

2022 MAFWA Committee Report on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

MEETINGS TIME & PLACE

(meetings attended by one or more CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

111th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2021; Providence, RI

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee;
virtual

Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises CITES Listings and the Implications to State Agency
Conservation and Management Webinar, February, 2022; virtual

87th North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2022; Spokane,
WA

AFWA International Relations Committee, May 2022; virtual

CITES 74rd Standing Committee, March 2022; Lyon, FR

CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, hosted quarterly by USFWS; virtual

CITES Technical Work Group regularly conducts business via phone and virtual
platforms

CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

Scott Buchanan- NEAFWA (Rhode Island Rhode Island DEM, Division of Fish and
Wildlife)

Buddy Baker- SEAFWA (SEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

Stewart Liley- WAFWA (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish)

Deborah Hahn- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

TBD- U.S. CITES Delegate Representing the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and
International Relations Committee Co-Chair

CITES OVERVIEW

The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international trade agreement among 182 countries (and the European Union) to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten species' survival. CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. These require that all imports, exports, re-exports, and introductions from the sea of species covered by CITES have to be authorized. The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but for whom trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES countries for assistance in documenting trade.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Office of International Affairs, administers CITES for the United States. The USFWS solicits input and feedback on issues of

importance from the state fish and wildlife agencies through the CITES Technical Work Group of the International Relations Committee of AFWA. The Technical Work Group consists of one representative from each of the four regional associations who work on behalf of states in concert with the USFWS on CITES matters. This state-federal partnership has been effectively working since 1994.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OVERVIEW

CITES updates presented in greater detail include: 1) Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises Possible CITES Appendices Listings and the Implications to State Agency Conservation and Management; 2) CITES 19th Conference of the Parties; 3) CITES 74rd Standing Committee held in March, 2022; and 4) Scott Buchanan, NEAFWA Technical Work Group Representative.

DIRECTOR ACTION ITEM

No action items at this time.

DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS

Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises Possible CITES Appendices Listings and the Implications to State Agency Conservation and Management

Thirty-eight staff representing 22 State Fish and Wildlife Agencies joined the CITES Technical Work Group February 23rd virtually to discuss freshwater turtle and tortoise listings in the CITES Appendices and the implications to their conservation and management. The goal of the meeting was to gain a better understanding of the state agencies' views on the resource management implications from possible additional CITES freshwater turtle or tortoise listings. Anticipating significant numbers of potential species additions to the CITES Appendices, the Team felt it important to discuss the matter with the state agencies. The discussion highlighted information gaps, a need to maintain communication on the issue, and state fish and wildlife agency concerns.

CITES 19th Conference of the Parties

The signatory countries to CITES are collectively referred to as the Conference of the Parties (CoP). Every two to three years, the Conference of the Parties meets to review the implementation of the Treaty. The next CITES CoP will be in November. The CoP is the most important meeting in the context of the CITES Treaty, as Parties take on a significant body of tasks, including:

- Recommending measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention, including the drafting and adoption of Resolutions and Decisions to be implemented by all Parties, the Standing Committee, the Scientific Committees and the Secretariat;
- Debating proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II;
- Reviewing progress in the conservation of species included in the Appendices;
- Discussing documents and reports from Parties, the Standing Committee, the Animals Committee, the Plants Committee, and the Secretariat.

Proposals to amend the species listed in Appendix I or II must be submitted by at least one range country six months prior to the CoP and approved during the meeting by 2/3

majority. Developing species proposals here in the U.S. is initiated following a series of public input requests published in the Federal Register. During the first phase of this cycle, the USFWS received comments for the addition, removal, or transfer of over 600 animal species and 200 plant species from the CITES Appendices. Of these, the USFWS scrutinized the recommendations based on current CITES criteria resulting in species that were “Likely” (3 taxa), “Unlikely” (173 taxa), or “Undecided” (75 taxa) to be submitted as proposals to the CoP. In April, the USFWS requested additional input. Our Team solicited input from the States, with assistance from the Amphibian and Reptile Committee for the herpetofauna, for nearly all of the “undecided” species and submitted formal comments on May 26th through AFWA. Final species proposals must be submitted to the CoP on June 17th and cannot be altered after that date.

CITES 74rd Standing Committee held in March, 2022

The CITES Technical Work Group (Team) routinely represents the state fish and wildlife agencies and, where applicable, the Provinces and Territories at the CITES Standing Committee (SC). In March, Stewart Liley attended as the WAFWA representative and Deb Hahn attended as a member of the US Government Delegation. This was the first in-person meeting since the 18th Conference of the Parties (CoP) in August 2019. There were over 400 country delegates and observer organizations. The Non-Governmental Organizations were diverse from the Humane Society International to Wildlife Conservation Society to Safari Club International Foundation. The SC provides policy guidance concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the budget. It also coordinates and oversees the work of the CITES Plants and Animals Committees, carries out tasks given to it by the CoP, and drafts resolutions for consideration by the CoP.

The SC discussed over 80 substantive agenda items including the conservation of eels, paddlefish, freshwater turtles, seahorses, corals, and American ginseng; CITES and zoonotic diseases; captive bred and ranched specimens; and the CITES Strategic Vision. A key component of attending was to reconnect with partners, reestablish relationships, and meet new country delegates and the staff of the Secretariat.

An inter-sessional working group was formed through the CITES Standing Committee in 2020 to discuss and develop recommendations concerning the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade. There was overwhelming interest by countries and many NGOs to participate. Working Groups had to have an equal ratio of country representatives to NGOs. The Team was invited to be a member of the working group whose recommendations were submitted to the Standing Committee. The recommendations were accepted and include identifying opportunities for collaboration with OIE, WHO, and FAO to develop a joint program of work, developing a resolution on actions CITES countries could take to advance a One Health approach as it pertains to international wildlife trade, and considering amendments to the CITES guidelines for the non-air transport for mitigating risks to animal and human health.

Scott Buchanan, Ph.D., New NEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative

Dr. Buchanan has been with the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife since 2018 as a herpetologist where he is principally responsible for coordinating all conservation and management projects for amphibians and reptiles in the state. In April, Scott was appointed as the NEAFWA CITES Representative replacing Mike Bednarski (Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources).

SCIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

CITES deals with the legal and sustainable international trade of plants and animals listed in its three appendices. For this reason, the CITES Technical Work Group will not be proposing any science-based management priorities at this time.

TIME & PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the CITES 19th Conference of the Parties, November 14-25, 2022; Panama City, PAN.

Respectfully submitted May 27, 2022,

Carolyn Caldwell
MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative
Division of Wildlife, ODNR
2045 Morse Road, G-3
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693
MAFWACITES@gmail.com
614.403.3756 (Cell)



The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

1100 First Street, NE, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-838-3474
Fax: 202-350-9869
Email: info@fishwildlife.org

May 26, 2022

Public Comments Processing
Attn: FWS-HQ-IA-2021-0008
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB
5275 Leesburg Pike
MS: BPHC
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

Dear Sir/Madam:

This letter responds to the public notice by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) titled, "Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); Nineteenth Regular Meeting: Taxa Being Considered for Amendments to the CITES Appendices." On behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association), the professional association that serves as the collective voice of North America's state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies on a broad spectrum of biodiversity and conservation issues from migratory bird conservation to invasive species management to engagement in international treaties and conventions, and the International Relations Committee's CITES Technical Work Group, the following comments are being offered.

Short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) and Aleutian cackling goose (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*): As supported by the periodic review process, the Association supports the transfer of these two species from Appendix I to Appendix II.

Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*): Given the existing protections and management programs already in place to protect sustainable caribou populations in North America and given there is no evidence poaching or international trade in caribou parts threaten the species, the Association opposes an Appendix II or I listing of caribou.

Caribou are distributed throughout the northern latitudes of North America from the Aleutian Islands of Alaska east throughout Canada. Natural cyclic variation observed in wild caribou herds in both abundance and distribution over time is common and trends in abundance are better measured over decades and not years. Large population fluctuations can be observed in caribou populations with factors such as weather, vegetation, predators, disease, as well as density-dependent processes impacting population dynamics.

Caribou are vital culturally, economically, and ecologically throughout their range. Caribou are important sources of food through subsistence hunting and are culturally important to indigenous communities. Human harvest of caribou in North America is highly regulated with State/Provincial/Territorial governments determining and permitting sustainable harvest (or not

allowing human harvest at all, depending on the specific caribou population) ensuring that harvest will not have a negative impact on populations. Additionally, harvest of caribou in North America is almost exclusively for domestic subsistence or personal use with indigenous harvest being a large portion of the overall harvest, this is especially true in Canada. Also, there is no evidence that poaching or illegal international trade in caribou threatens the species.

There are a few small, domesticated reindeer operations in Alaska but they are regulated to ensure that they do not have an impact on the wild populations. In most instances, Alaska prohibits the collection of wild caribou for the purpose of starting or replenishing commercial caribou (reindeer) herds. In those instances where wild collection is allowed, Alaska prepares a statement examining the probable environmental impact of the action, and certifies the animals are surplus and unnecessary to sustained yield management of the resource. Additionally, Alaska has strict laws that prohibit the release of any animals that are raised in captivity into the wild. These regulations in turn protect the wild herd from overexploitation for the purposes of commercial (including international) trade.

The Government of Canada, under section 11 of the Species at Risk Act, has entered into conservation agreements with most provinces and territories, and some indigenous organizations, to benefit caribou and enhance its survival in the wild. The overarching goal of these Agreements is to achieve and maintain self-sustaining populations of caribou, by maintaining at the landscape scale the ecosystems they require, and by implementing conservation measures to achieve protection of caribou and their habitat.

The Table (CoP19 Extended Web Version) associated with the Federal Register document the USFWS states the Law Enforcement Management Information System Database (LEMIS) shows high trade in United States caribou, and that trade is in bone, horn, leather, trophies and meat. However, this information is incomplete and misleading. Because the majority of caribou are harvested for personal consumption, these data largely reflect quantities of meat and parts moving from Alaska to Alaska—transporting by road from northern Alaska to southeastern Alaska requires travel through Canada and requires that caribou meat or parts be declared at the international border crossing, even if they are for personal consumption. These declarations do not reflect “trade” in caribou as many of these animals are harvested domestically, transported back and forth over the international border, and consumed domestically—this is not international trade.

Comparative to Alaskan residents who harvest approximately 22,000 caribou annually for food, only a few thousand nonresident hunters, primarily from the lower 48 states (domestic hunters also travel across the Canadian border when transporting meat and parts home), Europe, and Mexico, travel to Alaska each fall to hunt caribou. There may be a small amount of international trade in caribou “parts” by indigenous people, beyond the hunted animals. This trade is in caribou “parts” that go into crafts and garments made and sold by indigenous artisans. However, each piece, even with just a tiny bit of caribou antler or fur would count as a single “part”, even though many crafts and/or garments could be derived from a single animal.

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*): We agree with the recommendation of the USFWS and do not support a proposal to exclude sliced ginseng root from CITES regulations. Excluding sliced root from CITES regulations could provide a mechanism for illegally collected ginseng to enter the market. Slicing ginseng roots will render wild and cultivated ginseng roots indistinguishable. Given the variability of ginseng roots, a clear means for distinguishing wild and cultivated ginseng product is necessary. Nine State Agencies, including the top four with the largest annual wild-harvest volumes, strongly oppose a sliced root exemption because of the identification challenges it poses to law enforcement.

Desert Horned Lizards (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*): Regulations prohibiting commercial collection of desert horned lizards exist in all states where the species is found in the wild. It is uncertain if listing the species in the CITES appendices would add to the conservation of the species in the United States.

Timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*): Timber rattlesnakes are well regulated throughout their U.S. range. Many states, where populations may be at risk, have developed plans and are implementing measures to conserve and monitor their populations. Attached is more detailed information from the States which was provided to the USFWS last fall. The LEMIS data does not indicate significant exports. While a variety of threats such as habitat loss, disease, human persecution, and illegal collection are known to occur, we do not believe an Appendix II listing is warranted or will aid in the conservation of this species.

Florida softshell turtle (*Apalone ferox*), Smooth softshell turtle (*Apalone mutica*), and Spiny softshell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*) – Transfer 3 species from Appendix III to Appendix II: The LEMIS database makes clear that both *Apalone ferox* and *Apalone spinifera* are heavily traded species and that the majority of animals traded originate from captive breeding/farming operations. There is no LEMIS information available for *Apalone mutica*. The international demand for all three species is predominantly for food. Throughout the wide geographic range of the three species, few states list them with elevated conservation concern, and the majority of states still allow for some level of recreational or commercial collection. Because the species are subject to strict regulations at the state level and there is little evidence that the current trade in these species threaten their existence in the wild, the Association does not support an Appendix II listing.

Common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) – Transfer from Appendix III to Appendix II: *Chelydra serpentina* is traded internationally at extraordinary volumes. Similar to the softshell turtles, the majority of international demand for common snapping turtles is for food, and most of this demand is met via captive breeding/farming operations. The species is vulnerable to a host of threats and is subject to an inherent vulnerability to population declines because it is slow to grow and reproduce. However, it is a wide-ranging species and remains common throughout most of its range, where it is subject to strict state regulations. The Association does not support an Appendix II listing.

Alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) and Suwannee alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys suwaniensis*) – Transfer from Appendix III to Appendix II: The alligator snapping turtles are susceptible to a host of threats and are subject to an inherent vulnerability to population declines because they are slow to grow and reproduce. The LEMIS database shows substantial trade in the alligator snapping turtles and most of these animals are labeled as wild-caught. However, the Association maintains that nearly all alligator snapping turtles shipped internationally are captive-born hatchlings originating from farming operations. *Macrochelys temminckii* is a species subject to recent significant illegal collection and is a popular pet species, both domestically and overseas. Illegal collection is likely occurring to meet both domestic and international demand for pet and food markets. However, an Appendix II listing would do little to solve this problem. Rather, additional law enforcement resources and enforcement of existing regulations are required by both state and federal wildlife authorities. The Association does not support an Appendix II listing at this time.

Map turtles (*Graptemys* spp.) – Inclusion of 10 species in Appendix II, and inclusion of 4 species in Appendix I: Since their inclusion on Appendix III, the LEMIS database has revealed little or no trade for the majority of the *Graptemys* species under consideration. The exceptions are *G. pseudogeographica* and *G. ouachitensis* (and perhaps *G. sabinensis* which recently split

from *G. ouachitensis*) which both show substantial international trade. *Gratemys pseudogeographica* is subject to illegal collection from the wild and shows the signatures of being a staple species in the international pet trade. Both species are being considered for Appendix II, but because neither species is considered threatened in the wild, and because both species are subject to existing strict state regulations, The Association would not consider an Appendix II listing as “addressing a serious wildlife or plant trade issue that the United States is experiencing as a range country for species in trade.”

Of the remaining 12 *Gratemys* species under consideration, eight are of elevated conservation concern. Largely because of restricted ranges, ecological specialization, and population demographics, these species are particularly vulnerable to impacts from wild collection. Though there is little suggestion from the LEMIS database that any of these species are heavily traded, there is some suggestion that at least four of them (*G. barbouri*, *G. ernsti*, *G. gibbonsi*, and *G. oculifera*) occur in international pet markets (i.e., Hong Kong as determined by Sung and Fong 2018, *Assessing consumer trends and illegal activity by monitoring the online wildlife trade*). The Association would not oppose an Appendix II listing of these four species should USFWS have additional information suggesting they are experiencing significant international trade and that this trade may threaten the sustainability of the species. Also, the Association would support the inclusion of the recently classified *G. sabinensis* to Appendix III.

Painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), Chicken turtle (*Deirochelys reticularia*), Big Bend slider (*Trachemys gaigeae*), and Cooters (*Pseudemys* spp.) – Inclusion of 11 species in Appendix II:

These 11 species under consideration for inclusion on Appendix II are subject to some international trade, but the scale is poorly understood. There was no LEMIS data for any of these species. Based on the available evidence, it is the Association’s conclusion that the majority of this trade is for food, though several of the species do show a sustained presence in the international pet trade (Sung and Fong 2018; Sung et al. 2021, *Species list and distribution of non-native freshwater turtles in Hong Kong*). Commercial collection and/or farming of at least six of these species does occur in some of the range states, but none of these species are of elevated conservation concern. Because of a preponderance of data for these species, the Association would not oppose the inclusion on Appendix III, but does oppose inclusion on Appendix II.

Western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) and Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) – Inclusion in Appendix II: These two recently split species continue to experience significant pressure from the loss and conversion of wetland habitat and competition from invasive species. *Actinemys marmorata* is considered an endangered species in Washington state, and the population trend of the species is thought to be decreasing by state agencies in California and Oregon. *Actinemys pallida* has a range restricted to southwestern California and is also considered to be declining. We were unable to identify any information suggesting that there is significant domestic or international trade in either species, legal or illegal. Therefore, the Association does not believe an Appendix II listing warranted. However, we would not object to an Appendix III listing to gather international trade data.

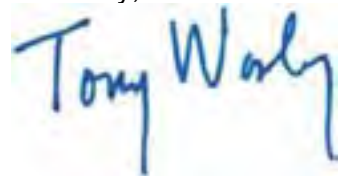
Musk turtles (*Sternotherus* spp.) – Inclusion of 5 species in Appendix II: Turtles from the genus *Sternotherus* are small-bodied and lay few eggs per clutch, making them inherently vulnerable to population declines because they are slow to reproduce, especially when adults are removed from a population. *Sternotherus depressus* is listed as critically imperiled by IUCN, and though not currently recognized by IUCN because it was only recently split, *S. intermedius* is endemic only to Alabama and therefore inherently at high risk. The LEMIS database makes clear that international trade in the musk turtles is substantial. In addition, there is abundant

evidence that several species are subject to significant illegal collection from the wild, namely *S. minor*, *S. odoratus*, and *S. depressus*. The majority of this demand is thought to originate from the pet trade, though overseas demand for food may play a role as well. Although 3 of the 5 species in question are not of elevated conservation concern, it is the Association's opinion that the genus is subject to an emerging threat from illegal collection that is international in nature. Moreover, because of their small and often nondescript physical appearance, the ability to correctly identify to species can be difficult. Thus, the Association would support an Appendix II listing for *S. minor*, *S. odoratus*, *S. depressus*, *S. intermedius*, and *S. carinatus*.

Mud turtles (*Kinosternon* spp.) – Inclusion of 6 species in Appendix II : Similar to the musk turtles, the genus *Kinosternon* consists of small-bodied turtles that lay few eggs per clutch, making them inherently vulnerable to population declines because they are slow to reproduce, especially when adults are removed from a population. Also, their small and often nondescript physical appearance makes identification to species difficult. The LEMIS database suggests that *Kinosternon baurii*, *K. flavescens*, and *K. subrubrum* are all subject to significant international trade, and other available data sources support this. Like the musk turtles, the nature of the demand for mud turtles is predominantly for the pet trade and this demand has increased in recent years from overseas. Only one of the species under consideration is of elevated conservation concern (*K. sonoriense*), but it is the Association's opinion that this genus is also subject to an emerging threat from illegal collection that is international in nature. For that reason, the Association would support an Appendix II listing for *K. arizonense*, *K. baurii*, *K. flavescens*, *K. hirtipes*, *K. sonoriense*, and *K. subrubrum*.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. Should further clarification of these comments be necessary, please do not hesitate to contact Deb Hahn, International Relations Director for the Association at dhahn@fishwildlife.org.




Sincerely,














Tony Wasley
President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
and Director, Nevada Department of Wildlife

U.S. Species Proposals for CoP19



Species		Proposal	Submitter
Musk turtles (<i>Sternotherus spp.</i>)		include this genus in Appendix II	United States
Alligator snapping turtle and common snapping turtle (<i>Macrochelys temminckii</i> and <i>Chelydra serpentina</i>)		transfer these two species from Appendix III to Appendix II	United States
Softshell turtles (<i>Apalone spp.</i> not including subspecies already in Appendix I)		transfer this Genus from Appendix III to Appendix II	United States

Big-headed map turtles (five species of <i>Graptemys</i> spp.)		transfer these five species from Appendix III to Appendix II	United States
Mud turtles (<i>Kinosternon</i> spp.)		include twenty species of this genus in Appendix II and two in Appendix I	co-sponsored by the United States and submitted by Mexico
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)		include this species in Appendix II	United States
Timber rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus horridus</i>)		include this species in Appendix II	United States
*Short-tailed albatross (<i>Phoebastria albatrus</i>)		transfer this species from Appendix I to Appendix II	United States
*Aleutian Cackling Goose (<i>Branta canadensis leucopareia</i>)		transfer this species from Appendix I to Appendix II	United States

*Puerto Rican boa (<i>Epicrates inornatus</i>)		transfer this species from Appendix I to Appendix II	United States
<i>Rhodiola</i> spp. (58 species):		include this genus in Appendix II with annotation #2	co-sponsored by the United States and submitted by the European Union
Redfish sea cucumbers (<i>Thelenota</i> spp. [3 species])		include these species in Appendix II	co-sponsored by the United States and submitted by the European Union
Glass frogs (Family Centrolenidae)		include this family in Appendix II	co-sponsored by the United States and submitted by Costa Rica
Straw-headed bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>)		transfer this species from Appendix II to Appendix I	co-sponsored by the United States and submitted by Singapore

*Note: These species were selected through the CITES Periodic Review Process under Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP17).

Resolutions/Decisions

Seahorse Decision		co-sponsored by Monaco, Maldives, UK, Senegal & Sri Lanka and submitted by the United States
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U.S. Submissions: Resolutions, Decisions, and other Agenda Items

19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties:

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora

Panama City, Panama, November 14-25



Topic	Proposal
Transport of live specimens:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Partner with IATA to make relevant content of the regulations available to all Parties at no cost 2) Encourage Parties to apply the humane transport guidelines for the domestic leg of international CITES transport to reduce risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment of (IATA, IATA-LAR, IATA-PCR, CITES). 3) Support a workshop and online training to share best practices in live specimen transport with CITES authorities 4) Amend the preambular text of Resolution Conf. 10.21 (Rev. CoP16) on Transport of live specimens to clarify when to use the regulations and to acknowledge implications of transport for zoonotic and infectious disease risk.
Totoaba Decisions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Update CoP18 Totoaba Decisions (18.292-18.295) with Secretariats recommendations from para 53 in SC74 Doc. 28.5 2) Strengthen measures to ensure that a “zero tolerance policy” is strictly applied in the vaquita refuge/ zero-tolerance area and ensure that the area is maintained as a net-free zone by scaling up and funding net removal efforts, increasing collaboration with fishers and partners and agreements, and promptly destroying any marked or confiscated gear. 3) Encourage Mexico scale up surveillance and patrol activities in the vaquita refuge/Zero-Tolerance Area and land to ensure authorities with legal powers of seizure and arrest are present full-time to prevent illegal activities in these areas. 4) Pursue the implementation of the September 24, 2020, Agreement regulating gear, systems, methods, techniques and schedules for fishing activities with vessels in Mexican Marine Zone in the Northern Gulf of California.
Resolution on Conservation of Marine Turtles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Recommend Parties to address notes from the study by increasing international collaboration, national legislation, research, financial support, capacity building, intelligence, monitoring and detection. 2) Promote development of public education and awareness programs to reduce demand of marine turtles 3) Collaborate in genetic identification of specimens and the Secretariat to aid the range and exchange of information 4) Encourage Parties to submit comprehensive information on illegal trade in their annual reports to the Secretariat and to share bycatch mitigation strategies, that have proven effective at reducing bycatch or bycatch mortality.
Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clarify that the exemption provided by Article VII, paragraph 4, should apply only to products identified in an application and that the Register on the CITES website should be specific to those products rather than the species broadly 2) Clarify registration procedure should be followed for new operations and/or major changes in an already registered operation (ownership/management, parental/breeding stock, strategies/activities conducted, type of products produced) 3) Clarify that the requirement that a breeding operation make a meaningful contribution to the conservation of the species concerned includes ensuring that trade will not negatively affect efforts to combat illegal trade in the species

commercial purposes	4) Propose amendments to the operative text of Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) and Annexes 1 and 2 to reflect the above
Seahorse Decisions	1) Recommend Secretariat collaborate with Parties and species experts to prepare a report on global illegal seahorse trade 2) Propose the Parties develop national plans of action to improve CITES implementation for seahorses 3) Suggest the Animals Committee consider seahorses as a case study to 2nd international expert workshop on non-detriment findings
Review of National Ivory Action Plan Process	1) Propose decisions recommending the Secretariat contract a consultant to review the National Ivory Action Plan Process (NIAP) and the associated Guidelines to ensure that they continue to meet the goals of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP18) and effectively and efficiently improve national and international responses to elephant poaching and ivory trafficking, in a way that appropriately incorporates the use of existing tools and mechanisms available to Parties and avoids duplication of effort. 2) Propose decisions recommending the Standing Committee to assess the results of the Secretariat's NIAP review to determine if further evaluation of the NIAP Process is needed and if so, outline any elements requiring further evaluation and direct the Secretariat to undertake the additional tasks as necessary and provide a report to the Standing Committee at its 78th meeting.



2022 MAFWA Private Lands Working Group Directors Report

Submitted by: Mark Norton, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

Meeting Time and Place

May 3rd from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and May 4th 8:30 to 12:00 p.m. held via Microsoft Teams hosted by SD Game, Fish and Parks

Attendance

There were twenty-four (24) participants in the meeting. All member states were represented at the private lands working group except Illinois and Minnesota. Kurt Thiede, AFWA Government Affairs Director, provided an overview of AFWA of the recently adopted AFWA 2023 Farm Bill Platform. Scott Taylor, the National Pheasant Plan Coordinator provided an update on the Plan which was revised in 2021. Claire Beck, Landscape Conservation Technical Coordinator, gave an update on the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI). John Morgan, National Bobwhite & Grassland Initiative (NBGI) Director, also provided an update on the newly renamed NBGI. See Appendix 1 for participant names.

Executive Summary

This year's private lands working group discussions focused on the sharing of new and successful projects in each state, CRP status reviews, CRP rental rates, CRP in the 23 Farm Bill, how states plan to use RAWA for private lands conservation, and the shortage of applicants for existing vacancies and future anticipated additional positions needed. See Appendix 2 for meeting agenda. The group felt this was a productive meeting with relevant discussions. There is value in meeting counterparts from different states, comparing successful projects, issues and challenges and working together toward solutions. **The group encourages the Directors to continue their support for this Working Group and to prioritize attendance by their staff.**

Director Action Items: None

Director Information Items:

State Updates – New or Successful Projects

Indiana DFW added two new full-time CRP biologists through an agreement with NRCS and three new partnership farm bill biologist positions. DFW has been part of two new RCPP proposals submitted in 2022. One will focus on restoration and enhancement of grasslands and the other will focus on wetland establishment and working lands conservation. Using a VPA-

HIP grant to expand their private land hunting access program to include deer and waterfowl hunting opportunities which had 5,200 acres in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Iowa High demand remains for private lands habitat assistance as they worked with 2,776 landowners in the last year. Using a VPA-HIP grant they have opened just under 15,000 acres of private for public hunting access and created habitat on 245 sites.

Kansas VPA-HIP has been very successful at securing hunting and fishing access opportunities. They have used \$2.1 million to open public access to nearly 36,000 acres, much of which is new CRP. The iWIHA continues to grow to an anticipated 15,000 acres by the fall providing electronic check in for hunters. The Great Plains Grasslands Initiative through NRCS is very popular spending \$6 million last year for invasive woody control in grasslands.

Kentucky has hired 15 new partnership biologists in the last year working out of NRCS offices delivering private lands habitat programs. They have new projects starting on moist soil management, cedar removal, and native warm season grass management. Plan to develop new cost-share programs from KY DFWR.

Michigan recently completed the development of a private lands database to be able to track and report accomplishments. Just finished a 10-year pheasant habitat initiative that created over 80,000 acres of habitat. Working to continue this project going forward. The CREP program is now open again for new enrollments for the first time in 6 years thanks to MI legislature appropriating \$4 million to it for water quality. Received a new EPA grant to monitor and determine the best places to add pollinator habitat to the landscape.

Missouri is in year three of a reorganization that resulted in an increased focus on private lands habitat work with over 150 staff in this branch working on forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and urban habitat. They spend about \$1.8 million per year on private lands habitat projects and have added \$600,000 towards urban projects. Have a wildlife friendly buffer program in partnership with MO Corn and MO Soybeans with higher payments for more diverse seedings and wider buffers resulting in the creation of ecosystem credits to be sold by the landowners. They have received a VPA-HIP grant that will enable them to double their private lands hunting access program enrollment. Have projects planned to start in FY2023 to be funded with RAWA if it passes. MO would receive \$21/year from RAWA.

Nebraska just finished the Berggren Pheasant Plan 2.0. During the 1st phase over the last 5 years, they impacted over 233,000 acres of improved upland habitat and access. Had the most private land open to public access last year at over 382,000 in the Open Fields and Waters Program. The Nebraska natural Legacy program funded 69 projects on over 31,500 acres of grassland restorations, prescribed burns and forest restoration in 2021. Currently have 27 partnership field biologists with PF that worked with over 7,000 landowners on over 236,000 acres last year.

North Dakota is working on creating a few partnerships biologist positions again after a few years of not having them. All of NDGF private lands habitat programs require public access except their neonic free brood plot seed program. The Meadowlark Initiative is up and running with partial funding through an RCPP. Focuses on grassland restorations and management in priority landscapes that will result in larger grassland patches and greater grassland habitat connectivity. This initiative is ready for additional funds from RAWA once it passes.

Ohio recently hired a wetland program administrator that has helped implement the water quality incentive program. This program has been successful by completing 174 projects in 2021 containing 3,038 acres of wetland projects. Also working on transitioning from 5 to 15 biologists that will have partial private lands habitat work share. Their new hunting access program has almost 15,000 acres enrolled and uses a hunter check-in system. Have increased promotion of wildlife habitat practices through EQIP and have seen a large increase in applications.

South Dakota added 8 new private lands habitat biologist positions in 2021. A new project funded by state wildlife grants to remove invasive cedars from native prairie has been popular. Enrolled over 6,500 new acres into the James River Watershed CREP in the last year all open to public hunting and fishing access. Re-enrolled over 75% of expiring CREP acres in 2021. Currently working towards adding a second CREP in the Big Sioux River Watershed to enroll 25,000 acres. \$700,000 VPA-HIP grant funding secured over 100,000 acres of public hunting and fishing access on private land in 2021 for multiple years.

Wisconsin just reorganized to improve habitat management, partnerships, & collaborations that will allow for them to do more private lands work. About \$3.4 million in revenue was generated from species specific stamps was used to expand partnerships to do additional habitat work in 2021. The Deer Management Assistance Program worked with over 1900 landowners on more than 400,000 acres to improve deer habitat through deer habitat management plans. The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership works with landowners to promote healthy young forest habitat in appropriate locations identified in species conservation plans and had 379 contracts on over 25,000 acres in 2021.

Other Information Items

2023 Farm Bill Update – The Senate Ag committee held a field hearing on April 29th where we learned that budget for the 23 FB will likely be flat with no addition funding added. This means any growth in a certain program will require funding reductions in other programs. **The working group recommends that a subcommittee of the AFWA CRP committee be formed to develop ways to refine grassland CRP and maximize the wildlife habitat benefits of the overall CRP program.** AFWA is contracting with Southwick to quantify the benefits of VPA-HIP by early 2023 to help advocate for more funding for this program in the 23 FB. The AFWA 23 Farm Bill Platform was shared with an emphasis that it is working document that could be changed as we learn more about what will be in the 23 Farm Bill over the next year.

CRP Rental Rates by Tract – This is a proposal to improve CRP contract rental payments by using an average rate for the three predominant cropland soils in a Tract instead of just the three predominant soils in the part of the Tract that would be enrolled in CRP. Usually, the area being enrolled in CRP is the least productive soils and it gets a lower rental rate, but landowners would still get the whole field average payment if they leased it out for crop production putting CRP at a disadvantage. There was some concern that using this method would decrease the CRP payment on some critical areas like filter strips that can occur in the most productive soils. Other questions were raised about how this would impact the overall cost of CRP and efforts to increase the national CRP acreage cap. **The working group recommends that a subcommittee of the AFWA CRP committee be put together to further consider this proposal and how it would impact CRP in multiple parts of the county and further consider some of the questions raised.**

State assistance to NRCS to complete CRP status reviews – Most state agencies were either directly assisting NRCS in completing CRP status reviews or indirectly by providing funding to partnership biologists that were completing them. In some states NRCS had hired numerous staff with the understanding that they would be needed to complete CRP contract status reviews.

National Pheasant Plan – The 2nd edition was adopted in the summer of 2021. The main objective was to determine how much nesting habitat was needed to meet 24 contributing state's need in the primary pheasant range of the county. A lot of science, calculations, and discussions went into determining that this number was 45 million acres. The next effort is to develop a GIS-based solution to help prioritize where nesting habitat acres should be placed to maximize pheasant production.

Midwest Landscape Initiative – An effort to build collaboration of the many species-specific regional plans to maximize effectiveness of on the ground habitat efforts for species of greatest conservation need. Will provide guidance for conservation funding through greater collaboration and better outcomes.

National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative – Formerly the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, NBGI provides services of partner coordination/policy, coordinated implantation plan (CIP), and habitat management service center. The CIP is a standardized monitoring of birds, habitat, harvest, and management actions in 20 focus areas. Manpower, seed, & herbicide are the main services provided through the habitat management service center. NBGI is hosted by Clemson University and offers unlimited match up to 25% through administrative discounts over the next 5 years for federal grants.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative - Funding for managed grazing lands that provide time, rest, and recovery as part of the management plan. GLCI formerly funded through NRCS to hire grazing specialists and use EQIP cost-share funding to help install infrastructure for grazing management. There is currently an effort to restore funding of \$50 million through GLCI for FFY2022. It would result in grants for workshops, webinars for grassland management.

How states plan to use RAWA for private land conservation work – States planned to use RAWA for grassland restorations, wildlife passages, additional staff both agency and partnership positions for both grant administration and project implementation, private lands habitat projects, and CREP. Many states were concerned that there will not be enough qualified people available to hire to fill the need to deliver the additional funding from RAWA.

NABCI Private Lands Staff Forum – This inaugural forum originally scheduled for March of 2020 in Kansas City, MO was postponed due to covid and is scheduled now be held this July. The goal of this forum is to provide a high-quality environment for training and mentoring, exchange of ideas, and developing a community of practice that enhances the ability of private lands field staff to effectively deliver Farm Bill and other conservation programs. They are looking to have up to 150 people attend. All states are encouraged to send staff.

The working group also discussed the lack of wildlife college students graduating with the skills needed to work with private landowners to create wildlife habitat. Just about every state in attendance has had difficulty filling open positions in the past year. This difficulty extends further than just entry level biologist positions as many states are struggling to find qualified candidates to fill vacancies and all levels within the agency. There are a couple of good programs at Iowa State and Mississippi State that are focused on private lands work and programs.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held during May of 2022 in Wisconsin.

Appendix 1. Attendance List

Participant Name	Organization
Patrick Mayer	Indiana DNR
Sam Whiteleather	Indiana DNR
Josh Griffin	Indiana DNR
Zach Voyles	Indiana DNR
Nick Baumgarten	Iowa DNR
Todd Bogenschutz	Iowa DNR
Wes Sowards	Kansas KPWD
Jacob Stewart	Kentucky DFWR
Mike Parker	Michigan DNR
Lisa Potter	Missouri DOC
Kevin Kading	North Dakota GF
Curt Francis	North Dakota GF
Nate Harling	North Dakota GF
Erich Zach	Nebraska GPC
TJ Walker	Nebraska GPC
John Kaiser	Ohio DOW
Mark Norton	South Dakota GFP
Eric Magedanz	South Dakota GFP
Mary C Anderson	Wisconsin DNR
Kelly Martinson	Wisconsin DNR
Kurt Thiede	AFWA
Claire Beck	MLI
Scott Taylor	Pheasants Forever
John Morgan	NBGI

Appendix 2. Meeting Agenda



MAFWA Private Lands Working Group Meeting Agenda

May 3rd & 4th, 2022

Microsoft Teams Meeting

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Central Time

Member States: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

Tuesday, May 3rd

1:00 – 1:15 Welcome (Mark Norton) and Review of 2021 Meeting hosted by Wisconsin (Cody Strong)

1:15 – 2:45 State Updates

2:45 – 3:00 Break

3:00 – 4:00 Updates to AFWA 2023 Farm Bill Platform - Kurt Thiede

Wednesday, May 4th

8:30 – 9:00 National Pheasant Plan Update – Scott Taylor

9:00 – 10:00 CRP

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 10:30 Midwest Landscap Initiative – Claire Beck

10:30 – 10:40 Northern Bobwhite & Grassland Initiative update – John Morgan

10:40 – 10:50 Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative – Mary Anderson (WI DNR)

10:50 – 11:30 Continued Discussion on any topics covered earlier

11:30 – 12:00 Meeting summary, action Items, resolutions, letters for Directors

MAFWA Public Lands Working Group

Respectfully submitted by

Paul Coughlin, Habitat Program Manager, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

Meeting Time and Place

The MAFWA Public Lands Working Group (MPLWG) met via video-conference on May 3, 2022. The lingering concerns and restrictions associated with COVID-19 prevented an in-person meeting for the third year in a row. While appreciating the efficiencies of time and expenses realized through virtual meetings, MPLWG participants expressed a strong desire to return to in-person meetings. Additionally, participants encouraged returning to convening a joint meeting with the Midwest Private Lands Working Group as had been the tradition pre-pandemic.

Attendance

In attendance for the video-conference were the following members: Mitch Hess and Don Kahl (IL); Brian Hickman (IA); Dustin Mengarelli (KS); Derek Beard (KY); Earl Flegler, Kerry Fitzpatrick, Valery Frawley, Kristin Wildman, and Christine Hanaburgh (MI); Dan Stark (MN); Joel Porath and Matt Boyer (MO); Pat Molini (NE); Mike Ervin (OH), Paul Coughlin (SD); Anne Reis-Boyle (WI); and Claire Beck (MAFWA-MLI).

Executive Summary

The 2022 MPLWG met via video-conference call to discuss topics relevant to management of state wildlife lands and consider Action and Information Items for the Directors' attention. Each attending state presented a brief 5-10 minute update that included the top challenges and opportunities related to operation and maintenance of state wildlife lands. Common themes across the states include staffing challenges, infrastructure and equipment needs, and increasing and diversifying uses on state wildlife lands. Claire Beck also presented information regarding the Midwest Landscape Initiative and efforts being made through the Midwest Conservation Action Plan.

Director Action Items

Participants agree there is great value in the annual MPLWG meeting and encourage the Directors to continue supporting the working group and prioritizing attendance and participation by agency public lands program managers in annual meetings. The meeting connects names and faces, and greatly enhances year round communications amongst members regarding common and emerging opportunities and challenges faced by state public land managers across the Midwest states. Additionally, MPLWG members encourage the Directors to utilize the groups collective knowledge network to forward MAFWA initiatives and priorities as they relate to state wildlife lands and the expanding base of users and uses of these lands.

Action: Reinstate/maintain the Midwest Public Lands Working Group as a technical working group of MAFWA.

Director Information Items

The following Information Items were discussed by the Working Group:

Opportunity/Issue: Staffing

Hiring and retaining a qualified land management staff continues to challenge state public land managers across the Midwest states. Challenges result from limited employment pools of qualified individuals for existing management positions as well as ever present FTE limitations. Some states have developed work-arounds to address FTE limitation through contracting with NGOs such as Pheasant Forever. These arrangements can be beneficial in the long-term by serving as training opportunities for future agency employment. However, retaining qualified employees in the current employment market remains a concern.

Opportunity/Issue: Equipment and Infrastructure

Maintaining and upgrading infrastructure on state wildlife lands, along with securing necessary equipment continues to challenge state public land managers. While in most cases funding seems available, supply chain issues, equipment availability, and contractor shortages are limiting progress in meeting these needs.

Opportunity/Issue: Public Land Users

All Midwest states are experiencing increased use on state wildlife lands, and often by a diverse set of users pursuing activities outside those traditionally reserved for state wildlife land (e.g. hunting and fishing). While this expanding user base provides opportunities to expose a larger population to outdoor recreation and increased appreciation for fish and wildlife resources under state management, challenges exist with ensuring new and diverse uses are compatible with the primary purposes of state fish and wildlife lands (i.e. providing fish and wildlife habitat, and public hunting and fishing opportunities).

Along with an expanded and diversified user group, obtaining quality public land user data is an important issue for state land managers. Whether it's traditional users such as hunter and anglers, or determining residency of those users, obtaining user data is important in driving management direction on state wildlife lands. In the case of non-traditional users, demographic data on all public land users can serve as an important information source as states begin developing implementation plans for their relevancy roadmaps and determining the role state wildlife lands play in the relevancy discussion.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

MPLWG participants expressed a strong desire to return to in-person meetings and encourage a joint meeting with the Midwest Private Lands Working Group as has been the tradition.

Wisconsin, May 2022

MAFWA Public Lands Working Group Agenda May 3, 2022

Member States: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
8:30 - 8:45	Welcome and Introductions	Paul Coughlin
8:45 - 10:30	State Reports (5 to 10 minutes/state)	All States
10:30 - 10:45	Break	
10:45 - 11:00	Midwest Landscape Initiative	Claire Beck, MAFWA
11:00 - 12:00	Opportunities/Issues/Action Items for Directors	All States

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
Illinois DNR

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Inadequate staffing
- Procurement system
- IL is running an outdated and restrictive harvest reporting system

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- Steady funds and support for acquiring new acreage
- IRAP continues to grow, providing public hunting on private land

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Brian Hickman

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

Public land use: The public demand for recreational use on Iowa's public lands continues to increase. Ultimately interest in Iowa's public lands is a good thing. However, there is a growing concern over the volume of users and the constant pressure from non-compatible recreational groups wanting to utilize Iowa's public lands. We continue to think about how we can grow support from the public and stakeholder groups for public lands while staying true to compatible uses and providing quality habitat for Iowa's native wildlife species and species that migrate through our state.

CWD: CWD surveillance and management continues to be a Department priority in an effort to sustain a healthy and sustainable whitetail deer herd in our State. The 2021/22 season was the second year of targeting our surveillance methods using a weighted approach which placed added emphasis on male deer, specifically adult bucks. This reduced the overall number of samples taken but allowed us to target individuals of higher disease risk. Two new counties in Iowa had CWD detected. Greene county in Central Iowa and Fremont county in far SW Iowa.

Total CWD Positives in Iowa since 2013:

2013 – 1

2014 – 3

2015 – 2

2016 – 12

2017 – 10

2018 – 18

2019 – 44

2020 – 21

2021 - 52

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

Staffing: The Wildlife Bureau currently has 4 position vacancies; however, at the start of the State's budget fiscal year 2018 we had 24. Great progress has been made in addressing staffing needs. The Bureau also added a State Wildlife Veterinarian position for which the primary focus is to manage wildlife population health and educate the public.

Three of the five planned subunits have been fully staffed. This effort is proving successful in bridging geographic hurdles in managing Iowa's public lands. Sub Unit locations were determined by considering the following factors:

- Existing Unit Headquarters locations,
- Distance from headquarters to managed WMA's,
- Acres managed per permanent staff,
- Proximity to other conservation areas and
- Future opportunities for growth.

CWD Interactive Dashboard and dedicated staffing: This year marked the launch of Iowa's interactive dashboard sharing information about CWD in Iowa.
<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting/Deer-Health/Chronic-Wasting-Disease/Surveillance-Results>

This new tool allows Iowans to see up to date information on current and historic surveillance efforts, sample statistics and locations of positive samples.

In addition to the dashboard two dedicated CWD Outreach Specialists in partnership with Iowa State Extension. These positions located in NE Iowa carry out Chronic Wasting Disease incentive hunts, educate the local public on CWD management practices and work one-on-one with local landowners and hunters.

Good Neighbor Meetings: The Wildlife Bureaus 17 Units have begun hosting Good Neighbor meetings across the state. Each Unit is hosting an open house gathering once annually at or near a Wildlife Management Area where members from the public can come discuss current management, future plans, wildlife trends or diseases and what private land services we offer. The Unit, Private Lands and Depredation Biologists are all present to answer questions as well as the District Forester and local Conservation Officer. Initial open houses have been well received and have helped gained support from our neighbors and users.

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
State Report for Midwest Public Lands Working Group
May 2022

Overview

KDWPT – Public Lands Division in the Fisheries, Wildlife, Education and Boating Branch is responsible for the management of over 390,000 acres. These acres include 40 state fishing lakes, 80 wildlife areas, 10 public access area, as well as a number of other areas under agreements, including 16 USACE and 6 BOR reservoirs managed under license agreements and two power plant properties.

Budget

- FY22 Total Public Lands Budget - \$10,416,769
- FY 22 Salaries and O&M – \$4,631,844 Wildlife Fee Fund, \$1.8 million Federal Ag Funds and \$700,000 State Ag Funds
- Temp Salaries - \$443,500 Ag fund and \$302,000 Wildlife Fee Fund
- PR Grant - \$6.5 million
- Sport Fish Grant - \$800,000

Land Acquisition

FY22 land acquisition budget - \$100,000 total.

- Land Acquisition has been at a standstill for the most part.
- Push Back for Legislature for purchasing any land.

Operation and Management

- Agricultural Production – approximately 195 permits are issued to farm more than 44955 acres. In addition, 8653 acres are planted by Public Lands staff.
- Grazing – 26,850 acres are under grazing management plans in 37 contracts.
- Haying – 1788 acres were hayed on 29 contracts.
- All agricultural/grazing/haying income exceeds \$2.78 million. Current Ag fund balances exceeds \$6.5 million.
- Noxious Weed Control – 50,000 acres
- Prescribed burns –27,000 acres
- Food plots – 5,000 acres
- Invasive species control - > 12,800 acres

- Water level (pumped) – 15,639 acre feet
- Managed Dove Fields – 1343 acres most require non-toxic shot.
- Bison Management – Three herds comprising 288 head on 8058 acres
- Law enforcement – 38 certified PL LEO's completed 8,000 license checks
- Cabin program- Public Land Section operates three cabins on State Fishing Lakes and Wildlife areas. Reduced from seven a couple years ago.

Partnerships/Projects

- North American Wetlands Conservation grants (NAWCA) working in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited continues to add new projects.
- Kansas Forest Service – Received a new \$300,000 grant to apply landscape forest stewardship practices across public and private boundaries in eastern KS. Foresters will develop forest inventories, forest management plans, and cover habitat work on public lands. In addition, they will host demonstration days and workshops for landowners. Beginning new projects and finishing old projects for new grant.
- Pheasants Forever – Agreement renewed in 2020 for habitat specialist positions on public lands. Currently all 13 positions are full. Agreement expires Dec 31, 2022.
- Missouri River mitigation work continues in northeast Kansas, including land acquisition, restoration, and public access in 5 properties totaling 6094 acres.
- SSWA partnered with Friends of Sandsage Bison Range and Wildlife Area to provide 111 bison tours to 949 guests.
- ISportsman continues on 28 properties –61579 Accounts, 135148 Check-Ins. 1.3% non-checkout. We are migrating to Brandt on June 1st, 2022. This should be a step up for the sportsman as it will be tied to their license purchasing account. New App will allow you to checkin/out of a property buy licenses etc.
- Special Hunts (Public & Private Land): Spring 2022 = 94 Turkey Hunts available this spring with 154 permits. There were 538 Applications - all choices. Applications came from 15 different states. Fall '21-'22 Special Hunts = There were 742 Total Permits, 5122 Applications (all choices).

Personnel

- 1 – Public Lands Division Director
- 1 – Public Lands Assistant Director
- 4 – Regional Supervisors
- 33 – Area Managers
- 1 – NRDA Coordinator
- 13 – Assistant Managers
- 13 – Pheasants Forever Habitat Specialists
- 2 – Equipment Operators
- ~150 – Temporary/seasonal laborers
- *38 – LE certified LEOs*
- 7500 acres per State FTE

- Loss of 5 FTE's as a result of Voluntary Retirement Incentive, still lingers.

New arising issues

- Secondary Use on Public Lands: Kayaks, trails, geocaching, etc.
- Non Resident Hunter influx perception vs reality
 - Proposed regulations to combat is not based on data but more desires
- Providing adequate opportunity for hunters and anglers
- Homeless camping on State Fishing Lakes (will be going to a 7 day max stay in 2022)

Legislative issues

- Land Acquisition obstacles

Top Issues facing our Division

- Constant political heat; acquisitions mostly (some want us to sell wildlife area's)
- Salary inconsistencies and compression
- Concerns about fee fund revenue not being as sustainable into the future unless we can get license cap increases through legislature
- Spending authority cap
- Inconsistencies with COE and BOR offices
- Blue Green Algae
- Invasive species control
- Staffing

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
(Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources)
(Derek Beard)

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Replacing aging infrastructure and equipment typically only occurs on an emergency basis due to limited funds. Recent budget builds for FY23 will only allow for approximately \$150,000 for public lands staff to purchase needed equipment.
- Staffing—the division is rapidly losing highly qualified and knowledgeable employees. We are seeing a low level of interest in our posted vacancies with applicants that do not meet minimum qualifications and/or experience. To increase our applicant pool the agency recently updated minimum qualifications for the Wildlife Biologist series to simplify the education requirements for all five classifications. We removed the complex and specific coursework requirements (course hours as specified by TWS certifications) and replaced with simple and appropriate bachelor's degree requirements. Minimum education requirements now include a graduate of a college or university with a bachelor's degree in a biological science, wildlife biology, fish and wildlife management, conservation biology, natural resources, environmental sciences, or related field.
- Funding-Kentucky continues to rank among the lowest paid wildlife staff and is one of the top two underfunded pension systems in the nation. House Bill 1 passed this legislative session providing state employees a much-needed raise. Employees will receive 8% increase on July 1st with up to a 12% in year two of the biennium. The financial impact to the agency will change the landscape of our agency in the very near future if alternative forms of income is not identified soon. At the current rate approximately 80% of our Wildlife division budget is consumed by personnel salaries and benefits.
- Both a challenge and opportunity the legislature passed Senate Bill 217 this session. The historic legislation gives the Agency a level of independence. The Governor vetoed it on April 6th followed by the Senate (29-8) and House (69-24) taking action to override the veto on April 13th. Due to the emergency clause the legislation takes effect immediately. The Agency is working diligently to establish new operational protocols to allow the agency to conduct all procurements necessary, make all contracts and agreements subject to Governmental Contract Review, and conduct its own bidding. The Agency is now only attached to the Tourism Arts and Heritage Cabinet administratively for limited functions and purposes as requested by the Agency.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- Passed legislation (SB217) that will allow the Agency to acquire a perpetual conservation easement on approximately 54,000 acre WMA in southeast KY. Funds for purchasing the easement will come from state general fund which will provide the 25% federal match. The property is located in Knox, Bell, and Leslie counties.
- WMA categories has been approved by our commission. WMA's will be categorized into High, Moderate, or Low levels of management. High management areas being staffed and intensively managed while Low will be areas with staff some distance away that will receive the minimum in the way of management but are still available to hunting, hiking, wildlife watching, etc. Ideally, this approach will give area users a better idea of what to expect on areas when visiting or planning a trip and will also help focus our staff, budget and sometimes commission to prioritize efforts on Highly managed areas. Staff are in process of finalizing the roll out, advertise and market this approach on the areas this Fall.
- Southeast Kentucky Habitat Initiative started in 2022 focusing staff efforts to help control invasive shrubs that are encroaching on open fields with reclaimed areas, create more suitable brooding and nesting cover for grassland birds, and improve forage for elk. Reclaimed mine lands have its challenges as each unit we must communicate with the Division of Mining to get help determining if the proposed area is currently under bond and if so, would burning the site cause issues with compliance. The plan was to burn the areas no earlier than mid-February and no later than mid-September. Burning during this period would ensure quick vegetation response providing cover as well as help with soil stabilization. Currently staff have identified approximately 8,000 acres to burn. In year one staff was able to complete nearly 2,000 acres

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
(Michigan DNR, Wildlife Division)
(Earl Flegler)

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

Public Land Without Public Access - With the increased access to GIS mapping tools (like OnX Hunt) that identify public and private landowners, the interest in landlocked public lands has increased-both on a national level and in Michigan. A total of 15.87 million acres of landlocked public land in western states has been identified, including 8.3 million acres landlocked by corner-to-corner connections.

A collaborative report from OnX and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, "The Upper Midwest's Inaccessible Public Lands," suggests that Minnesota is home to 248,000 total landlocked acres and Wisconsin has 55,000 acres. Michigan has not calculated landlocked acres. We frequently dispose of parcels that lack public access, seek trades to consolidate ownership, and require reciprocal easements when a private landowner seeks an easement across public land. We are also exploring mapping of legal easements across private land that lead to public land.

On corporate forest lands in the Upper Peninsula, transfer of ownership to Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) and private landowners is affecting public access. Access to public lands by 2-track trails that run through the former corporate lands is increasingly being questioned.

A recent trial in Wyoming has highlighted the issue of corner-crossing to obtain access to public ownerships. No law exists that specifically outlaws corner-crossing, but various attempts to make it either definitively legal or illegal have thus far failed. In Michigan, a 1980 Attorney General Opinion determined that the public does not have an easement to cross cornering parcels.

Best Management Practices for Renewable Energy Projects - Wildlife Division has formed a small group to develop best management practices for wind and solar projects. We are seeking fence specifications that would prohibit wildlife from getting trapped within the fencing area or lodged on the fence (less than 52 inches tall or greater than or equal to 10 feet tall without using barbed wire). Local zoning requirements require barbed wire fencing of at least 6 feet in height and another agency requirement is 7' fence or 6' + 3-string barbed wire.

Bike Trails on Wildlife Administered Lands – A Wildlife Division workgroup was created to develop a unified stance and communication to help address bike trails on wildlife-administered lands. We have a desire to increase the use/relevancy of wildlife areas by the general public and see non-traditional use as a possible gateway, at least a way to increase appreciation for wildlife-related recreation recruitment. However, the

intensity and frequency of these non-traditional uses may detract from the primary purpose (wildlife habitat and wildlife-related recreation). We have some unauthorized bike trails on our managed wildlife areas, and we have continued interest from user groups for additional trails. The workgroup will develop recommendations and present them to the Wildlife Division Management Team for consideration.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

DNR Public Land Strategy – Public Act 240 of 2018 required the DNR to prepare an update to the 2013 DNR Public Land Strategy and provide it to the Legislature by July 2021. An internal DNR sprint team was formed in 2019 to accomplish this goal. Their efforts involved extensive engagement both within the Department and with the public, stakeholders, and local units of government. The focus of the original goals set in 2013 remain in the updated plan, but they were restructured to better align with agency mission and management objectives and leverage the department's other strategic plans. The new proposed goals center around the ideas of “protect, provide and perform:”

- Goal 1: Protect natural and cultural resources
- Goal 2: Provide access to outdoor public recreation opportunities
- Goal 3: Perform responsible natural resources management.

The plan will be implemented upon review and approval of the Michigan Legislature. Here is the link to the plan: [The Power of Public Lands: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Public Land Strategy 2021-2027](#)

Here is a report on progress made towards the 2013 strategy and an overview of the main changes including the 2021 strategy: [Proposed Updated Plan](#).

State Land Review: The Department Managed Public Land Strategy requires the DNR to review approximately 240,000 acres of state-owned land to determine whether these lands contribute to the department's mission. The parcels are either 200 acres or less, or have irregular shapes resulting in a significant shared private-public boundary, making it potentially difficult to manage. The intent of this new approach is to focus ownership on priority areas, ensure quality outdoor public recreation opportunities, protection of natural and cultural resources and promotion of sound resource management. It will also increase efficiencies in state land management. The parcels will be classified to either retain them as important to the DNR mission, offer to conservation partners, use them to trade to consolidate ownership, or make them available as surplus.

The DNR has completed reviews for 40 of the 83 counties (4,121 parcels, 76,628 acres). The recommended classifications break down are as follows: retain (81% of

parcels, 86% of acres), offer to alternate conservation partner (3% of parcels, 3% of acres), exchange (2% of parcels, 3% of acres) or dispose (14% of parcels, 8% of acres).

Land Acquisitions: Successful grant applications from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and funds from disposal of lands have increase funding for land acquisitions. Two Wildlife Divisions acquisitions closed in 2021: Crystal Waters SGA (680.16 acres, \$3,675,000) and Maple River SGA Miller (40 acres, \$140,000). In addition, two 2021 grant applications were approved for 900 acres and \$5 million.

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
(MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION)
(Joel Porath-Wildlife Section Chief)

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Urban, suburban, and exurban, sprawl and development putting pressure on conservation lands. Areas that used to be in rural space are not anymore. Habitat and wildlife are feeling the heat and we are seeing encroachment issues with negative impact.
- Invasive species ruining/taking over wildlife habitats. This is next biggest issue we face as public land managers. Aquatic and terrestrial invasives will dominate our time and resources on public land if we allow it. But if we do not address this issue, it will impede and prevent most other management, and it will negate the ecological benefits those lands provide for wildlife and people. Most impacted areas are in and near urban centers, and it grows outward exponentially, impacting our highest quality natural communities. While feral hogs in Missouri are the most prominent invasive species at present (FYI: We have made incredible progress towards the goal of eliminating feral hogs), the list of invasives are at a paradigm-shifting and exponentially growth-increasing level.
- Pollution of public waters and stream management challenges that hurt aquatic and terrestrial species. Collaboration with professionals tasked with protection of clean water for human population is critical. Clean water will be the issue of the future, and it affects everyone. Our public lands can act as a buffer against pollution, and the pressure is building but public lands cannot handle it all. Eventually the pressure will build to the point when the system breaks. It already has in many places.
- Protecting Wildlife Population Health (primarily disease control). Great need to train more wildlife professionals in wildlife disease surveillance and control. Collaboration with agricultural professionals in protection also of domestic livestock is critical.
- Competing & increasing public use. Lots of people with lots of differing expectations on the same land. We are seeing right now that a big challenge is finding consensus among professionals about how public lands should be managed for public use. One of the biggest barriers to entry for hunting is access/opportunity, but it is not just enough to have a place to go. We need *quality* opportunities. The higher the non-traditional uses and “pressure” from increased public use, hypothetically the lower the quality. It is hard to retain new and/or young hunters constantly discouraged by lack of success and/or bad encounters. It is a difficult balance.
- Deficient number of potential resource management professionals. The number of qualified individuals (relevant degree/adequate experience) pursuing professional careers in this field has been declining for years, leading to some new staff which are unprepared to do the job. It is not their fault but in some cases their staff, the public, and the resource may suffer. Improving staff

retention will help with this problem, but getting more kids interested in this field early seems essential.

- The timely reporting of land management activities and accomplishments.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- RAWA!!!!
- Outreach to and engaging the public in wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, and experiencing wildlife in the wild. People will only defend what they hold personal value in.
- Focusing efforts on retaining institutional knowledge given the well experienced workforce who are nearing retirement.
- Using technology creatively as a teaching/gaming/exploration tool to bring people outside to better understand, identify, appreciate wildlife.
- Sustainable farming and crops with less use of poisonous pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer in order to better support the ecosystem and balance needs.
- Opening the rivers and letting the floodplain be the floodplain supporting wildlife habitats (reduce the number of levees).
- Protection or reintroducing of species of conservation concern on restored/managed terrestrial and aquatic habitats.
- Ability to collect public engagement is available now more than ever to create informed decisions and better reach all Missourians. Focus efforts on public engagement and partnerships.
- Work team restructuring to get habitat work accomplished.

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
(Nebraska Game and Parks Commission)
(Presented by Pat Molini, Wildlife Assistant Division Administrator)

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Shrinking applicant pool for position openings with fewer and fewer experienced/qualified applicants. Lower interest from existing staff to take on leadership positions. Competitive wages for permanent and temporary staff.
- Increase demand on public wildlife areas for activities outside the traditional uses of habitat/hunting/fishing/trapping.
- Drought/Wildfire (insert rain dance)

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- Prioritizing the surplus of areas with high management costs and input often with little or no public access. Will free up time and funds to apply to other more important areas.
- With increase interest in using wildlife areas for hiking/biking/kayaking/canoeing/etc. there may be opportunities to understand and manage these uses and limit potential negative impacts and/or conflicts.
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (will come with many challenges also)

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING
May 3, 2022
North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Presented by Kent Luttschwager Wildlife Resource Section Leader

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Continued requests to turn Wildlife Management Areas into recreation areas by the public. Covid has led to a surge in increased outdoor use and the public continues to request (or just do on their own) more and more uses that are not consistent with proper wildlife management objectives. Includes requests for weddings, ATV trails, bike trails, archery targets, hiking trails, trail cameras, primitive camping, off road traveling, beer drinking and partying. Although some activities could be considered compatible use – the excessive amount can become problematic on some WMA's. Compounding this is the ND Game and Fish Department's new R3 program which encourages people to get outside.
- Antler shed hunting has exploded in popularity. In North Dakota, winters can be severe and the Department annually plants food plots on WMA's. However, shed hunters are starting in December and walk food plots and high-quality habitat on nearly a daily basis. Shed hunting is occurring on a minority of the WMA's but is nearly continuous throughout even the harshest winters. Western states have actual shed hunting seasons on winter ranges or Wildlife Management Areas that are closed until late spring. The ND Game and Fish Dept is concerned and at this point is working on an educational aspect, prior to making any rule or regulations changes.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- How to spend increased PR funds

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING

May 3, 2022

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

Paul Coughlin, Habitat Program Administrator

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- Expanded public use on Game Production Areas - Public use of GPAs in the last two years has increased both in number of users and diversity of uses. While most public uses on GPAs remain consistent with or do not interfere with the purposes for which the areas were acquired, a broader diversity of users and uses can result in incompatible uses occurring to the detriment of wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing access.
- Habitat management staffing - Maintaining fully staffed regional habitat teams remains a challenge for GFP regional habitat managers. This is particularly challenging with regards to obtaining team members with skills and abilities necessary to meet job expectations (e.g. equipment operators, CDLs). The situation is currently compounded given a very competitive labor market.
- Annually adjusting to climatic conditions - GFP habitat managers put a great deal of time and resources into annual habitat management planning for GPAs. Making timely adjustments to plans in response to extremes in weather (e.g. drought, flooding, seasonal temperatures) prove challenging for proper management planning and budgeting.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- Funding - With an increase in PR apportionments and a recently implemented Habitat Stamp, GFP habitat managers are taking advantage of financial opportunities to expand habitat developments on more GPAs and secure much needed equipment upgrades to accomplish on-the-ground habitat developments and conducted necessary management practices.
- Expanded public use on GPAs - While this remains a challenge, expanded public use also presents an opportunity to expand public lands advocacy across a broader population. Finding the appropriate balance between compatible and incompatible uses on GPAs will remain a center point of this situation.

MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP MEETING

May 3, 2022

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Anne Reis-Boyle, Public Lands Specialist

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Challenges

- During the pandemic, we had many vacancies within our Wildlife Biologist and Wildlife Technician classes, as well as vacancies in other supporting programs like Real Estate and Engineering. This negatively impacted the quantity of work we were able to complete.
- Rx fire continues to be managed by another Division which impacts the total # of burns and burn acreage on a yearly basis. Many Wildlife Management staff no longer have fire credentials so that we are reliant on the other Division to staff burns.
- There were many vacancies and turnover in the supervisor classes in our districts and central office. There continue to be 3 supervisor vacancies at our Central Office.
- Dog training and trialing proponents are continuing to request the DNR to expand training opportunities, including lifting leash restrictions.
- We continue to need millions of dollars to manage our wetland infrastructure. There are many sources, but the backlog of projects and timing of funding makes it difficult to fund and complete projects before funding expires.
- We continue to explore opportunities to increase relevancy among the public and recreational customers that do not frequent Wildlife Areas.

Top State Wildlife Public Lands Opportunities

- We recently hired 20 new staff; 13 new Wildlife Biologists and 7 new technicians, with a 3 more technicians and 2 more biologists scheduled to be hired within the next 2 months. These staff are going through a year-long training.
- There is an increase in Pittman-Robertson allotment, with a \$4 million surplus that has yet to be allocated this year.
- We are purchasing two large tracts in southern Wisconsin to expand two Wildlife Areas, representing over 2,300 acres.
- Covid-19 avoidance measures have largely been lifted; we are able to hold in-person meetings and interact with the public.
- Our Central Office sections (statewide specialists for grasslands, wetlands, game species) are shifting so that all game species specialists will be in one section and all private and public lands staff are in other section. Our wildlife health section remains the same. This will occur in the next fiscal year.
- We've recently reviewed and created a scoring system for all wetland infrastructure (over 1000 impoundments & structures) to help us prioritize maintenance, abandonment, and upgrades.
- A \$5 increase (from \$7 to \$12) in our waterfowl stamp fee will help us conduct more habitat work in the coming years.
- We have 56 grazing projects covering approximately 6000 acres on Wildlife Areas, State Parks and State Natural Areas currently.

- We are hopeful that Recovering Americas Wildlife Act (RAWA), Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), and the infrastructure bill will provide much needed funding for habitat and road/dam infrastructure projects on public lands.

Ad hoc CWD Committee Report

Background

The Ad Hoc Committee of the MAFWA Board was established in 2021 to: enhance and expand external communications; improve internal coordination among the members and with other federal agencies and partners; design and pursue an economic impact study; develop funding and management plans; recommend a shared position statement; and evaluate the need for a dedicated coordinator; develop and continue iteration of shared information, research and funding resources with organizations within and outside of MAFWA; and facilitate communication among member states

Meeting Time and Place

The ad hoc CWD committee has held monthly virtual meetings since March of 2022.

Committee Members

Social Science: Emily Pomeranz (MI), Craig Miller (IL) and Faren Wolter (SD)
Deer Committee: Mike Tonkovich (OH), Levi Jaster (KS), and Chad Stewart (MI)
Health Committee: Mitch Marcus (IN), Charlie Bahnson (ND) and Kelly Straka (MN),
Support roles: Tami Ryan, (WI), Bryan Richards (USGS) and Gabe Jenkins (KY)

Executive Summary

The committee's initial work has been to understand the actions taken regionally and nationally since the finalization of value stream mapping effort that led to the establishment of this group. Here we highlight a few of the most significant efforts.

- 1) Nicholas Cole and Brad Milley (USGS/FWS) are leading development of social-ecological model for CWD management. The initial phase of conceptual modeling included several members of the committee. The second phase of this project will work to identify areas in the model where agency/organization interventions show the most promise for positively affecting CWD management has begun. In Phase II, a multidisciplinary, cross-sector team will also work to identify CWD management successes, failures, and contributing factors. Phase II of this project will result in a decision framework and guidance document that will be disseminated to help managers use the identified interventions and employ them at the local, regional, state/tribal, and national level to improve CWD management outcomes.
- 2) Dan Walsh (MT) and Scott Hull (WI) are leading a CWD Consortium group focused on evaluation of management strategies across state boundaries. Specifically, they are working to determine the influence of harvest regulations, with early work being done based on data from Wisconsin. The intent is to simulate harvest strategies to help inform where and how to implement surveillance and management interventions. The committee will be working with them to determine the feasibility of a regional adaptive management project focused on reducing prevalence of CWD.
- 3) Many MAFWA states are updating or considering updates to CWD management plans. The consensus is that most state's response plans are designed for the first few detections

and don't represent a long-term strategy to management of CWD. Several states are utilizing newly developed systems models, structured decision-making, and increased social science information to update management strategies. One take home from the early modeling efforts is that it does take substantial effort to shift population density, sex and age ratios, etc., to alter disease outcomes. These efforts have clearly identified need to shift from initial response more quickly in planning to implementation of strategies that can meaningfully alter outcomes.

- 4) USFWS support for regional wildlife health coordination creates an opportunity to have a MAFWA wildlife health coordinator with capacity to facilitate the work of this committee. The committee will be working closely with the Fish and Wildlife Health to support the position and creatively find ways to increase the capacity of states to address CWD and other wildlife health related challenges that limit agency's ability to implement meaningful CWD management actions.

The committee has also completed review of existing CWD-related MAFWA resolutions. All standing resolutions seem appropriate, except for the 2017 resolution "Supporting restricting importation of hunter-harvested cervid carcasses from known CWD-infected states and provinces." The committee is concerned that with the continued inter- and intra- state movement of high-risk cervid carcass parts and will work with fish and wildlife health and deer technical committees to propose, if appropriate, an update to this resolution.

Over the next year, the committee plans to focus on: facilitation of communications between the fish and wildlife health, and deer technical committees, and among member states; support to existing efforts to update management plans, develop adaptive management strategies and socio-ecological modeling to design potential interventions; regional and national communication efforts with the Wildlife Management Institute; and support for social science work targeted at identified knowledge gaps.

Director Action Items

No action items for the Directors.

Director Information Items

No information items for the Directors

Time and Place of Next Meeting -

TBD

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) 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)

MAFWA Wildlife Diversity Committee Report



29 June 2022

**Eileen Dowd Stukel CWB®, SDGFP, Chair;
eileen.dowdstukel@state.sd.us**

Greg Link, NDGFD, Director Liaison

**Presented by Casey Heimerl CWB®, SDGFP
Wildlife Diversity Biologist**



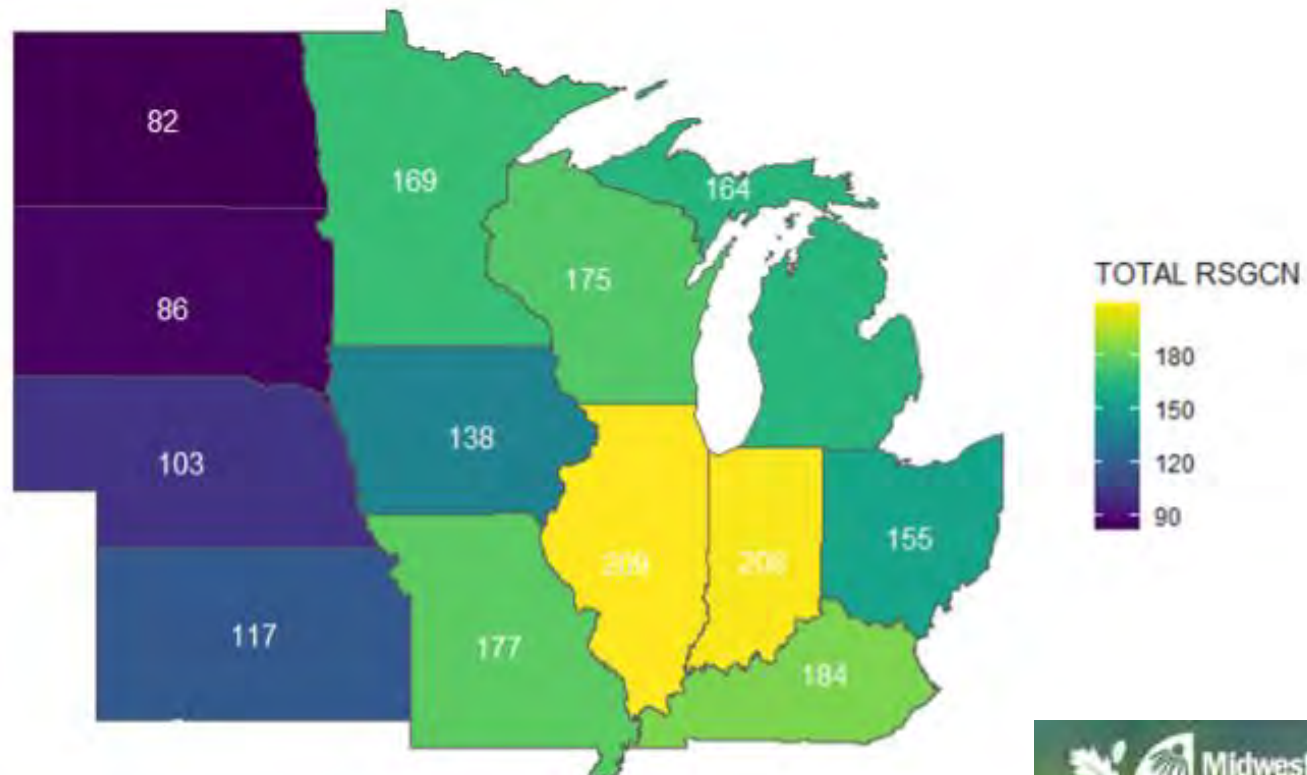
Upland Sandpiper © Doug Backlund

REGIONAL SGCN LIST

- MLI initiative was completed
 - MAFWA is third of 4 regional associations with this product
 - Work continues on fleshing out component parts
 - Wildlife Diversity Committee (WDC) has discussed various ways to use this tool to better coordinate across state boundaries

REGIONAL SGCN LIST

1817 state SGCNs evaluated → 340 regional SGCNs



Number of RSGCN occurring in each MAFWA state



WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN REVISIONS

- **11 of 13 MAFWA have major revisions due October 2025**
- **Continued work on ways to improve coordination and effectiveness**
- **Many states pursuing minor revisions to add plants as SGCNs**
- **WDC members actively engaged with AFWA and MAFWA priorities, including MLI's implementation of AFWA's Landscape Conservation and Wildlife Action Plan Coordination report**

RECOVERING-READY

- Extensive discussion during annual WDC meeting in May
- Most feel their state is in early to middle stage of readiness
- Many WD staff involved in agency's readiness planning
- We ask directors to assure that the intent of RAWA is fulfilled
 - Wildlife Action Plan implementation to address needs of SGCNs