scope of MLI. I will say that MLI and human dimensions has created this safe space to have more challenging conversations that do impact landscape level conservation. Here we are suggesting we come back to form this Ad Hoc committee within MAFWA and MAFWA structure but the space to have that conversation at landscape level was appropriately done in MLI construct. I am appreciative of Kelley and her leadership throughout. *Jason Sumners* – Kelley has done a super job of summarizing the struggles the group went through and Jim's comments earlier about it being as much about the process as the end point. In my mind it has highlighted how we can more effectively work together and try to make Tonk's (Mike Tonkovich) life easier as well as all the folks in the field that is struggling with this issue. I am pleased, regardless of what the decision is, I think we all have better understood the framework we are working in and how we can better operate inside it. We couldn't have done this without Kelley, she continued to kick us along and we challenged each other but she challenged us to test some of our assumptions. Greatly appreciate the opportunity to have her help us. *Pauley* – Highlight one other point Kelley made. The Service, we heard from Martha earlier this week and she is leading the charge to bring USDA and others together on the CWD task force and how to collaborate and coordinate nationally. We really are in good position to have structure to allow regional association, for communication, identifying priorities and pathway forward. *Mike Tonkovich* – Support Kelley and put plug in for creation of Ad Hoc committee. I think it would help if I shared about my background as I think it will lend some credibility to my remarks. I am in year 26 as deer program administrator for the Ohio Division of Wildlife but I had the privilege if spending a few working years with folks like Amanda, Megan and Keith on R3 issues, a temporary thing. I enjoyed it and would have traded deer if I could have but that wasn't an option. The other thing I have had the pleasure of doing is sitting on the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee for the last 6-7 years. I think I bring a unique perspective to this position. I struggled immensely in Missouri when we first met in December 2019. I had my mind made up on how we were going to solve CWD. It evolved and I latched onto coordinator position and resigned myself to the fact that the real need is what we are about to propose

to you, the creation of this Ad Hoc committee which brings together three critical elements if we are going to have any success. Not that we haven't had success but if we are going to make forward progress in dealing with this issue I think we have come to realize that we have three separate groups, deer managers like myself and I like to consider myself wearing multiple hats, but we have had deer managers that feel we can manage the disease out of the herd. Then we have the health professionals in another room that are convinced if there is a risk, we should eliminate it, whether moving carcasses, prions and bottled urine, whatever the issue maybe we should just take it away and eliminate the risk. Then we need social scientists and human dimensions people to serve as referees. We all need to be in that same room talking about solving this because we are not going to do it separately for the reasons I mentioned. Brian Richards has said time and time again if we cannot make CWD relevant to hunters we are going to fail, but at the same time we have to convince the health folks that you can't take all the fun out of hunting because there is a potential risk. We desperately need to work together, in the same room, under the same roof if we are going to make significant forward progress. I think CWD is fitting analogy for dealing with this issue, the One Health approach. My wife is in medical profession, a nurse practitioner for 35 years and works with a lot of physicians. Patients will compare her or ask her if her job is different. Doctors and physicians rely heavily on medicine and my wife looks at the entire profile of the patient, physical health, mental health and what is going on at home or work, nutrition. That is the point I am trying to make here. If we are going to be successful we need to all not work in separate silos to try and solve this issue. We all need to be together and work this out. I am grateful to have opportunity to work with Kelley and the rest of the folks on this project. Kelley, thank you for your patience as I often times struggled through many meetings to not get agitated with the direction we were going. *Warnke* – About 12 years ago I traded deer for R3, a good deal, and now traded back. Thanks for report and directive that went a long way to help clarify some things. In my view good direction to take and it is an MLI issue. Input from directors? *Douglas* – Is Ad Hoc committee, Dr. Tonkovich, the perspective leader of such a committee? *Pauley* – As the director/liaison I would be appointing that position, I am likely to delegate to Jason Sumners initially, to make it easier for me. I am guessing as the chair rotates thus perhaps the director/liaison will as well. *Douglas* – I think proposal for Ad Hoc committee is good considering all the potential elements of a charge for that committee which were well stated by Kelley. It would make this a rather elegant proposal, in light of different proposals that have been discussed. Coordinator versus not a coordinator and how do we this. I think it is also evident that the variety of activities and potential activities the committee could engage in would necessitate an engaged committee and engaged leader. Someone with depth of perspective we just heard. I was impressed with perspective and analysis of different perspectives that exist out there that have to be brought to bear together. Nebraska is one of the states that has had CWD for a long time. In early days Nebraska had a fairly high level position, the assistant chief of wildlife, that we devoted nationally to accomplish a fraction of types of things mentioned in the proposal. They spent full time, at that time it was west of Mississippi and almost west of Missouri condition. They spend full time working on trying to coordinate a lot of activities associated with CWD. Not many more states than represented by MAFWA now. It is a big job. I think proposed solution is good but you have to start out with good leadership. *Myers* – A couple of points there, Jason

and Tonk are both very engaged across the community. If you get a chance please go in and look at who on your staff are involved in this. We did have a lot of staff from around the region and appreciate that everyone participated and had a strong voice in the discussion. Something the group talked about as being important was having some new perspective on this committee but retaining consistency from participants going forward. There is a mechanism in there to try to get folks like Tonk to stay involved if Kendra approves that. Building on what this group, from first group to second group to now and what moves forward has been important and identified that we have that succession and consistency. I would also say something I heard a lot during our discussions was they are already spending almost 100% of their time on CWD. Hopefully what this will help do is give them some common direction so they can work better together instead of everyone duplicating. This was giving stronger recommendation they needed and you are right that this is a lot of work. If I could see into the future, not see ticker of already done, see progress to work and it is those discussions that are going to be happening. All of those relationships and testing of each other that are going to help to bring out new ideas and find bright spots that have worked and identify the challenges and have more help working through them. I don't believe work will be done and some may require additional investments on the part of MAFWA in terms of coordinator or additional outreach, support of research. This is a start of the story. *Pete Hildreth, Iowa* – In what you mentioned the first step would be to have an Ad Hoc committee but I also recognize there is conversations about a potential future coordinator. Have those conversations about what potential coordinator would cost and contributions from states? *Myers* – We didn't get that specific, but ballpark. What we tried to do in initial discussions was we created a job description and started working through what this person would do and all of these pieces, responsible to build or bring together a network of people to build those. Is this a scientist or a facilitator; short term or long term because could be a different skill set on what that person does, if building something versus executing something in the long term. That is where the conversation was in terms of coordinator and that is where the coordinator conversation dropped. We couldn't agree on short term coordinator to get the group going or long term and that is another reason why they wanted more time for group on their own to coalesce and then make some of those plans. So, I don't think we got that far. *Warnke* – Do we need action on this? *Ollie* – Need motion, second and vote to establish this Ad Hoc committee or our bylaws allow you, as president to appoint it yourself. Think it would be better if you had full board buy-in. *Warnke* – So do I. ***Jim Douglas, Nebraska, moved to form Ad Hoc committee as presented, Amanda Wuestefeld, Indiana second. Motion approved.*** *Myers* – Thank you to directors who had staff participate. I think almost every director in some way was involved by the time we discussed this out with all of the different committees. Also, a special shout out to Sara and Jim, who started this discussion a couple of years ago at MLI steering retreat, and to folks like Jason and Tonk who made conversations possible. *Warnke* – From MAFWA, thank you Jason and Tonk, I know it has been tough and I have had a lot of updates from our Wisconsin staff who participated. They are excited about this. A positive move.

### **Non-Lead Partnership Recommendations**

***Keith Warnke, WI*** – I will need help on background of this. I think it started when I started so I was in the dark. We did assign MAFWA R3 and Wildlife Health committees

to come up with recommendations. What I can't remember is if we passed a resolution on this early last year? *Ollie* – No, we voted to join the North American Non-Lead Partnership. I don't remember, would have to look and see if we passed a resolution. We asked health and R3 committees to get together and propose to the board at what level MAFWA should engage in this initiative. *Warnke* – They have gotten back to us with some recommendations that have been circulated to the board. The overarching goal comes from the Wildlife Health and R3 committees (*Exhibit M*). We are collaboratively to minimize the unintended impacts of lead ammunition on wildlife. We are talking about voluntary measures, supporting long-term viability of scientifically managed populations and use scientific evaluation to assess and improve programs related to risk of exposure to lead. In the document of recommendations, they gave us, there are two. An overarching initiative and each one has an approach and some finer details. The overarching recommendation number one is support and encourage state agencies to commit to using non-lead alternatives within their own programs when applicable. We have taken that approach in Wisconsin for some time and it seems to be well accepted. Second is to develop strategic approach to address needs, challenges and limitations surrounding lead alternatives for both angling and hunting. This looks like one we would toss back into a committee-type aspect to look at it from Midwest perspective and get back to us with a report on the challenges and limitations surrounding lead alternatives or non-lead ammunition. Without too much further discussion I want to stop and ask if I should go further into the approach and walk through some of these. They are straightforward, provide training sessions; utilize in hunter ed programs; learn to hunt workshops, etc.; provide information; and promote use of lead alternatives on state managed public hunting areas. If we are going to take action on this and I think we need to so we can make these official recommendations. *Ollie* – Yes, you asked for input from committees and depends on what the board wants to do with it. *Warnke* – I will stop there see if we have input from the board, or if folks have ideas or questions they want to bring forward. Do we have a motion to accept these recommendations for our states and MAFWA? Do you prefer more time to review recommendations? Do we need more information? What direction should we take? *Brad Loveless, Kansas* – These all seem like sound recommendations and we should endorse them. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved, Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri second.*** *Ollie* – The board did adopt a resolution on this issue in 2020 and I will send it to the board. *Warnke* - Thank you. ***Motion passes.***

## NEW BUSINESS

### **MAFWA Banking Fee**

***Keith Warnke, WI*** – (*Exhibit O*) We had discussion at executive committee level for last couple of meetings and stems from additional interest we are getting on contracts and contractors. For example, potential for CWD coordinator and Midwest R3 coordinator and all of those would require our folks to manage money. Discussion has been on whether we need a grants coordinator to manage that money because right now it takes a lot of *Ollie's* and *Roger's* time for the contracts we have, Southern Wings, National Pheasant Coordinator, CLfT and a couple positions in Ohio. Right now, banking fee is 5%, this is what we charge for managing money, paychecks and being sure all of the grants are in place. So, the executive committee discussed increasing that fee somewhere

within the bounds of 8-10% and then considering going forward with a contractor position to hire a banking manager to handle those fees and take workload off of Ollie and Roger. There was substantial discussion around the level, 8% or 10% and how much money might be coming in from that and how much it would actually cost us to hire someone. Roger put out an estimate of 200 hours at \$40 an hour, \$8,000 a year. *Roger* – That is correct, that is in the proposed draft budget, that may be too low, but at least we have placeholder in the proposed budget at this time. *Warnke* – If we were to do this and go forward we could always start small. Start with 8% banking fee and hiring of the coordinator, we could see what kind of contractor requests flow in. Within executive committee discussion, states might be interested in hiring contractors because we can't get new positions. In Wisconsin we have at least half a dozen farm bill biologists that are hired as contractors through Pheasants Forever and it has been a successful program. We have a couple of R3 contractors hired through PF and National Wild Turkey Federation, so we have already done this in Wisconsin, we are comfortable with this and think it adds benefit to the resources we can provide to our customers. In the executive committee discussion, we did not take any position or action, we wanted to bring to full board to see if you wanted more information, additional exploration or if full board wants to take action on increasing current banking fee and using revenue from increased banking fee to hire a contract bank and grant manager. The caution Ollie issued is we want to be cautious about growing too big too fast. Executive committee recognizes that and feel that if we go into this as a pilot and issue shorter term series of contracts we can always pull back if this is not where we want to be. Bring that to you for input. *Kendra Wecker, Ohio* – I think you captured it accurately. This has been a beneficial service to us in Ohio, using contracts to hire specific project-based employees. If other states can take advantage of it, I encourage you to do so as well. It is a lot of work on Ollie and don't want to overburden staff. Getting someone to do this and to be sure we are hitting deadlines and are compliant is a wise move. *Warnke* – Particularly in federal grants, there is a lot of working going into making sure hit deadlines and have all the cost share and doing all the acronym soup that you need to complete. *Dave Olfelt, Minnesota* – You mentioned Ollie said we shouldn't grow too big too fast. Could you elaborate that? *Ollie* – I refer to Western Association as this happened to them, they grew too fast and overran their headlights and then they had to pull back. I know they got in a bind and don't want MAFWA to follow that example. *Pauley* – For clarification aren't you suggesting this person be a contracted position, not a MAFWA employee? *Warnke* – That is correct, we have no employees at MAFWA they are all contractor positions. *Ollie* – It is an "as needed" contractor, so if this is approved we will have to find a person willing to work on an as needed basis. These contracts ebb and flow. It is certainly clear the volume of contracting and grant management has increased significantly in the last few years, thanks to your leadership we are getting more involved, creating more action and getting a lot more things done. *Pauley* – Prospective from executive committee, there is support for this, but question was wanting to hear from full board on what the appropriate rate should be, double from 5% to 10% or sliding scale or something in between. *Douglas* – Sara's question is pertinent on whether this is MAFWA employee. In looking at total situation referred to with WAFWA, it was a combination of ingredients there, large share of situation was persons who were employees of WAFWA and grew in administration of some large national species- directed efforts. It also did include some contractors as well

that were being paid for with federal grants and the like. It was a combination of growth factors. The admonition is good to consider that Ollie brings up in long run and large picture. Those types of things will involve decision making as time moves forward, how many species-directed initiatives can MAFWA handle, large landscape or issue initiatives? At what scale do we have bandwidth to approach those things and what kind of associated administration will be required from MAFWA. This question before us is a small ask right now and seems prudent to pursue what is proposed. It is in the larger context it is prudent to be aware of what kind of administration is required as time goes forward. *Warnke* – Limited basis to start with. *Loveless* – Comments are good and caution deserved and no question about value this position would bring. One perspective from my WAFWA experience. We tend to be apologetic about charging for these positions and the value they add but one of the things that would be helpful to make these more sustainable would be to have as part of position figure out a way for them to advocate ideas to pay their own way in terms of grants and things like that. We get grants but we don't put in much for administrative overhead and in general we need to be looking for that money and be aggressive about the fact that it takes staffing to manage those. A small ask from the states is not a big deal and that is a reasonable way to get started but ultimately it is wise to transition to plan where funding comes externally. This is a broad enough issue that all of the federal agencies are invested in and something we should look at critically if we establish this position, see about that the funding comes to supplement the cost. *Warnke* – In general seems support of doing something like this. Take action and get started in coming year? See more information on Roger's proposed budget in a couple of minutes. Motion to endorse grant position and level of banking fee? *Pauley* – Roger or Ollie, would your preference be straight 10% or flexibility of sliding scale depending if it was a small entity or larger one? *Roger* – I don't know if I made a recommendation, but I made an observation, what we have for feds is 10% and if we did 10% that would be consistent. That is weak in terms that it has to be the same as the feds, it can be less as the feds do require more work than some states. 8-10%, it doesn't matter, it is just a number in terms of calculating bank fee. If we did a sliding scale we would need clarification on how we define that, some people would question why they are getting charged 10% when others are being charged 8%. We would have to have clear guidelines on what that is. One thing is we do have a couple programs going on that require very little work, one of those is the National Pheasant Coordinator Plan, Scott Taylor is doing a tremendous effort on that so our work is minimal. Another one is Southern Wings, very little work and we thought about grandfathering those at 5% but beyond that would be a different rate. *Ollie* - Does anybody else only charge 5% on grant administration, or less? I think we are the lowest. *Pauley* – Our foundation does, depending on the project. They may be the exception as well. *Ollie* – Is it a sliding scale? *Pauley* – It is a bit of a sliding scale, yes. *Ollie* – I think it is just up to the board. I wanted Roger to weigh in as he has a good feel for this. Starting small is a good idea, but once you set the rate it is hard to change it on somebody. *Douglas* – When would this change become effective upon action of the board? *Warnke* – I think it would be effective on new projects. *Roger* – That makes sense. *Douglas* – That is what I was wondering, you mentioned a couple of existing agreements and effort to ensure they have the pledges and follow through to fund their activities and they would need lead time if you were going to change the amount of overhead they are budgeting. We will make clear on motion

whether there is any grandfathering going on this is for new endeavors. *Ollie* – Roger and I talked about this and we agree we should grandfather National Pheasant coordinator, Southern Wings, don't think we can charge more but they don't require a lot of work. Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) is another program we charge 5% but is taking a lot of time and I don't feel comfortable about that program now, our contract is up for renewal, it has expired and it will be a point of discussion, when we renew, it has been 5%. and we charge Kendra 5% for her contractors that we are hiring. Those are limited terms, for two years, so would not change fee on existing contracts, we are talking about future contracts. *Pauley* – As Ollie articulates the contracts we are dealing with the level of effort is an important factor. Ollie and Roger if you had three options, a 5%, 8% or 10% based on level of effort it would take, would you prefer a range or one level based on criteria or level of work required? Wondering your preference? *Ollie* – If you want to set three levels and authorize Roger and me to set the level and you back us up because we may get some grief if charging one group 5% and another group 10%. That will have to be based on amount of staff work and they do vary a lot. We have spent an enormous amount of time on CLfT and that has not been worth the 5% charged. Southern Wings and National Pheasant coordinator is basically invoicing, accepting the money and Roger paying it out with Sara signing the checks. That is really relatively easy, but some get complicated. The federal grants are very complicated and we are restricted because we don't have an indirect cost negotiated cost agreement with the federal government, we can apply for one but we never have, so they give us 10% on federal grants. With your direction we could go to the effort of applying for a negotiated cost agreement with federal government and that would cover all grants we have with any federal agency. That would take some legal help because there is a lot of paperwork to apply for that. We may not get any better off than 10% we are getting now; I don't have a lot of experience with that but some of you may. *Warnke* – What is your direction? *Jim Hodgson* – Respond to Ollie's comments, the de minimis is set because a lot came in around 10%, standardized evaluation of the indirect rate, a lot of them came in at 10% and established that threshold. If you think you are going to be above that then it might warrant looking at that tool. From federal side that is why 10% is the de minimis and if you want advice from me you are probably good using de minimis on the program side. If you really get into it then we can talk about how to advise you to get into negotiated indirect cost rate. *Warnke* – Thanks Jim. Looking for direction from full board, you could punt this back to executive committee. *Ollie* – Whatever the board wants to do. *Warnke* – If you don't want to make a decision here or you want more information or want executive committee to make a decision that is all valid from my standpoint. *Ollie* – It is board policy so the board has to adopt or change it. ***Jim Douglas, Nebraska – To further discussion, I would make motion that we currently continue to operate on federal grants with de minimis 10% rule, grandfather anything existing at 5% and for future grant administration overhead to give director and Roger the option of evaluating administrative burden and administrative cost at 5% or 8%. This can be reviewed again as time moves forward to see if it is working. Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri second.*** *Warnke* – Motion to let director, Ollie and Roger set 5% or 8% on new contracts, maintain grandfathered 5% on existing contracts and de minimis of 10% as we move forward. ***Motion approved.*** *Warnke* – That gives us good direction. One thing your motion didn't cover Jim is hiring a contractor to manage contracts and grants. ***Jim***

*Douglas, Nebraska – I move we move forward with a contracted position according to the Treasurer’s recommended hourly wage and projection, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second.* Pauley – Just to clarify, this would be a contracted position? Douglas – Correct. Robling – Was that is for \$8,000 we projected? Roger – Correct. Warnke – Correct, on as needed basis but we projected \$8,000 potentially depending on the number of grants. Motion approved. Pauley – When Ollie is renegotiating when contract lifespan has been met, and negotiating a new contract term, is that considered a grandfathered, thinking of CLFT, new contract for purposes or renegotiation? Douglas – My thought was it was a new contract at that point. Pauley – If minutes should reflect that clarification that would be what I support. Clarifying that negotiating a new contract gives Ollie the flexibility. Warnke – Renegotiation of a contract is new contract. I agree.

### **Forming MAFWA Human Dimensions Committee**

*Kevin Robling, SD – (Exhibit N)* Obviously human dimensions is important component of our day-to-day and we talk about wildlife management being defined as essentially using best available science and needs of people in wildlife. This is the people part and science part and where they come together. I have been in discussion with regards to putting together a committee. Through others and my human dimensions specialist, Faren Wolter, she has been highly engaged in MLI and CWD Ad Hoc group. This has already been laid out so don’t need to further describe the intentions here. Essentially what it comes down to, in April 2021 there was a lot of discussion among states and federal wildlife agency staff that were in the human dimensions field, they felt they were all dealing with same thing and handling them in states independently and not doing these things collaboratively across states, especially in the Midwest. There are human dimensions committees in other associations, SEAFWA, AFWA and WAFWA has them. There is desire here, from human dimensions staff, to establish a Human Dimensions Committee to take on these things in collaborative effort and address larger scale, broader initiatives, not just at state level. I might ask Faren Wolter is she wants to add anything, she is our human dimensions specialist in South Dakota.

*Faren Wolter –* This has been a year-long process, started originally as discussion with former Secretary Hepler. We worked with MLI committee and it grew from a handful of people to 35-40 professionals working across the Midwest states having this discussion. Those people formed a small steering committee, and we put this justification statement together and we are bringing that forward to you in hopes of forming Human Dimensions/Social Science Technical Committee. Again, to bridge gap between SEAFWA and NEAFWA and WAFWA groups. The Midwest is really looking forward to engaging the other regions collaboratively. Robling – We would need a motion to establish this committee. Loveless – Support this as we see this area growing and all of us as state directors would say we are behind on this and don’t have the resources we need. This initiative from Faren and South Dakota is a great first step to become more efficient as we figure out how to navigate these larger and larger human dimension issues. **Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to establish Human Dimensions Committee, Brian Clark, Kentucky second.** Robling – Offer up Faren Wolter to be chair of the committee to get things moving. Ollie – Kevin, would you be director/liaison or would you prefer to defer to someone else? Robling – I would be happy to. Clark – The document sent out had a listing of suggested initial members, or maybe complete members, but I would suggest,

as we often do, to have opportunity for state member, either director or appointee from each state to represent. *Warnke* – That is typical process, an appointee from each state to represent on committee. *Wolter* – That is our intention going forward. My understanding with MAFWA bylaws is that we will spend the next year developing those structures and all of those details and that will be presented to this board this next year in 2022 when everyone is here in South Dakota. We will offer it then for final approval. The intention is to have agency-type structure from leadership. We also want to ensure we are engaging all of our conservation partners, federal, researchers, universities and etc. The voting structure and all those details will be worked out. ***Motion carried.***

*Warnke* – Our last item under new business is 2022 budget approval. *Ollie* – We have one more. We have funding stream survey of state fish and wildlife agencies by Charles Booher, University of Montana.

### **Funding Stream Survey**

*Charlie Booher, University of Montana* – I am a graduate student at the University of Montana studying wildlife biology, public administration and natural resource conflict resolution. I want to thank Ollie and Keith for giving me a few minutes to chat about a chapter of my thesis project. I have been working with Ron Regan and Mark Humpert at AFWA headquarters as well as Directors Eichinger and Parker-Pauley. This is on a topic that has been in the conversation about field of conservation for last few decades and many of you know this issue better than anybody else in the country. The decline, or rising uncertainty, in conservation funding. The mechanisms by which you are able to run and operate your agencies are facing new and diverse challenges as hunting, fishing and trapping licenses decline to spite rises in certain demographics and over recent years. There is a long term decline and different agencies have grappled with that issue in many different ways. It has been the topic of hearings, in your legislatures and in these forums for a long time. However, research on this field is focused on specific approaches. Case studies of Missouri's famed dedicated states sales tax or Michigan Natural Resources trust fund but hasn't really taken approach of building more comprehensive clearing house or portfolio of how conservation revenue is drawn into state agencies. That is my interest in this project, building that clearinghouse. In discussions with a group of directors, those I mentioned as well as Director Smith from Texas, and Director Wasley, Nevada. In the next few weeks, I will be distributing a survey to state agency directors. I have been working with this team to make sure this survey is gathering valuable information while minimizing, to the greatest extent possible, any burden on your staff. What the survey is going to ask is, generally speaking, for revenue over last three years in different categories. Ranging from dedicated sales from the sale of marijuana to the sale of conservation license plates in your states. What this is going to do for us is provide more comprehensive view of conservation funding portfolio in this country. Just like you spoke about earlier in this meeting, about your individual MAFWA funding portfolio. We want to get an idea of how diverse the nationwide funding portfolio for conservation at large looks. In a way that is easily comparable between states, among regions and nation as a whole. The immediate benefits is we should see some cross pollination of ideas, being able to show which states are having success and in which ways, of gathering revenue. What ways that revenue is being deployed with greater flexibility and how it can

be applied to different states? A scientific bench lab needs to share their findings I hope to act as a conduit between states in this forum to share those ideas more broadly and aggregate and distribute them back to states in a final report. The other immediate benefit we have identified, one that has been a topic of conversation in these meetings as well as AFWA executive committee meeting, is how agencies are working to respond should Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) pass and specifically identifying matching dollars used to match those federal grants and be available to multiple the conservation benefits of a program like RAWA. On our side of things being able to show federal decision makers that state agencies are working hard to make sure money is available should those federal partners be able to come up with that money and pass a new system of federal aid. I have included some more details in a letter that I dropped in the chat and I will drop that same letter and ask Ollie to send that out. It includes more detail about the data we will be asking for. The right people within your agencies who will be likely able to provide that information and more information about security of that information. I know that financial data is especially sensitive and we want to be respectful of that as well. Please be on the lookout for the survey in the next few weeks. *Warnke* – Important work. Look forward to the survey and the results as well to help us get that comprehensive look.

### **2022 Budget Approval**

**Roger Luebbert, Treasurer (Exhibit P)** – This is conference account proposed calendar year 2022 budget with draft date of June 28, 2021. The executive committee made a change Monday and I have incorporated that change. The executive committee has approved moving this forward but that doesn't mean you can't make changes. This document has six pages, the first two cover 2022 budget versus the actual, the next two pages are the current year budget status; basically, background information. On pages 5 and 6 we will talk about the actual proposed budget. On page 1, receipts for last year, we thought we would have an in-person meeting which ended up getting cancelled, we budgeted conference receipts of \$85,000 and took in \$35,000. Essentially sponsors that paid before the conference was cancelled. What we did with that \$33,000, as well as the \$1,800 in registrations, is we reduced the budget amount for 2021, thinking we would apply these revenues to conference for 2021. On membership dues, the other negative variance we have is that we had two states that did not pay by December 31, they have paid now. Part of that is my fault, I didn't follow up as quickly as I should have in sending past due invoices. Overall, for receipts the budget was \$163,000 and we took in \$106,000 so we were short by \$56,000. All of that is conference that was cancelled and late dues. On disbursement side, with conference being cancelled we had \$54,000 budgeted but only spent \$8,000, \$45,000 not spent. The only major unfavorable variance was insurance, we paid three years all in one year. That will save us money in 2021 and 2022. Overall, we thought we were going to have a deficit but had surplus of \$3,300 but ended up with surplus of \$15,000. A lot of that had to do with getting sponsor money for conference we didn't have. For 2021, actual year to date is not meaningful, as of May 31, not a lot of activity. For sponsors, we normally had a budget of about \$50,000 to \$60,000 but we reduced it for the monies received earlier. In disbursements, we saved money on tax prep fees, saved about \$565. Overall, the budget we thought was going to be deficit. Kevin Robling asked in executive committee how we thought we were right now given

we are six months into the year, so I did ask for updates from Cindy Delaney as well as looking at some of these other categories, like travel, we are probably not going to spend those. The bottom line is I think we will end up at break-even and won't see the deficit. The two major reasons for that is we are not going to have Cindy's expenses that we would have had if we had an in-person conference, like rooms, food and beverages and savings on travel. Looking at 2022 proposed budget, we have historical numbers for reference, 2019 actual, 2020 actual, 2021 budget and actual proposed budget amount. The far column on the right tells us where we got those numbers. We picked the best number we thought we could from prior years with a few exceptions to that. First is sponsors, we are estimating that, the last time we had an in-person conference was 2019, took in \$65,000 for sponsors. We know some of our sponsors were hit negatively by COVID so we are pulling back on that. We feel it will be closer to \$56,000. Membership dues, consumer price index (CPI) increased by 1.19%. If you approve this budget, 2022 membership dues will be \$4,160.02 for state and provinces will be \$110.22 for an increase of roughly 1.2%. Everything else on the budget side is pretty much historical. Budget for receipts is \$165,209. On disbursements side, the first line, Delaney coordinator fees, this is the change the executive committee made, I had a number based on historical numbers but the contract is for a much lower number, \$4,120 so we used contract amount. The rest of these are historical numbers. For executive secretary pay increasing by CPI, treasurer pay adjusted based on March 12, 2021 executive committee action, about a \$3,000 increase. Line 26 is contract manager, this is the \$8,000 we talked about earlier, 200 hours at \$40 per hour. The CPA audit is on a five-year cycle, so we won't have it until 2025. Also, we paid three years of insurance, so nothing for that. Overall, we think our disbursements will be \$159,600, receipts will exceed by \$5,600. *Warnke* – Looks like good solid budget. *Eichinger* – A word of congratulations for Roger, Ollie and others. It has been difficult in the last year to try and project revenues and expenses. My hats off to Roger and Ollie and the rest of the team for bringing us budgets that are in balance against a whole bunch of uncertainties. Thanks. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept budget, Kevin Robling, South Dakota second. Motion passes.***

### Save the Date

*Kevin Robling, South Dakota* – We are finally here. Look forward to meeting in person. I think everyone is zoomed-out we have all had our fair share of virtual meetings. It will be exciting to meet in person at Custer State Park. Cool things about South Dakota, we do shoot and eat our state bird, we are the only state that does that. We have more shoreline miles than Florida. In all reality it will be a good time, Custer SP is beautiful and people are flocking there like we have never seen before. I just got a text message from our parks manager out there and he said it was 200 cars deep on wildlife loop road, jam-packed. Incredible, as far as visitation goes, we have about 2.5 million visitors there a year. We will have a great time, great meeting, great fellowship, great scenery and great activities after work gets done. I had staff put together this video, it was done all in-house and they did an awesome job (South Dakota Spotlight Video 2022). We are looking forward to having everybody, bring your families, book early and extend your stay. Everyone will

enjoy it, a lot to see and do. *Warnke* – Looking forward to it and I am in on trout fishing, so save me a spot.

### **Conference Adjourns**

*Warnke* – Thanks to sponsors, Delaney Meeting Event Management, wonderfully done via Zoom. We have to meet in person next year. Thanks for sticking with it, we had a productive meeting, enjoyed seeing everyone’s face but look forward to seeing you in person next year. ***Kendra Wecker, Ohio moved to adjourn, Dan Eichinger, Michigan second. Meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.***

DRAFT

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# MIDWEST

## Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

### *Thanks*

*The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies would like to thank President Keith Warnke, Wisconsin for hosting a great virtual conference;*

*Directors, Committee members, Federal partners and Association affiliates for their dedication to the natural resources;*

*Ollie Torgerson, Executive Secretary; Roger Luebbert, Treasurer; and Sheila Kemmis, Recording Secretary for all of their hard work throughout the year to make the Midwest a better Association; and*

*Sheila Kemmis, Recording Secretary, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for printing and providing these proceedings.*

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