

# **Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Wildlife Diversity Committee Report**

Report submitted by Eileen Dowd Stukel, Chair, to Ollie Torgerson on 27 May 2022.

## **Meeting Time and Place**

The Wildlife Diversity Committee (WDC) held quarterly conference calls and one annual meeting during the last year. Conference calls were held on August 3 and November 2, 2021 and February 8, 2022. The annual meeting was held virtually on May 5-6, 2022. See Appendix 1 for the annual meeting agenda and Appendix 2 for attendance list.

## **Attendance**

WDC members from all 13 states participated in the meeting. The WDC includes State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators, Wildlife Diversity Coordinators, and Threatened and Endangered Species Coordinators from the MAFWA states (See Appendix 2); all were invited. Additional participants included invited speakers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, and MAFWA-affiliated staff. Detailed meeting notes are available from the WDC chair or committee members.

## **Director Information Items**

### **Regional SGCN Project**

The Midwest Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (R-SGCN) project was completed, making MAFWA the third of the 4 regional wildlife associations to make this collaborative tool available to member states and partners. Work continues on refinement of component parts of the tool. The final report and appendices are available at this MLI website location:

<https://www.mlimidwest.org/midwest-regional-species-of-greatest-conservation-need/> The WDC discussed various ways this tool may be useful in upcoming Wildlife Action Plan revisions and for contributing to better coordination across state boundaries to benefit rare species and vulnerable habitats.

### **Regional coordination within MAFWA**

The R-SGCN project is only one example of effective coordination and communication across state boundaries for the WDC. Other regional collaborative opportunities were discussed at this meeting and include continued Competitive-State Wildlife Grants, landscape-level planning related to Wildlife Action Plans, potential regional climate change assessments and continued involvement with the Midwest and North Central Climate Adaptation Science Centers, and interest in improving coordination with indigenous interests and federal-recognized tribes. The WDC works well together, and we expect that to continue and expand with the funding and coordination opportunities RAWA will allow.

### **MAFWA State Wildlife Action Plan Revision Schedule**

Paul Van Ryzin, USFWS Program Administrator, Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, shared the following due dates for upcoming Wildlife Action Plan revisions for MAFWA states.

STATE	DUE DATE
ILLINOIS	Oct. 1, 2025
INDIANA	Oct. 1, 2025
IOWA	Oct. 1, 2025
KANSAS	Oct. 1, 2025
KENTUCKY	Feb. 5, 2023
MICHIGAN	Oct. 1, 2025
MINNESOTA	Oct. 1, 2025
MISSOURI	Dec. 31, 2030
NEBRASKA	Oct. 1, 2025
NORTH DAKOTA	Oct. 1, 2025
OHIO	Oct. 1, 2025
SOUTH DAKOTA	Oct. 1, 2025
WISCONSIN	Oct. 1, 2025

### **Landscape Conservation and Wildlife Action Plan Coordination**

AFWA released the report “Leading At-risk Fish & Wildlife Conservation: A Framework to Enhance Landscape-scale and Cross-boundary Conservation Through Coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans” in September 2021

([https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/6416/3240/1090/SWAPLandscapeConservationReport\\_2021-FINAL.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/6416/3240/1090/SWAPLandscapeConservationReport_2021-FINAL.pdf)) MAFWA has followed up on the work by forming an MLI Midwest State Wildlife Action Plans and Landscapes Team. MLI will separately be reporting to MAFWA directors on this topic. WDC members were asked for feedback on the overall direction and proposed work of the team. In addition, Rafael Gonzalez, USFWS, shared a demonstration of a Landscape Recovery Tool as a potential dashboard method to facilitate Midwest SWAP and landscape integration. A subgroup of MAFWA states will serve as pilot states to test and refine this potential tool.

### **Recovering-Ready**

WDC members shared perspectives of where their agencies land on the Recovering-Ready spectrum, with most on the early to middle stages of readiness. Members also shared individual and agency definitions of what being RAWA-ready means and a variety of barriers to being ready. WDC members had an opportunity to provide input on a Recovering-Ready checklist being developed by AFWA. The group also discussed potential opportunities provided by the American the Beautiful Challenge grants handled by NFWF (<https://www.nfwf.org/programs/america-beautiful-challenge>). A subgroup of the WDC will discuss potential NFWF projects to support MLI objectives for collaborative landscape work.

### **Tribal Engagement**

Two guest speakers, Mark Humpert of AFWA and Paige Schmidt from USFWS, kicked off a discussion about ways to better engage tribes in conservation work, including and beyond what is required with Wildlife Action Plans. Indiana shared an example of a successful collaboration with the Miami Tribe regarding wild rice. WDC members discussed a variety of thoughts and challenges around the general issue of improving tribal engagement.

**Administrative**

Owen Boyle, WI DNR, will assume chair duties and arrange for quarterly conference calls and the annual meeting in 2023.

**Director Action Item**

WDC members are encouraged by progress on Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the significant opportunity these funds will provide for native species and associated habitats. The purpose of RAWA is to implement state Wildlife Action Plans and focus on WAP-identified species of greatest conservation need. We ask MAFWA directors to provide clear direction and leadership to assure that this primary purpose is carried out as RAWA funds are made available to state fish and wildlife agencies.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Meeting Agenda, MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Committee – May 5-6, 2022

**Meeting planning team:** Claire Beck, Elizabeth Middleton, Erin Hazelton, and Eileen Dowd Stukel

#### SESSION 1: MAY 5 AM - STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN REVISIONS

**Desired outcomes:** Provide an opportunity to discuss questions or concerns related to wildlife action plan revisions. Share input about opportunities for regional collaboration and potentially specific collaboration teams or project ideas for follow up.

**Moderator:** Eileen Dowd Stukel, SD

**Note-taker:** Melissa Panella, NE

- Regional species of greatest conservation list
  - Update from MLI – Claire Beck
  - Discussion question: How do state agencies plan to use this information for Wildlife Action Plans or other uses? Are there barriers to the use of this list and associated information?
- Discussion: What regional coordination issues are most critical to you?
  - For example, would a regional climate change assessment be helpful for Wildlife Action Plans?
- Discussion: Are there concerns with regionalization or nationalization of wildlife action plans?
- Other topics related to revision of wildlife action plans.
  - Example: incorporating topics of interest to indigenous populations
- Group action items; recommendations for Directors Report

#### SESSION 2: MAY 5 PM - LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN COORDINATION

**Desired outcome:** Learn about this MLI Team as a regional collaborative opportunity and share feedback on its direction and progress to date.

**Moderator:** Claire Beck, MAFWA and Katy Reeder, IA

**Note-taker:** Kelly Rezac, MO

- Description of newly-formed MLI Midwest SWAPs and Landscapes Team, including its relationship to MAFWA WD Committee
- Description of the new team's overall purpose and proposed deliverables
- Examine SWAP dashboard tool deliverable, including description of process and resources involved and a demo of the Landscape Recovery Tool that is the basis of the dashboard – Rafael Gonzalez, FWS

- Q&A; group feedback on team's proposed work
- Group action items; recommendations for Directors Report

### **SESSION 3: MAY 6 AM - GETTING RAWA READY**

**Desired outcome:** Learn from experiences of others in preparing for changes and opportunities resulting from Recovering America's Wildlife Act funding. Identify potential barriers to being RAWA-ready.

**Moderator:** Erin Hazelton, OH

**Note-taker:** Shari Koslowsky, WI

Discussion:

- Exercise to illustrate where your state is re: RAWA-readiness
  - What does RAWA readiness mean to you? How has your agency defined it?
  - Who among WD Committee members have been given this charge for your agency?
  - Discuss and improve draft Recovering-Ready checklist – Eileen Dowd Stukel
- Group action items; recommendations for Directors Report

### **SESSION 4: MAY 6 PM – PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT**

**Desired outcome:** Learn from experiences of other states in building partnerships, especially those resulting in needed match. Discuss ideas for effective tribal engagement. Determine content for written and oral reports to Directors.

**Moderator:** Elizabeth Middleton, IN

**Note taker:** Scott Johnson, IN

#### **PART A: PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT**

- Examples of partnerships and related match
  - Indiana example – Elizabeth Middleton
- Tribal engagement, with or without presence of recognized tribes
  - National perspectives on tribal engagement in State Wildlife Action Plans – Mark Humpert, AFWA
  - Local tribal engagement with Miami tribe, IN - Dericke Lavoine, Property Manager, Tri County Fish and Wildlife Area
  - Other examples from group
- Group action items; recommendations for Directors Report

#### **PART B: ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS**

- Review Director's Information and Action Items (All)
- Remarks from Owen Boyle WI DNR, incoming Committee Chair

Adjourn meeting

## **Appendix 2:** Meeting attendance list

The following attended all or a portion of the meeting. All MAFWA state wildlife agencies were represented.

Claire Beck, MAFWA  
Chris Berens, KS  
Tara Bergeson, WI  
Michael Bill, MO  
Ed Boggess, MAFWA  
Owen Boyle, WI  
Laura Burford, KY  
Daren Carlson, MN  
Zach Couch, KY  
Eileen Dowd Stukel, SD (chair)  
Rafael Gonzalez, FWS (speaker)  
Kristin Hall, MN  
Erin Hazelton, OH  
Tony Henahan, MI  
Leon Hinz, IL  
Mark Humpert, AFWA (speaker)  
Patrick Isakson, ND  
Caroline Jezierski, NE  
Sandy Johnson, ND  
Scott Johnson, IN  
Karen Kinkead, IA  
Shari Koslowsky, WI  
Dericke Lavoine, IN (speaker)  
Greg Link, ND  
Melissa Marinovich, NE  
Kelley Myers, FWS  
Elizabeth Middleton, IN  
John Navarro, OH  
Cynthia Osmundson, MN  
Melissa Panella, NE  
Jess Piispanen, FWS  
Katy Reeder, IA  
Kelly Rezac, MO  
Daren Riedle, KS  
Megan Rohweder, KS  
Paige Schmidt, FWS (speaker)