



**MIDWEST**  
Association of  
Fish & Wildlife  
Agencies



**88th Annual  
Directors Meeting  
Proceedings**

**June 27 – June 30, 2022**

**Custer State Park – State Game Lodge  
Custer, South Dakota**

*Hosted by:*



**South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*(page numbering follows paper copy, not necessarily website copy)*

### Page

1) Cover.....	
2) Table of Contents .....	<b>i.</b>
<b>SECTION DIVIDER PAGE .....</b>	<b>v.</b>
3) Action Items.....	1
4) Objectives and Mission Statement .....	5
5) Past Meeting Locations and Dates.....	7
6) FY 2021/2022 Committees and Appointed Representatives .....	9
7) Constitution and By-Laws (October 2021).....	13
8) Attendance Roster.....	25
9) Executive Committee Minutes (6/27/22).....	27
10) Minutes (6/28 & 6/29/22) .....	37
11) Business Meeting Minutes (6/30/22) .....	119
<b>EXHIBITS DIVIDER PAGE.....</b>	<b>vi.</b>
EXHIBIT 1 – Final Program .....	149
<b><u>TUESDAY, June 28, 2022.....</u></b>	<b>vii.</b>
EXHIBIT 2 – State Hot Topics .....	159
EXHIBIT 3 – SD Game & Parks & Customer Service PP (Harrison/Kiel) .....	275
EXHIBIT 4 – Hunt Safe in the Schools (Maahs) .....	281
<b>WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS .....</b>	<b>viii.</b>
EXHIBIT 5 – Habitat & Access Priority (Coughlin).....	285
EXHIBIT 6 – Private Lands Habitat & Access (Norton) .....	287
EXHIBIT 7 – Aquatic Habitat & Access (Davis) .....	291
EXHIBIT 8 – Wildlife Damage Management (Hathaway) .....	293

**WEDNESDAY, June 29, 2022..... ix.**

**MANAGING & TAKING CARE OF PUBLIC LANDS ..... x.**

EXHIBIT 9 – Habitat Stamp (Kirschmann).....	297
EXHIBIT 10 – Game Production Area Management (Coughlin).....	301
EXHIBIT 11 – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Norton) .....	303
EXHIBIT 12 – Habitat & Food Plot Management in Parks (Persoon) .....	307

**PARTNER AND OTHER REPORTS ..... xi.**

EXHIBIT 13 – AFWA Science & Research Priorities (Mason).....	311
EXHIBIT 14 – Conservation Decision Making handout (Schaffer).....	315
EXHIBIT 15 – The AFWA Strategist (Wasley/Regan) .....	319
EXHIBIT 16 – USGS Midwest Climate Center (Galkowski).....	321

**COMMITTEE REPORTS ..... xii.**

EXHIBIT 17 – Climate Change committee report (Lott).....	325
EXHIBIT 18 – Deer and Wild Turkey committee report (Lindbloom) .....	327
EXHIBIT 19 – Feral Swine committee report (Clark) .....	331
EXHIBIT 20 – Furbearers committee report (Kirchener).....	343
EXHIBIT 21 – Hunter & Angler Recruitment & Retention/R3 (Wisecup).....	359
EXHIBIT 22 – Law Enforcement/AMFGLEO (Schelhaas) .....	367
EXHIBIT 23 – CITES report (Caldwell).....	413
EXHIBIT 24 – Private Lands committee report (Norton).....	429
EXHIBIT 25 – Public Lands committee report (Coughlin).....	437
EXHIBIT 26 – Chronic Wasting Disease Ad hoc committee report (Ryan)...	461
EXHIBIT 27 – Wildlife Diversity committee report & PP (Heimerl).....	463
EXHIBIT 28 – Fish & Wildlife Health committee report (Griffin).....	471

**HIGHLIGHTING SOUTH DAKOTA ..... xiii.**

EXHIBIT 29 – Peregrine Falcon Recovery PP (Heimerl).....	479
EXHIBIT 30 – Pheasant Harvest History PP (Runia).....	483
EXHIBIT 31 – Elk Management PP (Lindbloom) .....	487
EXHIBIT 32 – Aquatic Invasive Species PP (Davis).....	491
EXHIBIT 33 – Bighorn Sheep PP (Lehman).....	495

**THURSDAY, June 30, 2022 ..... xiv.**

**BUSINESS MEETING ..... xv.**

EXHIBIT A – Proxies (IN, MI, WI).....	499
EXHIBIT B – Business Meeting Agenda.....	503
EXHIBIT C – Business Mtg Minutes June 30, 2021 Annual Mtg (Virtual).....	505
EXHIBIT D – Treasurer’s Report CY 2021 (Luebbert).....	543
EXHIBIT E – Bylaws showing requested revisions (Pauley) .....	555
EXHIBIT F – Resolutions (Includes AMFGLEO on RAWA).....	569
EXHIBIT G – Award Winners (Wecker) .....	571
EXHIBIT H – Executive Secretary Report (Torgerson).....	573
EXHIBIT I – Center for Conservation Excellence Handout.....	577
EXHIBIT J – R3 Committee Organizational Guidelines (Wisecup).....	579
EXHIBIT K – National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Update (Taylor) .....	583
EXHIBIT L – Midwest Landscape Initiative annual report (Pauley/Myers)....	585
EXHIBIT M – Monarch & MLI Support Amendment (Pauley/Myers).....	589
EXHIBIT N – Non-Lead Partnership/R3/Fish & Wildlife Health recommendation (Wisecup).....	591
EXHIBIT O – R3 Coordinator Position contract with WMI (Wisecup) .....	593

EXHIBIT P – CSS/HD Committee Organizational Guides (Torgerson) .....	595
EXHIBIT Q – Fish & Wildlife Health committee guidelines (Torgerson).....	603
EXHIBIT R – 2023 Budget Proposal Approval (Luebbert) .....	605
EXHIBIT S – Greater Prairie Chicken & Sharp Tailed Grouse conservation strategy report (McCoy) .....	613
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>xvi.</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>xvii.</b>
Sponsors .....	615
Photos .....	621
Thanks.....	Inside Back Cover

**Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Annual Meeting  
June 27 - June 30, 2012  
Custer State Park  
Custer, South Dakota**

**ACTION ITEMS**

***Thursday*** (Completed 6/30/22)

- < Voted to accept proxies for Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin
- < Accepted 2021 minutes from annual virtual business meeting
- < Voted to accept Treasurer's Report
- < Voted to approve by-law changes as recommended
- < Heard two resolutions and voted to approve two resolutions
  - 1) Fish & Wildlife Health committee on added staff capacity
  - 2) Thanking South Dakota
- < Voted to approve new Affiliate Member (ACI Worldwide)
- < Voted to approve R3 committee organization guides
- < Voted to approve Fish & Wildlife Health committee organization guides
- < Voted to add amendment to cooperative agreement with USFWS related to MLI
- < Voted to approve R3 coordinator position
- < Voted to approve Social Science and Human Dimensions committee guides
- < Voted to approve Proposed 2023 budget

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

***Tuesday*** (Completed 6/28/22)

- < Heard welcome from Keven Robling and saw Honor Guard flag ceremony
- < Heard State Hot Topics (being RAWA ready & state reports)
- < Heard discussion on Customer Service and New Technology
- < Heard HuntSAFE in the Schools presentation
- < Presented Awards to Law Enforcement Officer of the Year; Wildlife Biologist of the Year; Fisheries Biologist of the Year; Spirit of the Shack; Excellence in Conservation; four Special Recognition Awards; Past President's Award; and President's Award (Completed at lunch)
- < Heard Panel discussion on Workforce Challenges and Opportunities for Recruitment and Retention (facilitated by Chris Hull)
  - < Competing Interests
  - < Employee Marketplace
  - < Seasonal Opportunities
  - < Remote Work Expectations
  - < Employee Values
  - < Law Enforcement Recruitment
- < Heard discussion on Working with Landowners
  - < Habitat and Access Priority (Paul Coughlin)
  - < Private Lands Habitat and Access Programs (Mark Norton)
  - < Aquatics Habitat and Access Programs (Jake Davis)
  - < Wildlife Damage Management Program (Mike Klosowski)
  - < Law Enforcement Responsibilities (Sam Schelhaas)

***Wednesday*** (Completed 6/29/22)

- < Heard discussion on Managing and Taking Care of Public Lands
  - < Habitat Stamp Implementation Projects (Tom Kirschenmann)
  - < Aquatic Infrastructure Overview (Jake Davis)
  - < Game Production Area Management (Paul Coughlin)
  - < CREP Management (Mark Norton)
  - < State Parks Habitat Success (Ryan Persoon)
- < Discussion on Science and Research Priorities (Russ Mason)
- < Received handout on Discovering and Building the Conservation Decision-Making Tool (from Jen Mock Schaffer, discussed by Russ Mason)

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

- < Heard Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) report (President Tony Wasley, NV and Executive Director Ron Regan)
- < Had Federal Partners Session
  - < Heard U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) report (Charlie Wooley, Region 3 Director)
  - < Heard U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) report (Matt Hogan, Region 6 Director)
  - < Heard U.S. Forest Service (USFS) report (Karl D. Malcolm, Ph.D., Acting Renewable Resources Director)
  - < Heard U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) report (Keith Wehner, Western Region Director)
  - < View PowerPoint and heard U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Midwest Climate Center report (Mark Gaikowski, Midwest Environmental Science Center Director)
- < Viewed PowerPoint and heard U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Midwest Climate Center (Mark Gaikowski, Upper Midwest Environmental Science Center Director)
- < Heard report on Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) (Dave Chanda)
- < Heard Committee Reports (Ollie Torgerson, facilitator)
  - < Climate Change report (Shannon Lott, MI)
  - < Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group report (Andy Lindbloom, SD)
  - < Feral Swine Committee report (Brian Clark, KY)
  - < Midwest Furbearer Group report (Keith Fisk, SD)
  - < Hunter & Angler Recruitment & Retention Committee report (Megan Wisecup, IA and Jeff Rawlinson, NE)
  - < Law Enforcement Committee (AMGFLEO) report (Sam Schelhaas, SD)
  - < CITES report (not present – written report only)
  - < Private Lands Working Group report (Mark Norton, SD)
  - < Public Lands Working Group report (Paul Coughlin, SD)
  - < Chronic Wasting Disease Ad hoc report (Tami Ryan, WI)
  - < Wildlife Diversity Committee report (Casey Heimerl, SD)
  - < Fish and Wildlife Health Committee report (Steve Griffin, SD)



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

- < Heard reports on Highlighting South Dakota's Resources and Telling the Story
  - < Telling the Story (Nick Harrington)
  - < Peregrine Falcon Recovery (Casey Heimerl)
  - < Pheasant Harvest History and Weather Models (Travis Runia)
  - < Elk Management (Andy Lindbloom)
  - < Missouri River Fishery (Jake Davis)
  - < Aquatic Invasive Species (Tanner Davis)
  - < Big Horn Sheep Recovery (Chad Lehman)

***Thursday*** (Completed 6/30/22)

- < Heard Wisconsin Spotlight for 2023 Meeting (Eric Lobner, WI)
- < Heard Audit Committee Report (Colleen Callahan, IL)
- < Heard Investment Committee Report (Shannon Lott, MI)
- < Heard Awards Committee Report (Kendra Wecker, OH)
- < Heard and Viewed MAFWA Executive Secretary's PowerPoint Report (Torgerson)
- < Heard update on National Wild Pheasant Plan (Dr. Scott Taylor, National Wild Pheasant Plan Coordinator)
- < Heard report on Mid-Continent Monarch Strategy ( )
- < Heard report on Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) (Sara Parker Pauley, MO and Kelley Myers, USFWS)
- < Heard update on Non-lead Partnership Recommendations (Megan Wisecup, IA)
- < Heard update on Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee coordinator (Torgerson)
- < Heard update on Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (Torgerson )
- < Heard update on Greater Prairie Chicken and Sharp Tailed Grouse (Tim McCoy, NE)

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

### ***Objectives***

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

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

## ***Mission Statement***

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

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

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

45. Milwaukee, Wisconsin - Marc Plaza  
July 16 - 19, 1978
46. Nashville, Indiana - Brown County Inn  
July 16 - 19, 1979
47. Columbus, Ohio - Hilton Inn East  
July 14 - 17, 1980
48. Des Moines, Iowa - Hotel Fort Des Moines  
July 13 - 15, 1981
49. Springfield, Illinois - Hilton Hotel  
July 12 - 15, 1982
50. Lexington, Kentucky - Radisson Plaza  
July 18 - 21, 1983
51. Hannibal, Missouri - Holiday Inn  
July 16 - 19, 1984
52. Wichita, Kansas - Hilton Inn East  
July 15 - 18, 1985
53. Vail, Colorado - Manor Vail  
July 7 - 10, 1986
54. Winnipeg, Manitoba - Holiday Inn  
Downtown, July 13 - 16, 1987
55. Bismarck, North Dakota - Sheraton  
Bismarck Galleria, July 11 - 14, 1988
56. Duluth, Minnesota - Radisson Hotel  
July 10 - 13, 1989
57. Grand Rapids, Michigan - Amway Grand  
Plaza Hotel, July 16 - 19, 1990
58. Rapid City, South Dakota - Hotel Alex  
Johnson, July 8 - 10, 1991
59. Green Bay, Wisconsin - Embassy Suites  
June 28 - 30, 1992
60. Ashland, Nebraska - Eugene T. Mahoney  
State Park, July 11 - 13, 1993
61. Estes Park, Colorado - Aspen Lodge  
July 10 - 12, 1994
62. Galena, Illinois - DeSoto House  
July 9 - 11, 1995
63. South Bend, Indiana - The Works Hotel  
July 14 - 16, 1996
64. Des Moines, Iowa - Embassy Suites Hotel  
July 13 - 15, 1997
65. Lawrence, Kansas - Eldridge Hotel  
July 12 - 14, 1998
66. Louisville, Kentucky - Embassy Suites  
July 18 - 20, 1999
67. Petoskey, Michigan - Stafford=s Perry Hotel  
July 16 - 18, 2000
68. St. Paul, Minnesota - Radisson City Center  
Hotel, July 15 - 17, 2001
69. Springfield, Missouri - Marriott Residence  
Inn, July 13 - 16, 2002
70. Omaha, Nebraska - Double Tree Hotel  
July 12 - 15, 2003
71. Bismarck, North Dakota - Radisson Hotel  
July 11 - 13, 2004
72. Sandusky, Ohio – Sawmill Creek Resort  
July 11 – 13, 2005
73. Spearfish, South Dakota – Holiday Inn I-90  
July 9 – 12, 2006
74. Minocqua, Wisconsin – The Waters of  
Minocqua, July 15 – 18, 2007
75. Estes Park, Colorado – Holiday Inn  
June 29 – July 2, 2008
76. Peoria, Illinois – Pere Marquette Hotel  
June 28 – July 1, 2009
77. Indianapolis, Indiana – Hyatt Regency  
June 27 – June 30, 2010
78. Centerville, Iowa – Honey Creek Resort SP  
June 26 – June 29, 2011
79. Wichita, Kansas – Hotel at Old Town  
June 24 – June 27, 2012
80. Lexington, Kentucky – Hilton Downtown  
June 23 – June 26, 2013
81. Traverse City, Michigan – Park Plaza Hotel  
June 22 – June 25, 2014
82. Duluth, Minnesota – Radisson Harborview  
June 28 – July 1, 2015
83. Saint Louis, Missouri – Chase Park Plaza  
Hotel, June 26 – 29, 2016
84. Ashland, Nebraska – Eugene T. Mahoney SP  
June 25 – June 28, 2017
85. Bismarck, North Dakota – Ramkota Hotel  
June 24 – 27, 2018
86. Oregon, Ohio - Maumee Bay Resort  
June 23 – June 26, 2019
87. Virtual Meeting – Whova and Zoom  
June 28 – June 30, 2021
88. Custer, South Dakota – Custer State Park  
June 27 – June 30, 2022

## **MAFWA COMMITTEES AND APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES 2021-2022**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

**Colleen Callahan (IL), President**  
**Vacant, First Vice President**  
**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN), Second Vice President**  
**Sara Parker Pauley (MO), Member**  
**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**

### **AUDIT COMMITTEE:**

**Colleen Callahan (IL), Chair**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**  
**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN), Member**

### **AWARDS COMMITTEE:**

**Kendra Wecker (OH), Chair**  
**Christie Curley (ON), Member**  
**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**  
**Brian Clark (KY), Member**  
**Tim McCoy (NE), Member**

### **BYLAWS COMMITTEE:**

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

### **INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE:**

**Dan Eichinger (MI), Chair**  
**Brad Loveless (KS), Member**  
**Dave Olfelt (MN), Member**  
**Roger Luebbert (MAFWA), Member**

### **RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE:**

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

### **PROGRAM COMMITTEE:**

**Kevin Robling (SD), Chair**  
**Colleen Callahan (IL), Member**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**  
**Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA), Member**

**CONSERVATION FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**

**MAFWA Executive Committee (see above)**

**Dan Eichinger (MI), Member**

**CEF/MFWC COMMITTEE:**

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

**Kendra Wecker (OH), Member**

**Tim McCoy (NE), Member**

**MIDWEST LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE:**

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

**Tim McCoy (NE), Member**

**John Rogner (IL), Member**

**Pete Hildreth (IA), Member**

**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN), Member**

**Brad Loveless (KS), Ex Officio Member**

**MAFWA TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEES**

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

<b>MAFWA HUNTER &amp; ANGLER RECRUITMENT &amp; RETENTION</b>	<b>KEVIN ROBLING (SD)</b>
<b>MIDWEST CITES</b>	<b>MAFWA President</b>
<b>MIDWEST HUMAN DIMENSIONS/ SOCIAL SCIENCE</b>	<b>KEVIN ROBLING, SD</b>
<b>MIDWEST FERAL SWINE (AD HOC)</b>	<b>MAFWA President</b>
<b>MIDWEST CWD (AD HOC)</b>	<b>SARA PARKER PAULEY</b>

#### **OFFICIAL MAFWA REPRESENTATIVES**

##### **AFWA CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE TASK FORCE:**

**Lindsey Long (WI)**

**Tom DeLiberto (APHIS-WS)**

##### **AFWA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

**Tim McCoy (NE)**

##### **AFWA FARM BILL WORKING GROUP:**

**Greg Hoch (MN)**

**Michael Parker (MI)**

##### **AFWA SCIENCE AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE:**

**Gary Whelan (MI)**

**Jason Sumners (MO)**

##### **SHOOTING SPORTS ROUNDTABLE**

**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)**

##### **CITES:**

**Carolyn Caldwell (OH)**

##### **ESA JOINT TASK FORCE:**

**Sara Parker Pauley (MO)**

##### **FEDERAL BUDGET:**

**Colleen Callahan (IL)**

##### **HUNTER ACCESS:**

**Tom Kirschenmann (SD)**

##### **MONARCH JOINT VENTURE STEERING COMMITTEE:**

**Pete Hildreth (IA)**

##### **MSCGP TECHNICAL REVIEW EXPERT**

**Jennifer Wellman (IL)**

##### **NATIONAL BOBWHITE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE:**

**Brad Loveless (KS)**

##### **NATIONAL COOPERATOR'S COALITION:**



**Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA)**  
**NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH INITIATIVE**  
**Tami Ryan (WI)**  
**Jason Sumners (MO)**  
**NATIONAL FISH HABITAT BOARD:**  
**Pat Rivers (MN)**  
**NATIONAL GRANTS COMMITTEE:**  
**MAFWA President**  
**NATIONAL WHITE NOSE SYNDROME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**  
**Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)**  
**PRAIRIE CITY USA:**  
**Ed Boggess (MAFWA)**  
**Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA)**  
**RESERVOIR FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP:**  
**Scott Hale (OH)**  
**SOUTHERN WINGS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE:**  
**Craig Thompson, (WI)**  
**SWAP REVIEW TEAM**  
**Dave Olfelt (MN)**  
**Kendra Wecker (OH)**  
**WIND ENERGY:**  
**Nathan Cummins (TNC)**

**PRESIDENT'S AD HOC COMMITTEES**

**FERAL SWINE COMMITTEE:**  
**Terri Brunjes (KY), Chair**  
**CWD COMMITTEE:**  
**Jason Sumners (MO), Chair**

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS



**MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

**JULY, 2021**

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

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

### **PREAMBLE**

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

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

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

The objectives of the Association shall be:

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

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

## **ARTICLE I**

### **OFFICERS**

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

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

## **ARTICLE II**

### **OTHER ASSOCIATION POSITIONS**

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

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

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

## **ARTICLE III**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

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

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

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

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

## **ARTICLE IV**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **ARTICLE V**

### **MEETINGS**

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

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

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **VOTING**

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

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **DUES**

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



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

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **FISCAL YEAR**

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

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **QUORUM**

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

## **ARTICLE X**

### **AMENDMENT**

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

## **ARTICLE XI**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Climate Change (2022)  
National Conservation Need (NCN) Committee (2023)  
Midwest Private Lands Wildlife Management Group (2024)  
Midwest Public Lands Technical Working Committee (2022)  
Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee (2022)  
Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (2023)  
Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (2023)  
Midwest Furbearer Group (2024)  
Wildlife Diversity Committee (2024)  
Hunter and Angler Recruitment and Retention Technical Working Group (2023)

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

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

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

Amended 1995  
Amended 1996  
Amended 2000  
Amended 2001  
Amended July 16, 2003  
Amended July 13, 2004  
Amended July 13, 2005  
Amended July 12, 2006  
Amended July 18, 2007  
Amended July 2, 2008  
Amended July 1, 2009  
Amended December 23, 2009  
Amended June 29, 2011  
Amended June 27, 2012  
Amended June 26, 2013  
Amended June 25, 2014  
Amended July 1, 2015  
Amended June 29, 2016  
Amended June 28, 2017  
Amended June 27, 2018  
Amended June 26, 2019Amended October 8, 2020  
Amended June 30, 2021

Brian	Bashore	brian@sdhabitatfund.com	Second Century Habitat Fund	Executive Director
Jim	Bauer			
Claire	Beck	claire.beck@dnr.ohio.gov	MAFWA	Landscape Conservation Technical Coordinator
Taniya	Bethke	Taniya@cahss.org	Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports	Director of Operations
Ed	Boggess	edward.boggess@gmail.com	MAFWA	Landscape Conservation Liaison
Frank	Boyd	frankboydllc@gmail.com	USDA Wildlife Services	Consultant
Ryan	Bronson	rbronson@rmef.org	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Director of Government Affairs
Richard	Burns	c3@colleencallahan.com		
Colleen	Callahan	colleen.callahan@illinois.gov	IL Department of Natural Resources	Director
Stephen	Carlyle	scarlyle@mhhc.mb.ca	Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation	Chief Executive Officer
Dave	Chanda	dchanda@rbff.org	RBFF	President & CEO
Brian	Clark	brian.clark@ky.gov	Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources	Deputy Commissioner
Paul	Coughlin	paul.coughlin@state.sd.us	South Dakota Game, Fish & Park	Terrestrial Habitat Program Administrator
Nathan	Cummins	ncummins@tnc.org	The Nature Conservancy	Director, Renewable Energy Programs
Theresa	Davidson	theresa.davidson@usda.gov	USFS	Acting Threatened & Endangered Species Biologist
Tanner	Davis	tanner.davis@state.sd.us	South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks	Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator
Evan	Denning			
Rachel	DePalma	rachel.depalma@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Executive Staff Assistant
Justin	Dull	justin.dull@aciworldwide.com	ACI Worldwide	Sr New Business Developer
Al	Eiden	aeiden@pheasantsforever.org	Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever	Director of Field Operations - West Region
Jennifer	Forster	djforster@bellsouth.net		
Dan	Forster	danforster@archerytrade.org	Archery Trade Association	Vice President & Chief Conservation Officer
Bee	Frederick	Bfrederick@scifirstforhunters.org	Safari Club International (SCI)	State and Local Liaison
Mark	Gaikowski	mgaikowski@usgs.gov	USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center	Center Director
Todd	Haines	todd.haines@dnr.ohio.gov	Ohio Division of Wildlife	Assistant Chief
Brayden	Hammock	Braydenhammock@icloud.com		
Aaron	Hebeisen	hebeisen@backcountryhunters.org	Backcountry Hunters & Anglers	Chapter Coordinator (MN, WI, IA, IL, MO)
PETE	HILDRETH	Pete.Hildreth@dnr.iowa.gov	IA DNR	DIVISION ADMINISTRATOR
Matt	Hogan	Matt_Hogan@fws.gov	US Fish and Wildlife	Regional Director
Kathy	Hollar	kathy_hollar@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Manager, Division of Policy and Programs
Becky	Humphries	bhumphries@nwtf.net	National Wild Turkey Federation	Co-CEO
Stephanie	Hussey	shussey@rbff.org	Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation	State R3 Program Director
Paul	Jones	paul_jones@fws.gov	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Sagebrush Grassland Ecosystem Project Manager
Dan	Kemmis	dankemmis@yahoo.com		
Sheila	Kemmis	sheila.kemmis@ks.gov	Kansas Dept of Wildlife and Parks	Public Service Administrator and MAFWA Secretary
Carla	King	C10king@msn.com		
Mitch	King	mitch@airgunsporting.org	Airgun Sporting Association	President
Eric	Lobner	eric.lobner@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Wildlife Management Bureau Director
Shannon	Lott	lotts1@michigan.gov	Department of Natural Resources	Natural Resources Deputy Director
Mindy	Loveless	heather.young@ks.gov		
Brad	Loveless	brad.loveless@ks.gov	Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks	Secretary
Glenda	Luebbert			
Roger	Luebbert	Roger.Luebbert@mdc.mo.gov	Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies	Treasurer
Karl	Malcolm	karl.malcolm@usda.gov	USDA Forest Service	Assistant Director, Renewable Resources
Russ	Mason	MasonR2@michigan.gov	Michigan DNR	Assistant Director for University and External Programs
Diane	McCoy	coydog1986@gmail.com		
Tim	McCoy	tim.mccoy@nebraska.gov	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Director
Jared	McJunkin	jmcjunkin@nwtf.net	National Wild Turkey Federation	Director of Conservation Operations - Central Region

Brad	Milley	brad_milley@fws.gov	USFWS	Conservation Social Scientist
Matt	Mitchell	matt.mitchell@brandtinfo.com	Brandt Information Services	Chief Revenue Officer
Matthew	Mitro	matthew.mitro@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin DNR	Fisheries Research Scientist
Bill	Moritz	bmoritz@wildlifemgt.org	Wildlife Management Institute	Midwest regional representative
Caroline	Murphy	cmurphy@wildlife.org	The Wildlife Society	Government Relations Manager
Kelley	Myers	kelley_myers@fws.gov	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Senior Adviser on Landscape Conservation
Mark	Norton	mark.norton@state.sd.us	SD GFP	Hunting Access & Farm Bill Coordinator
Dave	Olfelt	dave.olfelt@state.mn.us	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife	Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife
Sara	Pauley	sara.pauley@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation	Director
Janice	Paulson			
John	Paulson	john.d.paulson@usda.gov	USDA/APHIS/WS	State Director
Bob	Paulson	bobpaulson2015@gmail.com	South Dakota Parks & Wildlife Foundation	Board Member - Resource Development Chair
Kelsey	Pickart	kelsey.pickart@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin DNR	Communications Coordinator
James	Rader	jrader@ducks.org	Ducks Unlimited	Director of Operations
Jeff	Rawlinson	jeff.rawlinson@nebraska.gov	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Assistant Division Administrator
Ron	Regan	rregan@fishwildlife.org	ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES	Executive Director
Kevin	Robling	kevin.robbling@state.sd.us	SD Game, Fish and Parks	Department Secretary
John	Rogner	john.rogner@illinois.gov	IL Department of Natural Resources	Assistant Director
Tami	Ryan	tamara.ryan@wisconsin.gov	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Deputy Division Administrator
Phil	Seng	phil@djcase.com	DJ Case & Associates	President
Lorisa	Smith	lorisa.smith@mdc.mo.gov	Missouri Department of Conservation	Governmental Affairs Specialist
Dean	Smith	info@woodwaterconsulting.ca	AFWA	NAWMP Director / Wildlife Liaison (Canada)
Roald	Stander	rstander@mhhc.mb.ca	Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation	Director of Conservation Partnerships
John	Steuber	John.E.Steuber@USDA.GOV	USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services	Asst Regional Director
Mitch	Strobl	mstrobl@kalkomey.com	Kalkomey Enterprises, LLC	EVP, Agency Relations & Conservation
Scott	Taylor	staylor@pheasantsforever.org	Pheasants Forever / MAFWA	National Pheasant Plan Coordinator
John D.	Thompson, PhD (JT)	jthompson@usgs.gov	USGS, Cooperative Research Unit	Deputy Chief
Curtis	Thornhill	cthornhill@s3gov.com	Sovereign Sportsman Solutions (S3)	Director of Business Development and Client Relations
Ollie	Torgerson	ollie.torgerson@wi.gov	Midwest Assn. Fish & Wildlife Agencies	Executive Secretary
Chuck	Traxler	charles_traxler@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Deputy Regional Director
Christopher	Tymeson	ctymeson@scifirstforhunters.org	Safari Club International	State and Local Liaison
Tony	Wasley	twasley@ndow.org	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Director
Kendra	Wecker	Kendra.Wecker@dnr.ohio.gov	Ohio Division of Wildlife	Chief
Sherry	Wehner			
Keith	Wehner	Keith.P.Wehner@USDA.GOV	APHIS, Wildlife Services	Regional Director
Jeb	Williams	ltimm@nd.gov	North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Director
Richard	Wise	richardw@brandtinfo.com	Brandt Information Services	CEO
Megan	Wisecup	megan.wisecup@dnr.iowa.gov	Iowa Department of Natural Resource	Education, Outreach and Marketing Section Supervisor
Faren	Wolter	faren.wolter@state.sd.us	South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks	Human Dimensions Specialist
Mike	Wons	mike.wons@brandtinfo.com	Brandt Information Services	President
Charlie	Wooley	charles_wooley@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Regional Director

**MAFWA Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Monday, June 27, 2022**  
**4:30-6:00 p.m. MDT**  
**Creekside Lodge/Coolidge Room**  
**Custer State Park**

**Call to Order** – President Colleen Callahan, Illinois called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

**Quorum** – Colleen Callahan, Illinois, Pete Hildreth, Iowa, Kendra Wecker, Ohio and Sara Pauley, Missouri. Also present were Ollie Torgerson, Executive Secretary, Roger Luebbert, Treasurer and Sheila Kemmis, Secretary. Guests: Claire Beck, Ed Boggess, Lorisa Smith, Kelley Myers, Kevin Robling. Colleen – Thank Kevin for the work, a herculean task on top of daily work, planning a meeting like this for your cohorts in other states. Putting together sponsors as well. Thank you for all of your efforts. This is just the beginning and Thursday afternoon you will exhale. Kevin – Welcome to Custer State Park. Excited to have you, have a fantastic four days, weather will be perfect, facilities are great and great to see people in-person. Happy you are here.

**Agenda Repair** (Agenda – Exhibit A) – Sara – If time would like to give executive committee idea of roundtable discussion on RAWA and suggestions for that. Ollie – Dan Eichinger couldn't be here because of tribal consultation, Shannon Lott, his deputy has his proxy. Dan is on the agenda and there are some financial papers that need to be executed to transfer financial advisor services. Colleen – Are those beyond the ones Roger and I have been e-signing? Roger – We signed them but there might be more. Ollie – There may be a couple that need a wet signature.

**Approval of May 4, 2022 ExCom Minutes** (Exhibit B) – *Pete Hildreth, Iowa moved to accept minutes, Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri second. **Approved.***

**Electronic Vote Results**– Ollie – President called for electronic vote of board for taking unused NFWF monarch grant state match money to use to contract with Monarch Joint Venture to update the monarch strategy. Conducted vote on May 12 vote and it was unanimous in favor.

**Financial Report** (Exhibit C) – MAFWA Treasurer *Roger Luebbert* presented the financial report – Last report was as of February 27, 2022, this report is as of April 20, 2022. This report shows all transactions for all of MAFWA and Conservation Enhancement Fund accounts for this time frame. The first two accounts are banking services accounts and we split banking services into two accounts to stay under federally insured amount. First page is **Banking Services Account, River Region Credit Union**, last balance you was \$133,610; total receipts for National Pheasant Plan Coordinator and interest, \$36,089; disbursements of \$32,469, PF and MLI zoom subscription; for balance of \$137,229. Designations of that balance are listed and they total \$133,853 (monarch/pollinator and pheasant plan coordinator). **Banking Services Account, Conservation Credit Union** last balance of \$105,634; total receipts CLfT from Michigan and interest for \$10,544; total disbursements of \$10,000 for CLfT; balance of \$106,178. Designations are at the bottom of the page (three Ohio projects and RBFF) \$92,529. In **Conference Account**, our main operating account, last balance of \$140,127; total receipts of \$21,525, 12 sponsors for annual meeting and interest; total disbursements of \$26,868 for meeting expenses, Executive



Secretary and Treasurer pay and travel, tax preparation and executive committee meeting expense from Northwestern, technology we had to pay for; for total balance as of \$106,178.

**Federal Account**, which handles federal projects, last balance was \$17,210; total receipts of \$87,943 (USFWS and interest); total disbursements of \$81,686 (state liaison and technical coordinator pay, R3 evaluation and toolkit phase 2 projects); balance of \$23,466.

**Southern Wings Account**, minimal activity. **Credit Union Share Account** required to maintain membership, \$25 to be a member, minimal activity. The **Money Market and Securities Account at the Broker** (investment account), dates are different because of when we receive statements; last balance as of February 28, 2022, \$845,267; total receipts of \$3,926 (interest and dividends); funds swept out of the cash sub-account and reinvested, \$1,195; change of market value was negative \$53,809 for balance as of April 30, 2022, of \$794,189.

We have two tax entities in MAFWA, they are a 501(c)(6) and the Conservation Enhancement Fund is our foundation and is a 501(c)(3). These dates are different depending on when we received statements.

**Conservation Enhancement Share Account at Credit Union**, minimal activity, \$30 interest; ending balance of \$60,780. **Conservation Enhancement Credit Union Checking Account**, as of April 30 \$7,851; receipts includes small amount of interest; disbursement is \$625 for tax preparation fee; balance of \$7,228. **Conservation Enhancement Account at the Broker**, as of January 31, 2022, \$6,726; \$16 in dividends and \$16 swept out of the cash account and reinvested, change in market value, negative \$157, balance as of March 31, 2022, of \$6,569.

**Conservation Enhancement Fund Summary**, Last part of page is summary designations and assets of the conservation enhancement fund. We talked about checking and share account, have receivables for 2022 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC) Iowa and 2023 MFWC in Kansas and broker account \$6,569, so total assets of \$106,576. The designations are listed Kansas is \$22,472. *Sara* – Is that right, 2012, not 2022. *Sheila* – Yes, it is 2012. *Roger* – Funds back from that conference we are holding for them and whenever they do it again. *Sheila* – We are doing it again in 2023. *Roger* – In 2012, we had a different process. Also true of Ohio MFWC conference funds that was 2019. Have contributions from 11 states, \$5,000 each for \$55,000, CEF operating funds and funds set aside for Kansas staff to Iowa conference funds. *Sheila* – We are not going to use that. *Roger* - Total designations of \$99,569 and an undesignated balance of \$7,007.

**Budget Summary**, per our internal control plan we show the status of our conference account. It is too early to make much out of this, don't have a lot of activity yet, that picks up in the summer and fall and this becomes more meaningful. Budget shows a favorable variance of \$5,609.

Concludes my report. *Ollie* – Any issues in mid-year? *Roger* – No. You can see by looking at it. Line numbers are on the left. When you look at line 19, Delaney Coordinator Fees, you see that we are probably going to have a deficit there. The contract was renegotiated after we put the budget together. We are going to have favorable variances that will offset it. An example of that would be line 33, tax preparation fees, that is done and we have a favorable variance of \$565 and there will be others like that. *Kendra Wecker, Ohio, moved to accept Treasurer's report, second by Pete Hildreth, Iowa. Approved.*

**Proposed 2023 Budget** (Exhibit D) – *Roger* – This will be presented to the full Board. Budget has six pages, first two are how we fared in 2021 budget, next two is 2022 budget status. Move to page five, proposed budget of 2023. Line numbers are on the left. On page 4, line 36, under disbursements. We thought receipts were going to exceed disbursements by \$5,609 but if you

look at the actual we exceeded by \$64,000, a very good year. Some of the reasons for that, page one, line 11, federal indirect costs; we had a lot more federal projects going on for higher dollar amount than we thought we would at the beginning of the year. We had a favorable variance on that line of \$18,901, thought we would receive \$16,660 and instead received \$35,761. The other line that played a major role, was line 22 and disbursements side (page 2), total conference disbursements. We thought we would have \$54,935 because we thought we were going to have in-person conference but had virtual conference and spent \$13,589 so we had a favorable variance of \$41,346. We did well but we didn't think it was going to be. We don't have a lot of numbers yet for this year. The executive committee sees this report every time they meet and it becomes more meaningful as the year goes along. Move to page five, 2020 actual, 2021 actual, 2022 budget and proposed 2023 budget. Most of the numbers come from historical numbers, 2022 budget or 2021 actual. Lines 5 and 6, membership dues for 13 states at \$4,687.83 and three provinces at \$118.91. If this budget is approved by the full board this will become the membership dues for 2023. That is 7.88% raise according to the consumer price index (CPI), from January 2021 to January 2022 numbers. Line 10, federal indirect cost using average of 2020 and 2021 figures, we had \$16,000 in 2020, \$35,000 in 2021 and not sure if we will have that high of number in 2026, so using \$26,000. Total receipts, line 15, \$180,275. One line changed since last time, line 16, Delaney coordinator fees, we discussed this and changed to draft contract amount. Another one we changed, line 20, prizes and awards, had it based on 2022 budget, \$4,200 and we haven't been spending that much, so used 2021 actual and adjusted for inflation. Exceptions to the norm, from using historical numbers, line 22, executive secretary pay and line 24, treasurers pay, those are adjusted according to CPI per contract. Line 26, contract manager, we set aside in 2022 \$8,000 but we haven't found anybody yet so moved it forward to 2023. Line 29, CPA audit, is on a five-year cycle and the next audit is in 2024, so nothing for 2023. Line 30, insurance is on a three-year cycle and it does come due in 2023. The bottom line, line 34, total disbursements, \$178,820 and is \$1,455 less than receipts on line 15. So, no deficit, pretty much break even. *Sara* – Delaney contract, reflective of fact that we are back in-person or did it just jump? *Ollie* – We don't have contract right now. We have a contract for this meeting and had part of the money in 2020, cancelled that conference and it carried over to here, so we had quite a flux in our contract with Delaney. They met with Cindy and Meg (Brad Loveless and Dan Eichinger appointed by Madam President), to negotiate two new contracts with Delaney. They both are expiring or have expired, don't know results of that meeting. Cindy asking for five-year contract instead of three-year contract. That was a negotiating item. What I am guessing we will have to do is either have an electronic vote on that or set a meeting of the executive committee to execute those contracts. I don't know what figure to put in there because we haven't seen the draft contract. We may have to adjust that figure. *Sara* - \$16,000 was actual contract amount? *Roger* – That is amount on draft contract. *Sara* – Significant jump from last couple years is that in part that we are going back to in-person or combination of factors. *Ollie* – I don't think there was a hybrid item in the draft contract, which would help the contract costs. *Sara* – I am asking this, 2020 was \$6,000, 2021 was \$8,400 and in 2022 jumped to \$16,000. I am asking that question, why significant jump? *Roger* – Last time we had in-person was \$11,000 and that was a number of years ago. *Sara* – So it is reflective of going back. *Roger* – It is higher than we estimated. I toyed with making it less. *Sara* – That is helpful. *Colleen* – This is proposed and can be adjusted. Need vote to recommend moving this to the full Board. *Ollie* – You can let Board decide on Thursday. *Sara* – What information has full Board had on change of membership dues? I felt that we notified full board or was that just to the executive committee?

*Ollie* – Change in dues is in the bylaws. *Sara* – I am offering a change in the bylaws. My question is, has all the board members been notified that this change is coming other than looking through their documents? *Ollie* – They got this. *Sara* - They have this report, but have they been emailed to be aware that membership dues are increasing? *Ollie* – It changes every year. They go up or down based on the CPI. That has been going on for a long time. We changed it this year because it had an old figure in it and wasn't realistic in the bylaws. *Sara* – Maybe it doesn't need to be in the bylaws. Maybe it should just say dues change based upon the CPI. I just want to know if members got a separate communication regarding dues. *Ollie* – No, see this and will get invoice from Roger. *Sara* – I don't think anyone is surprised. But related to how we roll this out I want to understand that. *Ollie* – You brought up the same question about sponsorship numbers as seen in the bylaws and do they need to be in there? *Sara* – Since they change every year I think there might be a better way to state things in the bylaws so we can accept regular changes without specifically providing that level of detail. *Colleen* – I see your point. Maybe an email stating, please be aware the annual dues will see an increase of 7.88% due to CPI. Even though we should be aware of it 7.88% is a lot. If you don't read the bylaws it could catch people off guard. As a safety measure, communicate that you would be well served. *Ollie* – Would you like an annual notification? *Colleen* – I think so. *Sara* – A good practice. *Colleen* – Alert membership to increases and decreases so you can adjust your own budget. *Sara* – With so many new directors they may not be aware of this practice and want to alert them. Need to look at rewording the bylaws as well. *Colleen* – When will notification go out? *Ollie* – I can send today. *Colleen* – Nothing wrong with that, say at executive committee meeting held earlier today it seemed appropriate that we alert you that dues will be going up. We still need to vote to make recommendation to the Board. *Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to take to full board, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second. Approved.*

**Check Signer Back-Up** – *Roger* – All checks MAFWA sends out are signed by a director, *Sara* is our primary check signer, but in the past we had a back-up check signer if for some reason *Sara* is not available. *Keith Warnke* was our back up. We are looking for someone to do that. We never had to exercise it with *Keith* but want to have someone in place. Whoever that person is we would need a copy of their driver's license and some forms a person has to fill out. *Ollie*, myself, and *Colleen* would probably have to sign it too. Looking for someone to fill that role *Pete Hildreth* – I would be happy to do that. *Colleen* – Since we have a volunteer and we don't have to designate anyone, do we have to vote approval? *Ollie* – I don't think so. *Roger* – *Pete*, we will get together after this meeting.

**Financial Advisor Papers** – *Dan Eichinger* not present and *Shannon Lott* is not here yet. *Colleen* – *Dan* did an incredible job getting this accomplished. In researching, analyzing, reviewing, recommending and all that to get to the point where we are ready to approve this. He did all that, so, a public thank you to *Dan* for his work on that. In light of the fact that *Shannon Lott* has been prepared and prepped to do this, will come back to it if she arrives.

**Proposed Resolutions** – *Sara* – We have one resolution of great substance coming out of Fish and Wildlife Health committee asking for added staff capacity to respond adequately to health threats. These professionals are feeling the weight of additional threats and responsibilities coming their way. This is to recognize they are needing additional capacity, whatever that may look like, and recognition of increasing workloads. *Lindsey* will not be here but I will be able to

answer questions. *Ollie* – I don't think we need to take any action here. *Colleen* – That is one resolution that will be for consideration and will be discussed at Board meeting. *Pete* – When they ask for support for added capacity, what are current workload priorities? *Sara* – It is for health professionals in your individual states. It is just recognizing that our health professionals are dealing with a lot of added challenges and recognition of that. Resolutions are not binding on states.

**MAFWA/USFWS Cooperative Agreement** – *Kelley Myers* – Craig couldn't be here he is moving this week. He is all in with what we are doing in the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI). We are asking for approval of an amendment for the current cooperative agreement in place between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and MAFWA. It is for work Ed and Claire have done as well as work with WMI for development of communications and engagements documents and strategies. We have had some semblance of this agreement in place since 2016 starting with monarch conservation. There has been a new agreement every five to six years, so two years ago did second round. This is an amendment to continue on the work that has been going on with subtle changes, Ed is retiring, a big transition. *Colleen* – That is not so subtle. *Ed* – It will be smooth transition. *Kelley* – Trying a new approach, Lorisa Smith will step in, Missouri Department of Conservation (DOC) has offered to incur the cost of Lorisa, her personnel costs, so that will be a reduced amount in this agreement. This is a different approach so we will try it out and see how it works. Travel will still be paid. We think it is important for Claire to go to some professional development training, she has been doing this work since 2017 and this is a perk we can give her in terms of where she is going in her profession and we want to add that to this agreement, so funds in there for that. Also, left opening for other work we might identify. With work from WMI would like to be open to it as we identify that type of work and subsequent versions. There is an increase in the amount Claire would be paid as she will be taking on some additional duties she is taking on with Ed leaving and she stepped in to keep that going and raised her by CPI. Making sure we are taking care of the staff. We want to make sure people behind us doing the work are taken care of. About \$300,000 plus last year we decided that rather than go through headquarters for conference support we decided we decided it would be easier to put it in this agreement for conference support, came to association easier so make amendment, so it may be a little more than the \$300,000 because it will include conference support. New work and pilot with Lorisa. Want to add how wonderful to have Ed help transition with Lorisa and help me and Claire figure out things down-the-road. He wanted to make sure we were in a good spot. Appreciate that. *Ollie* – Moved at May meeting to recommend approval of this amendment to full Board. *Kelley* – Asked for permission to explore that. *Pete* – Great to have Lorisa here. *Kendra* – Great you are sending Claire to NCLI, good recognition. *Kelley* – Could use a few letters to help do that. *Colleen* – Claire, please take a minute to tell us a little bit about your background and new roles you will be doing in the new roles you will be assuming. *Claire* – I started out as contractor with MAFWA as monarch conservation strategy. I focused on pollinators in grad school and after monarchs stayed on as a contractor. I have been working with MLI for 2-3 years and started out with at-risk species working group and then laid out a little bit more of our roles. My title is technical committee coordinator and work with the different working groups, expanding groups of teams so there is someone who knows everything going on and working towards a vision. *Colleen* – Thanks for what you have done and what you will begin to do. *Lorisa* – Worked for Missouri, with Missouri DOC for five years now and have been working with MLI, Ed, Claire and I and I am happy to step into this role. My background is not

technical, not pollinators but more policy related. I enjoy connecting the dots with people, excited for opportunity with MLI and soon will have the opportunity show the value of what MLI is and help each state be more successful individually and as a collaboration. Spread the word on what MLI is about and be additional support. Excited to be here and see everyone in person. Nice to talk to Ollie and have opportunity to be here. Thank you. *Colleen* – Thank you, on behalf of Executive Committee, Ed for everything you have done and staying longer than you might have planned but you are known for doing things well and adding your influence as you could going forward. **Applause.** *Ed* – Worked with this group for many years and this is probably my last ExCom meeting and I want to say what a privilege and honor it has been. I want to put a plug in for cooperative agreement. After I retired unsuccessfully the first time I came back under cooperative agreement and got Claire on shortly after that. We have done a lot of great work with USFWS and in my career really the best thing I have seen in building relationships between states and the Service and working long-term. Directors have to deal with fires all the time and the MLI approach allows working together in long-term process that is moving conservation forward. States are doing it but not a lot of time to think about regional scale. Privileged and honored and humbled by what I have been able to do.

**Regional Wildlife Health Coordinator** – *Ollie* – The America Rescue Act has provided money for the country to work on wildlife health issues of pandemic potential. When AFWA Fish and Wildlife Health committee got word of that they made a recommendation for each regional association to use this money to establish a regional wildlife health coordinator position. Happy to hear about that. Needing that kind of help with grants and wildlife health is a most active part of our Association along with MLI and R3. I contacted the Region 3 office and asked them to figure out how to get the money dumped in our laps so we could move forward with this position. We thought we could add it to this amendment just discussed but Jim said no that we needed to do a separate agreement, which he got executed in short order, The NOFO was announced day before Memorial Day and gave me two days to apply for it, due on Memorial Day or day after. If it wasn't for the help of Julie Cole in the USFWS Regional office I could have never gotten that done, but we got it applied for. I don't know when it is going to get awarded, it hasn't been announced yet. As soon as it is Roger can download the money. We have a position description and an interview committee. Has the request for applicants gone out? *Sara* – I don't believe it has. I will check. *Ollie* – We are ready to rock and roll, hopefully yet this calendar year, we will have person on board. There are other federal funds coming out and we will talk about that in business meeting. Waiting for announcement, Roger will download funding and we will be ready to go. Located in our region, don't know where, depends on the applicant. Sara is on interview committee as well as Tami Ryan, WI, Lindsey Long and Jason Summers. They will do a great job for us. *Pete* – How does that parallel what we just discussed on position for wildlife health? *Sara* – The same committee who made the resolution is involved in this. We will have copies of the resolution in front of the Board. *Ollie* – Yes we will. Avian influenza that hit took a lot of staff time and a lot of our states don't have the capacity to do the things that pop in the fish and wildlife health field, some are under capacity anyway. Know this position will help but will not take load off individual states. *Pete* – One time funding? *Ollie* – Three to four years, it is \$450,000; \$150,000 a year but they said it could be extended but we are planning on \$450,000. Don't know how much will be available this year, enough to get the position started anyway. It might be located in your area; you have a big health facility in Iowa. *Pete* – We have lab at Iowa State. *Ollie* – One in Madison Wisconsin and one at Michigan State,

so we have good facilities around the Midwest. *Sara* – We are getting a new One-Health lab in Missouri tied to Department of Conservation.

**Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership** – *Ollie* – We were asked by the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (GPFHP) Board to assume administrative responsibility for this partnership since the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will no longer be able to provide that service. The National Fish Habitat (NFHP) Board has been tasked all of the responsibility of this and they met in April to figure out how they are going to execute this Act. Some Board members are meeting this week. USFWS pulling out of eight of the 20 existing partnerships, losing their funding because of the Act at the end of budget year in September, so that is as long as they can continue operate these 8 partnerships. One change in the Act is that it is a one-to-one match now when there was no match before, so a big change. There is no action before you because they are still trying to figure this thing out. Don't know if you want to take this on or not. Fits in MLI really well. It is rivers and streams fish habitat partnership and most of our regional species of greatest conservation are aquatic. It extends a little beyond our geography to the west; includes Kansas, the Dakotas, Nebraska and goes into Montana. It is rivers and streams and not lakes and reservoirs. There is a second one in the Midwest called Fish and Farmers Fish Habitat Partnership that is also administered by USFWS but we have not been asked to assume administrative responsibility of that. We have two letters, urging us to take responsibility, one from Brad Loveless from Kansas and one from fish chief in North Dakota. Both have written letters in support of MAFWA assuming these responsibilities. I will let Board know on Thursday at business meeting. Lot of questions at this point and not a lot of answers. Doug Nygren from Kansas represented us on the Board, he did a great job but retired, Pat Rivers from Minnesota DNR has been appointed by the President to assume that role so we do sit on the NFHP Board. I asked for some minutes but haven't seen minutes from their April meeting. *Sara* – Ron will be here he may have more on that. Something we ask him during full Board meeting. *Ollie* – Another administrative responsibility. The coordinator is a half time position; \$85,000 annually, part salary, part travel and other things. We would have to hire somebody, report to us or Pat Rivers if we decide to take this on. The thing I like about it is that it fits the MLI well. I don't know anything about Fish and Farmers partnership. It is in our region. I don't know what Western Association is going to do as they have several that are losing USFWS coordinators. They already have one they administer, the Trout Initiative in the west. A big one that is a full time position. Let you know about letters and what we are being asked. *Pete* – You mentioned required one-to-one match and talked about it being around \$85,000, will our ask to them be over \$40,000 for match? *Ollie* – Don't know the details. That is what the current system, \$85,000 a year to pay for that. We can turn it down and the GPFHP Board has to decide on who to take on that responsibility. They came to us first. *Ed* – Clarification, Pat Rivers used to run Glacial Lakes Fish Habitat Partnership before he went to DNR and he is probably pretty knowledgeable about it. When I talked to executive committee in April/May about my plan for full retirement, I indicated I was committed to a smooth and complete transition, through September. I was hoping to go earlier if possible and it wouldn't be before the board meetings. I am moving along and working with Lorisa, I had every confidence the Board was going to approve her so why not get her started. So, I would like to go before September. *Ollie* – You did say that and would stick to end of the contract or where it makes sense. *Ed* – I will stay if you need me. I didn't want it to come up after this meeting, I will work with Kelley, Craig and Ollie. *Colleen* – Thanks for reiterating your request. *Pete* – On partnership, any request for action of Board this week, or

can't be because we need more information? *Ollie* – There can't be, we might need to set another ExCom meeting before AFWA conference in September. We have Delaney contracts and this pending and may have to make some decisions. *Kelley* – Offered after March meeting I have had a couple of conversations with both of these groups, not necessarily coordinator stuff but other stuff that involves us and there is a lot of interest. We have been working in MLI with joint venture and if this is something you decide we will take this on, we will fold into work on it. *Ollie* – I don't know much about Fish and Farmers, just Great Plains partnership. Is it more farm ponds or what is it? *Kelley* – It is Mississippi River basin, it is water quality issues, predominant in Illinois and Iowa. They traditionally had a coordinator and had a lot of fund raising potential and a lot of claims on wet work. We definitely need to open more conversations there. We need to anyway, but we need direction from this group. *Colleen* – It will be continued conversation. *Ollie* – I will talk about it in business meeting too. *Colleen* – Ron Regan may have some additional information.

**RAWA Discussion** – *Sara* – Kathy Hollar coming from WSFR in part to listen to conversation and appreciate opportunities to identify concerns or issues we as states might have that still need to be answered. I will do a brief introduction or Tony might in his comments, but I do think there is a clearer picture now of USFWS role, state technical committee, half a dozen states with wildlife diversity coordinators working with WSFR program to work on language and habitat assessments between now and statewide action plans are running now. Talk about what is happening and how the Service and AFWA is preparing. I am asking every state to say what they are doing, how it is going and there are still gaps in what you need to be working on, new lessons learned and more specifically any areas we hope for guidance coming down that may clarify some questions we may have. Need to state what you are doing specifically; lessons learned and ask questions that need to be clarified. Do you have other thoughts on how to use that time? *Colleen* – This is tomorrow. *Kevin* – When do we start adding to our teams? *Sara* – An important part but I will be honest perhaps the most important principle is that there be sustainable funding so that we can, with confidence, add staffing and know that is sustainable funding. There are still rumors that pop up about a sunset. That is a good question about reimbursable dollars. Pushing out both legislation of both House and Senate versions to federal year 2023. There is a question of when states should begin to think about this and show progress and we all know we need staff. *Kevin* – That is exactly what we need and grant coordinator as well. I would like to turn to you to RAWA update and then talk about questions you are hearing about sunset and all of that. *Pete* – Strategy you outlined with three primary questions is perfect. I think it is great we recognize this. *Sara* – Appreciate Kathy being in attendance. *Kevin* – We all have ways to help us spend money but grant process can be cumbersome. Need to know what is realistic. *Sara* – If you need help facilitating, let me know. *Kevin* – You have been so involved in RAWA concept would appreciate the help. *Kelley* - Kathy has been having conversations with the Service not just on WSFR but across the board programs so everyone is informed as well. So, don't be afraid to ask hard questions. *Colleen* – She is here to help us. *Kevin* – We need to hear some hard question answers, implementation-wise. *Ollie* – Tony not here, delayed at airport, he is coming. *Kevin* – Should we move things around until he can be here. *Sara* – Don't think so, Ron is here.

**Next Meeting Date** – *Ollie* – Looking at August, usually Tuesday at 2:00 pm, August dates are 9, 16, 23 and 30? I will be out on first one. A month before September meeting at the AFWA conference in Fort Worth. Sometimes we set meeting and cancel it but have a strong feeling that

we will have to have a meeting because we have decisions coming up and we may know more about RAWA by then too. Safe to pick a date and protect it on your calendar. *Discussion on dates.* August 30, 2:00 pm for one hour Zoom meeting.

**Adjourn** – *Pete Hildreth, Iowa moved to adjourn, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second.* **Meeting adjourned at 5:53.**





**Minutes**  
**MAFWA Annual Meeting**  
**June 28 – June 29, 2022**  
**Custer State Park, Creekside Lodge, Event Barn**  
**Custer, South Dakota**

*Final Program – Exhibit 1*

**Monday, June 27, 2022**

MAFWA Executive Committee Meeting 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, June 28, 2022**

*Meeting started at 8:00 am*

**WELCOME REMARKS and STATE HOT TOPIC SESSION**

**Welcome** – Kevin Robling, South Dakota Cabinet Secretary – Kick off with honor guard.

**Honor Guard** – South Dakota Conversation officers performed Honor Guard flag ceremony and pledge of allegiance.

*Kevin Robling* – Welcome to Custer SP beautiful day and setting, great to have everyone here. Shout out to sponsors, thank staff, lots of hard work went into this. Thanks to Honor Guard, great to serve this department and people we serve. Our mission is to serve and connect people to the outdoors through management of our state parks, fisheries and wildlife resources. Serve/Connect/Manage. Connect people and families to the outdoors, my family does all things outdoors, hunt, fish and camp and it is so much fun to see outdoors through their lives and how much it impacts them. Can't think of better motivation, it provides passion and motivation to take on those tough topics we all need to deal with. Vision is to enhance quality of life for future and current generations. Focus on next 100 years and it is challenging at times. Great to have a room full of directors here and eager to learn from you. Four things we prioritize in our department. Habitat access, one page, we want staff to feel empowered and drive towards those goals. Habitat access, 250 people working on it every day and I believe it is our foundation. Big game biologist since 2011, build it and they will come. Focus on habitat and access and you will hear a lot of presentations on that today. Access in private land state is key to R3. If people have a place to hunt, where they feel comfortable enjoying the outdoors and it is free that is the first step of participation. Another one is asset management, we have one of the best park systems in the world, Custer State Park is a testament to that; taking care of the things and land we own. Customer service, connect, serve and manage. We work with Brandt folks each day to offer great customer service. Internal/operational excellence, Team Game, Fish and Parks. We talk about teams all the time, it is a passion that all 500 full time staff in the department are heading towards one goal, one direction and working together as a team or collective unit. Those are the four main parts of our strategic plan, what we strive for and they are meant to be simple and proud that and of this team. Here in Black Hills, have endless amounts of trails; get out east of Black Hills we have Badlands, an amazing, unique ecosystem, great to visit and explore; east of there is rolling prairies, oceans of grass, one of the most intact grasslands in North America; east of that is Missouri River, great walleye fishery and offers a lot of recreational opportunities including

other fishing and boating, up and down that river had 15-20 parks and recreation areas and campgrounds we manage; and east of there is pheasant capital of the world from there to Minnesota, a lot of tallgrass prairie on CRP and a lot of playa lakes in northeast corner, the prairie pothole region that offers great fishing. Happy you are here to enjoy those outdoor resources. Welcome and thank you for being here.

### **State Hot Topics Session**

**Kevin Robling, South Dakota, Facilitator** – We took the hot topics and converted it into a RAWA ready conversation. I want to let Sara give a synopsis of where we are going and where we are at with RAWA right now. She has been a huge supporter of this throughout her career, she carries a lot of weight and is doing a fantastic job. From there we will have a facilitated discussion about RAWA readiness, two years, three years or six months from now and have a good robust conversation. All things indicate this will be a game changer.

*(State of State Reports - Exhibit 3)*

**Sara Parker Pauley, MO** – We are excited to be here, thanks for beautiful weather. Kathy from WSFR program will be joining us. She has agreed to answer some questions for us. Huge debt of gratitude, to state members around the table, Ron Regan, amazing AFWA team and I could go on and on with names. If you are here today, you have probably been part of this conversation. Here because we had state step up and reach out to members of Congress and engaged with external partners. For directors and amazing NGOs partners, you have done your part to engage members of Congress to talk about how critically important this legislation is to the future of conservation. Sean and Kurt remind us to write members of Congress each week. It is out of the House and we can have the conversation on some of the issues that came up in the House, I know funding mechanism was significant part of that. It is looking promising in the Senate as well. We know we have to identify the funding mechanism and most in this room know that the focus is on conservation easements, called tax loophole legislation that seems to be supported by many, still questions by members of the Senate, to make sure it is not retroactive and is only forward looking. Some consider closing a loophole as a tax increase, which is head-scratching to me, trying to work through partners to say that closing loophole is utilizing tax provision fraudulently really isn't a tax increase. Our two primary sponsors, Senator from New Mexico and one from Missouri, are incredibly committed to seeing this across the finish line. It is time to have conversation as regional association, with state directors and partners present because we cannot implement RAWA without partners. Ron and Tony have been working with Kathy and the WSFR team to set up inner agency coordinating. At the same time the USFWS is putting together a rapid response team, who will answer questions internally on eligibility drafting guidance for states and tribes. Talking about state technical team which will be comprised of a few of our wildlife diversity coordinators and/or team members who know the existing WSFR program well who will be reviewing responses from rapid response team. Appreciate conversations that have already occurred between WSFR program and AFWA, making sure we are locked into to conversations that will prepare all of us for when RAWA passes. Kevin, I will let you guide us through this to have states share how they are preparing internally, how they are identifying projects, what are issues that are still barriers. An example of that, in Missouri we have to go through our legislature for appropriation authority even for federal funds. We went in for an emergency Governor's amendment and we were able to secure that use of funding in fiscal year. Love to hear, where you are with barriers, with Kathy here this is a great time if we have specific questions. Kathy may know some and may not know some yet. This is your time to begin to ask those questions. A conversation among ourselves and get regional aspect too as there will be innovative grants to work the landscape as a whole.

*Kevin* – Exciting time. Where we are at as state agencies, when it comes to being RAWA-ready; what are barriers, is it work force, capacity, people or places we need them to be; and an opportunity to show North America what we can do with the additional funds, have shovel-ready projects ready to go immediately, what type of shovel-ready projects we are looking at; along with any other topics.

***Speakers included below:***

*Kevin Robling, SD; Dave Olfelt, MN; Tami Ryan (proxy for Preston Cole), WI; Pete Hildreth, IA; Sara Parker Pauley, MO; Brad Loveless, KS; Kendra Wecker, OH; Tim McCoy, NE; Brian Clark, KY; Jeb Williams, ND; Shannon Lott (proxy for Dan Eichinger), MI; Colleen Callahan, IL; as well as Kathy Hollar, USFWS; Ron Regan, AFWA; Taniya Bethke, CAHSS, Dan Forster, ATA*

*Dave* – Not RAWA ready. Interesting thing about Minnesota is there are different divisions in our agency than just fish and wildlife. We work well together but there is an institutional side that has been going on for a number of years. We are stand up team on how we will work among divisions, division of wildlife, parks and trails and large land base and rare resources and water resources which is where the diversity program sits. We will have opportunities for projects so don't see that as an issue but coming up with internal governance on how we will select those and working inter-divisionally will be the challenge. Thinking about where matches will come from, from division of wildlife standpoint we are matched out on PR right now so would have to find other matches and capacity to handle additional grants. *Kevin* – Other states concerned about match? *Tami* – We are wondering about match grants and whether we can up land those. Also, wondering whether or not this could fall under PR and find matches for that. Those are key questions in our state. *Kathy Hollar, USFWS* – Same grant management roles that apply to PR/DJ will apply here. *Kevin* – Other match conversations or questions? *Pete* – Looking forward to this discussion. This will take time to ramp up, and when we heard there would be a ramp-up phase that gave us peace of mind. We will be looking at recipients the first couple of years, Universities, science and research a big component and important to know and have good knowledge of distribution and relative abundance and ecological needs of these wildlife species. We have a whole multi-species monitoring program in Iowa and we work through Iowa State University, so I envision universities being important to bring in some of that state match. We also have county conservation system and all 99 counties have conservation boards, so opportunities for them for these grants too. We envision getting word out to partners in first couple of years to see how they work with us. Long term we recognize we would need about \$4 million in match in Iowa. We would need raise in appropriations because we are looking at putting around two-thirds in capitals and one-third in operations. Operations gets appropriated by our legislature so we will ramp up operations. We will need to get an ask, so looking toward beginning in legislative session next year. *Kevin* – How many folks need appropriate approval? (*Many hands raised*) Most of us do so we will be going to legislature and asking for spending authority. That is one of the hurdles we have to overcome. *Sara* – Pete brings up a great point. Early wins we are all looking to, now we need to look at longer term, staffing needs and added capacity and all that. How do we get moving forward, Pete brought up great example, using existing partners who are already doing cost shares and technical assistance. Brainstorm with partners and come up ideas with habitat strike teams where they already have boots on the ground and/or they can staff more quickly than we can and are already doing good work on landscapes. Amen to what Pete said, partners will be critical, especially in phase one. *Brad* – One of the plugs, along sub-recipient discussion, we have a conservation community that extends far beyond your agency. One of the temptations I have seen over the years is to build capacity

however a lot of capacity in our states already. We don't have plants on our SWAP list in Kansas but have a biological research group affiliated with our universities. They are the experts we go to and we had an early discussion about building up our staffing around that and ended up asking ourselves why. They already exist and are healthy organization, are experts, so why don't we not try to duplicate that but compliment that. There will be a lot of opportunities for that around our states. I encourage you to look there for short term and long term to build integrity of this elite ecology of conservation. It will make us all stronger in the long run and more efficient. *Kendra* – Similar to Kansas we utilize universities and partners, we have dedicated our funding in thirds, one-third to land acquisition, one-third to conservation research to partners and one-third to education. That is what we are going into in the beginning. We will rely on partnerships that provide our SWAP and will do those with contracts so business operation can be efficient and accounting for that. Our team will be ready to do big contracts and have to be ready to hire a federal aid coordinator additionally to help run this program. We are private property state, looking to hire seven wildlife management consultants to get ready for this. We will have to have private partners and landowners out there. I encourage all directors to be positive to this with your staff. Your wildlife diversity staff are ready, this is a great challenge to have but keep a positive attitude about it. *Kevin* – Further along than South Dakota. Do you already have those doubts in filling those positions, those seven biologists and grant coordinator? *Kendra* – We are working on job description right now, so rolling this out shortly. We want to do those positions regardless we want to do those positions whether passes or not. We are working with HR and we will have staff up and running by late fall. *Kevin* – Capacity-wise, are other states looking to hire staff right away? (*Several raised hand*). *Tim* – Our plan, we started meeting with staff and ironed out a bunch of new positions quickly. In terms of spending our match we would have to either hire them as direct hires and we have capability to do that but if something happens and those federal funds go away we would lose the positions so we have been hesitant to go too far. We do know we will need additional core grants people we need to run these systems is the most important piece. We are looking intensively at partners we have worked with on state wildlife action plan. Similar to Iowa, we have potential partners with universities to help us with monitoring needs. We are trying to focus on working in our landscapes and getting work done on the ground. We think we have the capacity with our partners but our partners think they can all each spend the total amount of money we will have. We are excited about that because in the long term supporting these groups to build that capacity and have that carried forward as conservation community has been helpful for us in gaining support from our Senators and Representatives to keep this moving forward. See ramp up being in second, third and fourth years and being at point where you are bringing staff on. We need to be strategic about that to make sure we know exactly what we are going to gain in our long run. With what I am hearing from RAWA, there is going to be some reporting we need to do and expectation to show that we did something. I don't think Congress will look very favorably if all we did was hire a lot of new people. *Kevin* – South Dakota is considering the same things you are. Is everybody going to be hiring a grant coordinator? (*Several raised hand*). Let's talk about shovel-ready projects, talked about capacity and how we are going to spend the money. *Kendra* mentioned splitting in thirds. Do other states have examples or ideas of how to spend dollars out of the gate to show Congress this is money well spent, putting money to work and doing exactly what the money was intended for? *Sara* – Surveyed our entire staff and did focus groups with branch leadership and compiled a significant list of shovel-ready projects throughout the state and prioritized those based upon different funding scenarios and levels. We have projects, habitat focus, some recreation, some species and habitat focus on public lands but with private land ownership we are really focusing on strike teams with existing partners issuing technical assistance in priority geographies. Utilizing existing private land efforts but ramping up. The concept of strike teams is new to us but that is example of where we are applying resources. *Dave* – Explain strike team, is it habitat

management team? *Sara* – Yes, using invasive species as an example, through existing NGOs, whether focused on invasive work or whatever it is, but it is habitat focused. *Kevin* – Other examples? *Jeb* – In North Dakota, in infancy stage. We brought in partners and built meadowlark initiative. North Dakota is similar to most of your states in that we are 93% privately owned. The Meadowlark Initiative was built off of species of conservation priority, a suite of grassland species, our SWAP plan. We feel like the hopper is in place, it is just a matter of continuing to dump some resources into that hopper. Feel we have good infrastructure in place as far as handling additional dollars, our biggest concern is grant coordinator position with doubling federal aid aspect of it. No disrespect to the Service, but obviously over the years that has had initial rules and regulations but has gotten more complicated and challenging over the years. We feel we have tools in place to be able to move as soon as we get some dollars. *Kevin* – As far as availability of funds and when those funds will be available, does the USFWS have the capacity, in your own shop, to process this amount of money? What is timeline for state agencies to acquire funds? *Kathy* – We have been doing some calculating on that and there is a process we will need to follow from day RAWA is a go for the Department of Treasury to do what they have to do to make that money real. Then go through Department of Treasury and Office of Management and Budget to Department of Interior to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and all of the different accounting strings it has to go through. There is some lag time before it shows up in USFWS checkbook. While that process is happening, we will be hard at work running final apportionments, which is not a straightforward formula, it is 50% based on land and water acreage, human population, those are easy, we got those numbers but then it is also the number of threatened and endangered species, including marine species and other listed species and also number states with SWAPS with plants in them. Running all that together and running apportionments. Doing what we need to get notice of funding availability set up so your federal aid coordinator or person doing grants in your shop can push all the buttons they need to so conversion and those other things will be wrapping up at the same time. So, when we have apportionment and have everything set up in financial system, about 3-4 months. *Kendra* – Based on formula on species, is that just federal list or state list too? *Kathy* – Just federal. *Kevin* – In timeline you were talking October, is that correct? *Kathy* – October is earliest the funds could be available to Service. *Kevin* – Four months past that, so looking at first part of 2023? *Kathy* – We will be asking the wheels to start as soon as the bill is signed. We are hopeful we don't have to wait until October 1 for Treasury to start working on setting up the accounting string. The money can't be physically available until October 1 but we will be asking Secretary of Treasury to be getting the process laid out before them. *Kevin* – Possible states could see dollars by the end of the year? *Kathy* – No possibility. Trying to get checkbook set up but can't have funding available until federal fiscal year October 1. Not available until federal fiscal year 2023. *Brian* – Any idea on timeline for rules to the states will be available? Similar to WSFR federal aid rules and when to start application process, eligibility and those kinds of things. *Kathy* – We will be working under interim guidance for the time being, similar to other Acts passed. We put together a national team of gurus, hunter ed folks on national basis and published advisories so we could provide timely national guidance. Package that together so we have time to write formal guidance through joint task force process, financial assistance process. We had great answers already there, so quick to turn that informal set of advisories into formal guidance. Same process we want to use here, set up rapid response team, gather best fish and wildlife grant managers and probably in next two weeks will get a notice on this setting up the process so this so if you have questions on eligibility, specifically grant questions, you will send those into this team. Meet twice a week and coming back with best answer and universal grant management and provide those answers for everyone to see after state technical team reviews them. We will be collecting answers and in a year or so take interim process turn them into formal guidance. We don't want to slow anything down. *Ron Regan, AFWA* – Two things come to mind. We might all

benefit if you have one -page expected chorology of events. I know it is nothing but speculation at this point. For my own benefit so I know, I know you can't spend until after October 1, but you used the term 3-4 months. Could you clarify, when do you think you would have final apportionment numbers to share? When might you have NOFO on the street? You suggested there wouldn't be an opportunity for money to exchange hands between USFWS and states until after January 2023. *Kathy* – The first step is to get money in the checkbook, hopefully have apportionment and NOFO draft ready to go when money is in checkbook. The piece we cannot control is that money in our checkbook. We can work on apportionments and notices of funding opportunity but can't control Department of Treasury, or management and budget. The 3-4 month timeline is a guess on how long it will take. We will be doing other work behind the scenes. Happy to share our timeline with you. *Ollie* – You mentioned plants, there is curiosity here about that because our MLI is heavily focused on habitat, but most of our SWAPS in the Midwest don't include plants. How is our habitat eligible since we don't have plants listed in our SWAPS. *Kathy* – Habitat work is absolutely eligible for RAWA funding even if you don't have plants in SWAPS right now. I'm sure it would be fairly easy for you to tie to animal species of greatest conservation need with habitat work and that is all you need to do right now to use RAWA money to implement SWAP project for species of greatest conservation need. *Kevin* – How many states here include plants in conservation plans? (*Several hands raised*). What things can we do as state agencies to help USFWS with that process and collaborate in a way that is mutually beneficial? *Kathy* – Coordinate with regional managers, the more we know the more we know about your plans the better we will be able to support them. It is great to hear you are focusing on land acquisition emphasis early on because that tells us that we need to build our capacity to support that. We are trying to figure out how many different grant managers and what types of grant managers we need to build our capacity to best support your efforts. Land acquisition focus tells us we need real estate gurus to support that. If you are going to be doing habitat restoration projects, we want to be sure we have compliance support to move projects move through as smoothly as possible. The more you can share with us on what your emphasis is will help us. I agree we need to get success stories and show something besides hiring people. We know we will have to do reporting on this. Have those conversations now to help move projects forward. It is about communicating and collaborating. *Tami* – I am going to take this opportunity to introduce myself since Keith Warnke retired in May. I am a deputy division administrator working with Wisconsin DNR. When talking about rapid response and technical teams, is that national team or step down to regional level? *Kathy* – National at this time to provide nationally consistent answers right now. This is a new realm so we are going to have different representatives from across the country and it will be a tremendous workload; meeting twice a week and doing deep dive working with these questions. Working bylaws to figure out best answer, based on what we know right now. Whether something is an eligible activity, sideboards and how we can make it work. We will be sharing it with a small team of state folks, pulling in joint task force legal support based on statute or regulations we have to work with. Lane Kisonak from AFWA is on that task force. We will be moving fast and doing the best we can with information we have at the time. Interim guidance so we have what we need to work, staff working on policy so we can turn this into real guidance. *Tami* – Do you envision over time, as we get past implementation state, having more regional resources for states? As you are describing there is overwhelming volume of support. Our team is wondering if regional resource at some point. *Kathy* – Absolutely, nationally right now, don't want regional right now coming up with different interpretation. We don't have a lot of depth of experience, so national approach first. When we get more examples to work through then go back to the regions. *Sara* – One of those topics the team will be working on. Question on recreation and law enforcement and how closely it has to be tied to state wildlife action plans? Maybe some states have examples of how they are interpreting recreation. Regional association, with America the Beautiful and wrestling

through, can they be primary recipients and guess regional associations would be sub-recipients. *Kathy* – Apportionment will go to states but competitive grants can go to regional associations. On law enforcement, right now reading it as it can be used as directive for protecting and conserving species of greatest conservation need and their habitats but there is no limit on costs. State wildlife grant is 10% of project cost. So, no limit on costs, it just has to be directed on SGCN and habitats; it is broader. *Tim* – On education side of this. Picked up different interpretations on education and outreach part of this; can that be general or does that have to be targeted at SGCN species. We have different staff looking at it different ways in my agency. *Kathy* – Working through that right now. For implementing state SWAPS right now, still loose, not super broad anything but broader than PR. I don't know where that decision is right now. It could be a great opportunity to help us is give us the questions, nothing like examples to think it through. *Kevin* – Coordinate with regional managers on types of projects early on, would it be beneficial if regional managers asked us specific questions of what they need answered to keep this conversation going. Reach out to regional managers to say we have questions on what type of projects they are looking to spend money on, what type of capacity they are looking to create so we can keep this ball rolling. *Kathy* – Different regions have different approaches to that. We can pull that together, capacity, recreation and questions we have been swirling over in our heads. *Kevin* – Along with that the education piece, what qualifies and what doesn't and if you can help identify those things we can or can't do on that. *Pete* – Like that we brought up education and recreation. Landscape conservation, science and research we have a better grasp on but still looking for ideas for education portion and outreach and recreation. We currently envision projects like building wildlife viewing structures and providing backpacking kits to be checked out from county conservation boards or nature centers with items like guides, binoculars, cameras, for example. We are looking for other ideas from other states on what they are thinking for recreation, the piece we are struggling with. *Kevin* – What are other states thinking about recreation part of that? South Dakota has not embraced that concept; we still have a lot of work to do. *Kendra* – Working through partnerships, have state parks in a separate division than our DNR and Metroparks. This is great pay back investment of what they are doing in urban centers and have those locations so that is within that education programing, viewing blinds, trails, trail maintenance and programing for different projects they want to do with school systems. *Kevin* – In South Dakota we have parks in our division. Looking at more naturalist positions, more education/outreach in parks system like viewing platforms, binoculars and those sorts of things. Other examples of that? *Kendra* – We have 23 nature centers that need major upgrades, more outreach and education activities and materials for them and personnel with seasonal people, to have more one-on-one contact with customers to reach a lot of people quickly. Make sure we have the handouts available to train naturalists and same messages they are talking about and that everyone handles things in the same way. We can't be everywhere. *Pete* – We currently have an urban fisheries coordinator, don't have an urban wildlife coordinator. So, maybe opportunities for things like that. *Kendra* – We are working with our call center and we train facilitators on how to answer those calls, trained our staff and our folks asking same questions of professionals and that has helped a lot. Calls going up, when you think it would go down with all the internet access we provide, people want responses right now, so training staff is good way to go. *Kathy* – RAWA does have emphasis on historically underserved communities. *Jeb* – Circle back to law enforcement aspect, cloudiest for me. In discussion with LE folks, how that looks, how coding aspect looks and is there potential for certain portion of time each month that can be automatically coded to this based on species of greatest conservation need versus what they are doing individually throughout the day and navigate through that. A little overwhelming to think about. *Kathy* – Similar question from auditor. Tricky one. Come up with BMPs on how to approach that. *Jeb* – Any possibility, come up with some formula to automatically allocate to LE based on species and day-to-day activity that would be



helpful. In current discussion with LE staff, it is going to be too big of a pain to do that sort of thing with all the different things they are doing. *Kathy* – Reality of day-to-day operations. Question to circle back on. *Pete* – We have same issue. Some quick things that could happen, tied to SGCN and LE associated with those. Thought about equipment like pit tag readers, snake tongs, reptile transport boxes and things like that. Also looking at training piece and do a better job of informing across agency, not just law enforcement about habitat needs of species and helping with training opportunities. Those are small things, equipment and training opportunities. *Ron* – Add to this discussion. President Wasley will sign off on executive leadership being chartered with six representatives from the Service and six directors to be on this team to talk about global big picture policy questions. One of the six directors is someone with strong law enforcement background and someone who can bring good street cred to that discussion and be a good person to reach back out to LE community. Stand by. *Sara* – Low hanging fruit, with two big international airports we are looking at least one additional FTE in K9 unit to serve in that capacity. *Kendra* – Similar to Pete, looking at more equipment and major species, historically animals and people stealing something from them, reptile and herp trade. Looking at federal aid coordinator to reduce the coding, went from 30 codes to four and officers happier with that. Make things more streamlined and less burdensome. *Tami* – Is law enforcement on your teams? *Kendra* – Yes. *Kevin* – South Dakota does. We haven't had this discussion yet on how they will be involved in general patrol, would that be eligible if they see SGCN, poached or injured or something like that, how does that fit into all of this? *Kathy* – That is part of the trick, the purpose of the patrol. *Pete* – We have been saying it has to be directly related to SGCN. *Kendra* – If carrying out investigation is easy way to track it. *Kevin* – If we have an investigation of somebody shooting hawks or other SGCN, that makes sense. *Brian* – Focus on trade going on. *Kevin* – Aquatic invasive species are they eligible? *Kathy* – Sure. There are all kinds of species of SGCN. *Kevin* – Are other states looking at that as part of piece to identify? We have a lot of zebra mussels in South Dakota, thoughts on that? *Tim* – Doing the same thing, with both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. Trying to utilize it for ID control and management especially in critical landscapes we have identified in our statewide action plan. *Brad* – We are doing the same thing in Kansas. We have hired three new field folks for aquatic nuisance species this summer. We will see how they transition into that. We see great opportunities there. On law enforcement, we have never been able to put a lot of support towards movement of reptiles and amphibians. We know it is going on and know we will find more and be able to stop them if we apply more law enforcement resources. *Taniya Bethke (CAHSS)* – Three years into 10-year reporting and it is easier at beginning than it is two to three years down the road. We are trying to establish a baseline and we are three years in to 10-year reporting period and that is a challenge. Regarding this initiative we are now in the process I was wondering if considerations given to developing reporting criteria and what reporting window is on RAWA? *Kathy* – Bill requires 3-year report and work plan after first year of implementation, so cycle where every three years the states will be creating a work plan going forward as well as a report going backwards of what happened those three years. That will be one of the charges of executive leadership team, what is most efficient structure and format for that work plan and report. I envision a tool we could use to streamline to do programmatic work instead of individual, use as tool to batch grants and look at programmatically rather than project by project. That is worth taking a look at that to see if there is a way to do something like that; similarly for reporting, if batch work plan than do batch report. Something that would be useful for all of us rather than something else we have to do. For reporting have annual accomplishment project-specific report that tracks and what needs to be tweaked in that system to work for RAWA. Fortunately, the vast majority of projects funded under RAWA are already funded under state wildlife grants. There will need to be some tweaks for law enforcement, recreation and education. *Roald Strander* – Comment on limits for partnering with groups outside the states, Work with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation.

Are there limits for partnering with groups out of state, perhaps in Canada, to provide match as conservation partners for conservation opportunities. Restrictions around that? *Kathy* – I don't remember seeing anything in the legislation, some nuances from other states about spending state funds outside their borders. Great question. Need to follow up on that. *Kendra* – Opportunity to use regional associations, through MAFWA. *Sara* – Or on match side. *Kathy* – Will follow up on that. *Unknown Audience* - Heard a lot at North American on private land side on how hard it is to hire currently. Are you making preparations or thinking about drawing these new jobs and what it is going to take to make that happen? Hiring environment can change quickly but right now would be difficult to hire. *Kevin* – We are going to have a panel discussion on that about work force challenges, it is a real thing. We are losing state employees to private sector and state markets aren't good in SD, salaries in general and that has been a negative force. Some of our best employees are finding work elsewhere. As far as filling the capacity we will be needing, it will be a huge challenge. If we announced five positions today in South Dakota we may get 25 applicants but maybe not all of them would be qualified. I am sure other states are dealing with something similar. *Jeb* – Part of our conversation and partner. Not a lot of people, in areas, increase capacity and struggle with that issue. A couple of aspects, challenge of partners and building capacity too. *Kevin* – Grant coordinators are going to be in high demand too. *Shannon Lott* – I am deputy director in state of Michigan. On hiring front looking at hiring RAWA coordinator position because we do have a lot of land base in Michigan and are going to leverage our partners heavily. Several partners we have are in wildlife and fisheries projects. When this came to be they thought that all that money was going to them but we are now recognizing that it is going across the department and we need a coordinator position. In oversight of all divisions combined. Leverage partners through contract with each development, project-based list for shovel-ready projects. Something we ran into is that all of our engineers are in a different agency and we have to go through them to put in anything. Going through shovel-ready projects now and getting engineering done because it takes two years to get it done. So, when money comes we can do the on the ground work. That is how we are going to structure. *Ron Regan* – There is a thing about what a state may use to manage species of greatest conservation need whose range is shared with state, territory or Indian tribe or foreign government and for conservation and habitat of those species. I think the back story on that forum was to address questions like that. *Kathy* – So may be able to accept Canadian dollars as match. *Dan Forster, ATA* – Historical nature, go back to 1937 when PR was passed, states weren't positioned to invest, they didn't have license structures in some of them and states like Georgia didn't participate until a couple years later. I was intrigued by the match discussion because I thought that would be the big issue. You all of conveyed creative ways to get the match out the door. My core question is, from state investment perspective, this may be opportunity to get some state investments in a bigger way. Missouri's funding is in a great place. Is there a plan, maybe not in first year or two, but is this going to help leverage you all to improve state level investments which will add to the partner value that you will be relying on in the short term? *Sara* – This is great opportunity to leverage legislative support and constituent/citizen support for additional state match opportunities. *Pete* – Back in 2010 Iowans voted for sustainable funding, water, land and legacy act. If we had an increase in sales tax the first 3/8<sup>th</sup> of a cent would go towards a pot such as conservation for things like water quality and habitat. If we ever have that opportunity that would be our state match, but we haven't had sales tax increase so not enacted, not there yet but that is the plan to bring in state dollars. *Kathy* – Kudos for AFWA match strategy report a year ago, an excellent document that outlines different match strategies and touches on a number of those strategies. Need to circulate that again as there is a lot of good information in there. *Sara* – Other federal agencies will be eligible as match. That includes Department of Transportation. *Kathy* – Everybody except Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior. That includes Department of Defense, Department of Transportation and a whole bunch of federal partners that can provide match.

*Ollie* – Back to comment on legacy act. When RAWA passes that would be a great opportunity for state wildlife federation to go for a 3/8<sup>th</sup> of one percent sales tax increase to help implement new federal money. *Pete* – We have a story to tell, we don't want to turn away opportunity for federal funds because we don't have that state match. That is a big part of the story and a great point. Other states that don't have it or looking at that this is opportunity to mention this is why it is more important than ever. *Ollie* – And 3/8<sup>th</sup> of one percent of increase in state sales tax doesn't seem like very much to the public but would be huge for you. *Kevin* – Don't use the T word in SD. *Sara* – Colleen as president, or Ollie, to make sure we are RAWA ready as regional association, especially for competitive grants. Need to pull together conversations we are needing to have now and thoughts from existing committees. Just a part of that process. Any additional conversations we should be having? *Ollie* – On competitive grant portion, can regional association apply for grant manager position? *Kathy* – Not as written right now just for that purpose but could embed that as an objective in a certain project. *Ollie* – Project related. *Colleen* – So be creative. Sara, yes, it is time to have that conversation, have that on Thursday as to what we should or shouldn't do. *Kevin* – More sessions on that. Thank you Kathy. *Tim* – We have parks and wildlife in our agency. We have had history of trying to do habitat-related projects on areas within our state wildlife management action plan to have consistency on how to do those. Questions asked before that made us think we could not use federal funds because we charge a park permit entrance fee for access to our parks. Other interpretations that seem to be that maybe we could do it, not a good place to be in terms of federal aid. Thoughts on habitat related projects in parks for SGCN, does that take in having income because doing it on property that requires a park permit? *Kathy* – Other variables at play, provided doing work for SGCN it shouldn't be an issue. Like to see whole issue first. *Tim* – We have areas we manage especially for BOR reservoirs where part is state recreation area and rest is wildlife area. We have been hesitant to do the same work we are doing on wildlife management area on state park because federal funding piece is critical. *Kathy* – Follow up with you on specifics on that. I will follow up with timeline and frequently asked questions documents that I can send out as well. It is comparison contrast of state wildlife grants with RAWA, a good foundation document for grant. Thank you for this opportunity, I appreciate it.

*Kevin* – Russell Olson, our Commission Chair is here today. Thank you for coming. No director photo until this evening. Adjustment in our schedule. Do photo this evening with group photo. Continue hot topic discussion. Open forum on what states are dealing with, probably things we all have in common and challenges we face every day.

*Kevin* – One of the challenges we see in South Dakota is meeting customer expectations, it is a moving target. Expectations are changing over time and in the world of instant gratification we are sometimes not meeting that. Is that a challenge in your states?

*Tami* – Social interaction that feeds into that and we have standards for response for questions. Trying to turn things around. *Kevin* – A lot facing the states and a lot more ways to interact and communication efforts, totally agree. This is the world we live in and it has changed customer expectations. In some ways it spreads false information so that is a real challenge.

*Tim* – Obviously a couple of things we see as far as customer expectations and are hard for us to control. Our private land ownership access continues to be number one issue for us. Also, habitat concerns and customer expectations.

*Jeb* – Access on their property. North Dakota had 3.4 million acres of CRP back in 2008 and now we are competing with federal crop insurance, a difficult challenge. How to communicate that with the public and not look confrontational with Ag when you are having a realistic conversation about that. Sensitive issue in North Dakota and I expect other states as well, how to have a real conversation about that issue without sounding like you are anti-farming. A real challenge as far as meeting customer expectations, habitat conditions and access on private land. Try to do it with access programs but we all know we pick the low hanging fruit and landowners

that are okay with having access on their property. Those are hard to overcome. *Kevin* – SD in the same place as you and experiencing those exact challenges when it comes to meeting customers' expectations for hunters and anglers and finding a place to hunt. We have also lost about a million acres of CRP since 2008. It is coming down to how to look at profitability of producer and take marginal crop acres and putting them back in grass. That is the utmost focus here. It all comes down to the producer but as you said federal crop insurance has been the elephant in the room and it is hard to compete with that piece of it. It comes across that we are anti-production but we are not at all. A challenge in SD, one of our biggest focus areas and trying to get opportunity where we can. We have private property in public access of about 1.4 million acres enrolled, long ways to two million acre mark. Launching another CREP program this fall, just did a 100,000 acre one and that has been embraced by sporting and agricultural communities. It is essentially CRP with public access component and it has been a beneficial program for South Dakota. It is expensive but worth every penny. *Shannon* – I don't know if other states are dealing with this but the whole remote work, customer service centers were closed for a long time; reopened a couple of days a week and soon five days a week. There was a lot of public outcry about not being visible and open. That whole thing started all over again with COVID and folks learned to work remotely so now a constant battle with being visible again. Tell folks the relevancy story, two year hiatus and struggling with that. We have a large work force in Michigan and it has been a battle to get folks back. *Kevin* – Great conversation this afternoon and will talk about remote work and expectations from customers and employees as well. *Sara* – Making sure we have the tools to determine what public expectations are. We have a team that has slowly been adding customer experience surveys into a lot of our programs and services. Starting with website to private lands efforts now, they get a follow up survey asking what their experience was. We are slowly beginning to implement that externally and internally, so business support is asking how to follow up was to whatever the need was. Do we have that baseline information and how we are being pursued. DJ Case also does a quarterly conservation monitor survey of random sampling of Missouri citizenry. They are asking key questions related to trust of Missouri Department of Conservation and how are we doing as a public agency. My feedback would be to make sure we have the data to make those assessments. *Kevin* – How do we quantify customer service or customer expectations. Set a baseline and identify where your needs are. Are there other ways of measuring customer service? We have audit committee that reports every couple of months and they ask how we quantify customer service because it is one of our objectives in our strategic plan. *Brian* – In Kentucky we have implemented a question in all our license customer surveys and hunter and angler surveys about satisfaction and allow for open-ended comment in surveys so we get a lot of feedback that way. *Kevin* – We do too, success and satisfaction is one in the same and if they don't harvest a deer may get negative satisfaction rating because they weren't successful harvesting. Worried about that correlation. Was experience still the same even though not harvest an animal. Other qualitative or quantitative ways state agencies do customer service. *Jeb* – Difficult to get reasonable level of customer service when it comes to their actual experience in the outdoors. It is hard to tease out because of peoples different interests. We focused on department policy or guidelines, like response time when deer depredation, comments on social media, or electronic licensing structure and things we are able to do some actual surveys on. We struggle with that as well. It is tough with clientele we are dealing with sometimes. *Kevin* – Frustrating. Other comments or hot topic discussion? *Colleen* – Working with stakeholder groups across the state in creating an opportunity to have statewide input, now only on customer service but what the agency should look like in the future or expectations. Acknowledging we have new responsibilities that we didn't have 5-10 years ago; climate challenges, etc. Hopefully by end of the year we may have a conservation meeting or conservation conversation and have input from all the stakeholder groups, online and social media and that will help us guide where we need to be in the future and meeting what

expectations are. Talk about responsibilities we also contribute to health of communities and mental health of people using our parks and recreational areas. It is so much more broad than it used to be. We feel we need to get input to be agency that is responding and is responsive beyond what we have been in the past. *Kevin* – Opportunity, cast a wider a net, not just hunter and anglers anymore, it is bird watchers, wildlife viewers and how do we understand how to meet their expectations as well. Something to reach non-consumptive users as well. *Sara* – Different states are developing relevancy roadmaps and measures you are establishing are going to be key to that. I have community conservation pilots going on in all regions of the state where we are focused on more under-served populations. Part of that is what are the measures of success and how we gain that data. That leads me to another challenge. The internal governance piece. We need a credible agency and be transparent. We have a push going on for just overall governance. Does every program throughout the agency have clear program objectives. We collect a lot of data but is it the right data to tell us if we are moving the needle on the right measures. Do we know where we are headed and what that desired mission is. It is painful, we are going on a year now. We do a lot of great work but getting teams together to say, define objectives for each program with those measures and collect data to measure that. We now have a quarterly dashboard meeting where all of those program objectives are feeding into strategic goals. We now have to report on progress, so having accountability mechanisms in place has been key for us. Those meetings are getting more informative and better each time as we focus on where we are headed and if we have the process and systems in place to get there. Big challenge. *Kevin* – Elaborate on those processes to help us identify those, interested in hearing strategies. *Sara* – Massive undertaking and part of our reorganization and took us several years to get there. Like what capacity we need moving forward or what skillsets. What we need to be 21<sup>st</sup> century agency and where gaps are. Implemented a year ago and it is not easy. You have to assess as an agency if you are ready to face it. Conversations now when really talking about governance and how working in our branches and what does business look like and the clarity. Sometimes we have areas of duplication where different divisions are doing similar work. Now we are pulling apart all of that. Whose job is it, who does it need to be coordinated with or involved in the conversation and ultimately whose responsibility is it. The governance piece in our science branch, who is making decisions on research priorities and how are we gaining input from other branches of the agency. It is all of that work. Our agency is good at saying here is the work we do, so how is decision made that is desired condition we want or direction we want program to go, what input went into making that decision. We found many of our resource and business units were doing great work but no clear program objectives defined. Had good measures of success but didn't align with program objectives and didn't have good accomplishment reporting system across the agency or mechanism to report back to ourselves and our public on how we were doing in key areas. All of that governance work. Are we doing better at how we are defining success, have a mechanism to report that accomplishment in a reporting system, do we know direction we are headed, why we are headed that way and how we can account for work. We did it in pieces and parts but not in a way we could report as an agency. That has been critical work for us the last few years and into the next few years. *Kevin* – What do states use to measure success, license sales, participation or what? *Sara* – We can all come up with data, but the question we are asking is are those the right question. *Tim* – We have the same issue. We can measure and report on almost anything but we ran into some interesting conversations as we have been looking at R3 data, especially on recruitment side. We had historically only looked at hunting permit sales but the challenge with that is many of those are limited permits, many users buy multiple permits and when you look at R3 it is not just marketing permits it is creating new hunters. We started looking at certified data, which tells a better story than permit data does. Our hunting permit data will balance a lot and fishing permit data does the same thing. There has been a lot of resistance in our agency of trying to look at it

that way when talking about R3. That is different and we have always reported on total number of permits. Reporting has to have clear answers to clear questions otherwise this is the same issue. Researchers can collect data but what does it mean. *Kendra* – All of us can push for higher numbers of anything. Recently we have been talking more about quality over quantity. One example was our trout stocking program. We found when we overlaid our census data that we were stocking majority of fish where we don't have majority of people. We have realigned that and are stocking fish in more in densely populated areas. We are trying to relate to high quality experience and get things where the people are. *Kevin* – Brad, how do you meet customer expectations in Kansas? *Brad* – We just did a survey to figure out importance of that, our trout program, we perceived it as incredibly popular, but most people didn't know about it, so not advertising well and aren't locating trout in the right place. We need to do a lot better at that. We get feedback after surveys like you but people are facing survey fatigue so we are trying to figure out a way around that. One interesting thing is we found the value of electronic versus mail surveys, electronic are usually younger folks and they give us better response. Trying to pair those up and use electronic more extensively. We do periodic focus group sessions, but difficulty is that is not as broad as a survey and you can be guilty of cherry picking. What we do is invite people in and sit down and talk with management on how we can do a better job. That accomplished two things, these are our most critical thinkers and not happy when talk about criticisms and how we can do things better. Encompasses everything we do, bathrooms in state parks to trout pond I fish and they can be very critical but get good feedback and it is usable information and is concentrated. The other thing it accomplishes, it is not high percentage of users but they are vocal. We invite them and open the door for them to share and facilitate that voice and they become our friends. The evolution we have seen, those folks are hard on their neighbors, hard on our staff and they evolve and become advocates and they see how brutally honest we are. Our folks are sharing detailed information about what works and what we are concerned about, what we think is failing. It is a positive process and we have seen a real benefit. *Aaron Hebeisen, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers* – I am out of Minnesota. To that point, anecdotally we work with our DNR and have done some of the same things. We were contacted by Dave Olfelt and asked to sit in on CWD sessions. That really started dialog and we felt closer and that we were being heard. We have a good relationship with DNR now give kudos to them that has changed in last couple of years. The town hall meeting of approaching deer numbers, etc. are less well attended last few years so they switched it to contact your local wildlife manager, and I was critical of that at the time, but those managers got more engagement from those calls and people felt their voice was being heard because of one-to-one conversation. I spoke to a couple different ones for a half hour each. People tickled with communication and willingness to do it. *Kevin* – Stakeholder involvement is critical. *Shannon* - Structured in Michigan, we have several advisory councils, like deer, fishing basin and all the Great Lakes, etc. and so it is structured at local levels and they meet regularly. Our staff doesn't always appreciate having to attend all of those meetings, but it is our only direct link. We have surveys too, 20% return rate so paper surveys are not cutting it. Local groups a lot of work for staff but get most feedback and works well. They are seeing the data and we are asking what they think and having those conversations. Sometimes it is the longer way around to solve an issue but good for decision that will be made at Commission level. *Kevin* – Those can be a lot of work but are highly effective way to gather opinions.

*Kevin* - Switch gears and have state report. Ask everyone to identify one hot topic that you would like to share.

*Pete Hildreth, Iowa* – Have health and safety coordinator now in our division, supported by the troops and strategic appointment and a way for us to not have a strategic plan but be strategic in way we are doing things. Just got done with legislative session and two big hot topics we had.

We had a deer management bill that will affect us a little but we will work through it. But one bill regarding OHB/ATVs in state, and it would allow all 99 counties to allow them to be ridden. It used to be up to the county to have that ordinance but now statewide. The big change they made was 50% of the registration used to come to the department for enforcement. Conservation officers would use that because in Iowa code we are required to do the bonding and inspection. Obviously we weren't using PR dollars so using OHB registration funds. This new law doesn't allow us to use enforcement for those funds. We are really scrambling to see how this affects our spending plan, and what our role is moving forward. I was on the phone yesterday, talking about it weekly, now switching to fiscal year and technically all the bills the Governor signs goes into effect July 1 but our fiscal year started June 25. We need to figure out direction and guidance to give our COs when it comes to inspections.

*Brian Clark – Kentucky* – We have several. Currently we have a very interested avid angler group that wants to stock non-native strain or separate strain of largemouth bass, Florida bass. The science as far as adaptability and our current strain versus this strain. We had the social dynamic of people believing that if we bring this strain in our species it will out-perform our native largemouth bass. We are getting a lot of social pressure to allow this. We have been told it might be legislative if we are not conducive to doing that. An interesting dynamic from conservation standpoint as well as fishing standpoint. It is an interesting topic, developed in last year or so. The best way is to communicate about that, market our native species and work with legislators, current anglers and other anglers that want to see what they believe to be an enhancement to our fishery. *Kevin* – They stocked walleye in fishery down the road and we are seeing same pressure.

*Shannon Lott, Michigan* – Our hot topic is carbon credits. We sold carbon credits off of state forest system, the first time that has been done in the country. There was an article in the Wall Street Journal about that so we got a ton of inquiries from several states; 32 states now have called and want to know how to do that. We have a big state forest system so we took a chunk of that in Pigeon River country, it is wild and has a great story. Also called charismatic carbon and enacted all kinds of things like climate conversation. None of our folks were trained in that so we are learning; it is like changing tires on the car. We have been slow walking that and have another pilot location in the UP that we just registered some credits but haven't been sold yet. The revenue there is pretty big, \$18 million from that initial sale. Our first check will come in August, about \$2.5 million. The carbon conversation is out there and a lot of states out there that have carbon goals so that is part of conversation with our administration. We were told to look into that. We will see if we can help other states as well. The carbon credit conversation can go as quick as it came. *Kevin* – How big is your forest land you own? *Shannon* – About 4 million acres.

*Dave Ofelt, MN* – Tribal issues. We have eleven federations and a long history of working them on natural resources. This past year the legislature passed a law that requires government to government interaction, working on that; a challenge for every state agency. There is a stand up policy on how it is going to work with tribes. Federal governments in Minnesota and some government tribes that have strong natural resources and others that have virtually none. It is fascinating work and to spite the long history we have working with tribes; issues are becoming standard business. Maybe a natural resource being used for some other kind of political purpose, that is challenging now. We thought we would sail along and all of a sudden it is in the paper and you have to talk to government.

*Sara Parker Pauley, MO* – Missouri decided about five years ago to take Ozark culture and start the eradication of feral hogs. It has been painful but turned a corner. Huge thanks to Mark Twain National Forest. Change for us was first of all putting together a collaborative inter-agency team from Farm Bureau and some other entities and private partnership. It was painful because we shut down hog hunting on public lands and had to get support from other public land entities,

state and federal. There was a lot of legislative pressure to keep it open but what we were seeing was a lot of these industries setting up and that was exacerbating the issue. We survived closing Mark Twain and I think that is the first time the Forest Service did that, it was painful for them too and we appreciated support. Gratitude for our Governor who got on the phone with USDA and others to talk about the importance of shutting down federal lands to hog hunting. We adapted to the initial strategy and it was all hands on deck in our agency where we had many of our agency staff that had any resource experience or not, were going down and trapping hogs. That had a number of issues, it created one-on-one perspective and staff got a good sense of the challenge what hogs create for private landowners and public land trustees. We had transitioned to full-time hog hunters and also used University Extension specialists to help deal with that directly. We have adapted a lot. We appreciated folks from Texas coming up to testify before our House and Senate who said you do not want this happening and that Texas would never be rid of feral hogs and that it was costing them millions of dollars every year in damage to the resources. We can now report well over 50% of watersheds that were impacted by feral hogs are now hog free. The strategy is working and we couldn't do it without our partners.

*Kevin Robling, SD* – I want to touch on standing shooting sports opportunities and recreational shooters that have been building a shooting sports complex just north of Rapid City. It comes with challenges and opposition from a couple of strong landowners. The county commission had to relocate a section line so it has been very contentious. We had funding bill in the legislature to help support this shooting complex and it didn't get out of the House. There has been a lot of attention on this project at the state level and all across the state. This is going to be a state of the art shooting facility similar to ones in Colorado and Arizona. We are looking to expand competition shooting into the Midwest and have opening in 2024. We are excited about it but it is coming with struggles and challenges. Other shooting sports, opportunities, indoor range in Sioux Falls, archery range at that facility, other cities and municipalities to extend gun ranges across city limits so a big push here in South Dakota to expand recreational shooting opportunity across the state. Seeing some good positive feedback, good results and some nice ranges being constructed.

*Colleen Callahan, IL* – No shortage of short topics in Illinois. I will mention two. We spend so much time internally on procurement and it is difficult to get things done that need to be done. We seem to be not creating partnerships and doing things because of procurement complications, big topic internally. Externally, when you look at list of states that comprise MAFWA, almost half touch the Great Lakes. The biggest hot topic for us is Asian carp. We talk about collaboration and partnership throughout the Great Lakes and Illinois is the non-federal sponsor with Army Corps of Engineers to build a barrier on the dam. For those of you who have worked with the Corps, they can be a great partner and have a lot of great engineering when building but also can be difficult to work with when it comes to signing agreements. Last week I spent time in Mississippi at Corps headquarters and went through not only the preliminary engineering design agreement that we signed that took months to get to agreement because of legal aspects. Now onto the planning agreement which is still in flux because of some state and federal concerns. Federal funding has a 35% match on part of the state engineering. When it comes to actual building that has been proposed to become 10% state funded and 90% federal funded. In collaboration with all the stakeholders we are also pushing for 100% federal funding which would make this easier financially but would take away a lot of challenges with state laws. Big hot topic for us but more broadly throughout the U.S. because of the impact the Great Lakes has, along with two Canadian provinces. Not only did we work on the next phase, the partners launched a rebranding of name of Asian carp. For Illinois partners we will now be referring to that fish as COPI, shortened abbreviation for copious because we know copious amounts of them exist and we don't want them to get into the Great Lakes. Going forward, along with many restauranters throughout the U.S. that participate along with processors we will be working hand-



in-glove with commercial fisherman to harvest as many of the invasive species as we can. Almost 3.2 million have been removed from an area on the Illinois River and now an additional two million have been removed. They are prolific in reproduction so we can't stop any effort, whether barrier or enticing it to become a delicacy on a restaurant menu.

*Tim McCoy, NE* – New director so no problems yet. We continue to have challenges with growing elk herd. Being the largest irrigated state in the country and many irrigated corn fields and we have issues with elk moving into those areas late in the fall and not leaving until harvest. Stirred things up last Tuesday, issued order to do a special depredation season for elk, we have for deer. It is focused in an area where we have main herd of elk, 20-30 elk causing extensive damage every year. Moving into larger area and they keep coming back. We tried to hit them as they were going in and in doing something different, we made everybody mad. The landowners were mad, hunters mad, it is interesting that they might agree on something for once. They think this is the worse idea ever. See how it goes. *Kevin* – Share same issue in South Dakota.

*Jeb Williams, ND* – I can still play new guy card. As previous roll as wildlife division chief, CWD issue is something we deal with. Unfortunately, in North Dakota, due to our regulations, we have always allowed baiting for big game hunting. Different from some states and I envy states where baiting has not been allowed. With CWD issue we end up talking about baiting restriction that goes into place. As CWD continues to spread on the landscape, not at a fast pace but when it shows up either a unit or two units that fall under baiting restriction category. You end up talking about that issue rather than CWD. Latest restriction has hit individuals fairly hard will it probably is going to turn into a legislative issue as far as potentially taking away their harvest potential to regulate baiting.

*Kendra Wecker, OH* – Turkey is our hot topic, but probably across the Midwest so will talk about them later. We are engaging in more solar and wind energy in the state. We have 11.8 million people and over 50% of them live in 10 counties and we have 88 counties. So, we are considered a rural state. People look at that land, and President Biden referred to them as 1,000 empty acres but we don't view them as empty acres. That perspective on how they look at your property and what you are going to do with it. Allowing energy companies to do good things on the property and realizing impact of it has been a struggle. No solar, no wind energy signs out, but is a hot topic. We are trying to get stronger habitat on property and regulating take of wildlife and we are making some progress. It will take time and have a lot of people to manage as well as wildlife controversy. Those that have good energy policies I would like to talk to you about that.

*Kevin* – Like to be part of that discussion as well.

*Tami Ryan, WI* – It was a wildlife health year with CWDs 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and definitely a hot topic. We have a response plan and we did so in partnership with National Wildlife Health Center working with them forming a stakeholder committee on decision making approach to ultimately inform our view. I will be applying this decision making over the next year to two to inform next CWD response plan, which should inform agency's response in the future. Excited about that.

*Kevin* – Thanks for sharing. That wraps up first session.

### ***Refreshment Break (sponsored by National Archery in the Schools)***

*Kevin* – Go around the room and make introductions.

Tami Ryan, WI, Fish Wildlife and Parks Division

Kendra Wecker, OH, Chief of Wildlife

Jed Williams, ND, new director, replacing Terry Steinwand, not new been there for 24 years

Tim McCoy, NE, new director, replacing Jim Douglas

Ollie Torgerson, ancient guitar slinger, been in this job after 32-year career with Missouri

Colleen Callahan, IL, DNR Director

Kevin Robling, SD, Secretary, Game Fish & Parks  
Sara Pauley, MO, Director, Missouri Dept of Conservation  
Dave Olfelt, MN, Director, Fish and Wildlife Division MN DNR  
Shannon Lott, MI, Deputy Director, MI DNR  
Brian Clark, KY, Deputy Commissioner, KY Dept of Fish and Wildlife  
Brad Loveless, KS, Secretary, Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism  
Pete Hildreth, IA, Division Administrator for Conservation & Recreation Division  
Absent due to illness: Amanda Wuestefeld, IN, Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

*Kevin* – Sponsor of last refreshment break was National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)

### **Customer Service and New Technology** (Exhibit 3)

*Kevin* – Facilitators for this talk are Nick Harrington our communications manager and Emily Kiel, marketing and outreach coordinator and now SD Public Health Director, sorry to lose her.

***Emily Kiel, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Nick and I will tag team this next hour, feel free to interrupt to ask questions. We will move swiftly through conversation. Theme if you haven't picked up on is customer service and technology. Our ultimate goal is to hopefully teach you something different and get you to rethink how you approach your customers. Overview, talk about connecting with customers; integrating new technology; communicating change; marketing to new audiences; enhancing R3 efforts; and optimizing organizational efforts. Kevin did a great job of recapping who we are. I am strategic planner so I will go into mission and vision mode and go into that on daily basis. Game, Fish and Parks is first connection before moving outside and our mission and vision is important to us. Our core is to provide incredible opportunities and experiences that keep customers coming back. Under Secretary Robling, the strategic plan process focused on four priorities. How we weave in the story telling into customer service aspect, talk about data, talk about processes but I charge you to weave storytelling into emotional connections you have with customers and using data to tell the stories. The four priorities look at how we focus on what the user wants, needs and desires. Not go into detail but a few key points on how we hit home. Habitat and access is foundation of wildlife management to R3. Focus of this presentation is customer service, which is where we group in marketing, outreach and technology components. As we define Game, Fish and Parks, this is where we deliver excellent customer service and meet customers where they are. Ohio talked about that, meeting them where they are. The approach that meets up innovative technology and meaningful experiences. Omni-channel is a new word but really about customer experience, from storefront to mobile device to web to social. It puts customer in center of the equation as opposed to just being on the outside. Our position is that is vital to entire communications strategy, you have to put yourself in the center of everything coming in and going out of your organization. You can't just send the customer the information, you have to act and make them want more. Customer service ties back to target audience and personalization. The goal is technology, all in effort to drive incremental growth. Folks are charged daily to think about what that might seem like, a seamless experience for the brand. It is our responsibility, not only as communicators but as leaders in the organization, to not only get people to buy something but buy into the outdoors and further promote recruitment, retention and reactivation of our customer business. We talked about taking critics and turning them into advocates. Second responsibility is to deliver mutual expectations to implement and receive a quality experience. Knowing that in your organizations you have that quality assurance in house. Like SD, many of your states probably have users working for you, so don't hesitate to ask them user-type questions to convey what quality experience is for them. They have diverse plans, diverse thoughts, so bring them to the table and

ask them to drive up those strategies. Third responsibility is to adapt and develop best management practices based on customer attitudes, behaviors, expectations and service. Everyone has diverse technology, marketing and management to get at total customer experience. The last responsibility, the mantra, is meet customers where they are.

**Nick Harrington, SD Game Fish and Parks** – I want everyone to look around the room, these are the biggest brands in the agency. You don't need certain brands to get on the water, or wheels in the parks but they need us. Every customer has to go through us, you are the biggest brand in your state or in the nation. We don't have COPI, but seriously we are the number one stop to get people outside. Whether coming to Custer State Park, whether catching a fish but half of you will stop with us to buy your license first, every customer will do business with our agency. We are the biggest brands in our state and our country. When talking about meeting customers where they are how do you get them outdoors? We can talk in-person, our offices are open Monday through Friday for walk-in traffic and have initiatives for customer service hours, but it is more than meeting with you right now, but meeting in your in-boxes. How many have checked their email during this presentation. You are meeting them all the time, before on the water, before in the parks, before they go get their deer and after. There are so many different ways to meet those customers, they have to meet with us before they get outside. Have customers like me, maybe I don't come into the office for anything except to apply for deer license or purchase hunting and fishing license and I am done, out the door and ready to go have fun. But I had to do business with us to get out there. Some customers come in and spend an hour in your office and talk about deer, turkey, hunting or whatever. That is different customers and how we meet them where they are. Maybe your customers are more savvy, but maybe we have to send them 200,000 emails to remind them that the deer application was due last Friday. You are meeting them in their inboxes. They hit their email and we watch them click and go right into purchasing their licenses. It is hitting them when they are on Facebook and Tik-Tok, but we have to stay with those customers and meet them where they are at all times. When in the field we are meeting them and we have different customers, landowners and hunters, have eight new private land habitat biologists and the purpose of that is to promote habitat and access and meeting them; landowners on their own land, a different customer base and that gets us access and that gets us hunters in the field, then they are doing business with licensing. Park users are stopping at kiosks, that is meeting our customers where they are. We have 96 kiosks in parks across the state because maybe they don't want to go in the office, or it is 5:00 am and they want to go out, so that is meeting them where they are, in our parks and doing business with them where they want to be, outside and having fun. We never stop even when they have their deer licenses and are out hunting, or park entrance permits, we never have to stop meeting with them. That doesn't mean we are done. We need to remind them of CWD regulation or dumping COPI where they shouldn't be. That is where we are constantly doing reminders and visiting with them. We want to make sure they come back and make sure that they are doing what they need to do to have fun in the field.

**Emily** – New technology, Go Outdoors South Dakota, our new e-commerce system that at the end of summer 2021 we combined camping reservation system with hunting and fishing licensing system. Historically we were offering two different host environments and users had to log in separately, had two passwords and it was time to rethink that. We went out for RFP, asked questions, had Q&A, some of those vendors are in this room, but ultimately we selected Brandt. Our customers can now purchase and apply for licenses, making camping reservations, purchase park entrance licenses and manage friends and family members accounts. This gives total customer experience, with customer service, marketing and relationship management we have with our users. Nearly 800,000 have logged into our system and interacted with it since

December. We have had a lot happening since then. January is opportunity for residents to purchase combination hunting/fishing licenses, turkey applications for spring season, paddlefish tags. We just got done with elk and deer drawing will be after July 4 Holiday. Obviously, this is busy for state park system too and making reservations, so a heavy flood of users interacting with that system. If any of you in your careers have gone through system changes you know that it is difficult and not without glitches and frustrations internally and externally, confidence within the agency has been positive for shift not only with internal staff but with external customers as well. We have a complicated draw structure, we are special here, proud of where it is coming to; we have special tags, special seasons and now special system working with all of that. Hopeful, as we get through year one, that implementation will just be stories and opportunity for success for the next phase. Talk about other states going out for RFP, more communication among the states in what that looks like and sharing RFPs and conversations and best practices when these things take place can only be better for us.

*Nick* – Talking about change. When you look at hunters, anglers and visitors, have traditionalists who have done business with our agency with licensing system we had since 2004. That is the only system that some of our users have known. Some of our hunters who have done it for up to 40 years, how do we communicate change, use everything in the toolbox and invent a few more. This not a new challenge and every one of us has to deal with change so that is why we have all these tools. To show how well tools work. We put out press release on January 3 to get folks excited and in early. I told my people the more people who get in January or February the better off we will be in March, April and May when we start getting in busy season. We sent 3 million emails regarding this system; in 6 months 20% of the emails we had were specifically about this change. Whether how to set up account, how to purchase a license and we put together a tutorial about how to use the system. We pulled out every tool in the toolbox and people responded. We had over a million people open these emails. Open rates are good. This is what people care about and want to know. You are doing this for your customers and what you want them to be doing too. That makes it fun and it means our people care about it and that gets me excited, that means our tools are sharp and we have the right tools in place. We did Facebook posts, 870,000 people reached, overall, we have had 60,000 people from our messaging driven to Go Outdoors South Dakota. With new deer applications, closer to 90,000. We truly drove 25,000 people from emails and Facebook to go apply for those licenses. That tells me these are the right tools and we are putting them in place at the right time. It is not just about having the right tool, I am a big believer in data driven numbers, all about using the right tool, right message, right time. It is not about the numbers, we can put numbers out and say we have done so well but that doesn't really matter, we can send emails this week and say we informed people. But did we? It is about the right message, right time, right place. That was why we started in January, we wanted to get people into the system before they truly needed to be in there. We wanted them to be prepared, the earlier they people went out there the better off we are going to be. We drove people to the site and we knew that was going to happen. Need to use analytics and tools correctly. The biggest thing we will watch is emails. If you send out email to 100,000 people you are probably going to have lower open rates. If you send out specific emails, like your campsite just flooded, to the right people, the read rate is about 90%. You have to read your messaging and read your audience. If you sent out email to 100,000 people, 20,000 people open it, we did our job. If we decide we are going to bombard you and light up inbox for five days you will see less percentage, now not doing our jobs. Elk applications, just wrapped up second draw. Usually, we get about 37,000 applications for this season. This was first main application in Go Outdoors, so we knew this would be an undertaking. We were communicating with hunter and how to navigate the system so we brought out all the tools, multi-prong approach, we didn't just put together messages, we went through it in time to get application in and this is how you now do it. For a lot of these people this was the first time they got in the system. We had to pull out

everything and look at second objective and shared tutorial videos all over social media and continue to do that because numbers told us it was going well. We are seeing users on YouTube continuing to increase and seeing posts reaching people and doing well. If not the case, we would have seen numbers going down. We offered additional customer service hours on Tuesdays for an additional hour. I thought we would have a mad rush from 5:00 to 6:00 but that wasn't the case. Folks were so accustomed to coming in 8-5 that we didn't see those people. It depends on how you look at things, I initially thought maybe I hadn't done my job and might have to go look for people because they were not knocking the doors down. We have taken care of them with the other tools. Widely spreading that message, using omni-channel approach. Got excited about this; email has always been our best way to convey applications, best way to tell peoples seasons are due and get them into that system but we also had a lot of chatter on social media. I felt we had to ramp this up, be out there, be aggressive and be in front of this message. But again, the right message at the right time. See posts start to decline, lot of action and chatter early but as folks got into the system and we were addressing common questions you saw those folks decreasing, the opposite for some reason. South Dakota is very good at procrastinating, usually see that going up, but had opposite effect for elk. Because so much chatter and questions those that we addressed ahead of time. There was one post that performed well and got additional comments from it. We got the message out and they knew. Then you start see analytics decrease. What lessons learned, as application period progressed, declining people, biggest lesson was that first initial posts address those specific questions that we saw on social media and towards the end more generic, this is the deadline. Folks knew and that is why we didn't see that response. You have to be smarter than your data and stats. We addressed hot issues, gave message, good way to cover bases but that was it, those were truly just reminders. Post fatigue was definitely an issue, we beat that message into folks. Good news is, one channel, social media channel we started seeing that go down we still set a record number of applications, had 40,000 applications. So even though we had change, and had that challenge, not only did we get our regular application numbers but got even more people excited about going hunting and into that system. A huge win for our department.

*Emily* – As communication team and organization I can't be prouder of this team. They don't just push out communication strategy and expect it to flourish, there is evaluation during a message or campaign as well as post. We are going through the questions and answers, advocate we can pull through it, what case study example is applicable. Those are practices you are doing. Marketing automation, discussed how communication plays into customer service, now marketing, recruitment, retention and reactivating those customers. Go Outdoors is that whole e-commerce system that takes R3 to the next level allowing us to do customer segments based on system data to create trigger messages that communicate personally with the customer. This is where relationship management happens and through Go Outdoor system you can track individual activity and where they are in the system. For example, abandoned cart emails, season opening push notifications, upcoming license expiration, upcoming camping reservation reminders. These are things customers will be able to opt into to allow us a brand to speak with them in a way they choose. We are working on implementation in late 2022 but probably early 2023 for full implementation. We are taking this slow because we are allowing for face time involvement and what we are focusing on so we can learn how the customer is using the system and making that critical to next step of communications. We expect to strive to focus on target audience segmentation, personalization, tools and technology, data and analytics that Nick shared and knowing this approach overlaps with what we do on the education front to increase outdoor families. All of our education programing is driven by the R3 relevancy strategy to ensure outdoor enthusiasts have the ability to increase new skills and decrease barriers that keep them from getting outside, while staying relevant. Why does this matter? Marketing attracts pheasant hunters (automation); pheasant hunters purchase licenses (revenue); license dollars

support habitat and access improvements (growth); habitat and access improvements increase bird numbers and public land hunting opportunities (incremental growth); increased bird numbers and hunting opportunities attract and increase hunters; and repeat. You can insert whatever you want and in place of pheasant hunters. Think what this means for future of your agency. When we get more individuals in the field, the more opportunities there are for these individuals in the future. I will put in a plug for our partnership with the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, we appreciate them being here today and their partnership as part of the Council. The department's R3 Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring current customers and emerging customers have every opportunity to find their niche in the outdoors. Users are any outdoor enthusiast including anglers, bikers, campers, hikers, hunters, kayakers, shooting sports participants, trappers and wildlife watchers. This plan further enhances those efforts by identifying underserved populations, elevating marketing of urban fisheries, increasing ADA accessibility, and more. The take home message is; the outdoors are open and open to everyone; getting at inclusivity piece of R3 efforts. Shala Larson is our R3 manager, take time to visit with her and let her know who your R3 coordinator is. Don't hesitate to ask her some questions about how we are proceeding with implementation and what struggles we have had. Obviously, stakeholder input will be a big part of the success. Audience segmentation; to meet individuals where they are, you first need to know who they are. Defining who you want to target and what you want them to do is critical for success; you need to have a call to action and let them know why they are getting messaged and why we are targeting them and what we are asking them to do. As a working mom I don't have a lot of time, so get to the point. When we began taking our marketing efforts to the next level, we started by defining who we wanted to reach and what we wanted their action to be. What our communications team's did, and it is constantly evolving, is work on audience profiles and updating those based on user behaviors; which are constantly changing. How they receive information and what we want in terms of action. Nick will talk about how we zero in on audience profiling with our pheasant hunting campaign called "Hunt the Greatest".

*Nick* – Outdoors are open to everyone; we want to recruit new users, stay in contact with traditionalists, take those who have lapsed that have pheasant hunted before and get them back. That was the underlying strategy we had in this pheasant marketing campaign with SD Tourism. One of biggest successes was recruiting female license holders, they had 12% of budget of size of marketing campaign but were 21% of the transactions; they came in number one. We had some really good models. That is exciting, those are the successes we talk about. Exactly what we wanted to do, getting new people in the field. Everyone is welcome and everyone is coming but again you have to remember you can't lose sight of those traditionalists, we need to continue to talk to them as well. Our lapsed youth hunters were 5% of the budget but 19% of the transactions. It was females and youth hunters. Only 5% of the budget but 19% of transactions. They want to come back and have memories they had when they were kids, so we need to remind them. Do our job to help get them there. The next step is a diversity tool kit we are going to implement this year. The outdoors are open and open for everyone. We are going to continue to build off of those successes. In 2022, GFP was awarded the MAFWA grant to implement a small game diversity tool kit and we will be implementing this with pheasant hunting campaign. We are beaming with pride and we want to continue to show that everyone is welcome to get out here and get imagery out there. Everyone is welcome to be here and that is what we are continuing to showcase with this marketing campaign. Now we will talk about anglers, how do we get more people on the water. Fishing is gateway to joining hook and bullet crowd. It doesn't take a lot of equipment. Brian – Your budget, the percent of 12% yielded 21% trackable transactions? Nick – Yes. Began in March with Fishing South Dakota. Again, difference audience so we started by recruiting nonresidents to our destination fisheries. We have important lakes and I think everyone from MN comes in and IA too. In reaching out to those folks, the hard

core, dedicated anglers, tell them to come check out these awesome fisheries. We also say we also have a lot of urban fisheries and don't have to have a boat and truck you don't need it you can have fun for \$100, buy license. We have rental and loaner equipment and have friends that can get you hooked up with tools to go out and spend time on the water. It doesn't have to be long, dedicate 20 minutes to go to urban fishery on the way home with your son. We need to make sure we are reaching those folks as well. That is why you mix in showcasing trophy fish and showcase that you don't have to catch five walleyes, you can make memories in 20-30 minutes. Just getting underway, but like other marketing campaign we are looking for incremental growth, we need to make sure we are continuing to get message out. Another grant through RBFF, a comprehensive fishing education program. It was 20 in Sioux Falls, 20 in Rapid City and 20 in Pierre; a three-part class including basic education like getting rods and getting set up; getting exposure to local fishery and fish species; and third class was catch it, cook it, clean it. Truly trying to get them emersed in the sport. I want to give a personal plug here. I helped Shala teach a class and that was the most fun I have had this year. It was the fun, most rewarding two hours I have had. You have to go out and get people excited to be on the water and it brings you back. We all started somewhere, we all learned, we all fail, we continue to learn so when you have those mentorship pieces it pushes us to remember where you came from and what got you excited. I talked about food webs and talked about how to tie a basic knot. When you talk about how good they taste you have to remember there are folks out there that don't know how they taste and aren't going because they don't know how to tie a knot. Remember your audiences. Get out and help with those things and be sure your agencies are doing those things because they are some of the most fun you will have.

*Emily* – Major shift in organizational mindset and how that looks. Successfully implementing customer service, innovative technology, relationship marketing and R3 into your organization does not happen overnight. Successful implementation includes strategic planning, overall objectives and what does customer success look like; staff assessment, the right people in right place to meet objectives at the right time; financial commitment. Marketing is an investment and it requires money. You need to turn ROI into story of how whole campaign was successful. The right staff in the right positions to move things forward.

*Nick* – My position was created in 2016 to manage digital presence. This is where I began as digital career to manage website and social media accounts. It is a full-time job to stay in front of this. This is where you are reaching customers and spending time. We lost our communications manager in March of last year, we had a gap in this position and if you don't have that person it creates a gap for your team and communication with the public. We got position filled again and she is on week three, Kendel Merchant is doing a great job and diving right into it. That is a gap that I identified and now we have that filled and ready to pick up where we were a year ago.

*Emily* – It wasn't an easy position to get.

*Nick* – Your customer's wants, needs and desires change weekly, monthly and yearly. We have to be constantly ready to evolve and meet customers where they are. We need to embrace new technologies covered in depth. Foster and invest in tools for your team and customers to meet the emerging trends and customer desires. Communication is critical to everything, especially when it comes to change, have necessary resources in place to do that is paramount to successfully navigating those changes. Everything lies within recruitment, retention and reactivation. I will leave you with one more trend. Have time dedicated to your customers. We had an individual born in 1936 and we had to evolve to meet them where they were. Had issues with new system and I called and spent 20 minutes on the phone last night. He as so appreciative of that. He was from Duluth, MN and about 15 minutes later he called me back, he wanted to thank me for giving that time to him in making sure we could get him out in the field this year. It was a group application and I don't know why the young guy, born in 1940, don't know why he wasn't able

to figure it out. Having time dedicated to your customers is best investment you are going to make.

*Tom Kirschenmann* – Kevin had to run off to a meeting. One more presentation before lunch.

### **HuntSAFE in the Schools** (Exhibit 4)

***Brandon Maahs, SD Game Fish and Parks*** – In this position for a year. HuntSAFE is hunter safety education in the schools. We have taken traditional class and manipulated to fit inside a school curriculum. It is continuing to grow. Follows same International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) standards as traditional class but fits inside school schedule, usually offered in P.E. or Agriculture or some sort of natural resources class. It is a great way to get students who typically may not find themselves in hunting situation or a hunt safe class. There were about eight schools in 2019 that had certified teachers that were actively teaching, then COVID hit and a lot went by the wayside. I have records of about 30 schools with teachers in it and could only verify that about half of them were still actively teaching it. My number one priority was to reach out to them. This year we saw a big increase, doubling number of schools that are involved, depends on who follows through with training. As of today, there is a program called Teacher Academy. It is in Pierre and we are training teachers across the state on various subjects, with HuntSAFE being one of them. This year alone we brought in another 14 teachers and will bring in traditional hunt safe through ag teachers, bringing in another 20. In Jackson, a senior in High School last year, was required to do a senior project, he wants to become a conservation officer so was interested in HuntSAFE.. He became certified through me and with the help of his ag teacher he taught the 6<sup>th</sup> grade HuntSAFE in the school's class. Hopefully he comes back and is part of the new generation helping hunter education instructors, we need some young blood. The program works by using the same curriculum for a traditional class with some variation in what some schools will allow. Some schools will do it in P.E. class, some schools require it and some make it an elective so if not comfortable they can opt out. Once a student is in that class, it is the same curriculum that IHEA provides. A typical class format is one-hour class periods, 10 hours of instruction, so 10 one-hour lessons teachers can use as is or they can manipulate as they see fit. We provide all of the material supplies and lesson plans, whatever it takes to make it happen in the school. A lot of hands-on activity and is usually held in a gym. Teachers tend to be more creative on the way they describe different scenarios to get students to interact with the lessons they are learning. One method hasn't been adopted into traditional class yet, but they use a mock pheasant hunt, an opportunity for students inside a gym, with nerf guns, walk through hunting scenarios and learn various safety techniques. The blockers walk towards the shooters to "flush birds" and through this the kids can learn to practice muzzle control, practice when it is safe to shoot a bird, teachers will throw up a stuffed animal and they practice blue sky rule, being sure blue sky below the pheasant in order for it to be safe to shoot at it. May throw dummy pheasant low to see if they shoot at it or not or if they shoot too late. A great opportunity to learn it now with nerf guns in a safe environment and do it indoors. Usually, schools are much more receptive of nerf gun in the school than they are of real guns. From what I have heard from the teachers, the kids grab hold of the idea of pretending that nerf guns are real firearms. Usually, students will call each other out when they see safety violations, another way of repeatedly learning the exercise of safety we are trying to instill in them. Another exercise is fence crossing, in the gym or behind the shooting range it is the same exercise as a traditional hunt safe class. You can use the Mossberg training guns which are firearms without working actions and if we can we like to bring those in for hands on experience. They feel the weight of the shotgun or rifle, learning to load and unload the right ammunition while staying safe while doing it. That starts to enter into hesitations that schools have, the firearms even if they are



without firing pins. Another fence crossing exercise is handing off the firearm. Kids acting as dead game is an opportunity to enter into some of the law regulations, the best acting kid will pretend to be dead deer and practice how to tag it with a voided big game tag, where to sign it and when to sign it and how to transport deer and those types of things. One principal had to come down to the gym because the acting was too loud. One other exercise I find interesting, recognize that you are constantly watching the habitat to figure out where birds are, watching my feet, my dog, a lot of things while trying to make sure you are safe with the firearm. We play a video, called “The Last Shot” that is well-known in hunter education community. The video is about two kids that go out hunting and one of the kids gets shot. You tell the students to watch the video, give them a pen to act as their firearm and where you point is the muzzle and they have to watch the video and be safe with it and remember some safety issues kids in the video have. After the video you have a discussion on what was good and bad about the video and what could have been prevented and that sort of thing. Then you start calling out the kids that were scratching their head with the pen, chewing on it and doing all that unsafe stuff with the firearm and that helps put the point across that your mind is split between two important things, even though trying to find a bird you have to be safe with the firearm. When you want live fire and try to enter that realm with schools that is when they get nervous about adding this program in. Live fire is not required in SD with our regular HuntSAFE, they do not have to pull trigger on a real firearm or shoot a round to get certified. So, they don’t have to do it. There are varying levels within the schools, some want nothing to do with live ammunition or guns, so they allow nerf guns only. Others lean on local conservation officers, bring in inert guns and if not, at least they can come in and explain things. Working with the COs, local hunter education instructors put on conveniently timed HuntSAFE field days right after the kids get done with it in the school curriculum and encourage kids to go to it. It is not part of school. Other schools are the other extreme and they require the kids to do it and bus them out on school time to shooting ranges, which is awesome. I wish more schools would catch on with that. Challenges we have seen is trying to balance, traditional HuntSAFE course with shooting at the end and some schools that barely allow use of nerf guns so trying to balance that out to make sure kids are getting same education no matter what version they take. That is why we pressure teachers to lean on conservation officers and phrase things in a way that is promoting firearms safety, not getting kids out hunting. That seems to be more acceptable for school administrations. They want kids to be safe if they come across a firearm. The Teacher Academy has been our biggest recruitment effort. Teachers come and get students for the day; last week had one with a bunch of ag teachers, they were great. I was talking to gal that leads FFA for SD and was trying to get HuntSAFE in the schools as part of accredited programs that ag teachers in SD can provide for students. Right now, it is an option teachers make on their own but not state accredited program. Hope we get that and that would allow administrators on the fence about allowing it in their school feel more confident. Looking ahead, poking folks who are training who aren’t actively teaching and to see why taking the course and not getting it in class and continuing to reach out to other schools. *Jeb* – Seeing significant line as far as acceptance of program in rural versus urban areas? *Brandon* – Yes, Sioux Falls has been challenging to get into and Rapid City, but we have more schools there; majority are smaller schools. *Brian* – How long have you been marketing in schools? *Brandon* – In 2019, was last big push of recruiting teachers and now it is fresh again and getting it going again. ?? – Is department less aggressive when using nerf, air soft or paint ball or something like that. Air soft looks and feels more like a gun and can be more realistic. *Brandon* – We haven’t looked into that, those that are more realistic but not a true firearm. I would like to try to find an alternative, something that has a working action but schools are hesitant to have gun look-alikes. Some don’t allow nerf guns because it is a suspend-able offense for students to have. Trying to navigate that and find a working action, maybe just on a board, that would be at least a step in right direction. Kids that have only experience of nerf gun

and never touch a firearm they are still going to grab and not be able to load it. I'm not sure what they would think of air soft.

*Tom* – wraps up morning session.

## **AWARDS LUNCH**

*Sponsored by Sovereign Sportsman Solutions*

*Comments by Eric Richey*

**Kendra Wecker, Ohio, Awards Committee Chair** – Presented awards to:

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year – Please help me congratulate conservation officer specialist Bruce Nachtigall, SD as this year's winner of Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Presented to Bruce.

Wildlife Biologist of the Year –Join me in congratulating Zack Couch, KY as this year's winner of the Wildlife Biologist of the Year award. Presented to Brian Clark.

Fisheries Biologist of the Year – Join me in congratulating Matthew Mitro, Ph.D., WI as this year's winner of the Fisheries Biologist of the Year. Presented to Matthew.

Spirit of the Shack – Join me in congratulating Mike Hubbard, Ph.D., MO as the Spirit of the Shack award winner. Presented to Sara Parker Pauley.

Excellence in Conservation – Join me in congratulating South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Habitat and Access team as the Excellence in Conservation award winner. Presented to SD. There are no Sagamore awards.

We have four Special Recognition awards this year.

The first one goes to Charlie Wooley, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Presented to Charlie.

Our second Special Recognition award goes to Ed Boggess, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Presented to Ed.

Our third Special Recognition award goes to Becky Humphries, National Wild Turkey Federation. Presented to Becky.

Our fourth Special Recognition award goes to Howard K. Vincent, Pheasants Forever. Presented to PF.

Past President's Award goes to Keith Warnke, Wisconsin. Presented to Tami Ryan.

President's Award goes to Chicago Wilderness in recognition of 25 years of service as a national model of collaborative conservation and for promoting the land ethic across the Chicago metropolitan region.

*Afternoon session started 1:30 pm*

*Tom* – Made general announcements.

## **DIRECTOR PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **Workforce Challenges and Opportunities for Recruitment and Retention**

Competing Interests

Employee Marketplace

Seasonal Opportunities

Remote Work Expectations

Employee Values

Law Enforcement Recruitment

*Tom* – Discussed this morning when some of these items were mentioned; I remember remote work was brought up, recruitment and retention, employees and staff. There are a lot of different things going on and we all have some challenges in respect to staff, including holding onto them. Seasonal employees were on the list, when we looked at state parks across the state they bring out over 500 seasonal employees alone just to make operations happen. That is a daunting task on its own and it is challenging finding work force to come in. Even though we look at interns to come in and work for our agency on various programs and projects it has become challenging and sometimes even causes us to not get work done we need to on an annual basis. Chris Hull is going to be the facilitator for this session. He is a member of our communications/information team. He brings a wealth of knowledge and talent in respect to communications. He does a lot of video work for us, social media, website items, news releases and a lot of communications for us. Pleased to have him here today. He has done a lot of the set up for the audio this week and brings a lot of talents and skills to our agency and keeps us moving in the right direction.

*Facilitated by Chris Hull* – Been 16 years with the department, I used to be the gas pedal of the department and then we brought in Nick. Glad to be here talking about this. When you are in communications you get your fingers into everything, and everybody's priority is communications. It has been 7-8 years where we have had to reach out. It used to be that SD State University had a pipeline, interns, seasonals and new staff; 60 kids graduating looking at us, IA, NE, WI and MN, all the way around us. I remember sitting down with leadership all those years ago and discussing where these kids were going. A year after that we were getting them but can't keep them. That focus for our agency is keeping good people on the bus and bringing more people on the bus has been a big challenge. It takes a great deal of communication just trying to say we have jobs, but you have to market. We are good at a lot of things as wildlife agencies, but we are not always good at marketing. That is a big change. Ten years ago, our director would not use the word, market. We were communicating but now not only marketing opportunities, but now marketing job opportunities. You need to carry this conversation. Start out with the obvious. Biggest challenge facing labor force, and what are you doing to try and solve that?

*Jeb* – Seeing challenges in law enforcement (LE), now bigger issues as far as who wants to be in LE now days, a daunting task. Previously, minimum qualifications in ND was 4-year bachelor's degree, now 2-year associates degree. In last couple rounds of hires it potentially made a difference. Still in decent place, never had to hire 6-10 people at a time, but just two or three at a time. Our pool of applicants has been lower, but we are still able to find two or three. If we were looking for 10 it would be different. Jury is still out if that did anything or not.

*Tom* – In SD, our chief is in the room now and that is one of the challenges we have been dealing with. About 6-8 months ago we had 15-16 vacancies in LE, that is significant as full staff is about 82 and that caused a lot of extra work for other officers. Trying new stuff also. Salaries, in comparison to surrounding states, that was addressed this year through legislature and Governor's office. That should help us from retention standpoint and recruitment standpoint. Sam and his staff are reaching out to other universities. Even some tech schools are coming out with criminal justice classes. It is about finding the right person, not necessarily the right resume. Need right personality and demeanor. We have been talking about actually going out into high schools and recruiting like they do for academics, football or basketball. We are finding kids who have interest in doing that type of work and looking at concepts of signing them up then already. From retention standpoint on LE, we will get 80-90 applications for one or two openings we want to fill but a vast majority are coming from out of state. We will put them through training at the academy, they work for a year or two then leave. We are trying to come up with

ways we can offer more. By recruiting local kid that has an interest natural resource management or LE and interested in staying in SD. We have a lot of good officers that come from other states, love it and want to stay. Those are challenges, trying new things but there is no silver bullet.

*Brad* – Specifically in LE but we have issues we are dealing with in all divisions. In LE, the thing we stumbled into is evaluating recruits and they would apply multiple times and we had a rigorous testing process, unlike our other divisions. LE was really regimented and graded on wildlife identification and a whole host of things. It was daunting. We expect they are going to learn a fair amount of what they have to know on the job, but you wouldn't have known that by the application. It was a challenging test. What do we need to know about them and what do they have to have in place for potential to be a good officer, so looking at that. We didn't require a 4-year degree, but our human resources (HR) wouldn't screen people without one. We had to go back to our own requirements and say, 4-year degree preferred but not required. At the other end of spectrum, building up idea mentoring; when you have new folks how do they get set up and get to love the state, so we are doing more with having a mentoring person, senior person, to help them out. We hand pick those. On other end of spectrum, we have been working on salaries also. Need to sit down with the legislature but we are trying to get them into Kansas Police and Firefighters retirement system. We have a couple of legislators really against that and they have been stopping this the last few years, but we won't give up. They should be certified just like every other LE officer in the state. That would help our retention and recruitment. Ours do the same thing, they come in, get training, put a couple of years in and go to one of our neighbors who pay more than us. Trying every part of that process, to keep and retain LE.

*Tim* – About three years ago Brad, we went through that same process, partly because seeing decline in number of applications and we got funding for five new conservation officers. It was just a numbers game we were playing. Challenge we ran into was the extreme testing process and the amount of time. By the time we got through our process the top candidates had already been given an offer and accepted it. We had to modify it and we used the same format as in other divisions. The challenge is if they are not already accredited, they have to run through law enforcement academy and a series of other tests they had to go through. We've been having a fair number of retirements, so we went to continuous open call for law enforcement officers. The other situation we run into was we could only fill two to four spots in state law enforcement academy. We have been playing this game for a while. The other thing we have done, we tried to steer away from 10 years ago, now actually doing some advertisements for existing certified officers in Nebraska and have been able to pull some county sheriffs, state patrol and some larger community officers. Some of their salaries are higher and we can't compete.

*Shannon* – We have been stealing from other agencies and states. The problem is our pay scale is lower, \$8 different than others, especially state police. We have 1,200 applicants a year for 25 slots in the academy. We had about 200 for 25 slots and usually end up with about 20 that come out of academy. We have completely changed our mindset; they don't have to know anything. If you go on the website now there are videos that show how to write a warrant, how to check traps etc. Great when you are recruiting but all the officers on staff went through all of that, were rigorously screened and knew all that coming in, so they feel the new folks they are working alongside aren't as good as they are because they aren't screening that. But stealing from other agencies seems to be working for us. They have to really want to be a game warden because we have no pension and don't pay as well.

*Dave* – Long tradition of conservation officer academies and there has been strong interest in those but that is starting to wane. One of the up sides is no one came out of the womb knowing how to hunt and fish, so like Shannon is saying there is a strong effort to recruit people interested in the outdoors who may or may not be in law enforcement; looking for good people. It has taken awhile but there has been a shift in culture in that division and they are embracing that approach. Went through interview process a week or so ago and there was about 100 people, a lot to whittle

down to a class of 25 to fill one or two of those a year. Our officers are part of bargaining unit as our highway patrol, a plus and minus because all a part of Governor's police.

*Sara* – To Brad's point I think we could talk about this all afternoon. The biggest thing I can tell you, thank you to our Commission, four years ago we instituted a new market-based compensation plan, an incredible tool for us. It is a three-part compensation plan, market adjustments, typically every year if we have revenue beyond market we make market-based adjustments; a ten years of service component, so the longer they are there they get cash value every year; and the third part, we are going into year two of performance-based pay, that is its own discussion. If you are talking about retaining your top performers and having the ability to move them through the pay range more quickly that is also an impactful tool. It is a huge culture change. Looked at policies and where can we lighten policy handbook, changed hybrid remote work policy, doesn't work for everybody but where it works more liberal. Even dress and appearance. Maybe a tattoo isn't the worst thing in the world. We had to do a self-examination and look at our policies to see where we could incentivize the next generation. Also, doing a better job at marketing the whole benefit package; great health insurance and retirement. For people just coming out of college they couldn't care less about sustainable retirement but is for others coming in from different points of their career. Trying something brand new, other state agencies in Missouri trying it; for positions having trouble recruiting, for us certain IT positions, engineers, foresters and some positions we have. If you bring somebody in, can't be related and some other criteria, but if you recruit someone into the agency and they get the position you get cash value for that as an employee. Others in Missouri are doing that it has worked for them. We are going to try it and see, approved policy a month ago. For law enforcement we do back to back academies, we do our own; trying to recruit greater diversity. Sometimes people met an agent when they were 10 years old and always knew they wanted to be one, or other communities or audiences, they are interested in it but not same connection. We started internship program a few years ago for law enforcement diverse candidates and so far we had five interns and all five successfully interviewed. They have a full year of being mentored by conservation officers and have some payment for that. Where we do have positions recruiting across the state, doing full panel interviews, multiple supervisors, all go through the interviews and had great success. One of the interviews had five or six positions of similar nature and we just threw them all together. Some of the things we are trying.

*Kendra* – Last class of cadets, lost six through physical fitness who could not compete so this time we did some practice of physical fitness with our staff, had two of those and only lost one this time. They should be running and doing these things but weren't. Expanded degree, it used to be anyone could be a game warden and then over time got more restrictive; we expanded that to open up to education majors and other physical sciences and we have gotten a lot more variety. We also are working with historically black colleges, and taking female officers with us to recruitment events, we have eight out of 128, having their image as been helpful. We too are looking for people who are good with people, good at making judgements and handling all situations is our number one priority.

*Chris* – Going to the next question and something that jumped out was how you stay visible. With remote work mandates and some combination of in-person schedules what kind of approaches if everybody taking or implementing to keep your people engaged, informed and excited. For me, two weeks after we shut down the office I was back in the office because I was going crazy. I have to be around people because I feed off of ideas, but I was the only one in the office. What kinds of strategies are you doing to keep those folks not in the office all the time part of the team?

*Shannon* – I am not a big fan of remote work. Our agency is founded on relationships and the natural resource community is small to begin with so it is hard even when you see a person once

a day. We miss the piece happening from different interactions when clicking off one meeting and into another. We have a remote work policy but must be eligible for at homework. We have a ton of field staff not eligible for remote work, front desk and customer service people are not eligible for remote work. A lot of people aren't happy with that decision, but it was a compliment to what we thought we could do. We don't want to lose people to other agencies, so we were trying to do the hybrid approach. There is detailed document that must be done and have weekly logs that have to be filled out for all departments. That was enacted when remote work kicked on in 2020 and we still have that. As far as keeping teams together we do have to be intentional about team meetings, whether you have lunch together remotely and talking together over a computer not talking about work; a lot of teams are trying that. They seem to like it, getting more millennial groups into our newer positions and they like it because they grew up with technology. As soon as I could go out, I went out to the different offices to see how people are. Those are some of the things we are trying to keep going. Dan would say that people will circle back and want to come back in the office more, at least a day or two during the week.

*Jeb* – Keeping the team, one of the challenges I don't think you do. Most of the agencies' positions you have to be there, currently we have one programmer working from home. With technology we have and staff coming into the office has the flexibility of knowing that they can work from home if they have a sick kid or whatever. Having flexibility, we have but keeping people in the office. For us, the majority of people wanted to be in the office.

*Tom* – Shannon, you mentioned logs that are required to be submitted. That is one of biggest challenges for folks that work remotely is for direct supervisor to access and understand how thorough they are being with their work, are they getting 40 hours in, or whatever. Do those logs go directly to their immediate supervisor for review and do they talk about them or how far do those logs go? That is something not required in South Dakota.

*Shannon* – State employer office required those, go to direct supervisor but we have been asked by legislature twice now, in committee hearings about particular areas of the state that senators wanted to see. We do take it seriously and we continue to log, by coding and project and things like that. The hardest thing for supervisors to assess that. Things like, if they have a safe work environment at home and what that means. Many go into basements to work at home and who are we to say it is a safe work environment or not. Managers weren't happy about having to inspect houses or work environment, so slippery slope there. We haven't had that happen, had someone fall down the stairs at their own home, but probably will at some point. Also, that is not their official work location and they are not allowed to change that work location.

*Tom* – For those of you who have employees working remote, are most of them 100% remote or some hybrid?

*Tim* – Started out with a lot of people at home full time and then started getting people back in the office and now have very few cases where people are not in the office at least one to three days a week. We have been pushing that mainly from computer standpoint. We did have people that once they did remote work at home they refused to come back to the office and that has made it challenging. We were having some of those same performance related questions. One of my biggest concerns was work dumping, where other people are having to pick up parts of that person's job. At one point people were delivering paperwork to people because we aren't set up online to electronically to do it. We have gotten better at that in most cases. We have said that if they are doing remote work, they have to come into the office to pick up the work, have to be available to answer phones. For the most part, all of our staff is back. We have become more understanding to allow people to work at home if they need. The people appreciate it, but most can't wait to get back in the office.

*Pete* – Similar, did employee survey, 90% of division folks answered and 100% back to the office, only two of 640 people answered they like teleworking. Just because of nature of work Percentage that were hybrid because of pandemic were office staff. Having that flexibility is

something those employees do appreciate. As a supervisor, I am more lenient and we are seeing situations we can accommodate. Have telework agreements employees have to sign that lays everything out, health and safety questions and reminding them that if that is their full-time work office location then OSHA does count. Makes people nervous and want to look at that more in depth.

*Chris* – Remote work officer have pjs on.

*Colleen* – In Illinois, it is combination of everything everyone else has pointed out. Going back to law enforcement, for last two years our chief has been an officer of color and that has made an incredible difference in culture of conservation police officers. A completely different approach to recruiting, reaching out in areas we never did before, reaching out to schools and universities that we never considered before. The other thing about what made a difference in that culture is that chief, who just left two weeks ago to accept chief of police position in Champaign Illinois, also has a military background and is an active Captain in the military. His approach was very regimented, he changed the whole culture going out into the field and having different expectations and inspections. We are in a much better place two years later than we were two years before. Now we have a new chief who is not a person of color, but the mindset is different now. The new chief is getting his advanced degrees, so expectations are on a higher level than they used to be. We also changed requirement for 4-year degree to 2-year degree, like our state police. Instead of just looking at requirements expected to be a police officer the chief indicated that what he wanted to look for was not somebody who was already a police officer who wanted to transition into conservation police but rather look for person of character. He completely changed qualifications and training changed as a consequence of that because policing has changed. I can't say it strongly enough that we have a strong force right now with great comradery and respect for each other and that wasn't the case a few years ago. The everyday work force most can't, because of job descriptions, do remote work because you do need to be onsite. It is a little different for us because many are in unions so that is dictated by whatever those agreements. So, the state has put together a pilot project of 2-3 day week in the office and that continues through the end of October. The challenge is for appointees we have to come up with our own policy. We have gone back to full time work but with more flexibility than before.

*Chris* – Fourteen years ago had opportunity to go through a state leadership program our Governor started. Since then, our department has made our own leadership programs with different levels of participation and you don't have to go through one to go through the next one. It is focusing on keeping employees engaged. Employees stay when they are paid, obviously but it is metric, challenged, promoted, involved, appreciated, trusted and valued. That has stuck with me. The question is, what are your agencies doing to retain the employees you have and empower and uplift some of the people who aren't driving the bus?

*Sara* – Compensation and performance pay aspect has meant having inter-agency teamwork a year to create performance management system that went into the mechanism by which we evaluate staff. That means at least quarterly reviews and end of year evaluation. Clear work objectives identified and tying back to strategic goals. Those conversations for folks in the field not always intuitive to sit down and go through objectives and progress so we had to do a lot of training to do that. When money is involved and permanent bump in the scale, not a bonus, folks learning to take that system more seriously on how they identify work objectives for their teams and how they evaluate that staff. Sounds similar to South Dakota where you have a statewide leadership academy, we can only send two classes a year, two each time, so four a year. We have MDC leadership academy and that is for 20 every 10 months, then leadership 2.0, moving folks that complete the different academies to next level. That has been a good mechanism, mid-level managers who have been through training and are proving themselves as existing or future leaders. We use them to ground truth a lot of policies, challenging issues or things we need field perspective on. There are about 60-80 in 2.0 group, in every branch and region of the state and

has proven to be a good mechanism. We break them up into working group and come back with recommendations. Leadership development rule by state rule supervisors have to have so many hours of linked in learning and we have added additional requirements that are department specific. Having that mechanism and requiring supervisors to go through training; with hundreds of courses, provides continued leadership training and is a benefit.

*Tami* – Gone through series recently of primary classification pay increases and working to hire more competitive. As far as retaining staff that still isn't enough. We also have employee engagement initiatives with relevancy program, we have teams and provided recent survey to evaluate staff and how they are feeling about their work environment. We are working hard to improve that environment and ensure staff values. I have never seen, in my career, the rate of approval for professional development, travel. It is important for staff to get out and engage and interact with their peers not just be stuck in their offices. That has been noteworthy.

*Tim* – Used state leadership academy for many of our staff. Finding, especially for support positions, really valuable focus on state process and helps them understand who they can reach out to when they have problems when trying to solve an issue. Use NCLI for leadership for law enforcement through state park directors. We have had a long history of encouraging employees to travel to meetings and conferences and have interactions and get engaged in activities that are regional or national. From standpoint of our parks enforcement, wildlife and fisheries, that professional connection supporting that is huge. Keeps staff going. Question for Sara. We have ability in Nebraska to do performance pay but the only way we can reward somebody for high performance is we have to have people who are under performing to get raises too. Are you looking at and have additional funding to do that pay for performance because our system they set up for us we are not willing to do the way they want.

*Sara* – As long as revenues allow the first thing that goes into place is market adjustments for all staff and they have to have successful performance. The next piece is years of service to keep moving people through the ranks based upon tenure. If revenues allow then we do have third piece that we recommended to our commission, it is highly successful benefit from that and the Commission said everyone would benefit, all successful, not if not meeting expectations, but at a different percent, 1% additional for successful, 2% for and 4%. It is permanent adjustments based upon revenues as the third piece.

*Chris* – Like hunger games. Good job, you solved it. Appreciate it, great discussion, well done.

*Refreshment Break – sponsored by National Shooting Sports Foundation*

### **Working with Landowners**

*Facilitated by Tom Kirschenmann*

*Tom* – Have presentations from some of our staff. Focus on working with landowners. Most of you have multiple programs working with landowners. We will give you South Dakota spin and talk about some details from habitat access, law enforcement, aquatic and give you good summary of what is happening here.

First presenter Paul Coughlin. He is our habitat program administrator for game, fish and parks and works out of our central office. He has been in this role for 20 plus years. He is very knowledgeable about habitat and access, particularly on private land side and he also manages our game production areas on management standpoint and coordination with field staff on habitat efforts.



Habitat and Access Priority (Exhibit 5) – **Paul Coughlin** – Talk about habitat and access and priority of the agency and some of the other presenters will go into more detail. I want to give brief overview of the habitat and access initiative we are going through as an agency right now. Why do we have the initiative? As every other state we have stewardship responsibilities for state fish and wildlife resources. A key component of that is to provide opportunities for the public to enjoy those resources. Take this seriously, habitat and access are a priority for our agency. Fortunate to have large public land base, key component of habitat and access. Sitting in the middle of the Black Hills and probably single largest block of public land in the upper great plains, an incredible resource. South Dakota has public lands from western South Dakota in Black Hills to BLM public land trust in western part and then eastern part has USFWS and waterfowl production areas. In between all of that we have game production areas we manage as an agency. South Dakota is also heavily dominated by private land so achieving success of a habitat and access initiative requires a partnership. Key to that success is built on partnership, agencies working together, NGOs working with agencies, NGOs working together and private landowners. Recently in South Dakota did a shift with org chart, added whole staff of eight positions for total of 12 private land biologists across the state. Because it is such a priority it is all hands-on deck, all staff are being provided with opportunities to talk with landowners on what we can provide as an agency, what partners can offer. We encourage staff to become knowledgeable about the program and visit with landowners and sell the programs. Funding comes from hunters and fishing license dollars. Priority is private landowners who provide reasonable access for hunting and fishing opportunities and provide habitat programs to landowners that are interested in it. Goal of our initiative is to provide quality customer service, to landowners, partners and anybody who wants to be involved in habitat and access programs. We wanted to identify what priority habitat and access needs were on public and private land across the state. Across the state there are different needs for access and different needs for wildlife habitat in different parts of the state. We could not have just a blanket plan because there are different wildlife priority species and different efforts in different corners of the state. That needs to be driven by local efforts to identify those priorities. We wanted to identify wildlife species including species of greatest conservation need (GCN) and that provides funding for habitat work for those GCN species. Our local staff is working to identify priority habitat and access needs in their part of the world and species that depend on those habitats and are going to direct programs we offer and partnerships to address those needs. To ensure that we have a successful program we have to have landowners willing to participate with us. This is where it is key to have our staff engaged in habitat and access initiative so they can sell these programs and can also establish relationships to landowners, other partners in their geography and figure out what priorities are and how they can address those. It comes down to success of initiative. It comes down to partnerships and relationships. Anybody that has worked in private lands knows that is critical. As we brought on new private lands biologists, department secretary was pushing us to get goals established and we are working on that. One of the things we try to stress for first year your number one goal should be to go out and get facetime with partners, with conservation districts and NGOs that work in that same geography and with landowners and landowner groups. Establish relationships. That builds foundation of success. We are on the right track. We have been at this for decades but fortunate position that we have department secretary and whole administration fully behind this and working with habitat and access and private landowners.

*Tom* – Paul has been a true leader on this venture. Mark Norton is next. He is senior wildlife biologist who handles Farm Bill coordination and our walk-in area access program. Our congressional folks reach out to Mark to find out how the Farm Bill is working.

Private Lands Habitat and Access Program (Exhibit 6) – **Mark Norton** – You are sitting in the crown jewel of the whole country. I will expand and focus more on private lands habitat and access programs. The overall goal of this program is to work with landowners where they are and help them meet their goals to improve wildlife habitat on their property. We have different practices that are wildlife specific but also practices that are working lands friendly, benefiting wildlife and livestock operations. Landowners must allow access to receive our cost share assistance. We have three main habitat priorities; grasslands, all species are heavily dependent on grassland management and habitat. So, we offer things like restoration, seeding cropland back to grassland, grazing infrastructure, water development, fencing, wildlife friendly fence, wire replacement. Grazing infrastructure to improve grassland management and encourage more rotational grazing, diversity of grassland structure like species diversity by changing management intensity and timing throughout the year. Wetlands, eastern South Dakota is part of prairie pothole region, another unique landscape in the country. Wetlands are also important in western South Dakota, they may not be prairie pothole riparian areas but we have some potholes and playa-type wetlands and man-made dams; a lot of those serve multi-purposes, not just livestock but wildlife and waterfowl attraction habitat. In grassland area the predation rate is significantly less than the prairie pothole region. Wetlands we do have in west are critically important to waterfowl production as well. The other main habitat priority is winter habitat, primarily resident wildlife species, pheasants and deer through habitat and food plot creation that helps give them thermal cover from harsh winter and also makes sure there are food sources for them to survive the winter. Paul mentioned partnerships but needs to be mentioned again, nothing happens without them. So many programs available to private landowners that no one agency or individual entity can deliver or understand them all or all of the details or requirements and options available for landowners to do habitat work on their property. Making sure you have good relationship with partners to understand their programs and make sure they understand your programs and work together to create a diverse toolbox of habitat private land options for landowners. Relationship not only with landowners but all entities out there delivering habitat to private lands. On the hunting access program, last year we had about 1.4 million acres of private land leased for hunting. It is across the state but there are large concentrations in certain parts of the state. There is not a lot of private land in the Black Hills so not a lot of access there. We do have good representation across the state. Our number one access program is the walk-in area program with 1.3 million acres in that program, with 1,500 cooperators statewide. This program is 34 years old, is widely known and we are looking to grow and expand it. Increased payment rates last year along with Ag increase for habitat with emphasis on public access as well and doing everything we can to provide as much hunting opportunity as possible. Another program we have is in central South Dakota just north of Pierre, the lower Oahe waterfowl access area, lease 26,500 acres of primarily irrigated cropland for field waterfowl hunting opportunities. This program draws hunters to fields every morning and has historically drawn significant numbers of Canada geese that show up around Thanksgiving and are here through mid-February. A maximization of opportunity when the geese are here and a lot of waterfowl hunters count on that program. It is not only Canada goose, but mallards stage there on migration south and our duck season in that part of the state is open to January 15; ducks are still here and don't leave until after the season closes. A niche program is the controlled hunting access program (CHAP), smaller than others, but a program to work with landowners to provide some form of access but don't want unlimited access like walk-in hunting program. This one is wide open and anything the landowner can think up we can make work for this program. A lot of these are limited by number of hunters per day. Some only allow antlerless deer harvest or only allow whitetail deer harvest; various different rules can be applied to a CHAP area. Instead of paid by acre this is paid by number of hunters that can access the property. The landowners have some value in determining how restrictive they want it and how much income they want to make. Another

niche program is elk hunting access program, historically on areas where elk depredation issues. It is a partnership where they receive a base payment. These areas are not published in public hunting maps but those who draw an elk tag receives information that these properties are available, they contact regional office to get landowner phone numbers and hunter works with landowner to arrange to hunt on the property. In many cases a large percentage of the cow elk shot are harvested on these properties. The last access program is conservation reserve enhancement program, a habitat and access program. Targeted effort to maintain CRP and create CRP habitat in eastern South Dakota and central eastern South Dakota where we historically had high pheasant populations and high pheasant hunter densities. Right now, we have about 76,000 acres and can have up to 100,000 acres. We made some changes over the years so we can get to that 100,000 acres and looking forward to doing so in next couple of years. We are in development of a second conservation reserve enhancement program project in Big Seward watershed. This is a partnership between USDA and Game, Fish and Parks to target CRP acres and specific watersheds involved with public hunting and fishing access and they are delivering quality habitat, water quality and public hunting access opportunities. *Scott Taylor* – How many other CREPs across the country require public access? *Mark* – As far as I know one in North Dakota. *Jeb* – Do you pay for habitat work on private land where access is required? *Mark* – Yes we do. It comes down to reasonable access and type of habitat work we are doing. If we are doing grazing infrastructure and the guy doesn't want to put in an access program but will allow some local kids to come out and hunt during youth deer season or antelope hunting or something like that; to us that is reasonable public access and justifiable for us to spend license dollars. *Kendra* – I didn't see payment rates you are paying landowners, walk in areas? *Mark* – For walk-in areas for CRP it is \$10 acre, some parts of state paying up to \$13 an acre and we do also use public access grants to offer sign-on bonuses on undisturbed habitat or walk-in multi-year contracts and those are an additional \$10 per acre per year. If a 10-year walk-in area on CRP it would be \$100 an acre signing bonus.

*Tom* – Switch to from terrestrial to aquatic side on access. Jake Davis is area fisheries supervisor out of Rapid City office.

Aquatics Habitat and Access Programs (Exhibit 7) – ***Jake Davis*** – I was in that role but am program administrator on fisheries side now. We have smaller program but doing good things as well. Have partnerships and some private landowners but partner with other government entities here in South Dakota. We have fisheries staff on national forests, fisheries on natural grasslands, also U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Corps of Engineers, a lot of partners. One of our big partners is the U.S. Forest Service and private as they do allow grazing. One project is fencing on riparian areas at Castle Creek to protect stream riparian areas from cattle. One of the big component is working with lease to make sure they are working with things like hard point crossings, so a number of different partners. It might be national forests primarily there is private landowners and want to make sure we are at the table with them, so they are comfortable with what is happening. Program primarily for private landowners but some projects staff have been able to accomplish with private, municipalities, government entities and a lot of opportunities in the state. Our program is myself and statewide coordinator and regional wildlife biologist. In the last eight months we have increased our staff by three, doubled our staff, a big step in the right direction. We had one habitat access biologist for all of western South Dakota so if call came in from landowner, city, or government entity his plate was pretty full. We were able to fill another position, started yesterday; a good way to grow our program to meet the needs of our users. Rapid Creek in Rapid City, the partnership is City of Rapid City and within that working with Pennington County on floodplain. There are NGOs, an angling group in Rapid City and they have contributed funds to this so have been able to provide stream habitat in downtown

Rapid City with a number of partners. Black Hills Flyfishers was that group. We are always looking for opportunities to partner. Our funding comes from habitat stamp, or use license dollars, partner with NGOs and municipalities and in addition are able to utilize grants like Mark mentioned, public access grants for signing bonuses. We sign up landowners for angling access and can offer extra incentive and that has been a good thing for staff to have and felt fortunate to utilize that. Landowner programs, fishing pier, a partnership with municipality, City of Newell, wanted something for kids fishing pond; we were able to purchase it for them and maintenance fell to the city, another like-minded group. Three primary programs aquatics has for private landowners is fisheries management agreement, providing angling access to water body that is completely surrounded by private land, no public access to it. Landowner would contact us looking for fish for small pond, no natural lakes in western South Dakota, we would stock some fish and while we were out there saying we will provide fish and fisheries management in return for allowing public access to provide financial incentives as well. In the past it was reasonable public access but concern in the department so changed it to open public access and provide financial incentive. If not interested in that, we do provide opportunity to get fish in pond, but we won't be the ones providing them. It has been good program, especially in western South Dakota where we have few fisheries. Some areas may have only one or two fisheries in entire county. Important to provide regional opportunities for some folks. The next one is aquatic access lease agreement, we might go to larger water body and going to landowner and signing them up where we might be leasing two acres for 10 years, provide fencing, parking, signage, boat ramp, dock or whatever to make them happy. We use this program in eastern, central and western South Dakota and it has been good program there. Most of those agreements are for 10 years, number of acres from two to five acres, depends on specific location. When it comes to infrastructure that is there we work with landowner to tailor for what works best for their needs and our needs. We do sign a document and the agreement that the ramp and dock, for example, are government property, but we will maintain them. They can terminate the lease but wording on that that says how financing works after that and how infrastructure goes. The last one is shoreline restoration program, working with specific landowners on glacial lakes to convert manicured lawns back into native plantings. The interesting thing is working with lake associations and if you give one landowner a contract it starts a snowball effect, so the key is getting the first landowner or lake association to make that jump. This has primarily been in northeast part of state. In central and western parts there are no natural lakes with lake associations. Other access projects, may be with municipality or on our own lands. Our primary reason for access is boat ramps, fishing piers, shoreline improvements and access trails or road improvements. Fishing piers are popular with municipalities, not just kid's ponds but city ponds and a lot of that is getting people to the resource. We do a number of every year and have a list of willing partners. We built at prison in the state. Those conversations start with staff in the field. We have memorial fishing piers with NGOs, with certain groups as recruiting tool to get name out there; we put on sign that ways who we partnered with. We have boat ramps with any number of different partners. What we started doing with cities is doing more primitive kayak and paddleboard launches or other alternative ways other than watercraft. Do vegetation control, access improvements. Have couple of different kinds of access whether stream or lake and depending on where project is located. Part of it is working with Bureau of Reclamation working on wintertime flows on some of our reservoirs with water most critical part of fish habitat. It comes down to each specific example and who players are at the table. Stream habitat on park area in Rapid City, with benefits for non-consumptive users as well. Sometimes when we put piers out we put them within casting distance of basic structure improvements to increase catch rates. And do basic structure improvements and partner with a lot of entities. It is all for the users, that is what we always tie back to. *Brian* – Do you get support from users on investments for public access? *Jake* – Yes, they have been catalysts for our programs, especially on aquatic side and stimulate a lot of

projects getting done. Some projects have been on the list for a long time and aging infrastructure, we looked at population densities and with limited funds they weren't as high as other priorities but with increase of funds it has allowed us to increase volume of projects and geographical distribution of those projects.

*Tom* – Jake is administrator for habitat and access for aquatic species and involved with fish management across the state. First three presentations focused on habitat and access, whether private landowners, municipalities or other entities. You heard from Paul, Mark and Jake is reasonable access. That has always been challenging to determine and when you are using license dollars and PR/DJ funds but in South Dakota there is a statute that says if we are going to spend dollars on these types of projects there must be some level of reasonable access. The challenge is, what is reasonable? At times we are glad nobody has gone in and defined what reasonable is, but we don't want to be the access cop. Reasonable gives us ability to work with landowners and provides options for them. Move on to wildlife damage management program, a multi-faceted program that deals with wildlife damage whether during the winter when deer and elk herd up or in summer on eastern part of the state where you have Canada goose depredation and growing crops and other side of program is annual damage control program, essentially predator control with emphasis on coyote. Our program is unique, we have 28 staff dedicated to it. Trenton Hathaway is our regional terrestrial resource supervisor in western South Dakota

Wildlife Damage Management Program Exhibit 8– ***Trenton Hathaway*** – The animal damage program is statewide program started in late 1930s and was primarily focused on animal damage control of predators. South Dakota was a major player in sheep market at that time and coyotes were public enemy number one. In 1970s they added wildlife damage portion of it, deer, elk, Canada goose, etc. We have gone through changes and upgrades through time. In 2001, we added forest staff strictly geared towards deer and elk depredation. We have temporary fences used to address situations like stack yard or stored feed. Those folks were running panels and materials all over the state. We had state trappers and damage specialists at that time. Now we have 28 full time staff, we still look at large districts and some of these people are stilling having to drive quite a distance. Talking about a program with customer service focus, windshield time becomes a major consideration and trying to make sure folks are living in their district, getting integrated with the community and understand what is going on in area. All of our people are housed in central location and drive 4-5 hours to locations at times so it makes sense to have people in the communities, from logistics standpoint we have to have folks living in the communities we can call upon. Legislature sets funding for this program, a two to one match, one part is from county assessment and two parts comes from license dollars from Game, Fish and Parks. We have heavy focus on customer service, we urge staff to get back to producers within 48 hours, not meeting them onsite but to say we got their message and let them know where they are at in their lineup. We are just getting through busy time of the year, spring calving or lambing events and some of our folks were up to 10 days out at a time. We ask staff to prioritize work and provide them tools for the job. In big game depredation we have portable panels, use plastic mesh to wrap around bales to keep deer off them, use live trap to cyanide devices to aircraft to live traps and snares and anything we can put in staff hands to be more effective. Big four we deal with are deer, elk, beaver and Canada geese. What doesn't show up on charts is staff we have across the landscape and we will provide up to \$15,000 for landowner to put up stackyard, usually eight feet tall, using pipe that is essentially a bomb proof structure they can store feed whether ground hay, alfalfa bales or whatever they can put inside it that pretty much eliminates need for us to come out in bad winter. We had a couple issues we had to deal with last winter but request for service only involved temporary assistance in January to help protect alfalfa. We spend several hundred thousand dollars on elk annual in food plot

program. That is if someone has an alfalfa field we will rent several acres, pay them average going rate, plus some production costs. On deer, it was a light year for us, not much winter by SD standards, not much snow or cold. Commodity prices dropped and people were paying a premium for hay. Canada geese is big issue for most of you and we are using every tool we have to provide help and seasonals are out putting up electric fencing and trying to keep geese out of productive soybean fields. And beavers too, they will always be on the list. Examples of some of the damage we deal with, beaver in waterways, deer will transition to whatever green forbs are available like pine needles and spruce trees which are tall enough that it will not kill them but if six feet or shorter it will kill them. Influx of storage bags for grain, raccoons punch holes in them and deer find the holes. We have tried to use a bunch of different things, use mitigation measures like fencing trees, portable panels and using some of these products. Back to Canada geese, have electric fencing program and becoming a bigger issue as populations rise and they require a lot of work and staff time. Animal damage control program went through review a few years ago to improve customer service aspect as well as service we are providing. We increased number of field supervisors for trappers, increased number of contract airplanes we were able to partner with and increased focus on state trappers and wildlife damage specialists focused on coyote removal from February through July. Important time to remove coyotes, during calving and lambing and numbers increased because of those efforts. We do remove 10,000 to 11,000 coyotes annually. Prairie dogs are becoming more of an issue for us, recovering from plague of 10 years ago. We do provide some limited service for prairie dog removal, must have a certain number of acres within certain number of miles of other removal to provide control. Outside of that distance from public landowners. We use zinc phosphate treated oats. We have some black-footed ferret reintroduction across the state and they are federally endangered species so have to balance with them. One large predator on the landscape that causes a few issues is the mountain lion; not a large issue but we do employ a houndsman who has two hounds but the majority of his responsibility is radio collar and online sampling and requests vary, from people calling us who thinks they saw one or significant amount of livestock loss as well as people who want mountain lions. We have response protocol set up to guide field staff, we try not to remove mountain lions if possible but there are certain situations where the only option is to relocate them. When you relocate mountain lions they cause problems in different areas or are right back to where you moved them from. We do spend a significant amount of money on this program but feel it has bought us a lot of leeway with producers. If we didn't have this program, we wouldn't have access we do now. Most of our stuff is geared toward hunter access but interaction is underlying theme of this by providing solid customer service and letting them know we are here to help. The WDM review suggests we have a formal strategic plan that guides the program. That was a thought out, planned out process. We got staff input, ran through public stakeholder meetings. Again, customer service oriented. We don't want program to be how many animals we killed or took care of but how we best serve the public, whether that is removing 10 coyotes from the property or no coyotes from the property. What is the best response in any given situation to get producer satisfaction. *Ollie* – You mentioned using cyanide for coyote control. Don't you have issues with secondary poisoning on non-target species? *Trenton* – Not with coyote removal, no. It is fairly effective and there are a bunch of use restrictions on where we can and can't use it. We are not going to use in pasture where producer may be using for livestock or has dogs or any potential for non-targets...

*Tom* – One key organization I would like to thank is USDA Wildlife Services, they are important partner to our agency in that program, especially from ADC standpoint. The two federal planes we have is because of them. A big thank you for assisting us in those programs. Tim, earlier you talked about elk on the prairie and we understand what you are talking about. Several staff were at the fire hall in Martin, South Dakota with 45-50 not happy landowners about the elk numbers

there. We put a plan together to harvest 150 elk in one year from that county alone and we are on year two of that. Managing elk on the prairie is hard. We work heavily with our conservation officers and they are involved with walk-in area programs, habitat programs and most importantly building those relationships. Our law enforcement responsibilities include working with landowners. We have Chief Sam Schelhaas from our law enforcement section and he is going to give you an overview of what our officers do in respect to landowner involvement.

Law Enforcement Responsibilities – **Sam Schelhaas** – I don't have a PowerPoint. I am law enforcement section chief, came on in middle of COVID, haven't met your chiefs and colonels yet and I look forward to meeting many of them. I enjoyed the conversation you guys had on recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers. We spend a lot of time talking strategies and tactics on that as well. That plays into relationship we have with landowners. When we are short staffed, things get affected that way and relationships with landowners is one of those. In South Dakota we have had a strong connection with landowners and that changes from east of river in South Dakota to western South Dakota and different farm operations. We have always been the face of the department. Hearing from areas without conservation officers that those communities are starting to feel abandoned by Game, Fish and Parks and that is concerning. When someone says DNR shows up they are talking about conservation officers, the face of the agency. You know your landowners have their conservation officers, a strong relationship and are starting to see struggle in long-term duty stations that we can't fill. For South Dakota those are primarily remote duty stations, small communities in western South Dakota. That plays directly into relationships with landowners. We are trying to allow officers to be assigned to a duty station but live somewhere else. We don't know what that distance is and we are hearing that is working right now. Landowners know that they have an officer that is there for them, one they can call who will respond and that is strengthening our relationship in those communities. We push and train officers, as part of training program, to be out there engaging landowners, there is a whole component on that which is documenting and bridging that gap. It is tough to just show up at a farmer or rancher's door and knock and have a good conversation with them. Some officers are really good at that, you can probably picture someone in your agency that could talk to a fencepost in the prairie if they had to. Some law enforcement officers struggle with that so we put it in training program. We are training officers to go into communities and walk up cold, knock on the door and start that conversation. For us a priority to continue to work with farmers and ranchers. We see differences for officers who are really good at that because you can see those relationships build. Our conservation officers have a role in each of those programs, whether habitat on the landscape, walk-in areas start with contacts. Officers who have those relationships with landowners are often time the most successful at getting these programs going. Good for officer to have those relationships for a whole variety of reasons, everything from protecting the resource, generating tip calls or calling officer direct and all of those are because of relationship with landowners. That is why such an emphasis on that, since 2003. Times with mandatory landowner contact where we had to document and submit those contacts but still pushing landowner contact. Valuable for agency. South Dakota is primarily private land dominated state and we need those relationships. If conservation officers are first point of contact for landowners, 40% of calls are generated through a conservation officer. Calling to talk about coyote or beaver problem, many walk-in areas started with first point of contact, so have close relationship with landowners and continue to push that as part of training program. Big component of what we do. *Pete* – Training program, do you have someone dedicated to that or supervisors? *Sam* – The wildlife officer training program was based off law enforcement training about 10-12 years ago. There are four different components in it; the law enforcement phase, investigation phase, research phase and community resource outreach phase. We are always going to be checking a fish license or have tip call come in, but primary focus is those four

phases. So, during community outreach, they are going out to the farms and learning how to contact landowners, forcing officers to make a cold contact. Knock and introduce yourself and come up with reason of why you are there and what you are doing. The ones that struggle with it we continue to work with and some pick it up immediately and we send them off. It would be no different than a boating enforcement phase of that. We have wildlife training officers; we have a whole component of 15 training officers across the state supervised by a training coordinator.

*Pete* – I hear from my folks that we are going to see more training component requirements for officers and talked about the importance of tracking. All the conservation officers are full time positions and right now have it amongst our supervisors. *Sam* – We have seen that same trend here, more training and some coming down from federal government, some from in-house. We have training program coordinator in charge of all that and oversees wildlife training officer program. *Pete* – They are also conservation officers as well? *Sam* – Yes.

*Tom* – From division of wildlife we talked about habitat access both on terrestrial and aquatic side. Essentially the overall budget I have in the division of wildlife is \$55 million on an annual basis and of that 43% goes straight into habitat access and working with landowners through the WDM program. A significant portion of overall budget going to landowner-type programs on the ground. More heavily on program side than staffing side. It is a major contribution and a lot of work goes into it. It makes our job easy because of dedicated staff and they make things happen out there.

### SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Fly Fishing  
Lover's Leap Hike  
Lakeside Breather Legion Lake  
Wildlife Jeep Tour

### DIRECTOR GROUP PHOTO

*Dinner "The Game Lodge Cookout" sponsored by Brandt Information Services*  
*Comments by **Richard Wise***





MANAGING AND TAKING CARE OF PUBLIC LANDS

Habitat Stamp Implementation Projects (Exhibit 9)

*Tom Kirschenmann, deputy director, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – Two years ago state legislature passed a bill, that created the habitat stamp. Funds are generated by the stamp; few sideboards go with it but won't go over those right now. Every person who hunts or fishes in South Dakota will buy a habitat stamp, resident or nonresident, but there are a few licenses with exceptions that do not require somebody to buy a habitat stamp, for example, landowners do not have to if they are buying a landowner license. Any combination license, hunting, fishing, big game, etc. are required to buy one habitat stamp per year per person. You can buy multiple licenses but only need one habitat stamp. There is a different price for residents and nonresidents and a few exceptions. Funds from the habitat stamp will go for towards habitat and access. The department, from a budgeting standpoint, had a different line item to track the habitat stamp funds because we are trying to do habitat on public lands or obtaining access on private land. This has given us a shot in the arm and opportunity to do some habitat projects that we have always had on the list but didn't have the resources before. Started 1½ years ago, as of end of April it has already generated about \$9.3 million dollars; had expenditures of \$4.5 million with balance of \$4.7 million in the account. It is scary when you have new legislation and have a balance that big because the question becomes, did we need it. We intend to use some of these dollars for CREP programs. I will show examples of projects these dollars are being used for. Funds must be divided based on license tag status purchased. For example, if I buy combination license, big game hunting license, I have both fishing and hunting within my license purchase so half would go to terrestrial and half to aquatic. If I only buy a fishing license all dollars would go to aquatic funds. We estimated that approximately 55% of total habitat dollars is allocated to terrestrial and 45% to aquatic. On terrestrial side we are focusing on bolstering, making new habitat and improving habitat we manage. We have priority habitats like grassland, woody habitat and food plots and access are key parts of those projects. We have multiple projects where we are doing invasive species work, like cedar encroachment. These projects are above and beyond what we were doing on game production areas on an annual basis, doing more out there. Much of the work is done by our own habitat staff but we are contracting work out to help get projects done. Our people are busy doing their normal O&M on public lands so utilize contractors to help get work done. On aquatic side, access, boat ramps, waterfowl access and dam repairs across the state. Our agency is responsible for approximately 80 or so dams across the state. Used aquatic resources in the past and habitat stamp helps get extra things done. A lot of the dams are small but provide fantastic fishing opportunities throughout the state with many in western South Dakota. We are able to do a lot of projects we were unable to do before. Other projects, docks and piers, fish habitat, shoreline plantings, trail and access improvements. Since July 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022, most projects on east part of state as that is where we have the most game production areas; have 70-75% east of the Missouri River. We consciously are putting resources across the state. A question raised by the public when the habitat stamp was passed was where the projects would be and what type of projects, so we integrated a map as part of digital dashboard we use on our website. Every time we complete a project it is automatically updated when we work with GIS staff to update the dashboard so folks can see the map as projects are done. If you click on the icon it shows what the project was, whether grassland, plantings or dam repair; this curtailed a lot of questions and some of the criticisms. *Pete* – Required in legislation or something you did? *Tom* – The map is something we did because of

the questions being asked. Dashboard not only has the map but one page that shows number of projects, dollars spent and type of project with showcased pictures of before and after. Infancy stage yet, continue to do planning for habitat and access, one of top priorities in the department, number one priority in wildlife division. In 2018, did assessment of all game production areas (GPA) across the state, land managers that work on them did the assessment and we also did a public survey to get assessment from our users. It is humbling to tell you and internally we critiqued ourselves harder than the public did. Habitat stamp dollars really helping us implement that assessment. Putting together 3-5 year plans so we can continue to move forward. Sometimes the projects don't all get completed because of weather conditions or things out of our control. We have a lot of projects in progress or being planned right now, over 2,000 acres of grassland habitat are to be planted, restored or improved across the state this year on 37 different GPAs. We have habitat plantings, invasive species management, access and trails and have accented waterfowl areas. We have received questions and comments over the years that waterfowl hunters are getting older and it is getting harder to get into those areas and are looking for trails and boat launches and things like that so we are trying to provide some of those opportunities as well. We have a lot of grassland management areas and are using grazing as one of our management tool so infrastructure is needed. CREP programs, when the stamp went through one primary thing people wanted dollars spent on was CREP, it was number one and to increase James River CREP up to 100,000 acres. We got to about 72,000 acres and we ran out of funds so we ceased enrollments about six years ago. Now we have those dollars to go ahead and complete the 100,000 goal, about \$1.5 million. At 75,000 acres spending about \$3 million a year. Another goal is getting a Big Sioux River CREP, need \$1.5 million on state side to match federal side of it to enroll 25,000 acres. In South Dakota, on CREP it is a requirement to have open access to enroll. On aquatic side we have a lot of projects in place, access repairs, boat ramps, docks and piers, things to get people to the resource and have opportunity to go out fishing; a huge success. Urban fisheries is a big one as well. There are specific projects that can use habitat access and huge for us to be able to get projects done that we have not had the ability to do because we didn't have the financial resources. Our biggest challenge is to not let cash balance build because of the questions that will come. One of the requirements of the habitat stamp, we as an agency are required to go in front of our legislature government operations and audit committee once a year and give an annual report of projects we are doing, where money is being spent and how it is being spent. We learned the hard way they even want a detailed list of every project location and cost. They are pleased with projects being done; we just didn't understand they would want to see all of it. They got a seven page report, line by line of projects. That is what they wanted. It has been positive. We still hear from some sportsmen out there on why it is necessary to do this. It is a \$10 fee for a resident and \$25 for a nonresident. The ability to show them what the projects are and what they are getting out of if there has been more support. It is just basically part of license now. *Tami* – Speak to your experience trying to get that out of legislature. Was it a difficult task and how did you get it across the finish line? *Tom* – We had speed bumps along the way. This was legislation, not brought forward by the department, brought forward by a legislator, a good friend of the department, and more importantly a strong advocate for hunting and habitat. His number one objective of bringing this forward was he wanted to move the needle on the gauge to do more habitat. He wanted it, not only for us to do more on game production areas to make them the best they can be, but he wanted that available to do habitat work, both terrestrial and aquatic. He is avid pheasant hunter and loves to see habitat. This was his initiative and he moved it forward. There were a lot of conversations going back and forth on what licenses should be included and there are a few exceptions. There were questions if department needed the funds because we have all those federal dollars. We are fortunate there were a lot of folks that have a high interest in habitat. We answered questions, not as proponent or opponent, but on what dollars would be used for. The Senator himself lobbied it and worked

it, had quality conversations with legislators and interested groups and he did a phenomenal job of getting this passed. There were a few negotiations and changes made at the end but concept itself was supported. It wasn't easy. We are excited and fortunate to have it. *Sara* – Any sunset on legislation? On public lands only? *Tom* – No sunset. Statute is specific on where projects can be and it does identify public lands in doing habitat work but also we can use it for access on private lands but not for habitat development on private land, so can use for walk-in areas or CREP. We are using other financial resources and doing shuffling that way to enhance our private lands work. One of action partners was Second Century who will provide some additional finances as well. *Sara* – On reporting mechanism, depending on fund balance and report back to them may that fund balance be restricted? *Tom* – From balance of the fund, once we have the two CREPs fully implemented that is another \$3 million that will come off. We won't have a problem spending money especially when we get the CREPs fully going. *Dave* – You talked about allocation by license, it is hunting or angling, no pheasant or prairie dog projects. *Tom* – No. The separation of the funds is strictly by whether some type of hunting license or fishing license bought or combination, then split where funds go. At the end of the year, we will do a final allocation based on license types bought by each individual in our system. *Brian* – Have you seen an impact or been able to look at sales of licenses, are sales they affected by having to have the habitat stamp? In the past for us, no matter how small, it affected sales anytime we implemented one. *Tom* – We continue to watch closely what license sales do and only being in early stages it would be difficult to say it affected it. We have antidotal stuff an individual would say they were no longer hunting or fishing because they have to buy the extra stamp. Have heard nonresidents say that too but by and large it hasn't impacted that. Maybe over time we may be able to see some changes but there are bigger factors that have happened in the last 1½ years that could explain that.

### **Aquatic Infrastructure Overview**

***Jake Davis, aquatics program administrator, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Shared photos of project yesterday. Talk about section priorities and where we are at and tell what habitat stamp has done for the aquatic section. Our fisheries section is smaller than a lot of agencies, we have 53 staff members with recent additions and departures. That is management staff and hatchery production staff. Administration is fisheries chief, hatchery administrator and fisheries management administration. These positions oversee nine programs in aquatics. In hatchery side, we have three production facilities, two in western South Dakota and focus on cold water species, primarily rainbow trout and chinook salmon; one cool water in northeast part of state with primary production is walleye. Our production staff wear a lot of hats, even our production administrator, he is also a hatchery manager. With that comes a lot of coordination. For example, if we are going to stock walleye in southwest part of state, they come from northeast part of state and in some cases that ride can be 10 hours. We have identified this as something we would like to work on as a hatchery priority and looking at increasing production capacity, specifically using recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS). The benefit there is we could have those in different parts of the state. This year, as mentioned, we have two production facilities in western South Dakota, Spearfish and Rapid City, cold water hatcheries, however this is the second year they have raised walleye at Rapid City using RAS. The benefit is that it is much shorter trip for fish to the water and additionally able to increase production capacity and something that we have been looking forward to for the next 10 years for hatchery system focus on. Additionally, we are looking at expanding those operations to other parts of the state where we could utilize current offices, structure and staff to increase production capacity. Currently three facilities but hoping to expand to meet demand of users and increasing number of species we raise. With these RAS, we are able to raise a number of species and focus on urban and community fisheries with bluegill, hybrid green sunfish, channel catfish. Largemouth bass have been added that just a

couple years ago weren't part of our production. We are in infancy, we are building these facilities as we speak, a work in progress, all to try and meet needs of our users. An exciting time but also learning time and staff is involved and dedicated to this. Management side, small staff compared to most states, spread out in five fish management areas with one or two management offices where staff are located to cover those areas. Those areas are broken out usually by eco-regions, for example the Black Hills is its own region. It is unique cold water island in a warm water sea and because of that we have different management techniques; primarily put and take trout fisheries. We manage about 38 small impoundments and have several large reservoirs in the Black Hills, over 130 acres, but smaller than 700 acres. We do manage some self-sustaining populations of lake trout in two reservoirs in the Black Hills and that are unique habitats. We offer 800 miles of streams that provide self-sustaining trout populations, primarily brown trout however in a few unique locations we do have brook trout and rainbow trout. With fact that these are within Black Hills national forest, access is fantastic in South Dakota. We are fortunate to host the flyfishing film tour a couple of years ago and highlighted some of the trout fishing. Some other unique fisheries; we have a whole range of about any species you want to target. The Missouri River system and those large impoundments have walleye, smallmouth bass and we are hosting some large tournaments, BASS is coming to Mobridge this year for their second tournament and get coverage on a national level. The Missouri River also offers excellent chinook salmon, paddlefish seasons and walleye fisheries in those reservoirs is top notch and unique opportunities. If you move east you get to the glacial lakes portion of the state, walleye fishing is fantastic but we do produce excellent yellow perch, smallmouth bass, bluegill and others and unique opportunities. We have staff across the state, Rapid City office covers western one-third of the state, a large territory; same as rest of offices. Beyond fisheries management we wear a lot of hats. You will hear from Tanner Davis, an army of one, the only aquatic nuisance species staff member. When we are implementing our ANS program across the state we rely on area staff to help with that program, whether helping with seasonal staff, helping put out literature, signage, boat ramps, etc. Same thing on nongame program, we have one statewide coordinator located in Pierre so when that individuals needs to coordinate for Topeka shiner or lake chub, whatever it may be, she coordinates with management staff in that area to help. Staff is excellent and has risen to those challenges but it does take a lot of time, asking them to do things that might fall outside typical fisheries management. We don't have dedicated research staff but we have individuals in each office where that is part of their background. We encourage internal research and partner with outside entities, primarily universities. We have graduate studies that are ongoing right now and are coordinated with Game, Fish and Parks with South Dakota State University, University of South Dakota, University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse, Iowa State University, University of Nebraska and they work across the state depending on what the research is. We have staff partnering with those universities and additionally we encourage our staff to take advantage of those higher education opportunities, right now we have one staff getting his PhD working on invasive carp in southeast part of state. We have a biologist getting his master's degree with Nebraska- Kearney on salmon survival. Employees are wearing a lot of hats. Aquatic habitat and access is another example of asking staff to help out with projects. We are putting out fish habitat structures, helping clear cattails, that is being done by staff that is not part of habitat and access staff but are simply helping out because they have time and expertise to help our program. Added three people and doubled our staff. The biggest priority on management side is aquatic habitat and access. As positions came open we repurposed them, positions vacated were shifted into aquatic habitat and access because of funding mechanism from habitat stamp, realized need for extra staff. We still need a lot of help from management staff to help implement these projects as our staff can only do so much. Our statewide coordinator was based out of Fort Pierre and was biologist for the entire Missouri River system because we didn't have a staff member. One of new staff members started this Monday, still

trying to figure out what is on his plate. Tom mentioned the need to justify projects, onboarding new staff to build this program and show need for this habitat stamp. A lot of projects yesterday were focused on access because that is the low hanging fruit, projects we could get done faster than big projects that make take longer and need engineering to get feet underneath us, have big habitat projects that make take clearances from towns or government agencies and engineering. Got money on the ground to help fill map but as we move forward we have some big habitat projects lined up that include major renovations, some small impoundments not useable and with that comes challenges of aging infrastructure. We have identified showcase projects on both sides of the state that will take major planning, coordination and funds. We are trying to justify existence until we get to point where we have breathing room to do bigger projects. It is busy and exciting time. Our staff has been tasked to be ambitious and if you look at what we have lined up for projects we have it all spent and then some; just take time to get there. Our biologist out of Watertown told me if I got him an engineer and a resource biologist he would spend all the habitat money every year. I got him the research biologist but no engineer. A good thing and putting good projects on the ground.

*Sara* – Do you use private hatcheries? How do you identify priorities for research? *Jake* – Use of private hatcheries is very limited and depends on species. We have used private hatchery for largemouth bass, but unreliable, they are using small impoundments and have poor production and had a drought last year and had production of zero. Concern is there is no guarantee so that is why we are shifting to more RAS production to guarantee more. So, in a limited fashion. Our goal is trying to do everything internally so we can know what we are getting. Prioritize the research process, have a review committee and throughout the calendar year, deadline to staff is July 1. Soliciting ideas from staff, administration will look at and rank with section and department priorities and with funds available. If we deem worthy of continuing we work with specific staff to flesh out formal proposal and what university we might work with or if it is something we can handle internally, we have a number of PhDs on staff, the challenge is technical experts as well, so look at that versus an external source. Our process is based on calendar year, cross-section of aquatic staff from each office, review committee has 12 on the group and work with section chief on priorities. We have a number of processes in place over the years. *Tami* – Interaction with public on research setting process on what staff is proposing and weighing their interests? We involve public in research. *Jake* – We involve public not in process itself, but on how this impacts users. Our state wildlife grants, where it may not involve sport fish, a good example is project looking at lake chub in Black Hills; public not involved because not something they would have a lot of interest in. When you look at other projects we involve public in research going on and dissemination of information is through public meetings. As far as actual process we see if it is something that is going to benefit the public based on information we have. We do use angler and harvest surveys to fill in how to put it together but not necessarily one meeting where we would put up three or four proposals and gain public interest that way.

*Dave* – Repairing and replacing low-head dams, do you use rock? *Jake* – At this point, not necessarily, even low-head dams have been a struggle to replace. Most of dams are on small impoundments and are not necessarily low-head dams. We have been putting together dam packages around the state, surveying in package of 6-8 dams. When I think of low head dams I think about the ones on Big Sioux River and people are kayaking over it and that sort of thing. Small dams on small impoundments and it is simply clearing spillways, fixing cracks and cleaning out vegetation, what hasn't happened in 80-90 years to get those structures back to functioning *Brad* – In Kansas, working on early intensive largemouth bass project that has been successful, with aquaculture versus traditional, by doing it early they have had remarkable recruitment success in reservoirs, get in early ahead of gizzard shad so get a jumpstart and their survival is remarkable compared to natural stuff or traditional time of stocking. *Jake* – I would love to speak more on that. Last year on RAS system we were simply asking for walleye,

hatched them and stocked as fry. This year the question is do we raise them to fingerlings. We are at the point that we have answered that we can raise them to a certain size. *Kevin* – How many states use RAS? (Iowa and Kansas) *Tim* – We just started and our fisheries guys have been talking to you. One huge advantage is not having to invest in huge infrastructure and ponds. *Jake* – Some of our initial estimates say we can replicate production in a 6-foot tank that we would need a one-acre pond for. We are expanding that in Rapid City to focus on and adding one more staff for RAS production. *Brad* – As you talk about logistics, we have intensive walleye facility in southwest Kansas, neat thing about technology is you are not dependent on normal physical resources like 50 years ago, it is much more mobile in that sense.

### **Game Production Area Management (GPA)** (Exhibit 10)

***Paul Coughlin, habitat program administrator, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – The bulk of the game production areas (GPAs) are east of the Missouri River. Our department acquired 75,000 acres from Corps of Engineers a few years ago, there is a lot of opportunity there. Started acquiring GPAs about 95 years ago. In researching some of our history I came across the original paperwork associated with our first game production area, located in Day County, bought in 1927. It was interesting because the paperwork specifically said this was premier location in prairie pothole area for fast shooting diver ducks. In 1941, the legislature provided opportunities to use license dollars to acquire land and about that same time Pitman Robertson (PR) federal dollars came along and we have utilized those license funds for non-federal match for PR/DJ funds for 65% to 75% of our acquisitions. We have about 286,000 acres of GPA across the state. Post PR, we had a large acquisitions on agency side, basically had a land acquisition specialist on staff and if a landowner brought in a deed to property we would purchase it because we were buying everything we could. Consequently, we have some unique GPAs in northeast part of state and also bought 40 acres of lake bottom we don't know what to do with that yet. First priority, when it comes to acquiring property, put together a list over the years and prioritize based on our needs for providing habitat and access, wildlife needs and needs of the public. Game, Fish and Parks adopted land acquisition guidelines a few years ago and these priorities were included. It is supposed to be high quality habitat, hunting lands, additions to existing GPA and property that had to be included for administrative purposes like offices or hatcheries. Management of GPA, with habitat stamp opportunities, manage as wildlife habitat to provide public access for hunting and fishing opportunities, our principal and primary purpose. We spend approximately \$5 million annually on operating and maintaining GPAs and that has ramped up in last year and a half. With habitat stamp intent was to be additive. We were typically utilizing PR monies, \$4.5-\$5 million annually to manage GPAs including paying property taxes on those acres. What we are doing now is we are still spending PR dollars but adding on top of that projects we are doing with habitat stamp funds. A lot of work is being done by contractors because we are staff limited, only have so many people, tractors and can only do so much ourselves. One of best opportunities for contracting is grass seeding, food plots, woody cover development. We utilize a lot of local conservation districts as our contractor and that puts us in place with local folks, boards made up of local farmers and producers in the area, another avenue to have GFP at the table and facetime with folks. Management issues and challenges we face, noxious weeds, proud of effort on our control on GPA and that has paid dividends to us. We are responsive to noxious weed reports and are able to dedicate funds and staff and contracting for that so good for us. Loss of control, a problem particularly when owning property around a lake or water body where there is development. We are seeing encroachment, store mulch, trailers and garden sheds on state land and it is a nightmare, a big challenge for our staff. Archeological and cultural resources is a challenge for us and limits us. This is a significant issue on GPAs located along Missouri River, wide array of cultural and historic resources on those lands. One of our biggest challenges for habitat development work. Staffing issues, compatible uses and people wanting us to manage for

certain needs and we are limited on how we can manage them, because of cultural resources or existence of easements. We acquired a lot of property over the years that have various conservation easements on them, particularly WRP is a big one, some properties with USFWS grassland easements. For us not a problem, preserving type of habitat, native prairie or wetlands but when public comes to us and expects to see tree plantings or food plots and we can't do it. We use that as opportunity to educate the public on the importance of native prairie, etc. Management opportunities, funding from habitat stamp a big one; Recovering America's Wildlife Act could provide opportunity for us for more habitat conservation work and to work on species of greatest conservation need. Issues and challenges side. Expanding diversity of users and uses is listed as a challenge but is also listed as opportunities. We are seeing whole diverse group of people wanting to utilize our state public lands for various recreational opportunities. We are managing the lands for wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing access. Folks want to know why we can't do something else like add a boat ramp; small boat ramps for paddleboards and kayaks. Sometimes those requests conflict with purpose as GPA, trying to find opportunity where we can incorporate other uses where it doesn't conflict with funding purpose, so a challenge but an opportunity too. Every one of those folks that come to us wanting us to do something different or unique on GPAs, view as opportunity to show them value in public land that is incredible and pays dividends. At the legislature topics get brought up about owning state land and that issue is a challenge but also an opportunity. GPA assessment we did, internally looked at all of them and ranked them, scale 1-10, main purpose was to identify where we are not meeting the needs, areas for improvement and doing that with idea of using habitat stamp monies. Looked at ranking and where we wanted it to be and figure out what we needed to do to move the needle and give a cost estimate. What staff is needed to do the work and equipment needs; so, staff did a good job of evaluating that. We are own worst critic when it comes to how we view our GPA. Our habitat management staff take a lot of personal ownership in these properties and want them to be the best they can be. Gave ourselves a passing grade but working on improvement. *Sara* – Criteria to make an assessment internally, did we ask the public or how are you evaluating? *Paul* – We did ask the public and they ranked them higher than we did, better job of providing access and habitat than we thought we were doing. *Sara* – Did you have criteria of access and habitat quality? *Paul* – More details than, how do you rank the habitat, like what the quality of native grassland was, is it providing recreational opportunities and if not what needs to be done to improve it. Manage it, do we do that with fire and what is cost to do that. That was part of the process. *Sara* – Doesn't surprise me that staff would rank us more conservatively, we know what it takes to meet the goals than public would. We know we have more work to do. *Paul* – The other part of that was public perception of GPA they go to every year for hunting or fishing access. There might be 40 acres at bottom of a lakebed or something like that. The poor ones the public doesn't even realize we own. Needs were identified, the top one being we needed to improve access to GPA but on GPA. Our staff recognized that you have to be able to get to them, get around them so providing access is first and foremost, so ranked high. Fishing access and boat ramps, based on use were also high priority. Native prairie, grassland restorations and restructure, pollinator plots, prescribed burning, wildlife friendly fences and at the end of the day \$19 million was identified. On habitat stamp funds, in addition to interactive map we have a series of signs, so if we use funds we put up a sign, in the field see the sign, good to do that too. Human resource needs, noxious weed control needed additional bodies, research, prescribed burning, administrative support to the tune of 40 new FTE. We can't do everything all in one year but there is a need. One of the ways we are addressing FTEs is we have a good arrangement with Pheasants Forever (PF), putting habitat specialists in the field, contract PF person with six teams across the state with each team made up of one full time and one seasonal person that comes on in the busy part of the year. These folks, in some cases, are imbedded with habitat management staff at regional offices and in other cases they are located at



remote areas and filling in the gaps. That is working well, have six in place and looking to expand that opportunity. A contract with PF, we could spend more habitat stamp money to get these folks on the ground. *Tami* – Are you using grazing for noxious weed control and do you have conservation grazing staff or just another responsibility? *Paul* – We use managed grazing and use it to improve habitat, careful about it and do contracting and leasing with close monitoring by our staff. As far as quality or qualification of our staff, our staff know grass management, a lot of them are grass nuts and we send our staff to South Dakota grazing school and get on the ground interaction and a close relationship with a lot of grazing experts at SD State University Extension. A big priority. *Tami* – From nutritional standpoint, noxious weed control oftentimes needs cattle for that and that side of the equation as well. *Paul* – Yes, noxious weed control is one of those objectives we utilize as a management tool and working with landowners. We are experimenting in northeast part of state, doing coop grazing with neighboring ranchers and utilizing some of our GPAs as part of their overall ranch management, so putting public land out there, entered into a long term lease with them, when and where we want them and what rates and as part of it they are incorporating as part of their range management and we are seeking hunting access on their land. Expanding that and seeing more interest in that. *Ollie* – On western side of Midwest geography, do you have equestrian use problems on your public areas like we do on the east side? *Paul* – We do get requests for horse use on GPA, do have a couple along the Missouri River where we do allow horse use for hunting. It is pretty specific and use of horses on GPAs is prohibited with a few exceptions.

#### **CREP Management** (Exhibit 11)

***Mark Norton, Farm Bill coordinator and private lands biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – The conservation reserve enhancement program (CREP) is like CRP on steroids. It is a partnership between USDA and some other entity to create a CRP initiative that targets priority resource concerns for public benefit in a cost effective manner. It requires 20-30% non-federal partner match, non-USDA match. The enrollment process, how the landowner gets enrolled is the ag producer with cropland or pastureland goes into USDA farm service agency, just like sign-up for CRP. They would need to meet eligibility and provide hunting and fishing access on it and are eligible for CREP if in our designated project area. They complete both CRP contract and CREP agreement with Game, Fish and Parks. We as the agency post lands as open to public access and put it in our hunting atlas and participants receive normal CRP payment and additional rent payment in cost share from state to restore cropland back to grassland. Current project is James River CREP, started in 2009, goal 100,000 acres, enrollment went well for first three years and we ran out of money because land values increased from 2009 to 2013 and what we had budgeted. We suspended enrollment in 2014, goal was to restore upland grassland habitat for prairie wildlife species, improve water quality in the watershed, increase production of waterfowl and pheasants and create additional public access opportunities. We are at 82,000 acres delivered which has resulted in significant water quality improvement, over 86% reduction in nitrous phosphorous sediment over 121 miles of streams and rivers in the watershed. The wildlife benefits, produced annual estimated 44,000 ducks and 212,000 pheasants annually and created breeding habitat for seven species of greatest conservation need (GCN). It created over 1,000 additional places open to public hunting and fishing access. The cost: 82,000 acres cost annually almost \$9 million to USDA and for us as a partner \$3 million for total of roughly \$12 million a year. In the last 11 years, USDA has paid over \$97 million and GFP has covered \$31 million. In 2021, we amended agreement with creation of habitat stamp, we had additional revenue available so opened enrollment again. We are sitting at just over 76,000 acres and amended agreements for re-enrollments of original contracts. CRP contracts are 10-15 years in length, CREP contracts are the same so many of those started expiring in 2020 and we were able to offer reenrollment. The next project is Big Sioux River watershed CREP with goal of 25,000

acres. It is more expensive because of higher land value. Hope to enroll an additional 25,000 acres with estimate of \$1.5 million a year, similar model as James River CREP with improved habitat, water quality and additional public access. The cost on this one, over 15 years, estimating \$22 million from us and USDA \$86 million. *Jeb* – Obviously you have had a little more success than North Dakota with NRCS offices. *Mark* – There is a lot to CREP. We mentioned partnerships throughout the meeting and this is a big one between us and USDA with partnership between USGS, FSA and 20 partnership biologist positions with PF, not all located in this watershed but each office and staff members play a critical role in making this type of program a success. It is boots on the ground and having conversations with potential participants, answering questions and making contracts and access happen. We are riding the coattails of our partners and sharing benefits. We do have a good relationship with our state USDA, FSA and NRCS offices and having partner biologists in many of those local offices has built relationships and trust with those agencies as well as local producers. *Kevin* – We couldn't get it done without partners. *Jeb* – Point Mark brings up, that hits home, is partnership biologists, whatever you want to call them. Those individuals that walk those landowners into offices and correct information being delivered by FSA staff, that expertise is critical of making or breaking these types of projects. *Mark* – Agreement between national USDA office and the state, not state office, involvement in agreements but is a national initiative. If thinking about doing CREP the time is now. This administration has made it clear they want to see more CREP projects on the landscape and have new energized staff at the national level. *Brad* – We have CREP, run by the Ag department and doesn't have public access component. How much push back did you get on the access, how did that conversation go? *Mark* – There was some initial concern about having interested participants with this access requirement, because of success with walk-in hunting and how well it is known across the state this wasn't really any different than that in landowners or hunter's eyes. There is some concern. We had a few contracts after 10 years not renew because of access thing but fairly well received and successful. *Pete* – Is there a minimum acre size for enrollment? *Mark* – We have minimum requirement of 40 acres of public access but that doesn't mean the CRP contract has to be 40 acres, so we use walk-in areas to round out something smaller than 40 acres to meet 40-acre public access requirement. You could go on a buffer strip on 2-3 acres and get CREP payment on those 2-3 acres and round that out with 37 acres of crop land adjacent to it and get eligible for walk in program. *Colleen* – We just relaunched our CREP program and partnered with everybody you said in addition to our Soil Conservation Districts and tying it to lost production strategy which is an incentive for farmers to rethink participating in CREP. Ours is run through DNR not Dept of Agriculture.

### **State Parks Habitat Success**

*Ryan Persoon, district supervisor in Parks division, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – My staff manages campgrounds and boat ramps, and that is what the public believes is all we do, we are limited. I had to have staff buy-in to have recreation areas be more sustainable and more productive in many different capacities. I put this together to get buy-in from my staff, to use as a learning tool, you understand but my staff as campground managers aren't. I put this together as a guideline to understand the importance so they would put their heart into just like they do everything else. We talked about prescribed burns and benefits but the trouble on recreation areas is space is limited sometimes, environmental factors, timing and all that comes into play which makes it difficult. So, mob grazing comes into play, we bring cattle into the park. We remove cool season grasses and break down the soil crust so new grasses can grow through and prevent erosion; plants seeds deeper and provides nutrients we want. Typically, I will bring cattle in somewhere in the middle of May through Memorial Day weekend, for 2-3 weeks. We put a couple of cattle per acre in and mob graze. We are not taking away of from the atmosphere of the campground, hiking trails are closed because of grazing but they can walk with the cattle if they

want to. The cattle help us prep for spring. We have local producers partner with us. Campers are coming earlier in the spring because they want to be around the cattle. Some major points with staff I talk about on why we are doing this is the things that you don't see. It is the biodiversity, the soil, the atmosphere, macro and micro-nutrients that are sustained and encouraged to grow and break down. Good soil quality is important to me, water benefits, storage and filtration, carbon storage, biodiversity, food production and capacity; destressing atmosphere, recreation is education as well. We have programs talking about the whys. We try to do above ground no-till drilling and with grazing try to break up soils and constructing cover under the surface and breaking up soil brings nutrients to the surface and releasing carbon dioxide and methane and reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The goal is to store all that. Climate change is real, so we are trying to sequester all those things for benefits that are not negative for environment. Use whatever means necessary. I like private and public sector buy-in in parks, I do a lot of partnerships. Sometimes because I don't want to spend state money and sometimes because I want ownership in the parks. I have a lot of people coming in doing work that benefits both private and public sector. Use local producers extensively, they bring cattle in, I get benefit of grazing and they get benefit of what is left over. From there that producer, or other producer provides the seed for plots or habitat and sometimes we negotiate and let them hay two-thirds of it but have to leave one-third standing for our wildlife; they get hay for winter storage and we negotiate all these things and it is a win/win. Public is engaged in what we are doing, and we are doing more programs on why we do this and the impacts, even though they hay two-thirds of it we still have seed mass and biodiversity for birds, mice, pollinators and now we have coyotes, fox, badgers and bobcats for public to view because of how we are maintaining our parks. Try to do no-till, limited if needed, don't do cutting or leveling because take sponge layer out of the soil, cutting out mouse holes, etc. and capping that. If do cut and level, sometimes we have to, you will see spots where the plants don't grow very well because the soil isn't absorbing the nutrients. Little things like that keeps my staff up on why we do things. We do a lot of food plots but not big, biggest is 20 acres, one that has been growing for 3-4 years for a future grass restoration project. I don't jump right into grass plantings you spray and prep the seed bed and kill it off; spring growth releases toxins and brings new grasses so we don't plant grass on top of grass; we plant barley, sunflowers, etc., a diverse group of plants beneficial across the board. The second year bump up to grasses. I use a four-year plan. Second year is 30% grasses; third is 60% and then seed bed has converted micronutrients and you have a foundation that is good for whatever you want to do, whether pollinator plants or native grasses. It takes four years and some work. We do prep in spring and fallow in the fall and use grazing or plant masses to control noxious weeds and don't touch it again until following year. When you plant pollinators it is self-controlled which is our goal. We utilize local seed stores because they will give us seed that gets spilled so I don't put any cost into these plots. Have the buy-in, get seed for plots donated, the ownership our locals have. We consult producers, our biggest partnership, and they do all the heavy lifting. They bring equipment, sprayers and seed because they are getting some pay off, they are getting hay. I utilize Natural Resources Conservation Service for cover crop tables that tells me what plants to use for the soil and where I want them. I have asked about what to do with high salt content, put in barley for a few years and you don't have salt anymore. I use USDA resources all the time to figure out what I want to do. First year is mostly broadleaf mix that is excellent pollinator blend, brings bugs and I didn't buy in to that right away, but wanted to control noxious weeds. The emphasis is on managing the land so I do plant pollinators in that four year establishment of soils foundation so I take a little different approach. It is not the right or wrong way it is just my way. This is the recipe of what I will plant in first year, second year, more grasses, corn or sorghum, I diversify the mix and we have everything from rodents, insects birds, waterfowl, upland birds to big game utilizing the same food source; diversification is number one thing. Planting in parks is so people can see wildlife, walk on a hiking trail and go

bird watching and fall hunting, walk from campsite and go pheasant hunting and that is what we provide at recreation areas so we have to enhance the landscape to be more recreational friendly, diverse recreation is number one goal. We plant hidden areas, visible areas, wide plots, small plots and edge is important to me. I like to not see rectangles, not very pretty, but going around waterways or tree belts, there is no right or wrong place. One plot in August would have a lot of diversity, a few weeks later with colder temperatures see buffer and as you get into winter you can still see grasses and deer and birds because of seed available. It is the diversity that is the answer for us. Not just for wildlife but have community gardens and worked with SD Soil Health Coalition, who gave me a bag of seed, I planted it in park and it became a community project for people food. You will see gourds and melons and a fun thing for local public and campers. I even saw people write their name on squash so they would get picked. It is fun, recreation is supposed to be fun. *Sara* – How are you sharing, you can't do everything, how are you sharing with other park managers? *Ryan* – It starts with video, I want buy-in, their hearts invested and to know the reason why, I don't want it to just be a job. I want them to see the benefits of why they are doing this. I show them my idea with the video and it evolves from there with their buy-in, using their ideas. I utilize local partners and have morning where everyone comes in and we discuss it. I started with taking pictures and we go through this every year with new staff and interns. We orchestrate it all and use producers on partnerships, we don't pay each other anything, we work together. Starts with video, get buy-in and creates a recipe or platform that we utilize to move forward *Sara* – What percentage of parks are doing this? *Ryan* – It depends on producers. I am north central part of state and we have one-third of our wild lands, 100 acres in food plots or management practice like this that we put food plot in turned it into native grass prairie. The goal is to limit the amount of smooth brome, grasses that look attractive don't have a lot of value when it comes to habitat. *Kevin* – Haven't talked about it at all until a few years ago. *Ryan* – It takes somebody to spearhead all this; I am no expert but and I am happy to help move this forward to other states. *Dick* (Colleen's husband) – Who is responsible for fences when you bring in the cattle? *Ryan* – Fences are simple, within an hour we can have perimeter put up with a solar fencer and no problem. The biggest problem are the people. They mow to it. We hang caution tape on there and inform our campers but it is right there and cattle are right behind our camp spots. First I thought this would be a problem and I wanted the cattle out before Memorial Day weekend but people loved it. *Kevin* – Unique program we are conducting in parks system. I am proud of the staff who is embracing the concept.

### Discussion on Science and Research Priorities

***Russ Mason, worked for wildlife resources in Nevada, now Michigan DNR and Michigan State University*** – I was asked to talk about science and research priorities because I chair the AFWA Science and Research Committee. Handed out summary (Exhibit 13) AFWA and MAFWA science priorities and using Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) as an example of how those priorities are being worked and the work promoted by the Association. None of these are new. When I was Science Advisor to AFWA back in 2004 and 2005 I asked for creation of invasive species committee and climate committee. Becky Humphries advocated long before that for wildlife health as part of Association's business as well as regional associations. Priorities haven't changed. Left side of the summary lists priorities identified first in 2019, approved by Executive Committee of Association in 2020 and did it again in 2021 and again this year and the same again. There are a few surprises, for example, Pennsylvania said white-tailed deer were invasive species because they have second largest number of white-tailed deer in America but they were trying to make a point that they were spreading and making them less favorable. The middle column of the summary are MLI priorities; climate change, wildlife health and disease, invasive species are all high priorities and under are MAFWA- specific; modern agriculture, land use, agency structure/relevancy/authority. On right side, ongoing MLI activities, which has to do

with regional species of conservation need (RSGCN). If you are new directors, we have these established priorities and have a broker that works among various states in our region to try to adopt, have conversations and suggest strategies around topics of regional interest among states, USFWS and USGS. RSGCN happen to be among those topics, but I can think of others. Second page is something Kelley Myers put together in MLI that has to do with current activities of MLI and there is a color-coded chart at the bottom that shows what they are doing and how they relate to various priorities. They are addressing priorities either derived from MAFWA-specific or science and research priorities or AFWA priorities on invasives and wildlife disease. The final page lists take-home messages. Those messages have to do with where we started, why we have this and what they are good for. We have priorities, know they are important, and recognize to accomplish many of these we need to work together. I am not talking about the present but the future. Today we heard about fishery in South Dakota, have cold water fishery here in Black Hills and warm water fisheries everywhere else; 50 years from now cold is going to be cool, cool is going to be warm and warm is going to be hot. How are we planning for the future? In Michigan, we have successful program on state and public land and still rely heavily on red vine even though we know red vine won't be here 50 years from now. We know aspen will move into Canada. A number of these things are happening and we can't deal with those individually. One great example is CREP. CWD, all are concerned about chronic wasting disease but how many know how much you spend on CWD per head? I just collected the data, below \$80 in Oklahoma up to \$550 a head, mean is \$130, Michigan average is \$165 a head. If you add those numbers together it comes to \$23 million a year and that doesn't count the two states (Louisiana and Arkansas) that showed positive last year, so we are already behind the curve. Preaching about the future of where we are going to go and what we are going to do to accomplish things. The purpose today is to make you aware of priorities, somehow have to figure out how to use priorities. Sara wanted me to pose a rhetorical question. If we are going to collect the science are we going to use it? Yes, then how are we going to use it. The MAFWA committee of MLI is thinking about those priorities and how those priorities can influence the decisions across the region or topic of mutual interest of USFWS, USGS and the states. We also have a deer and turkey committee, a wildlife health committee and everybody else does. Are we thinking about how we can get those people together and make real progress as opposed to just creating models and then don't use them? Create dashboards and staff don't use them because not enough people or too hard. As directors, how do we incorporate these things and talk about them to public. How do we explain to people? In Michigan, 50 years from now unlikely there will be any trout water. So how do we talk about that future to people so they are part of solution moving forward. Tony, when he was wildlife chief in Nevada lost 200,000 acres every year to wildfire. How are we going to put that back, we are not going to put it back there is no way to do it economically. How do we provide habitat for species. Jen Mock Schaffer was going to be here, had family business and is why she moved back to Texas in the first place. She has a handout for you (Exhibit 14). I ask you to spend a special amount of time on the final page, there are six questions for directors. Take a look at those. How we use science to inform the process, where are we putting our efforts? In multistate conservation grant process, because there aren't enough resources and we can't do everybody's pet project. Is there a way for states to focus in so they complement each other. How can we bring those together additively to make a difference for the conservation community, for our stakeholders and for the health of our agencies? *Sara* – If you are in your role less than 3 years raise your hands (many hands raised). For those new directors, part of this came out of President's Task Force on shared science and state conservation several years ago as a recommendation. Appreciate AFWA's support, whether three years or whatever that timeframe is, doing a national survey of science priorities. When that time comes please get it to the staff person that can actually answer that survey so we don't have to keep coming at you. Notification of relevance every three years or so. *Russ* – More often than every three years. When I get

responses it is always from terrestrial side, none from aquatic, they have concerns but nobody knows what they are. It might be worthwhile to encourage fish divisions to bring forward things important to them because they are relatively less likely to show up on anyone's priorities. Statewide conservation grants are often described as terrestrial grants and then there are three fish things, mostly from American Fish Society not from agencies, so there is a need here. Encourage people to respond. *Sara* – Next piece is, ask directors to consider, following up on this conversation. If we all agree, with finite resources and ever-increasing challenges, where we need additional science capacity and focus, what do we identify as regional science priorities and how can we, as a membership, ensure that we are focused on those priorities. What does that mean, do we go after additional grant money, does it mean we direct our committees in a particular way. Right now, we don't really have a plan on how you are taking this information and applying it at a regional level. You might be doing individual research in states that may, or may not, be shared. We don't have a MAFWA science committee. Right now, to your point, MLI process is identifying its priorities and sometimes there is a crossover, sometimes MLI will be the answer and sometimes maybe one of our other committees need to have a role. What we are trying to pose is with recent challenges with finite resources, when we have shared science priorities, what do we do as a regional association. How do we ensure we are trying to answer some of these critical, important scientific questions. CWD is best example of all going our own way without a clear mechanism by which to get there. We are getting there, closer than five years ago. Worthy of a longer conversation, if other directors agree with that perhaps we can figure out how to have this longer conversation. *Russ* – One slight modification, not asking to do work differently, there is an invasive species and wildlife health committee. What we are thinking about is having wildlife health in deer and turkey discussions; how will climate change impacts will be part of that discussion; how does wildlife disease impact that; or invasive species concerns become part of that discussion without changing priorities. Use things beyond headlights for this discussion as we are trying to figure this out. And also, how to work with legislators and stakeholders.

### *Discovering and Building the Conservation Decision-Making Tools*

*Jen Mock Schaeffer, Independent Contractor for WMI* – (not present). *Russ* – Jen posed questions, how we support research support program, how we work across jurisdictions. If you could take a look at them (Exhibit 14) and respond yourself or give to someone who will respond so we have information we can use. *Kevin* – Ollie, send that electronically please.

### *Refreshment Break sponsored by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*

### **AFWA REPORT**

*Tony Wasley, AFWA President; Nevada Director* – Glad to be here in person. It is one thing to try and sustain or maintain relationships virtually but impossible to build relationships. When Sara asked how many people had been in their positions less than three years that speaks to importance of convening in person to build relationships. Thank you for opportunity to serve as President of the Association (AFWA). Nevada is the seventh largest state and the driest state in the Union and over 85% of it is federally administrated and is paramount. We had issues arise with the Department of Interior which delayed my arrival. Talking about climate change, where Nevada is presently is unfortunately the future for many. Nonfunctional lawns have been outlawed, lawns for ornamental purposes are not okay, golf courses and football fields are okay. Significant challenges as Lake Mead gets lower and lower and we find more bodies in barrels. There is so much going on and I can't tell you how impressed I am with AFWA staff. I had the opportunity to do a tremendous amount of traveling. People say that I must be crazy busy but

can't tell you how much AFWA staff does and how much they facilitate the success of sitting president of the Association. They are incredibly knowledgeable, passionate and you are well served and represented by AFWA staff. There are a few priorities I want to go through. As you listen to these, we are eager to learn from you how we can support your work better and welcome your participation in any of these items. Listening to Russ Mason talk about science priorities, these challenges and opportunities you heard specific to South Dakota programs here. You have seen priorities, big picture approaches and trying to look for synergy to complement and bring things together in comprehensive ways. Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), six years since concept from Blue Ribbon Panel and fast forward to where we are today is crazy and as Ron likes to say, it seems likely that RAWA will pass this Congress. A huge shout out to Sara Parker Pauley for her persistence and incredible leadership. Most of you have had the opportunity to see her testimony before Congress and you talk about hitting it out of the park, she did it as president of the Association and she has remained equally or more engaged and committed to see this across the finish line. Thank you, Sara (applause). We await floor action in the Senate, a lot depends on reaching agreement on pay-for, there is an idea being discussed and explored right now. We would love to see RAWA enacted and signed by the President as soon as possible after the August recess. Another priority is the America the Beautiful challenge grants that came out of Infrastructure and Jobs Act. AFWA recently hosted a meeting with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with options for regional associations to apply for these grants. NFWF gets it and are trying to be helpful but there are legal constraints dealt to them. Participating in fish passage and infrastructure funding workshop next month. NFWF administers the America the Beautiful challenge grants, \$440 million specific to DOI-related programs and \$85 million in year one and broken down into several different bins of funding relevant to the work we do. One is planning \$200,000 to \$500,000 per grant to help plan and another bin towards implementation \$1 million to \$5 million to implement plans. There is a match component of 90/10 so a little easier to come up with match. Landscape conservation, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams and I signed a charter for landscape conservation joint task force last December. The executive committee met in Washington. The joint task force has met several times and continue to address foundational governance concept, vision statements and sharing voluntary engagement by the four regional associations. Thank Brad Loveless for serving on the task force, I greatly appreciate the leadership of your Association in particular the Midwest Landscape Initiative. It is, in no small way, paving the way for national work. We had discussion yesterday and all directors received an email from Angela under my signature that showed the charter document. We will have our next meeting in conjunction with WAFWA summer meeting in two weeks, another meeting in end of July in DC and third meeting at AFWA annual meeting in September. Relevancy and DEI are two separate issues but related. We have been talking about relevancy for a long time, to this day I look at staff and they don't know what it means. I tell story of being before joint committee of legislature where I was asked to give the agency presentation. I was sitting at the table in front of the seats and was well into budget presentation for my agency and I heard the door open and another executive branch agency walked in, came in with 20 people in tow, not employees but constituents supporting them. The chair of the money committee stopped me and asked me to take a seat and ushered this other agency up and they sat down and gave their presentation and had full approval for their budget and got up and left. I was invited back to the table to jump back into my PowerPoint presentation. I explain that as an example of what relevancy is. We are blessed to be in God's Country here, but the challenge of conservation relevancy is real and growing a challenge with many competing interests. Relevancy is becoming more of a challenge, as is diversity of not only our staff but our constituents and customers. I see both of them as a priority, together they are related but are independent. As chair of AFWA's diversity committee we have really focused on connecting the dots between relevancy work and more focused

specifically on diversity equity and inclusion. We have been engaging with people new to us, organizations focused on intentional collaboration. We as an institution have been good for last few years at inviting people into our space but not as intentional at meeting people where they are. We are trying to take that next step. Looking for opportunities to provide tools for our institutions, for example, things like best hiring practices, practices that promote outdoor experiences and welcoming spaces in communities. We will also be rolling out guidance to AFWA committees in near future. Under President Parker Pauley we sent out a call to committees to try to view their work through the DEI lens. That met with varying degrees of success. When we think about relevancy, social science DEI that is the work of all of us. We have a lot of committees that do the work of some of us, science, animal health, habitat and have a lot of committees focused and do work of some of us but work that needs to be the work of all of us and that is social science, diversity, equity, inclusion, relevancy, etc. So, we made an attempt, as executive committee, to encourage AFWA committees to look at work through DEI lens. We will take another run at that and try to provide a think sheet to look at work of AFWA committee structure through DEI lens; that should be forthcoming soon. One Health is an important new priority for AFWA's consideration. It will be the theme of plenary session at our annual meeting in Dallas/Fort Worth. We contracted with Shane Mahoney to craft a white paper to articulate intellectual precept and visions for AFWA to lead from the front. You hear One Health and it is a lot of things to a lot of people. It is a cross sector approach that looks at animal health, ecosystems and human health in ways that contribute to and promote DEI, relevancy, landscape conservation; a way that encapsulates all of it in a complimentary synergistic fashion. It is challenging to build a silo within our institution significantly and now talking about cross sector, transdisciplinary integration. Significant challenges lie ahead but exciting and relevant opportunity to bring the work we all do together. I am in my tenth year as director and when I was recently appointed I went to a Cabinet meeting; I was intimidated, anxious and afraid and looking for gateway to relevancy and New Zealand mud snails provided that. The discovery of an invasive species in one of the most heavily fished waterways in the state. It sounds distorted but hopefully people in this room understand the significance of discovery of aquatic nuisance species and potential for relevancy. I showed it at cabinet meeting and thought it was the day to make conservation relevant. But I was quickly outshined by government shutdown, single mothers that didn't have food, education needs and a whole host of other things. If we can combine the importance of the work we do in ways that reflects on human health, education, food security and all those other things we will have a much easier time in elevating relevancy of conservation. Thanks again for opportunity to serve you. Reach out to me any time. This is an incredible time for conservation with more money, more people to view, new money and new people and new constructs like One Health in which to view, engage and implement conservation. Stay tuned.

***Ron Regan, AFWA Executive Director*** – Tony Wasley is a true philosopher of the highest degree. When we travel or during weekly talks, we don't go down a pathway of triteness in trying to work on an issue. There is some tough stuff in conservation world. Everything from predators, creation, killing contests, use of lead for hunting and angling, etc., not to mention the things Tony talked about. Tony brings a very sophisticated mature perspective in talking about those issues and AFWA is making good decisions because of them. I want to light a fire under all of you directors to make plans to be in Fort Worth, Texas; Cindy Delaney tells me very few directors in U.S have registered yet or gotten their hotel rooms. The room block is filled up for some nights and I signed an addendum this morning adding nights for Saturday and Wednesday . When you get home and talk to your executive assistants, come in on Saturday, September 17 because our friends at the Archery Trade Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation are going to host a 90-minute panel discussion at 4:00 pm eastern time about



relevancy and have shooting ranges and recreational shooting set at reaching a broader set of the American public. They are going to host an open bar and finger food after that. Carter Smith and his team load buses at 6:30 Sunday morning for a 90-minute bus ride to the Brazos River to do a float trip and come back to venue and spend afternoon meeting. This is directors only, by invitation. If you can stay through Wednesday, business meeting in the afternoon and that is when the official recorded work comes together in one place and that evening we will have an event to celebrate the work of President Wasley and welcome incoming president, who we anticipate will be Curt Melchior from Oregon. It will also be special in a way as Carter Smith has announced his retirement and we will look for a way to make his night special there. I sent an electronic document this morning, the AFWA Strategist (Exhibit 15). It is information only and there is a lot of information in there about a lot of legislation we haven't talked about and newest staff who have joined the team.

## **FEDERAL PARTNERS SESSION**

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

***Charlie Wooley, Region 3 Director*** – Updates relate to issues paramount to most of you. Lake Sturgeon species status assessment; per court order we will submit a 12-month finding in federal register by June 30, 2024. We will make a decision and put it out for public comment on whether we list or not list as threatened or endangered. Species status assessment was initiated in fall of 2021 and formal data and information request states, tribal and other partners will be going out in July. I just sent letter to 12 MAFWA state directors addressed individually giving you an update on the species. If you have not received this please let me know. Another endangered species update, relates to Northern long-eared bat. On March 23 we published a post rule to reclassify them from threatened to endangered. Per a court order the final rule is due to federal register by the end of November of this year. They have been decimated by white-nosed syndrome. Per settlement agreement we will also submit the finding for the tri-colored bat to federal register by September 30 of this year. We continue to assess the status of the little brown bat which is on national listing workplan for listing determination by September 30, 2023. Bats are in trouble here in the Midwest. Monarchs are a little better story. Thank you for all the great work our state partners have been doing to conserve habitat for monarchs, grassland birds and other pollinators. A wonderful example of all of us coming together, focusing on species and it has benefits that transcends not just monarchs but other species. The Service will submit to the federal register a proposal to list the monarch as not warranted for listing by September 30, 2024. Encourage everyone to continue the great work they are doing to provide habitat for pollinators, grassland birds and monarchs. Thank you for everything you are doing. Wolves; on April 25, 2022 DOI and the Department of Justice filed a notice of appeal to February 2022 court decision reinstating protections for gray wolves in Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. DOI is by notice preserving the department's rights. On April 27 of this year the court set a briefing schedule requiring the government to file its opening brief on August 3 of this year. During a June 3, 2022 mediation call the parties agreed to vacate the briefing schedule and keep the case in mediation pending resolution motion by the Coalition that is seeking to participate in the appeal. The parties will have a follow up call to the mediator in the next couple of months to determine next steps and schedules. I will keep these three state's directors apprised of what is happening. On the 10j rule; on September 7 the Service published a proposal to revise experimental population regulations under ESA 10j to allow introduction of experimental populations in the habitat, beyond the species range for conservation purposes. This will allow us and our partners to implement proactive conservation introductions potentially to address impacts of threats of invasive species encroachment into habitat. A conservation tool we will use in concert with you if needed. Fisheries; in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, fish passage we had four projects funded

this year worth \$2 million. Of those four two were in Indiana and two in Michigan that the states and Service had developed and are ready to go. They are going to help update obsolete dams and take dams out where there is public safety interest and restore some of these rivers that are fragmented. We are anticipating another amount of money in 2023. Projects will be selected based on what states have said they would like to do in concert with us moving forward as partners. Our WSFR staff are working hard to meet July 1 starts. Thank you for your patience, we are down a few staff, hired more people and getting them geared up for RAWA. A little more controversial is our hunt/fish rule recent proposal continues to open or expand opportunities, highlighting administration's commitment to providing access to hunters and anglers on Service lands and waters, however this rulemaking is limited only to hunter needs that do not allow for lead ammunition or lead tackle to be used beyond fall of 2026. FWS is proposing a rule that would expand hunting or sportfish opportunities at 19 refuges across the U.S., two in the Midwest, one at Crab Orchard, Illinois, expanding waterfowl hunting opportunities per Illinois state regulations on about 1,700 acres. The one is in Patoka NWR, Indiana; an opportunity to expand hunting on 74 acres. Proposed change to hunt/fish program would require use of non-lead ammunition and tackle on these acres by 2026/27 hunting and fishing season. This is out for public comment and review. Called Amanda Wuestefeld, Indiana wildlife chief to talk about this to settle lead lawsuit, let her know what was proposed and we continue to have open conversations. I can't say anything else about the lawsuit because still active. Midwest Landscape Initiative, Kelley will talk about tomorrow. Call Chuck Traxler up, deputy regional director from Minneapolis. We work hand-in-hand on a whole host of issues and Ed Boggess came forward too. Six years ago, Ed was contemplating retirement and Tom Melius talked Ed out of that and he has been our liaison between MAFWA and member states in the Fish and Wildlife Service. There has been a focus on monarch butterflies and Ed has been instrumental in getting us all to work together to advance monarch species status assessment work, Mid-America Monarch Strategy, vision and governance for MLI and the list goes on and on. I have watched Ed as he has taken his most valuable asset, his time, to mentor some folks in this room and Claire Beck is one of those. He has provided quiet leadership opportunities for Claire, has instilled in her what real deal looks like and wonderful to watch all around leadership on conservation issues as well as helping the next generation with science minds like Claire. We have a Silver Eagle Award we want to present to Ed for gratitude of everything he has done for all of us at FWS and all of you (applause).

*Ed Boggess* – Hard to talk after that. Appreciate what MAFWA presented yesterday too, a great experience. The relationships we have cemented over the last 10 years, we have seen an improvement in professional peer-to-peer relationship with our Service partners. I know MAFWA region includes part of region 6 and Noreen has retired and Matt is here. I hope it has been similar for western part of our geography. It has been a pleasure to work with all the professionals in this last six years in a different role. All I have is gratitude for being able to that. Thank you to the Service and MAFWA for the opportunity (applause).

***Matt Hogan, Region 6 Director*** – Charlie is a mentor of mine and he has covered big topics. Kevin, awesome job to you and your team, this is amazing venue but more importantly hearing incredible work you are doing here. For FWS, grassland conservation is one of highest priorities, grass and sage. We are excited about the bill funding NFWF is administering. Many of you attended central grassland roadmap summit that Bird Conservancy of the Rockies hosted a few months ago. I'm hoping a lot of the states are throwing in for projects in that grassland ecosystem, a great opportunity to build continued momentum. Parallel, as part of bipartisan eco-structure Congress gave FWS \$50 million specifically for the sagebrush ecosystem. We are working closely with WAFWA partners. Because of incredible effort before the meeting leading up to 2015 decision to not list greater sage grouse and Congress recognized that the partnership

between WAFWA, central land management agency, FWS and others with that \$50 million. It would be great if future bill down the road that they recognize something similar to that in the grassland ecosystem. Eager to see proposals from the states. Looking for opportunities to partner with states in grassland ecosystem, so if there are things we can do to help you or vice versa let's keep talking. A couple personnel updates; sent note to Region 6 states, that I just became the regional director permanently, Noreen retired in July and I became regional director officially in March. I hired Anna Munoz as my deputy. She has been our external affairs assistant regional director for 6 or 7 years and has a good understanding of the issues. She will be at AFWA in September. One thing we are working on, both with MAFWA, WAFWA and some of the joint ventures, putting together a species modeling project in sagebrush and grassland areas building on our other work. We are looking to assemble 60 aquatic or semi-aquatic pollinator species with focus on species of greatest conservation need. I was a little nervous about that and how comfortable the states would be sharing data with us. We worked hard to be sure data will be held by WAFWA so if you share it we will not have to turn it over to FOIA. Paul Jones is on contract, recently retired from Colorado Parks and Wildlife Service. If you have any concerns let me or Charlie know. MLI is also part of that effort. We want to make sure this is value-added and not taking your data and giving someone else access to it so that is why we are working through WAFWA. Appreciate being here, meeting directors I haven't met before and seeing you down the road somewhere.

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

***Karl D. Malcolm, Ph.D., acting Renewable Resources Director*** – Impressed by facility and staff and everyone representing the preponderous of opportunity this state affords. I am eager to make a road trip west from my new home state of Wisconsin. I am going to try stick with topics relevant to all states but first one is Missouri feral swine. This gives me opportunity to introduce my one forest service colleague here with me, Teresa Davison. We just brought her in as our new regional threatened and endangered sensitive species program leader and she is bringing 31 years of experience to that position, 10 years with FWS and 21 years with our agency. She will be a phenomenal asset to our state partners, FWS partners and the Forest Service. Conversation among directors earlier about return to in-person work in state agencies, this conference is the first time I am getting a chance to meet Teresa face-to-face. I want to pick up on something Tony mentioned about the value of in-person time. We can maintain and reinforce relationships in virtual environment but in terms of building a relationship it is basically impossible to do remotely. I agree with that. This gathering has been a chance to reconnect with a bunch of old friends and colleagues and make a bunch of new friends. Excited to see where we can take these new relationships. An honor to be among such esteemed colleagues. You may have heard about our 90-day pause on prescribed burning. The drought in the western U.S. and had an escaped wildfire in New Mexico that ended up becoming the largest wildfire in that state's history, 300,000 acres burned. That has been a socially and politically fraught issue for our agency and we did issue a 90-day pause agency-wide, includes Midwest, eastern U.S., southern U.S. and during this time we are going to be reviewing our burning protocols, evaluating our decisions on core tools and have national fire management and research professionals who will be leading that charge. The vast majority (99%) of prescribed burns go off smoothly but when we have something happen as dramatic, impactful and devastating as what happened in New Mexico our chief felt it was important to take strategic pause and evaluate. For all these topics, if anyone wants to follow up afterwards with me, I am at your disposal. Plan revision, our chief recently issued a letter establishing national planning service organization. Anybody that has been involved with our agency's forest plan revision over the years you will be familiar with the model. We are working unit by unit, national forest, national grassland at a time with a team at the local level. We are working to bring more centralized approach to that. For MAFWA

footprint you will be within one of our three regional plan service groups with national support with local buy-in, handled in more centralized fashion. Active management portfolio, stewardship authority, our region has been doing phenomenal work in partnership with a number of other organizations. We deliver 18% of vegetation management program last year through stewardship authority where we were able to use active management to accomplish restoration on the ground and pay for that work with receipts generated through sale of merchantable timber. Phenomenal opportunity to use timber program to support outcomes on the ground beyond vegetation management. Using receipts also to do things like watershed improvement work, aquatic rites of passage, non-invasive species work so stewardship portfolio has been a success with partners driving that work. Good Neighbor Authority, 16% of vegetation management work, \$107 million conducted through state agency partners. Shout out to Michigan who has the most robust programs anywhere in the country. They have 31 good neighbor agreements in place which includes partnerships with counties and tribes. Three bat listing status changes likely on the horizon plus the Indiana bat which has been source of ongoing consultation meetings for our agency for decades. Mention great collaborative effort between the Forest Service and FWS, pulling together some of the best available science when it comes to managing bat habitat for those four bat species. I want to flag for state partners that we have a great consolidation of best available science to manage forested habitats for those bat species that we are eager to take full advantage of and share with state agency partners. If that grabs your attention grab some time with me on the side. Picking up on One Health topic. Our region recently entered into a memorandum of understanding for conservation visions on the Wild Harvest Initiative. Our agency has phenomenal data around value associated with some of the resources we manage. Easy to talk about the value of a board foot of red pine, but hard when it comes to social, ecological, environmental culture food security values associated with wild harvest. Whether fish, wildlife, blueberries, wild mushrooms, the information we have at our disposal to inform our decision making is less solid oftentimes. The Forest Service is the first federal partner in the Wild Harvest Initiative. A number of state agencies in the west have joined that initiative and there is a lot of opportunities for us across the federal/state family to be putting more energy into thinking of how we understand and communicate the full suite of values of wild harvested resources. If MAFWA state agencies would like to think about collaborations around wild harvest issues, as it relates to One Health, please come and talk to me. We are interested in building momentum in Midwest. Midwest Landscape Initiative we have been hearing about it and the Forest Service needs to be more actively involved. My number one objective for being at this meeting this week is to come away with all the right connections to understand how to get the Forest Service more actively involved and participatory in the MLI. I think I have got some of those key people already. I have cards and new friends and we are really excited about everything around MLI. The last thing I want to say is Ed, congrats on the award. On relationship front the authenticity of emotion, and what you bring in terms of heart to the work we do, we have a chance to reconnect and be surrounded by friends and mentors. Watching him accept that award was a reminder of how lucky we are. A lot of things come up at meetings like this whether wolf controversy or lead that can be challenging and difficult. A bunch of new directors drinking from the proverbial fire hose, but his reaction to receiving that award was another reminder to me of the fact that we are supremely privileged to be among the small fraction of human beings who make a living in service and where our passions and identity overlap with the work we do. Bring on challenges, bring on difficulties.

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

***Keith Wehner, Western Region Director*** – Introduce my other Wildlife Service counterparts who are here today. Frank Boyd, state director, Alabama director, John Steuber, Assistant Regional Director and John Paulson, state director of North Dakota and South Dakota state

program. I have heard a lot of folks talk today about their team and how new everybody is. Frank and John in new role, but John is not but is still awesome. Three topics I want to go over today, update with feral swine, high path AI and transition of Wildlife Services that continues to evolve. Feral swine covers almost all the states in U.S., covered partially on federal funds but really on partnerships. We could not do what we need to do without state partners. Express my thanks to all of you for helping us through the process. Have an update on sodium nitrite that we have been trying to get out for a number of years as a potential toxicant for feral swine removal. EPA came out and asked for one more field trial through the winter, so will start that this winter. The hope is that everything will go well and sometime next summer we will be able to submit the final paperwork to EPA. From that point it takes about 18 months to decide whether or not to allow it as a restricted use pesticide. The plan is for restricted use only for Wildlife Services for state game agencies. Like the other toxicants we use it will follow that same pattern, we will get to use it at certain levels and expand further and further over time. Farm Bill funding, in southern states where big populations are the highest it varied and conversations for 2023 have begun, hopefully renewed for another session. High path AI (avian influenza), I think every state in here has had some sort of outbreak this year. Right now, we have 20 states affected in commercial poultry farms, 25 states where Wildlife Service is actively out there helping out with some of those projects, transferring and depopulating to get people back up and in business. All states doing some continued wild surveillance in wild populations and we are planning on doing that next year as well. Things are slowing down for summer but this fall expect it to ramp up. This particular virus is acting a little different and expect it to continue through fall and winter of next year, hopefully with resolution soon. Third topic, share that our priorities for the next several years, Wildlife Service as a whole, not just western or eastern region. In the west our entire office is new within the last three years. I personally have replaced two-thirds of our state directors and the other third are probably going to retire in the next three years. We are in the middle of massive transition. The east has gone through something similar and all of the regional offices will all be changing in the next three years there. Share a few thoughts. Wildlife Services is a little unique among federal agencies. We act at request of Congress on certain things, but history and evolution of Wildlife Services is that we are very state based. We try hard to be as flexible, as accommodating, as partnering and as strategic at state level through DC level. As you were working through some of your problems, I want to touch on a few hot topics I heard yesterday. I heard feral swine, recruiting problems, elk in Nebraska and different things going on out there. Wildlife Services was built with state fish and game agency as a partner. Every state is different because of evolution of the state agency that we work with. I want to throw a couple of ideas out there. As you struggle, like we do with personnel, let's work together. Some states are good and have a great relationship, but not true in every state. Wherever it is great let's make it better and if it is stagnant let's get it on the right track and if not working at all I would like to rebuild those relationships. I moved to Fort Collins, Colorado as Covid was hitting so this is my first trip outside of the city and it has been awesome. I grew up in rural Michigan and as so many people said you cannot build a relationship over Teams, it is just not possible. Our goal over the next couple of years is to attend all these meeting and meet all you folks and really get back to business of building relationships and getting things on the right page. As you talk about RAWA, when it becomes a reality, I want to stress that if there are ways we can help with whatever your highest priorities are we want to do that. We want to meet state agencies, federal agencies and landowners wherever they are at and help them get to the next level. We don't regulate or enforce anything; we are a service agency. The folks that work for us are passionate about providing that service and I hope you feel that through your state directors and through regional staff. If I have not met and shook your hand, please find time. I would love to shake your hand and have a conversation. Thank you for hospitality. *Sara* – I cannot say enough about how important our relationships are with our federal agency partners. That incident command

structure and how we are eliminating feral hogs in Missouri with the Wildlife Service, Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a lot of other partners involved. Those three agency representatives are shoulder to shoulder every step of the way. Travis Guerrant our Wildlife Services director; we take Travis when we have state legislators that are tired of dealing with us and use him as the secret weapon. He talks slow and asks about their family and swear the toughest legislators have different attitude when we leave about the feral hog issue. He is masterful. Dale Nolte, the former national director has been down there on the front lines with legislators and any time we have asked for assistance you have responded. I could say the same thing about the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, to talk about whatever the issue is, you all respond at a time of need and say thanks to all the agencies here today. *Keith* – Try to get right people in right place. Like you, we are going through transition, new staff and new directors and new issues. Climate change is becoming a priority for everybody and if we can help you with whatever you are going through, whether feral swine or elk or protecting mussels, no matter what it is we would love to partner with you. The Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service included.

#### **USGS Midwest Climate Center** (Exhibit 16)

***Mark Gaikowski, Center Director, Upper Midwest Environmental Science Center*** – Native South Dakotan, started my career in conservation at a fish hatchery. I appreciate opportunity to come back to the state and talk to you. Work in ecosystem area supporting MAFWA priorities. Shout out to west coast of Wisconsin where our science center is located; a little island in the middle of Mississippi River, more than welcome to come on your way to or back from next year's meeting. Olivia LeDee hoped to be here. USGS went through research RFP process on Twin Cities campus, that is host institution along with other universities, tribal agencies and a whole host network of other agencies to fill out that national task network. We are focused on synthesis research with partner agencies to review impacts of climate change. We are also focused on supporting and developing critical issues and USGS' mission and ongoing opportunities for post-graduate, graduate and under-graduate education. One of the first projects Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC) are supporting is focused in on public acceptance of climate change, impacts and adaptations agencies are putting forward to address and mitigate impacts of climate change. That will be focused on two prongs. First a series of workshops to identify critical issues that states support. Second, design and conduct a survey instrument to get out to public in Midwest CASC states to help assess a forum of public acceptance of, issues and applications to climate change. Wildlife disease, involved in responsive high-path AI and working to provide agent mortality and morbidity assessments, provide information emphasis on incidents of high-path AI and ongoing work to form a strategic response. Not the only disease issue that is impacting MAFWA states and members. There is a lot of additional work going on with chronic wasting disease, including partnering with Wisconsin and Ventana to help develop systems model to help integrate beyond epidemiological information for CWD to also include economics, political issues and realities. The Science Center continues to be a leader in corona virus impacts in wildlife, supporting surveillance efforts, assessments and providing risk assessments to agency staff interacting with and handling wildlife. Conducting surveillance to determine potential risks for wildlife to provide vector reports in North America. There is also ongoing work on white-nosed syndrome and ongoing work to develop field vaccines to support active management. We have all seen, from global pandemic, data on avian influenza and having access to data and information are key to that disease. The call center recently deployed WHISPers 2.0 and there is a number of MAFWA states that have been onboarding that information and accessing it and using it in response to high-path AI outbreak. Support through ARPA funds we are providing through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In developmental stages of WHISPers 3.0 which will require substantial coordination with wildlife health

committees to help with scope of that next generation database. Switch to native species and talk about freshwater mussels; they are most at-risk species, to extinction, and USGS has been developing a science vision to help form our research efforts for riparian areas because it is a hot spot for native mussels. That research science vision is in last phase of development, it definitely benefited use and input from over 150 different federal, state and NGO partners and institutions. With comments from over 500 individuals helping to guide and develop that science vision. We hope to have it be available this calendar year. Another highlight is to better understand the impacts of pathogens in native mussel declines and mass mortality events. From Washington state to Virginia, we have been working with partners to better understand the impact of pathogens in native mussels and impacts to their ongoing survival. The resource from Conservation Initiative will help expand that effort going forward in 2023 in the Great Lakes. USGS has long been a leader of advanced technologies and application of science to help inform resource management. One of tools working on is to access the use of autonomous vehicles equipped with hydroacoustic to better inform science-based management of Great Lakes fisheries resources. Partnering with the Monterey Bay Research Institute we will deploying those systems in Lake Superior this fall. It will be overtaken by powered research vessels from USGS, other state and federal and tribal entities to better understand the impacts of vessel sound on fisheries assessments for fisheries management in the Great Lakes. Mississippi River science, Congress has directed USGS to conduct a science forum on the Mississippi River. We are in the early stages of coordinating that with expectations to conduct a virtual science forum likely this fall and winter to focus on key priority areas. In addition, we published last week a third edition of ecological status and trends of the upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. That document represents more than 25 years of systemic monitoring collected through six field stations through the Upper Mississippi River restoration program and it highlights the changes in time in water quality, aquatic vegetation, fish and helps identify some of the long term drivers of change in the system. Specifically increases in discharge of land use change in the system. We have heard a lot about influence of ag practices at this meeting. There is work being done by the Prairie Wilderness Research Center in Jamestown, North Dakota. One of the key items is the ongoing work to help improve certainty estimates and importance of grassland for duck nest survival. Huge amounts of resources go towards waterfowl restoration efforts in the Prairie Pothole region. USGS continues to make big investments and resources to other states and population impacts of wind energy and other forms of energy. Associated with that they wanted me to highlight our ongoing efforts to apply artificial intelligence to stave off the detection and classification of wildlife in areas where energy is being developed. This is focused primarily on outer continental shelf in the Atlantic Ocean it has an application that relates where wind energy and has allocations for future deployment for all wildlife species detection. Invasive species impacts all of your agencies and we continue to work with state, federal, provincial and tribal partners to develop invasive mussel science and management with specific work ongoing with the University of Minnesota aquatic invasive species research center. We want to better understand potential for application of Lotus clockworks to better control to suppress zebra mussel populations. We have further work of Bureau of Reclamation where we are assessing application of carbon dioxide as a tool to reduce invasives in close water systems, locks, dams and other locations. Also, application of carbon dioxide for use in habitat restoration efforts associated with fish spawning reefs. Making substantial investments in invasive carp, focusing on and ongoing work with partners working on evaluation of deterrent systems for invasive carps. Working with Wisconsin DNR, USFWS, Army Corps of Engineers and others testing carbon dioxide for potential deterrents in a lock system in Wisconsin; ongoing science leadership with evaluation of Barclay Dam in Kentucky. Most recently deployed, along with the Army Engineers development center an underwater acoustic deterrent system in Iowa. Evaluations of those systems are ongoing. Highlight work on bipartisan infrastructure law. Focused on

application of eDNA for evaluation of ecological resilience of restored grasslands with native pollinators. The last three I want to highlight are focused on supporting the deployment of national early detection and rapid response framework. Three projects focused on helping inform that response. First, collaboration need with USFWS in response to detection of invasive mussels in moss balls in Washington state. We used existing tool we have been developing for point of use detection of invasive species and started at point of entry detection of invasive species. The second one focused on EDI toolbox; changing on a frequent basis so want to bring together a common location for information, tools and methodology. Last, highlight preparation for READI-Net, sampling system to be deployed across the landscape at critical locations to collect and process eDNA samples in real time over multi-spatial scale and temporal time and steps. *Tami* – Speak to tribal aspect that was focus priority area? *Mark* – Focused on incorporating tribal historical components, one of affiliated institutions is Menominee Tribal College and USFWS is going to be affiliated and consortium members. A strong component of engagement and outreach. USGS has hired a tribal liaison to help provide some positive outreach to tribes, listen to their concerns and engage with them.

### Prairie City USA

***Pat Conzemius, Wildlife Forever*** – Not present in the room.

*Kevin* - Asked Dave Chanda to make an RBFF report. *Dave Chanda, president and CEO of RBFF* – I have six months under my belt and it is a great organization. The president of MAFWA sits on my board as well as Kendra and Ron Regan. We are a small organization but are impactful. We have a great team. Many of you know Stephanie Hussey; she works closely with your states on the ground, helping them do marketing and strategies and other plans. Congratulations to folks at state level, from where you were five years ago to where you are today with commitment and efforts to R3 is rewarding to see. Very few states have marketing component and yesterday heard report on meeting the customer where they are and understand what they want and what they need; kudos to the states. We look forward to building those partnerships with you, key to the work I do. I see plenty of opportunities for bringing more staff to this arena where we may be able to do some partnerships. I could envision a regional R3 campaign with MAFWA and my team. The sky is the limit and we are looking forward to it. Kicked off marketing campaign for the year, tapped Get on Board campaign because it was resonating. Research we are doing shows most campaigns have a life of a couple of years but last year the numbers were tremendous in terms of what we were getting out of brand recognition, intent of people exposed to our marketing efforts and intent to go fishing or boating were all high. We are keeping it going for another year. There are some cool aspects in there, one of which is our alliance with Disney and opens on all their channels, markets a lot of different radio stations. We are looking to reach a lot, last year we got involved with them in a program called Holy Moly, but it is like Ninja Warriors, only miniature golf and you have different holes to go through. We sponsored the fishing hole and was one of the most popular holes on their course and two announcers gave us more airtime than we have ever imagined. Our campaigns utilize a whole variety of platforms; we entered the world of TikTok and we are taking out a lot of ads and seeing tremendous results; it is one that should get your attention. National Fishing and Boating week; we had a great time across the country, a lot of states got involved with different celebrations. We hosted several events, one particularly rewarding to me was we entered into mobile catch program with 20 state partners that we gave them a mobile trailer full of gear in exchange for doing at least eight programs a year in urban environments. During National Fishing and Boating week, the District of Columbia, one of our partners, took their trailer and partnered with the National Park Service working with deaf children and they had sign language folks. It was absolutely incredible; the backdrop, seeing a kid cast line in the water in front of



Jefferson Memorial, a cool experience. A fishing excursion in the tidal basin, it has catfish, sunfish and panfish, largemouth bass and others. Some took the fish home for dinner. On state marketing work, partnered with 17 states on boat registration marketing campaign, gets lapsed boats owners to register their boats, generates millions of dollars for the state partners and of us, more importantly, is getting boats back on the water. More participation and formula that generates the sportfish dollars back to the states, the number of the boats registered plays heavily into funding. The state marketing workshop we host every year is scheduled for February 27 to March 1. We do a special session for directors and RBFF covers cost of two staff members to come and will cover director as well. I can promise it is the only place and time where 25 state directors will get in a room and spend an hour and a half talking about fishing related R3. We know your time is precious but great ideas come out of this. We are federally funded and are on five-year grant with USFWS, it comes out of same funding you receive, renews in 2023. I imagine the USFWS will be sending out an RFP this fall, which we will apply for. In the past we have reached out to state directors for letters of support for us to be the recipient of the grant. When you see it come across your desk, please support the work we do. Thank you for a few minutes to introduce myself and I look forward to working with all of our state partners.

*Kevin* – Give all the federal partners that joined us today another round of applause (*applause*).

*Lunch Buffet sponsored by Kalkomey Enterprises*

Meeting started at 1:00 pm

## **MAFWA COMMITTEE REPORTS**

***Ollie Torgerson, MAFWA Executive Secretary, Facilitator*** – Each committee has a director/liaison assigned to it. When I first started there wasn't a lot of interaction between MAFWA committees and directors. Committees meet away from administrators and directors wanted a closer relationship with them, so they established the director/liaison position. It has been a good process and the director sometimes request assignments, but more often it is the other way around and committees make recommendations to the directors. They make proposals and write letters, etc. We have a vacancy for director/liaison in the Midwest furbearer committee so if any director is interested in volunteering let me or Madam President know. Each of you should have a representative from your staff on each of our committees and I encourage you to support their travel to these meetings to develop and maintain relationships. There are 13 committee reports and these go fast, but that does not diminish what they do.

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

**Climate Change** (Exhibit 17) – ***Shannon Lott, MI deputy director*** – Dan is at tribal negotiations today in Michigan. Amy Derosier is chair, met once by conference call in February with eight states in attendance. Met to address ask from Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center to prioritize research needs, a director information item. They planned to meet two times. They listed six priorities; category is science and adaptation documentation so there is some overlap, some in similar categories and some in other categories. For the medium-high priorities there are five listed there. If questions, contact Amy or any one of the members from your state to learn how and why they prioritized this way.

*Ollie* – I neglected to thank Sheila and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for printing committee reports booklet.

Jason Sumners, MO is director/liaison. Luke Meduna, Nebraska was the chair.

**Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group** (Exhibit 18) – ***Andy Lindbloom, Senior Big Game Biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – I coordinate deer, elk and upland programs. This is group of wildlife managers with primary objectives to talk about deer and wild turkey management strategies, emerging or existing issues of these species and coordination of any research. Study group met in Nebraska, was virtual and occurred in August. Had 34 state deer and turkey biologists from the Midwest member states--28 people attended. Group appreciates support of directors to attend meetings. It was shortened meeting with three invited speakers and some deer and turkey breakout sessions. Talk on mule deer research in Nebraska, another talk about Covid impacts and the National Deer Association shared updates as well. It is a small group which holds small, informal, in-person meetings with good discussion and lots of good debate. The virtual format did dampen discussion and as a result have no director information or action items. The full proceedings are pretty long and include detailed deer and turkey reports from participating states. We put them on the University of Wisconsin management digital library. They store a lot of information for us for free, all past proceedings and documents from meetings are also there. I have one hard copy. This year meeting will be held at Rock Springs, Kansas on August 15 to 18 and this year a joint meeting with Southeast Cervids and Wild Turkey Work Group. Can we get link to that on MAFWA website. *Sheila* – The reports are there. *Ollie* – Committee meets in August, so report is 2021. I have tried to get them to go back to regular schedule. All of the rest of our committees meet in April and May and I post committee reports on our website. *Brad* – Rock Springs is spectacular place, it is in the heart of Kansas near Milford Reservoir, one of our premier fisheries; a beautiful place. *Ollie* – Keith Sexson from Kansas was one of the early members on this committee, sat this table and served for 50 years for KDWP.

*Ollie* – MAFWA President is director/liaison. Chair is Terri Brunjes from Kentucky.

**Feral Swine** (Exhibit 19) – ***Brian Clark, KY*** – Deputy commissioner in Kentucky, Rich Storm, our commissioner, sends his regards. I am the chief operating officer, so he allows me to attend more technical functions while he attends more political and other needs for us. We are working through some good changes administratively from legislation last spring. Terry unable to join us but will give her pat on that back. Relating to Ollie's comments about getting together, they postponed meeting for earlier this month because of conflicts of committee members and plan to convene later this summer. The Wild Pig conference was postponed and is going to be held August 8-11 virtually. Midwest state work is being done in conjunction with Wildlife Services. We heard from them earlier and we want to communicate our appreciation and thank them for their partnership which is pivotal to our success in abating wild pigs. Because of this partnership, and intensive efforts to get other partners, we are experiencing declines in most states and impacts in population number of wild pigs. Discussions were held at AFWA Feral Swine Working Group meeting on feasibility of creating a national feral swine revocation and reduction plan at the federal or national level rather than several regional plans, yet to be determined. That would have bearing on MAFWA as well as SEAFWA. She also requested consideration from states that do not have an active member, Indiana, North Dakota and South Dakota. We understand committee states are doing multiple jobs and wearing many hats, so no guilt associated with that request. If you have folks who would be interested, they would be welcomed and appreciated.

*Ollie* – Director/liaison position is vacant, doesn't have to be a director if you have a high level person on your staff with fur resource management experience who could fulfil this spot. Chair is Sam Wilson, Nebraska.

**Midwest Furbearer Committee** (Exhibit 20) – *Keith Fisk, SD Game, Fish and Parks – Tom Kirschenmann* - deputy director of for SD. Keith not here. I have a feeling I just got volunteered to find someone to be on that last committee. Kevin and I have ongoing fun, he is former deer biologist and I am former pheasant biologist and neither one of us know a lot about furbearers. Highlights from minutes of annual meeting. It was held in May in Crawford Nebraska at Fort Robinson State Park. Thirteen members participated and they had virtual option available for those that couldn't attend in person. There are no action items for directors; summarized six information items, some pertinent to other conversations and committees as well. One is looking at captive facilities and ongoing discussions; support for BMPs; spotted skunk evaluation going on by USFWS and many states are engaged in that effort and attaining samples to determine listing; large carnivore report, updated for mountain lions, bears and wolves. When you look at the distribution of those species it is interesting how different it is just among the Midwest states. The next meeting will be in 2023 in Kansas.

*Ollie* – Kevin Robling, SD is the director/liaison. Megan Wisecup, Iowa DNR is chair of committee.

**Hunter and Angler Recruitment & Retention Technical Committee** (known as R3 committee) (Exhibit 21 and PowerPoint) – *Megan Wisecup, Iowa DNR* – My vice chair, Jeff Rawlinson is here and we will tag team. Excited for Kevin to step into role as director/liaison and we had a quick call with him and will be meeting with him onsite today to talk about various projects and efforts we are working on. Jeff and I are proud of this committee and how it has changed in the last five years, has rolled up its sleeves and become a real working group. It is not unlikely to have at least 10 to 13 states represented every time we have a call and 25-30 people participate on the call, members and partners. We have opened the door to partners to get really engaged in this committee as well and that has helped us to succeed and move forward to get projects done. Met in person twice in the last year, February at Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Des Moines and fortunate to have a hybrid environment, so had 80 participants during our two-day meeting. We have worked on several multistate conservation grants this past year as well. We are fortunate that in 2022 all of them were funded so a lot of work is going on at some level. Several committees or sub-committees are working on these projects. We also received some funding from Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to do a Midwest angling and boating photo shoot, underway now and will conclude next winter. We will have a wide variety of diverse imagery of Midwest fishing and boating type activities featuring multiple Midwest states. We continue to do our committee newsletter quarterly that we share with directors. Communication is one thing that directors wanted to step up, communication and coordination. We have been having good involvement and participation from states sharing all the success and good work going on. The annual meeting recap. I want to show the multitude of work going on in the committee; from having symposia, technical working group committee, several projects in individual states; several projects across multiple states; and the multistate conservation grant. Whether diversity, equity and inclusion, working on access projects, just a whole multitude of things going on.

*Jeff Rawlinson* – Gone from committee where we met and talked, discussed what we ought to do, but we are taking on projects, bringing on grants, getting work on the ground done and meeting some of the needs of Midwest states. We are excited about some that have come out. Our small game diversity marketing toolkit is one. This was a big project that we worked together on that will have impacts going forward. With this we can do a lot more outreach and marketing efforts to audiences that maybe don't look like us but can be strongly involved in small game hunting. The toolkit is now available for states and feels good to see a lot of the pictures used in states and in media. It will continue to support states for many years to come. Mentor communications toolkit is one that we are lining up the first year on; it is in place for states to start using to better

communicate the needs of mentoring to the people, hunters and states. Not just communication, now we are moving to the next phase where we developed opportunities for mentoring in state, so important, especially with some of the research we tag-team with. This project worked with other multistate grant projects to learn, get more information to better understand hunter education needs, adult hunters looking for more opportunities to get in the field and now this will be a tool to help the states and become a brokering entity to bring mentors and mentees together in format not seen before. We are also working with IHEA on this. Tomorrow we will be asking for your support and action on the modified guidelines of the committee, made adjustments to objectives, modernized a bit and made changes to how chair and vice-chair can be chosen in an effort to make sure Megan never leaves. Also, we are changing the name of the committee but because name wasn't very encompassing because not just hunting and fishing, but shooting sports, boating and broader recovery reach. We feel this is much better and puts us in better position to be the working group that does a lot more work on-the-ground. We are looking at an R3 position we have been working on for the last couple of years. We are excited to execute this, we have had about a year and a half of discussions which have been good, changing concept and name to add relevancy to this position. This is a good move and we are excited. After tomorrow we hope to move forward with that. Ollie – They are busy. It is amazing what a little money will do because of the PR Modernization Act. *Brian* – Thanks for your work. In Kentucky we are using that toolkit, using it for photography and marketing to bring hunters into our community and we are offering a small game hunting program. Appreciate your work.

*Ollie* – This committee is the oldest committee in MAFWA and has been in force since 1944; MAFWA was formed in 1934. This committee will meet with us next year in Wisconsin, they meet with us once every three years, they have their own meeting, but we do all of our socials together. Shannon Lott, MI is the director/liaison.

**Law Enforcement (Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO) (Exhibit 22) – *Sam Schelhaas, LE section chief, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Chartered in 1944 in Lincoln Nebraska, has 23 member agencies from Canada and United States and we meet every year. Again, with you in Wisconsin next year. Wrapping up meeting in Des Moines right now and in 2024, meeting in Minnesota. Send out summary that is 45 pages long. We typically talk about training, funding, staffing issues, major conservation, law enforcement cooperative enforcement efforts, new innovations in conservation law enforcement, state/regional/national issues in legislation, legal challenges, court decisions, initiatives, and other law enforcement issues. Training, Covid 19 continues to impact training efforts and most agencies have resumed the more conventional training schedules with more in-person and less virtual online training. There have been challenges to changes and new requirements in the last few years relating to use of force coming down from federal and local levels. Funding and staffing issues, recruitment and retention of officers is a challenge, basically due to resignations, retirements and decreasing applicant numbers. Agencies have been trying to recruit and fill all open positions but that will continue to be a challenge in years ahead. Agencies are trying to deal with how to engage non-consumptive users; like kayakers and mountain bikers. Many agencies are joining various state and federal law enforcement task forces with illegal trafficking and personalization of wildlife involved in illegal gun or drug or human trafficking which seem to go hand in hand. Many agencies are seeing more and more legal and illegal night hunting happening, an uptick with technology advances. With trends in civil unrest many agencies and conservation officers have been deployed to work alongside other law enforcement officers outside normal natural resource law enforcement. Mobile field courses, patrol and things like that. Some of the unique boundary and cross boundary law enforcement operations. We all know that wildlife violations go across state lines. An example, Kansas law enforcement worked closely with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a Fort Riley military game warden and local

agencies; the investigation led to conviction of a Sharon Kansas man for a number of violations where 60 whitetail and mule deer were taken; saw in Conservation Law Enforcement magazine, a cool case. In many states there were changes in resource law, legislation, private property rights which continues to be a common trend. Colorado is recognizing need to add overall number of officers to handle uptick in the woods requiring additional FTEs in the field for first time in 20 years. Colorado Parks and Wildlife authorized to hire an additional 10-15 officers to bring statewide number to 250. Kansas Wildlife and Parks law enforcement employees obtained a court order to not be able to install electronic surveillance equipment without the landowners permission, but wardens will still be able to conduct work on private property. Cost savings initiatives, grants have allowed some agencies, such as Manitoba and North Dakota to purchase items such as new outreach trailers, new ATVs and other boat safety equipment. Many agencies have gone to smart phones and many officers utilize cameras, videos, GPS, the whole technology world is always advancing and it seems we are always behind the curve. Other special law enforcement issues using unmanned aircraft or drones, ever changing technology, cyber technology, geo fences and search warrants. North Dakota has dramatically increased number of community outreach events, participating in weekly blogs and social media posts. If you follow any Facebook or Instagram pages out there, conservation law enforcement seems to be popular on those. In Ohio, after discovering CWD in two deer in the wild in 2020, surveillance increased in 2021 with several additional CWD positive deer, three counties declared as needing surveillance. Wildlife officers in Iowa are busy working with wildlife management research staff enforcing regulations and educating the public. This is a brief summary of what is going on in Midwest states, in the document each state has information in there. *Shannon Lott* – How many states have body cams? *Sam* – I do not, South Dakota has had them for five years. Quick poll with (*raised hands and comments*). Some of the new mandates have come down through the states or federal. *Shannon* – We just got mandated. *It seems all but two, some just got some or are getting them.* *Kendra* – Appreciate the LE Association's support, our officer Kevin Baird was shot last year. He is still recovering and will be impaired for life but got news today that federal sentencing for his case was concluded and the person who shot him was sentenced to over nine years of federal sentence and maximum was 10 years. Justice has been served and we feel good about that, as far as serving our officers. We heard from the judge that it was the testimony from his wife and him as well. Thanks for everyone's support and everyone who reached out to me during that time. *Ollie* – We look forward to having law enforcement chiefs with us next year in Wisconsin.

*Ollie* – Carolyn Caldwell has been CITES rep since 2003. Not able to be here. MAFWA President is director/liaison.

**CITES** (Exhibit 23)– *Ollie Torgerson (for Carolyn Caldwell)* – Her report is in the book.

*Ollie* – Jeb Williams, ND is the director/liaison.

**Private Lands** (Exhibit 24) – *Mark Norton, hunting access and Farm Bill coordinator, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – Met earlier in May, met virtually with 24 participants and all member states but Illinois and Minnesota were present. We had a few invited guests, Kurt Thiede, AFWA's government affairs director who provided an overview of AFWA's 2023 Farm Bill platform and provided updates on how Farm Bill is progressing. We had Scott Taylor, the National Pheasant Plan Coordinator with Pheasants Forever who gave an update on Plan 2.0. We also had Claire Beck; Landscape Conservation Initiative Technical Coordinator who gave an update on Midwest Landscape Initiative. John Morgan, National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative gave us an update about that initiative. This group always has valuable conversations, different private lands conservation work going on in various states. This year we focused on new and successful projects in each state. We discussed CRP, CRP rental rates and CRP in the

next Farm Bill. We also had conversations about how states plan to utilize RAWA funding for private lands conservation work. Another topic that came up was the shortage of applicants for listing vacancies in private land biologist field. Overall, had productive, relevant discussions. We request directors continue to support this working group and prioritize staff to attend this meeting. A couple of information items. The working group recommended a subcommittee of AFWA CRP Committee, which is part of conservation committee, be formed to develop ways to apply grassland CRP and maximize habitat benefits of overall CRP program. The first meeting of that occurred Monday of this week, so moving in the right direction. We also had conversation on ways to increase CRP rental rates on most marginal cropland and committee felt AFWA CRP Committee should form another subcommittee there to further explore that idea and how it will play across the entire country. There was a consistent message from states, the lack of wildlife college students prepared to work in private lands habitat field which goes along with conversations you have had on staffing difficulties. Some states had solutions they were implementing and we are working to broaden that implementation across the Midwest. Our next meeting will be next May in Wisconsin. No action items. *Ollie* – We all know how important the Farm Bill is to our Association in the corn belt in the Midwest and grasslands in the west and they have done good work on Farm Bill for us over the years. An important committee for us.

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

**Public Lands** (Exhibit 25) – ***Paul Coughlin, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – We did meet virtually in May, as said many times, virtual meetings just don't cut it when it comes to relationship building you get from face-to-face meetings. Over last three years we have been meeting virtually and had good attendance and representation from all the states. Each state at the meeting gives a brief report and we all seem to have a lot of commonality in issues and challenges when it comes to managing state wildlife lands. Common themes included finding qualified staff to work in habitat management; infrastructure and equipment needs, more elevated this year because of supply chain issues; increasing and diversifying uses on state wildlife lands. Participants agree this committee is well worth time and effort to attend. Many working groups have a sunset on them and I believe the public lands working group is set to sunset this year, so our one request of directors is to vote to continue the Public Lands Committee and continue to support sending your staff to attend meetings. Next year meet in Wisconsin. Traditionally work in conjunction with private lands working group and that has been enjoyable for everyone and there is a lot of cross-pollination with public and private lands folks talking about habitat and access. Plans are to be another joint meeting in early May in-person in Wisconsin.

*Ollie* – This is one of our newer committees. Sara Parker Pauley, MO is director/liaison. Dr. Jason Sumners is committee chair and Tami Ryan has agreed to present the report.

**Chronic Wasting Disease** (Exhibit 26) – ***Tami Ryan, WI DNR*** – I am deputy division administrator in **Wisconsin DNR Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division**. I am a member of this committee, which just started last year. The primary purpose was to enhance and expand external communication as well as improve internal coordination among members and with other federal agencies and members. We met virtually several times since March of this year and we have committee members from social science, deer committee and health committees as well as deer biologists and several of us are functioning in support role. The initial work has been to understand the actions regionally and nationally and finalization of Value Stream Mapping effort that led to the establishment of this group. Significant efforts so far include development of social ecological model for CWD management, leading CWD consortium group for advocacy of management strategies across state boundaries. Many MAFWA states are updating CWD management plans and learning about various efforts and have clearly identified the need to shift

from initial response to more planning and implementation that could have meaningful outcomes in regard to managing that disease. Also, the regional wildlife health coordinator position which is providing an opportunity and Ollie will talk more about that tomorrow. This committee is supportive of that effort. Also, completed review of existing CWD related MAFWA resolutions, seven of them and all of those resolutions seem appropriate except for one, which was the 2017 resolution “supporting restricting importation of hunter-harvested cervid carcasses from known CWD-infected states and provinces” so the committee is concerned about interstate movement and high risk of cervids. We are working with fish and wildlife health committee and deer technical committee to propose an appropriate update to this resolution. The committee plans to focus on facilitation and communication between fish and wildlife health and deer technical committees and amongst member states to support existing efforts to update management plans. No action items for directors. *Ollie* – Both Tami and Jason do serve on AFWA’s Fish and Wildlife Health Committee also, so MAFWA is represented at national level too.

*Ollie* – Greg Link, ND is director/liaison. Eileen Dowd Stukel is the chair.

**Wildlife Diversity** (Exhibit 27 & PowerPoint) – ***Casey Heimerl, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Not on the committee. One of the things diversity committee was involved in was development of regional species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) list, with Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI). MAFWA is the third of four regional associations that have developed this product. We continue fleshing out different components of the species list and the committee has discussed various ways to use this tool to better coordinate across state boundaries. The regional SGCN list has pulled out all of the SGCN identified in all the states, just over 1,800 species. Through a process states went through they selected species that states had shared priorities and conservation concerns and broke it down to 340 regional SGCN that states will be working together to help recover. Wildlife action plan revisions, 11 of 13 MAFWA states have major revisions due in October 2025. They are working on ways to improve coordination and effectiveness of these plans. Many states are having to add plants to SGCN. The major reason for doing this is so we will be eligible for more RAWA funding when that goes through. Committee members were also actively engaged in AFWA’s and MAFWA’s priorities including MLI implementation of AFWA’s landscape conservation and wildlife action plan. Recovering ready for AFWA and extensive discussions for wildlife annual diversity committee meeting in May. In early stages of becoming ready for RAWA and many agency staff are involved in readiness of this plan. The committee asks directors to intend RAWA is fulfilled through wildlife action plan implementation to meet the needs of conservation.

*Ollie* – Asking for committee name change also. Sara Parker Pauley, MO is director/liaison. Lindsey Long, WI DNR is chair.

**Wildlife and Fish Health** (Exhibit 28) – ***Steve Griffin, wildlife biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Lindsey asked me to give this report. Thank directors for support from your states and sending state representatives to meetings. It allows us to get together and discuss what is going on in various states and provinces. I am a wildlife biologist, not a trained veterinarian and I use the knowledge of state veterinarians to assist me in everything I do. Personally, and professionally, I appreciate the support you give those folks. We finally had a group meeting in Bismarck, ND and one virtual meeting before that but good to get together and we get a lot done. We had 11 states/provinces attend in person, five remaining states/provinces attended virtually and three federal agencies. We have a diverse group. Each state and province gets short period of time to discuss what happening in their state/province. Additionally on the agenda we discussed monitoring bee communities in North Dakota, high-path avian influenza, CWD, Wisconsin southwest deer study, MLI and SARS-CoV-2 virus in deer. We always seem to have a main topic that takes over, this year it was high-path AI, everyone vigilant since the spring bird

migration started, it seemed to take over what everyone was doing on top of all the other things. We feel sometimes we are just getting compounded every year; have to deal with things from the past and new diseases, we are busy. Not sure if this is director action item or not but we reviewed organization guidelines for the committee to better align with other standing committees in MAFWA and our agencies and we are looking at a name change to MAFWA fish and wildlife health committee. Director Pauley asked me to mention the new health coordinator position. I believe you will discuss that tomorrow. We have one director action item, a resolution on need for added capacity to states with insufficient wildlife health programs. *Ollie* – We will handle that also tomorrow. *Sara* – Reminder to members, this is the only resolution you will be asked to vote on tomorrow, please read through that before tomorrow.

*Ollie* – Give presenters a round of applause (*applause*).

*Colleen* – Look forward to these reports. Add another one for your consideration, the possibility of a Data and Technical Committee. At AFWA level there is a committee for data and technology and I have been asked to serve as the chair. After attending one meeting it became clear to me that it would be appropriate if we would consider a Midwest committee as well. In light of the fact that so many of us are new to our positions and we come to them with likelihood that during our tenure we will be asked to consider a new licensing platform or have inherited a licensing platform and they are challenging, to say the least. I am wondering if you might want to consider thinking about adding a Data and Technology Committee where we could work together to help each other when it comes for us to make decisions that come our way. This is opportunity for you to begin thinking about how we would involve our IT people who are very involved and engaged in these licensing platforms. We all know the backbone of what we do is sale of licenses, permits, tags and stamps and when we don't deliver well to the public it doesn't reflect well on us as an agency. If we help each other through these processes, I think we would be doing ourselves an individual and collective service. Hope you would consider thinking about adding a Data and Technology Committee for the future.

*Refreshment Break (sponsored by Airgun Sporting Association)*

## HIGHLIGHTING SOUTH DAKOTA'S RESOURCES AND TELLING THE STORY

### Telling the Story

*Nick Harrington, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – I will say things I know you all know but will say things we need to know. Everyone in this room has awesome jogs in the day to day we can get wrapped up, maybe selling fishing licenses to unruly crowd; but we get to take people out to places like this to get them their first fish, first pheasant or first deer. So, sometimes we need to take a step back, I am going to challenge you to do that now. I hope you are all enjoying Custer State Park, but it is not the total acres, I can give you data, campsites, visitation numbers but what will make you remember this trip is the scenery, wildlife, interactions with people, fishing, the point I am trying to make is you will go home and have stories to tell. I love data but we can't get wrapped up in it, we need to remember what we are truly doing. Think about CREP acres, hoping to get that to 100,000 acres, a great program but we need to remember that someone is going to kill their first pheasant on those acres and remember that is what we are here for. We are here to connect people to the outdoors. We can never forget that and that is how we continue to recruit more customers and get people onboard with this, by sharing those adventures. It is great to say we signed up 2,000 acres, go have fun, but if we can get someone to kill their first deer, antelope or elk, those are the stories we need to highlight. These are the biggest friends we have in the outdoors in this country, right here in this room. These states are



the number one source. People know us and trust us even some of those stakeholders that don't agree with us they know we are the source and we are where the information comes from. We need to make sure those stories are coming out, it is not just about data, elk numbers, deer numbers or licenses and permits sold, it is someone's first time out there. Catching coppi or bluegill, those are the stories we need to highlight. Every time we are talking with our customers and stakeholders, blend in opportunities with data, which is great and that is what a lot of us do. But when trying to recruit new customers they don't care if we have 100,000 acres for them, they are going to kill first pheasant on one spot and that will be where they go year after year, at least that is how walleye fisherman are. Work with communications staff and work with all the people on your teams to get the stories out there. We have the best jobs in the world but get wrapped up in day-to-day things. I challenge all of you to empower your staff and yourself, when you hear awesome stories to share them. Conservation officers or wildlife damage specialists who get to see an awesome sunrise, remind these that this is what we want them to be telling. Again, when you leave here, you will not remember the data, but will go back and tell your people about what you saw, like buffalo six feet away, etc., those are the stories we want you to tell we and what we tell each other on the way back home. We need to constantly keep those at the top of our mind. As we get into these next few presentations think about how can talk about that and what can we do about that. Some of you will catch your first SD trout or fish, those are stories we want to tell and showcase on our social media. When we talk R3 or talk recruiting, it is tailgate talks or around the campfire that is where these stories come from. Think about where you can see yourself, your staff, your customers and how can we make those connections between the awesome stories and the work our staff is doing. When we get it out what are we going to see in return because I can promise you customers want to engage and get excited about what you are doing. Maybe they don't agree with something you are doing but when a campus puts on a rod building class and a father and son build their first rods, spend time together and use them to go out and catch first fish. That is how we all got started. I want to challenge and empower all of you, whether doing this or know something you should challenge your staff to do, not just with communications but with wildlife biologists, law enforcement officers, park staff and share experiences they are having with our customers. When you give customers that type of information, not just application reminders or how to dispose of CWD, that is when you are going to see the needle move. *Kevin* – Love your excitement. There is a saying Nick uses, “facts tell, stories sell”. After every legislative hearing I always give a story at the end, a conservation story about my kids, about the outdoors. It definitely sells, Nick is wearing off on me.

#### **Peregrine Falcon Recovery in SD** (PowerPoint - Exhibit 29)

***Casey Heimerl, wildlife biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – As many of you know, this bird was once listed as federally endangered species in 1970s. Its decline was mainly attributed to DDT pesticide which led to eggshell thinning and decreased nest success in peregrines and other birds as well. Due to widespread successful reintroduction efforts across the nation, they made a rebound and were removed from federal endangered list in 1999. When federally listed, it was added to the SD endangered species list and still has endangered status here--primarily due to its disparity in the state and lack of information on current breeding and nesting success. One of the first projects we did was reintroduction efforts in Rapid City. Part of SD endangered species law requires that state helps recover listed species. Peregrine falcons once known to nest in Black Hills. We had two documented nests from 1960s and that was last nesting. Using state wildlife grants funds, we developed a reintroduction project that ran from 2010 to 2013. During that time there were 57 captive reared chicks released from captive sites into Rapid City. One release site was on top of Assurant building in downtown Rapid City, used hat boxes, controlled environment to introduce new raptors to their natural environment. The gates and doors are closed and coordinators provide food and resources to them and then gates are opened when they

are big enough so they can start to explore the natural environment while still able return to site for food. As they become more independent they will eventually leave release sites. Peregrines have become well adapted to nesting in urban environments; tall buildings are similar to cliffs to them and there is abundant food sources, pigeons, starlings and sparrows. They were banded with yellow bands from the captive breeders, which were removed and USGS metal bands were put on and red coded band so individual birds could be sited from a distance. Janie Fink, raptor biologist from Birds of Prey Northwest was our release site coordinator. Temporary green nontoxic paint was added on underside of young and each year a different color is added so if sited later on so they could tell age. One release site was Black Hills Coop building, released in 2012. Sites use remote monitoring so site coordinators can see how birds are doing and as they start flying they can see when birds return to feed. This program is popular among citizens in Rapid City, had police officers respond when there was a downed peregrine chick and they were helpful in picking up the chicks and bring them back to the release site. When they first learn how to fly they make mistakes, sometimes the parents will fly down and help them until they can get up and fly again to avoid them getting hit by a car, eaten by a dog or help return them to nest. Common to see birds flying over Rapid. The reintroduction summary, one bird released in 2012, overwintered in Rapid City area, returned to release site in 2013 and brought a second un-banded wild bird back with him. There has been a nest box on one facility and still there today. Game, Fish and Parks continues to monitor the Rapid city area and occasionally solicit for observations of colored bands or colored patches on their wings. We don't know if any nesting contributed to nesting someplace else. The next step was nest surveys and monitoring in the Black Hills. The last nest we were aware of was active in the 1960s but no one has gone out in concerted effort to see if still nesting in the area. Using state wildlife grant, in 2017, we contracted with Bob Oakley, a retired biologist out of Wyoming. He was involved in recovery nesting and has been working with us to do surveys in the Black Hills for nesting peregrines. First, we did some aerial reconnaissance and tried to identify cliff faces in the Black Hills that had suitable habitat for nesting. These are prioritized on a number of features. First is sheer cliff face that they like to perch on and adequate perching ledges, proximity to food resources, near lakes or waterfalls present and avian prey presence. We also considered proximity to Rapid City thinking that offspring of the released birds would likely be closer to area. The results, currently doing surveys, but since 2017, we have five known peregrine pairs in the Black Hills, with varying levels of success, but doing great. We plan on continuing to monitor to follow success of nests and keep surveying other peregrines that someday might have successful pairs. All of this information will hopefully lead to them be downlisted in SD. After which we will be proposing to the Commission to down-list from endangered to threatened. T&E species have a list of criteria they need to meet to be down listed to threatened or completely delisted. The peregrines meet our criteria to be considered threatened so that is up and coming. *Kevin* – Your Governor's will be getting letters from us suggesting down listing of peregrine falcon.

*Kevin* – Before next speaker I would like to make introduction of two sponsors. First is Second Century Habitat Fund partner. This is one of our initiatives to take second century of pheasant hunting and make it as good as the first. We celebrated our 100<sup>th</sup> year of pheasant hunting in 2019. They are geared towards habitat and putting grass back on the landscape. Brian Shore is our Executive Director. It is a volunteer board and they have raised a couple million dollars already. Another one is Bob Polson, a member SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation. Some of the beautiful buildings you see in this park, the visitor center down the road, the Bison Center we drove by on jeep tours were all done by the Foundation. They have raised millions of dollars to help fund those awesome projects here in SD (*applause*).

## **Pheasant Harvest History and Weather Models** (PowerPoint – Exhibit 30)

*Travis Runia, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – Article from newspaper in Madison in 1908 talking about the new game bird in South Dakota. By this time abundant in Pacific northwest on agricultural landscapes. It talks about two gentleman from SD who planned on propagating them and releasing them to get the population going. They were really hoping and thought they would take off, but I don't think anyone knew they would do as well as they did. Gene Simpson brought in original pheasants and started game farms which ultimately where first introductions in SD came from. The article mentioned people who brought in pheasants and plat book in 1908 shows it was just north of Redfield SD where original pheasant releases were. Introductions were successful and part of the culture there. There is a big sign there that welcomes you to Redfield and murals on side of buildings, a pheasant sculpture downtown, a pheasant on the water tower and north of town there is a marker indicating where first pheasant was released, it says 1908, but was actually 1909. A few years later was the first pheasant hunt in SD. A map from 1919 shows a one-day hunt in Sphinx County, possession limit was two roosters an estimated harvest of 200 birds. In 1926, there are different hunting zones with different limits, but generally liberal, pheasants were exploding at this time. In some units the limit was seven birds, two could be hens and hunters shot a million birds. Last year we harvested about a million birds. Fast forward to another year when pheasants boomed, around end of WWII, because of idle landscape pheasant populations boomed to ridiculous levels. There were a bunch of different zones but in general, most were seven or eight birds a day, and could shoot up to four hens a day. The numbers are astounding, 175,000 hunters harvested 7.5 million birds, about 44 birds per hunter. If you want to read more about pheasant history in SD we worked with a gentleman from Nebraska, a retired history teacher, Lonnie Schaffer. He put together maps and statistics for every hunting season from the first 100 years in SD. The digital copy is on our website, paper copies are sold out. There are great pictures from early hunts. They could pile up hens if they wanted to. As mentioned, we have had 100 years of pheasant hunting and they held a reenactment of original pheasant release. It looks like they are releasing all hens in the photo, but I don't believe that was the way they did it back then. It is interesting to point out that at the original release site, under footprint or shadow of an Ethanol plant, so a bit of irony to that. Graphs of pheasant numbers since beginning, interesting to look back at 1925, our depression era. Nearly all pheasant hunters were residents, a time when people didn't have a lot of money and if you look at post WWII when they killed 12 million birds and it was the first time we had a lot of nonresidents and residents, about equal. After that resident hunters were above nonresidents for quite a while until we got into CRP era; maybe there was more advertising for pheasant hunting because a lot more nonresidents came back. It is concerning when you look at trend of small game hunters and decline of resident hunters--in SD in a 60-year decline. Basically, it has stabilized at best, but when look at nonresidents, when we have a lot of pheasants and we put work into advertising and pushing hunts so we can get those hunters back. The pheasant population through time from beginning, just like hunters saw peaks in Great Depression time when idle land and same in WWII period, then again during Soil Bank period of 1950s and 1960s, then again in CRP era of the last 25 years. The CRP peak is not as high as other booms. There is a different landscape now from back then across the Midwest. Graph shows pheasant roadside surveys and conservation program land, soil bank or CRP lands. Whenever you talk about pheasants it is important to talk about habitat and CRP type programs. We have had a nice response to these programs through time, nice in soil bank era, suppressed levels between soil bank and CRP eras and another nice improvement during CRP. Just like a lot of Midwest states we have had unfavorable weather and some of CRP was in western SD which caused delayed lag. During 2000 peak, we were killing two million roosters a year and on a downward slide the next 10 years. The last 10 years have been at a little lower level than we like to be. The survey got unpopular, so graph ends at 2019. Another way of looking at habitat is to look at a larger lens. Many of you are engaged with

national pheasant plan and one thing in that plan is information for all pheasant production habitat lumped together. Scott Taylor is here today and he created the CRP acre equivalent, a way of getting all pheasant data and production habitat in a single metric. For SD, we have a graph since 1990, had 1.8 million acres of CRP on the ground and shortly after that Farm Bill was initiated. Since then, we have been on a severe decline. Right now, we are 2.5 million acres. We talk about habitat and access being a priority for our department and this is why. We lost CRP, we lost native prairie, small grains and all the things that make great pheasant habitat, in a long-term decline just like all the Midwestern states. Talk about habitat effects on pheasants. Facts don't tell the story. Graph showing cumulative snow and predictive response of pheasants when you look at roadside survey and you see a decline. With more snowfall pheasant populations declined. We have seen years when pheasant populations are cut in half after a harsh winter. This is one big driver. To put this in perspective, 36 inches of snow is average and if all other variables are average and in the average winter we get 20% increase in pheasant population. Another important variable is spring precipitation. As expected, it is happy medium. In a good spring pheasants do well. If we have a wash out it can reduce nest and chick survival. If no precipitation in the spring that is bad for pheasants too, so average is best when it comes to spring precipitation. Another influence on the population is temperature during that same time, April and May, looking for warmer spring than average seems to kickstart cool season grasses, kickstart nesting cover and expand nesting season a little bit. Like to see warmer than average spring. Had good variables this year so looking for another good year of pheasant hunting. *Bill Moritz* – Ever have a spring season? *Travis* – Not that I am aware of. Shot some in spring a few years ago to study impacts and see if they were eating meal-mix seeds. Looking for publication and should have something out late summer or early fall. We found wild birds were eating some treated seeds. We also saw captive birds were eating them in fair doses. We will share with everybody.

### **Elk Management** (PowerPoint – Exhibit 31)

*Andy Lindbloom, senior big game biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – History, look back and talk about Elk Action Plan, what surveys we do, disease issues and end with brief overview and couple of research projects. Elk were native in SD until mid-1800s, 888 was last reported elk killed in the Black Hills. Elk were extirpated in SD in the early 1900s and we have spent quite a bit of effort as an bringing them back. Transplanted elk from western states and had first limited season in 1952. Even as late as 1990 we were still transplanting elk in the Black Hills, primarily in Wind Cave National Park. Numbers grew to point of too many elk in early 2000s. The Elk Action Plan, important document, is our short-term management plan of what the agency is going to do over the next 4-5 years regarding elk management. It has provided us a way to be transparent to our public and provide a way for them to add input on things we are going to do regarding elk. We have objectives for elk in the Black Hills, 6,000 to 8,000 for Custer State Park, 500 to 600 outside of the Black Hills. We do have huntable populations. We manage to increase, decrease or maintain populations via hunting. Another objective in our action plans is what we are going to do for license allocations. This can be contentious issue, how many hunters can come in so we laid it out in the plan, right or wrong. Right now, we are allocating 25% of any-elk licenses goes to archery hunters and 75% goes to firearm hunters; 10% and 90% for Black Hills season. We also have objective regarding harvest age. Our intent is to manage our bulls that are harvested, 60% of bulls are going to be four years of age or older. Last year in 2021 we exceeded those objectives. We also have objectives for hunter success, like to see at least 75% hunter success from hunters with any-elk license in the Black Hills. Last year we were at 84% in the Black Hills and 100% in Custer State Park. Populations are strong and we are exceeding objectives. Talk about harvest, we require mandatory check-in for anyone who harvests an elk and survey hunters. Even in the 1980s we were still moving elk around, from

1990 on the herd started to grow. We got above social tolerance levels, peaked in 2005 at about 1,600 bull elk harvested. We met objectives and brought population down substantially and in the last five or so years at a good spot and bouncing around objective of 6,000 to 8,000 elk. Another survey we do is herd composition survey, these are random counts to get data on age and sex ratios. Looking at age ratio, calves per 100 cows, estimate of fall recruitment. Last year, it was about 47 calves per 100 cows, long-term average is 48. We also monitor survival. From 2015 to 2020 we spent a lot of time capturing and radio-collaring elk for a sample size of 100 cows. This is an effort to monitor annual cow survival, an important metric in determining population trends and great tool to evaluate and quantify impacts of harvest on the herd. Still have animals with collars and last year survival was 93%. Want to acknowledge the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation who were a great conservation partner in this effort. They funded the vast majority of our collars and capture efforts. Helped us collect data which was really important to us to keep pace with our population objective. The last survey I want to talk about is our aerial survey, we did our first one in 2013, another in 2016 and from there on we were on a four-year rotation, did one in 2020 and will do another in 2024. We divide the Black Hills into 250 subunits we can fly within about an hour. We fly all of them which is unique for us as biologists to be able to sample a population like that. It gives us good estimate of wintering elk. The last time we flew, 2020 survey, saw 6,500 in the Black Hills and 460 at Custer State Park. The Gasper Fire area, where a fire occurred about 20 years ago, 80,000 acres, is an important wintering habitat for elk, 50-75% of entire herd winters there. All of our survey data, as well as research data from previous projects are used to put together population models to project abundance and growth rates. We use that to allocate hunting licenses in order to meet our objectives. We are in between survey years, but for 2022 we are at about 7,000 elk, looking good in Black Hills. It is hard to talk about cervid management anymore and not talk about CWD. We have had it in SD for some time, first detected in captive cervid in 1997 and in wild animal 2001. We have been sampling harvested animals since 2000 to 2013, prevalence rate in Black Hills is around a half percent. Wind Cave National Park has no hunting season. The last seven years we have seen an increase of CWD, now 1.4, Custer SP 12.3 and Wind Cave National Park did some removal efforts and sampled those and had over 50% prevalence rate. Research projects: starting this fall ramping up sampling efforts on harvested elk to get prevalence rates to get special distribution rates. In 2024, do some captures and radio collar some elk and look at survival rates and look at areas with high prevalence and where we don't and look at impacts of CWD. We are looking at side project, another way of detecting CWD in animals to see if we can detect CWD with an ear punch, both live and dead animals. There has been some promising research coming out on deer and looking like a good technique. That will help us ramp up efforts on other cervids if that comes true. The last project is one we have been working on with University of Montana, not done so no results yet but expect it to be done this year; a trail camera project of deer and elk densities and also composition of study areas; one is here in Black Hills with 260 cameras out. We have gathered good information on these two species and other species as well. When you have that many cameras on the landscape you catch a lot of things, see elk, deer and mountain lions, which could be a good tool for us to use to monitor those lions. We do get reports occasionally of black bears in the Hills sometimes, they travel through and out of the millions of pictures only a couple with bears.

### **Missouri River Fishery**

***Jake Davis, fisheries program administrator, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – I am going to expand the scope a little outside the Missouri River fishery. This presentation was meant to be given by our area supervisor, Hal Evert but he took a new position with USFWS. I want to highlight other areas of the state as well. There are 53 aquatic staff members and I would be remiss to not mention the hard work they put in to provide opportunities across the state. We

have a lot of really good fishing opportunities. The Missouri River, Lake Oahe, went fishing there last week, while walleye is king there due to the wind we fished from shore, caught channel catfish and smallmouth bass. Walleye is the bread and butter of the Missouri River system in general, we do consider it to be a two-story fishery, the second is cold water fishery, which is chinook salmon. The primary forage for chinooks and walleye are smelt with secondary being lake herring and you need cold water to manage for two-story fishery there. Additionally in recent years we added Atlantic salmon, obtained eggs and added that to the mix. This year we set new state record, the sixth state record we set this summer, an indication of fantastic fisheries management. A unique opportunity at Lake Oahe, walleye harvest is fourth largest in U.S. and provides quality habitats, a lot of access and a lot of places for people to go and fish. It is one of the primary areas we obtain eggs for walleye spawning, take 50-75% of eggs from Grand River, western tributary on Oahe. In the past we have sampled walleye up to 17 pounds during those spawning operations. It also has hosted flathead catfish, white bass and a number of other sport fish. Downstream is Lake Sharpe, again primarily walleye but do have smallmouth bass that are very popular in that fishery as well. Unique opportunity that is emerging, in a couple years hope to have a recreational paddle fishery on Lake Sharpe. We are sampling fish, working with USFWS and getting to the point where we think we could have a limited harvest. We do have several paddlefish seasons in SD, both snagging and archery and they do operate in different forums in a slot limit. Not sure how Lake Sharpe might turn out, but it is a population that is expanding and are seeing individuals continuing to recruit to adulthood and getting lots of reports from anglers. A unique aspect is that Lake Sharpe gets a lot of input through Oahe Dam, so in tailrace area it is not uncommon to run into salmon. Good opportunities there. Downstream, a good majority of Missouri River is impoundments, so Francis Case. A strong walleye fishery, common to drive across I90 at Chamberlain in the spring and see hundreds of boats at Chamberlain area. A lot of good access there, walleye and smallmouth bass are secondary and channel catfish. The same when you go down to Lewis and Clark. As you run the whole gamut of the Missouri River in SD there are campgrounds and boat ramps and access all over for people to utilize that system. It is one of our primary fisheries and one we spend a lot of time on. We have five fish management units with one office each, however the Missouri River unit has two offices, Chamberlain and Fort Pierre, a large area and important recreational component. Other areas because staff deserves to have their efforts highlighted. One thing common across the state is our commitment to urban and community lake fisheries. We have focused on that the last few years and trying to get fish to people and provide opportunity, so they don't have to travel very far. A lot of that is coming back to R3 efforts. We changed hatchery practices for five different species and increased catch rates. That goes back to getting fish local and to the people. We look at population centers like Sioux Falls, Brookings, Watertown and it is easy to point out urban fisheries in those higher population centers. However, when we look across the landscape, in northwest and central SD is the importance in those towns and their small fisheries. When as a biologist in Rapid City I was giving a presentation to the City of Wall, 50 miles west of Rapid City. They have a fishery called New Wall Dam, because previous one was called Old Wall Dam. When at meeting everyone kept referencing New Town and had to ask what that was and they said that was the town name and was exact same location but to them that was their town on the dam, so they had New Town and Old Town. When we started talking about this in some of these other small communities that fishery might be three miles away but might be the only public fishery in 20-30 miles of them. That is something, when we looked at our management in urban communities, it is much broader scale than you might picture, locally might be the only fishery for a long distance. Have big population centers there, however, have unique river fishing opportunities there too, James River and Big Sioux. We have seen expanding flathead catfish fishery user group building there and set state record a couple weeks ago bowfishing flathead out of Lake Mitchell. We are seeing that same expansion in other parts of the state. In western SD

where some of the secondary species, like catfish, are really expanding and with that we are expanding our regulations to allow for that. Whether that includes float lines, expanding use of different gears like set lines to provide more opportunity for users out there. The same with spear fishing. We continue to expand opportunities because public asking for it, we are trying to provide that. Here in Black Hills excellent fishing. Driving down I90 headed to Wyoming you can fish the miracle mile. When you cross Spearfish Creek in Spearfish about a mile away is about 4,000 to 5,000 trout per mile in that stream. We do stock walleye in several reservoirs in the Black Hills as well as northern pike and any number of sportfish. There are no sportfish native to the Black Hills, so everything here is introduced at some point but not necessarily by us. We also have large irrigation areas, up to 8,000 square surface acres, primarily walleye fisheries but again excellent channel catfishing. We are fortunate to have three different national grasslands that offer small dam fishing opportunities, Fort Pierre, Grand River and Buffalo Gap, excellent opportunities for fishing access. No shortage. If you have opportunity, whether just shore fishing or on a boat, lot of opportunities. Northeast SD has glacial lakes and they get a lot of coverage, and rightly so. They are experiencing record water levels right now so dealing with some access issues but has boat ramps and roads getting folks to the water and we are working to keep access areas open. Anywhere across the state you don't have to look very far to find fishing opportunities. I grew up in Minnesota and I came here for college in 2003 and I have never gone back and big part of that is because of resources here in SD. Fortunate to work with the folks I do because they work hard to provide that.

#### **Aquatic Invasive Species** (PowerPoint – Exhibit 32)

***Tanner Davis, SD Game, Fish and Parks*** – Talking about Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) management in SD, which is primarily zebra mussels and will highlight a few other species we are currently battling. We have an invasive plant, curly leaf pondweed and Eurasian milfoil primarily. South Dakota is involved with our western model and we use inspection stations and Eurasian milfoil is only species on that but we are working on adding curly leaf to that in the next few years. In invertebrate family we have rusty crayfish in southeastern part of state, Asian clam in the southeast and southwest and zebra mussel, primarily in eastern in SD on the Missouri River system and the only reservoir that does not have zebra mussels currently is Lake Oahe. Moving to fish species; primary species are invasive carp; big head carp and silver carp are currently in the Missouri River system in southeast part of state. The last few years we have gained several different funding sources, USFWS on understanding this fish population, how they move in tributaries, if residents or if they have residency in tributaries for entire year or moving back into main stem of Missouri River. We are currently looking into that. Also looking at presence and absence of with EDNA, telemetry studies and risk assessments and movement and moving into different territories. South Dakota is separated east river and west river and there is a lot more water in eastern SD. So far, we have been fortunate enough to limit our distribution of zebra mussels to the Missouri River and eastern SD. We have a couple different management strategies. We either have roadside checks or entrance inspections. We also have different studies with invasive carp. For hatchery side of things, we primarily have our production in western SD, so primarily species of concern is New Zealand mud snail that can put a big stop sign on production in any hatchery setting. We had an incident in a private hatchery a few years ago and they had to drain their ponds, let it freeze over winter, refill ponds, drain them then fill them again before they were eligible for putting production in the field. It is something our action staff don't want to see and looking over assets should help with that prevention. South Dakota does have several different funding sources and have a lot of pressure from different areas of the U.S. on what our AIS management strategy should look like. We have a hybrid approach, a three-legged stool. We have outreach and education, which is primary focus and we are doing the best we can with limited funds and staff. I am a one-man operation but have several

different people, biologists and supervisors helping me out. Jake has helped me out as well as our regional staff helping put out signs, helping inform the public on different AIS regulations. A few outreach and education strategies we have in SD; “Least Wanted”, is our campaign for AIS intervention and you can find that online. You can find AIS regulations, frequently asked questions, mapping of zebra mussels and have a citizen monitoring program where we give out samplers to public and they can hang them off their dock, periodically check them and if they find anything they can report that, sending in photo or call hotline or my email. We are trying to revamp that because of set back with Covid and get more materials out to the public. Interest in this has gained, which is great. Boat ramp signs, happy with progress made. In the past we have had a lot of criticism on signage, with surveys and sign fatigue. If you have been to state ramp in SD at times you might see a dozen signs and there has been frustration from the public that they don’t have time or want to look at signs to find out what they need to know on AIS. We took on a little bit of this from Minnesota, with pull plug signs and invasive species alert signs. We customized them with 3 ½ x 7 inch stickers on signs if AIS in that body of water, customized to each individual water body. Shout out to Casey Heimerl, she is our local artist as well and has helped me get several species we did not have in our inventory from our border state, Minnesota. Very beneficial and laid out this spring and should be getting last signs out, majority on landscape currently. Another sign we are implementing this year is zebra mussel infested water signs. These are going to be QR coded on bottom right corner which will bring you to our FAQ page on our website and give you most of the information you will be looking for. Battled on what we wanted on signs and ultimately we wanted to go with requests from public to reduce number of words. If people are interested, take cell phone out and open camera page and that will take them to FAQ page. Our plug in and plug out stencils that we have put at appropriate locations. We have had positive feedback; it gets the point across. I don’t think anyone should say they can’t see them; they are very evident and have helped a lot in the main program. On digital and social media campaign, huge help from communications staff on this and we have partnered on this with 42 gas stations with television to educate people on pulling plugs when not utilizing body of water. Also, have incident experience on social media platform, Facebook and Instagram. You will have an ad pop up with 8-10 slides talking about AIS regulations and helpful tips to make sure your boat is AIS free when going down the road or about to enter a water body. Educational events, I do most of training, mostly in May. I do training in Sioux Falls, Webster, Pierre, Rapid City and other places. It is good time of year get new watercraft inspectors educated and trained on watercraft inspections so they can be certified to do inspections at roadside checks or entrance inspections on western reservoirs or northeast part of the state. We also have a presence at our state fair. I just had coordination with one of our research biologists at Pierre who was able to go do a summer class for junior high and grade school kids in Fort Pierre to educate them on AIS. We have worked with our campuses to incorporate AIS into their fishing classes and working on AIS curriculum at high schools and colleges. A lot of positivity coming from getting that message out there so everyone knows what they should and should not be doing and best management practices. Hand out free or swag items at inspection stations, anything from sponges in case someone has water in compartment, we will dry it out and give them that sponge; give de-chlorinator for those interested in using tap water to not transport river, lake or stream water; fish ID cards or things like that at educational events. Another place to find AIS materials are in boating and fishing handbooks. Without our partners it is not possible; thank Bureau of Reclamation, USFWS, SD Department of Transportation helping put electric signs on interstate and big thanks to conservation districts especially in western SD. They actually hire the majority of our inspectors for our six western reservoirs. We have a seasonal supervisor who oversees those inspection stations, which has helped tremendously. There are many other contributors to this, highlighted a few. *Jeb* – Aquatic nuisance species (ANS) are important to us in North Dakota and the public feels we are not



doing enough of or too much of. On messaging I saw a lot of consistencies. One of the things that strikes me, a simple observation, maybe a bigger discussion for everybody, are we being fair to public that states are calling it different things in different states, we call ANS you call AIS. Not a big thing but consistency is most important in our messaging. What discussions have gone on in groups about those inconsistencies in states? *Tanner* – There hasn't been a whole lot of topics on that. I do find it interesting, depending on the state, some ANS coordinators are AIS coordinators. I haven't had many discussions on that. *Jeb* – Just an observation, consistency is nice when dealing with a topic of this magnitude with the public. *Tanner* – Appreciate NDs help, I lean on Ben often, nice to run ideas off one another and I enjoy that partnership with him. *Kevin* – What do you use as main messaging when it comes to AIS? Do you say stop the spread or what? *Brad* – Slow the spread (*many others said they use "stop"*). *Kevin* – All on same page, we used to say stop the spread about five years ago. Now we talk a lot about the messaging of the campaign. *Tanner* – Have a little more, stopped on education, our main target but we have a couple other legs to the stool. Mentioned this is a monitoring program but internally we also do monitoring, at end of the season. We do boat ramp and boat lift checks on all of our water bodies to make sure to stay ahead of zebra mussel infestations and we do early detection with that and also do villager sampling. In SD and ND too, with nutrient loading at times it is almost impossible to do an adequate villager sample with algae in the water; to make sure we don't have new infestations. With that rapid response; took part in program at Fort Peck last year, met ND boys at Jamestown and we drove over and that was a good workshop we took part in. Several resource biologists that are scuba certified that can help out with rapid response on new infestations and work with private entities and diving companies to help clean infrastructure on dams and intake systems to make sure they are working properly. Highlights from last year, ramped up inspections from 2020 to 2021 by 50%, had 14,500 inspections last year and of those we had 583 boats on infested waters within last 14 days so great to gain some face-to-face contact which help educate people on the risk they provide when not being clean, drained and dry. I want to highlight partnership with law enforcement staff, huge help laying out our program and without them this would not be possible. Last year they wrote 239 citations and 183 warnings regarding noncompliance with AIS regulations. Before we had them onsite for 8 hours, on slow days we found that was not the most efficient way so now we have inspectors set up entire operation and law enforcement staff comes in shortly after that and they stay for roughly four hours which gets peak flow in morning. A huge help, thank you. With 2020 legislation, new laws put in place, mandatory inspection stations, so mandatory to stop at those and if you don't we will have law enforcement officer pull you over. Also, it is illegal to be on roadway with plants, no mud or water and we have increased fines, especially on second time offenders, that comes at ticket price of \$500, potentially some jail time; ranges from \$182.50 to \$500 minimum on second offenses in same year. Our roadside inspection stations help us reach multiple users and it is not feasible to have so many entrance inspections or exit inspections so roadside inspections help tremendously in outreach and making sure we have compliance. *Dave* – Restrictions on exportation of live bait harvest in infested waters? *Tanner* – Yes. In eastern SD we have a no-bait harvest on all our tributaries of the Missouri River and the James River; they cannot collect their own bait. Also, Sioux River and east and west fork of Vermillion River. All of those have invasive carp, so no bait harvest in those areas. *Dave* – What about importation? *Tanner* – Changed in last few years. No imports on bait in SD. Did that change with some of our bait in last few years? You used to see a lot of suckers coming into the state but put restriction in place. *Tami* – Prevent the spread in Wisconsin. I wondered if you measured effectiveness of television outreach at gas stations. *Tanner* – Yes, we have looked at those, not a lot of detail but have looked at impressions we have gotten and it has shown to be positive. Expect to continue to do that this year. *Kevin* – Have a video being released next week. *Tanner* – For other states, looking at TV screen, the one thing I would look at how small they are and pay attention to detail

for video aspect is important part, but message is primary part you want to be looking at. *Brian* – Aware of any research that evaluates the messaging signage or has anybody else here? Are there multistate grants or other projects research like boaters and anglers, their opinions and what might be most effective, to be more consistent? Nice if we had that knowledge. *Tanner* – In a couple of working groups and one of them looks at that marketing side of things. Looking at what drives people to look at messaging, demographics of that, what age class is looking. Surprisingly Facebook is older individuals and Instagram a younger crowd. How they rate across messaging. With danger and scary situation, we talk about in SD even with infested water body, not last nail in the coffin for that lake there are still great opportunities at those water bodies. Make sure we are not putting across the wrong message either. *Kevin* – AIS has gotten a lot of attention from legislators in this last session and at most commission meetings it is discussed. Is AIS escalating in your states as well? *Tim* – Ours is calming down. *Kevin* – We see what Minnesota does and do it.

### **Big Horn Sheep Recovery** (PowerPoint – Exhibit 33)

*Chad Lehman, senior big game biologist, SD Game, Fish and Parks* – Bighorn sheep are iconic species of the west. They are legendary for their ability to negotiate precipitous terrain and live in some of the remotest country in North America. The population was estimated at just over two million animals before their demise in late 1800s. In South Dakota the last native, original big horn was in 1899. After that Senator Peter Norbeck, the father of Custer SP, got sheep out of Canada and reintroduced them Black Hills in 1922. Those populations did very well until the mid-1950s and since that time we have established several populations and restored several populations in the state,, They have ebbed and flowed over time. A lot of reasons for crashes are respiratory disease. Talk about three case studies in Custer SP. In 2004, had 90% all ages die off; in Rapid City a 60% die off in 2009; and in 2016, a 60% all-age die off. Talk about mechanisms behind respiratory disease and how it occurs. Respiratory disease or pneumonia is most prominent cause of demise of many big horn populations in the west. In our opinion, the leading cause of that is bacteria (*Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*) as well as other bacteria which can also lead to disease. But, without question, it doesn't not allow for release of these bacteria and allows infection to take hold and then tissue damage occurs. It is an important pathogen to understand and the mechanism behind it. When you have an all-age die off, you have little remaining population. In Custer SP there are 200 animals to 25 animals within that population of remaining animals you have three individuals that are classic chronic carriers, so they are shedding the disease. One of those died in the field and we removed the other two to study the response. If you leave those carriers in a population what typically happens is reduced lamb survival, 20% or less and you don't see a response in the population. The first case study, Custer SP, our objectives were to see if we removed the chronic carrying individuals if pneumonia stays in the population and what is effect on surviving adults. Ascertaining if removal removes pneumonia rate of mortality. In order to do this work, it is expensive and time consuming. Typically, you want to get every animal radio-collared, ear tagged and sampled at least twice to get highly developed disease histories on each individual, classify every animal as either carrying, intermittent individual which sheds the pathogen at times, or negative individual. Negative animals you want to keep in population. A lot of work and you need a net gun, ground dart, or drop net to capture animals and after that you need to recapture to continue to sample them to get data. Results for first case study, saw adults 10% increase in survival in treatment population over our control, at that time in the Rapid City herd. We left shedders or carriers in that population and at Custer SP we took shedders out of the population. Saw significant increase in survival in adult population, with lambs we expected to see this, 77% annual survival of lambs in treatment population versus 35% in control population. The most recent case studies, in Deadwood, was a management approach, one strike and out technique. If animal tested positive,

we euthanized, we weren't going to test a bunch of times due to limitations. It was small herd, 25 animals, did first testing in 2021, had one shedder, shedding some but not at rate you would expect so we left it in the population. The next fall, lambs showed up that died. We went back in last winter and tested a bunch of animals and euthanized the one shedder and hope to see excellent lamb survival. In Rapid City case study, that was the control herd but now became the treatment herd, did before and after treatment. Removed shedders to see if response from lambs survival. We had nine chronic carriers, we euthanized and two animals died in the field so able to see a response in this study. For the adults, survival rates were nearly identical but for lambs we did see a significant increase, 21% pre-treatment and 62% post-treatment. In summary we found in Custer SP, increase in adult survival; in Rapid City, did not see difference in survival of adults. The take home message is, in both studies lamb survival significantly increased. With big horn sheep that is critically important. Typically, in most healthy populations, lamb survival is 70-80% or more and see fast growth rates. For instance, in Custer SP, started with 25 individuals, now 100-125 individuals in about five years. Growth rates are fast and see good response. Managers might wonder why you spend this money and time identifying shedders and doing all the work, why not just start over, depopulate and bring in new sheep. A lot of agencies have done that but one of the things we found however is there is population level knowledge in these herds. By leaving older animals that are negative, they know where to lamb, where to avoid predation, know where spring green up is, know migration corridors; things that are critically important. Antidotally when we were the first state to clean up a herd and supplement herd with new sheep, brought in 12 radio-collared ewes from another park. We compared those 12 ewes with resident females and out of those 12 one ewe still had a lamb by the end of lambing and 80% of Custer SP residents had lambs. That gives you somewhat of an indication that having population knowledge is important. We have mountain lions on the landscape and the last study of 77% that survived the bulk of predation was from mountain lions. Our sheep are easily assessable in SD, we have a lot of roads, places with access to sheep and terrain is not as rugged so can helicopter capture sheep and test animals easier than farther west. For us a successful program even though we had two of our population suffer recent disease epidemics we still are harvesting more big horn sheep, so excited about that. *Kevin* – Sheep find ways to die. Thank staff for great presentations and hard work.

## **SPECIAL ACTIVITIES**

Fly Fishing  
Lover's Leap Hike  
Lakeside Breather Legion Lake  
Wildlife Jeep Tour

***Dinner "The Dakota Field & Stream Buffet" sponsored by Ducks Unlimited and Canadian NAWMP Partners***

*Comments by Jamie Rader*

***Stephen Carlyle, CEO, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation***

**Minutes**  
**MAFWA Annual Business Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 30, 2022**  
**Custer State Park Lodge, Event Barn**  
**Custer, South Dakota**

**Wednesday, June 30, 2021**

Starts at 8:00 am

**MAFWA BUSINESS MEETING**

**Colleen Callahan, IL DNR director and MAFWA President** – Officially called to order at 8:00 AM. Would again like to thank everyone from South Dakota who was involved in any way in this meeting. It was an incredible experience, both recreationally as well as the meeting. Presentations from individuals throughout the agency helped us really learn those three Cs that are foundational, communicate, collaborate and connect, you did all three of those throughout the meeting. My thanks for giving us the benefit of putting together this meeting so we could learn from you. We are going to depart from the agenda (*Exhibit A*), we are going to begin at the end. For all the accolades we have given South Dakota, the challenge for Wisconsin is going to be to try to match our experience here. I know they are up to the task.

**Wisconsin Spotlight (2023) (moved from end of agenda)**

**Eric Lobner, Wildlife Bureau Director, WI DNR** – Thank you for letting me present early, my flight leaves early afternoon. Wisconsin is more than just beer and cheese. It is home to the Green Bay Packers, the only publicly owned NFL team, truly the people's team and people are passionate about them. If you ever have the opportunity to tailgate and attend a game it is worth time and money. The Packers have won the most NFL world championships, earned name of Titletown USA, three consecutive championships, not once but twice. Next year we will meet in Green Bay, Wisconsin. It has the world's largest freshwater estuary located on shores of Lake Michigan which holds record walleye. Meeting will be held in Titletown District next to Lambeau Field, a new and unique community; Austin Straubel Airport is about 10 minutes from conference location. Variety of natural features, Niagara escarpment, which is a good spot for vineyards and orchards, so you find wineries in the area. In addition to the wine, great cherry pie. This geological feature, known as the cliff, overlooks the Niagara River. The Broadway District is near the downtown hot spot, home to all kinds of events and markets. So, bring family and friends. At the base of Door County peninsula, a popular tourist destination with lighthouses, harbors, wineries and eclectic art. There are 34 islands and was once filled with ship wreck bootleggers and Al Capone. In addition to natural features, it is home to the Oneida Nation, next to reservation, one of largest employers in northeast Wisconsin and important partner with Wisconsin DNR. The Oneida Nation has been instrumental in many of our watershed clean ups and habitat restoration projects in the area and reducing sediment and nutrient loads to the river system. Also, a wide variety of historic areas, such as lumber and paper mill industry. Have a number of restoration projects and partnerships in the area and one of largest cleanup projects in the nation, it took 15 years and six million cubic yards of sediment

dredged which led to vastly improved water quality. Another restoration project, a unique opportunity to restore shoreline habitat, had wave action and a variety of things that impacted islands. We continue to work with partners, USFWS, Ducks Unlimited and others to restore 272 acres of islands in Lake Michigan off the shore of Green Bay. Wiped out critical nesting habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl, is a stopover location and provides opportunity to hunt the widest variety of waterfowl in the U.S. Not only good for habitat but good for the economy, a win/win scenario. This is restoring shipping industry and has been a catalyst in building new partnerships which has led to additional funding for new projects that will benefit fish, wildlife and people in the area. We have recently been monitoring the birds utilizing that location. It is also world class fishery and when it comes to fishing, Green Bay has it all, big water charter excursions with many species prevalent and 100s of inland lakes. A half hour south of Green Bay is Lake Winnebago which has one-of-a-kind sturgeon population, with a large yearly spear fishing event that continues to grow and expand. The event brings in millions to our area and allows us to access crucial biological data on this fish. To see shanties on the lake, people put their tack up and make roads, cut big holes in the ice and neat to see. We have robust commercial fishing industry on Lake Michigan and we have incredible partnerships and other opportunities as well. Within an hour's drive, there is almost 300,000 acres of public land. There is open water waterfowl hunting in one of the nation's largest flyways and also ruffed grouse hunting, highest density per square mile. Also, have variety of furbearers for hunting as well. We have an incredible Applied Science Division, fish and wildlife research unit. Our Office of Applied Science have done whitefish stock assessments which leads to better commercial and recreational fisheries management. We also are assessing the predator/prey balance. Some of you have seen our Snapshot Wisconsin Initiative, the largest citizen science project in the U.S. This project has allowed us to get a better understanding of population dynamics not only in northern part of the state but across the entire state. We have a significant number of state parks in the state, 49 state parks, 15 state forests, 44 state trails, 84,000 miles of rivers and streams and we have 15,000 lakes, more than Minnesota's 10,000 lakes. Heritage Hill SP is considered a living history museum and highlights structures from the Wisconsin Fur trade of 1762, Fort Howard in 1836, small towns in 1871 and ethnic farms of 1905. We also have High Cliff SP, northern shore of inland lake; Pottawatomie SP, a popular winter recreation site with snowmobile trails that connect miles and miles of trails; Whitefish Dunes, most substantial sand dunes on western shore of Lake Michigan, park allows you to travel back in time acting as mural full of fossils, seashells and coral reefs; one of largest parks is Peninsula SP, home to Eagle High Tower, a 60-foot high which offers a panoramic view of the state park and Upper Michigan. We can't wait to see you next year. *Pete* – Are dates picked? *Tami* – About same time frame.

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

*Ollie* – All states present except Indiana, Kendra Wecker, OH for Amanda Wuestefeld as her proxy; Shannon Lott, Michigan proxy for Dan Eichinger; Tami Ryan, Wisconsin proxy (*Proxies – Exhibit A*). No Canadian provinces are present.

### **Agenda Review**

**Colleen** – (*Agenda – Exhibit B*) **Tim McCoy** – Add short update on sharptailed grouse strategy. **Colleen** – Added to new business.

### **Approval of Annual Meeting (June 30, 2021) Minutes**

Annual meeting minutes (*Exhibit C*); **Brad Loveless, Kansas** moved to accept minutes as printed, **Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri** second. Motion approved.

### **Treasurer's Report**

**Roger Luebbert** – Treasurer's Report (*Exhibit D*). Passed out two reports, one we will go over now and the second is the 2023 proposed budget which is the last agenda item of the day. No changes to reports Ollie passed out. I want to give thanks, to project leaders I work with, both federal and non-federal. We have a good set of project leaders and that really makes my job a lot easier. They help to make sure that the work gets done, reports get done and the bills get paid on time to comply with 1099 reporting and that helps a lot. There are two individuals I really want to point out, one is Ollie Torgerson who does a lot to keep me informed of what is going on, I ask him lots of questions and he responds quickly and makes my job much easier. The other person is very busy doing all sorts of things and she still takes the time to sign all the checks, Sara Parker Pauley. This report historically has summarized all the receipts and disbursement transactions from all of MAFWA and Conservation Enhancement Fund (CEF) accounts for the most recently completed fiscal year. Our fiscal year is on a calendar year basis, so this report shows all the transactions for calendar year 2021. First page is summary of account balances and then it goes through each account. We have two tax entities, the first is our 501(c)(6), our Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife, MAFWA for short and our 501(c)(3), our foundation, Conservation Enhancement Fund or CEF for short. In MAFWA tax entity the first one is the Banking Services Account River Region Credit Union, had zero balance at the beginning of the year and ended with \$151,000. We moved part of banking services account from the Conservation Credit Union to keep under federally insured limits. Top two accounts start with banking services, which means those accounts handle special projects that do not involve federal funds. The two projects we moved over to the River Region Credit Union are the National Pheasant Plan program and monarch funds. The remaining projects are still in the Conservation Credit Union account. The next is the Conference Account, our main operating account, we will spend quite a bit of time and focus on this one. Southern Wings Account, the money comes in and I turn around and pay it out. Federal Account, is very busy, it may not look like it because the beginning and ending balances are about the same, but \$450,000 was run through this account. Credit Union Share Account, is where we have to maintain \$25 in that account to remain a member. The last one is the investment account, Money Market and Securities Account at the Broker, this is the account the Investment committee is going to be talking about. The bottom is the 501(c)(3) account, CEF we have a checking account. The main activity in this account is the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC). We have receipts coming in which we have paid out to various entities. Next is the share account, we moved \$15,000 over to the checking in order to make the deposit for the MFWC conference. The last one is the investment account at the broker which the Investment

Committee focuses on. The bottom of the page is designations for these accounts and you will see them on the individual pages.

The next page is **Banking Service Account, at River Region Credit Union**, on receipts side we have National Pheasant Plan Coordinator contributions from various states and then we transferred money to this account from the other banking services account at the Conservation Credit Union account and interest. On disbursement side there is Pheasants Forever for coordinator and communications software for MLI. The balance as of December 31, 2021 was \$151,292. Designations are listed at \$150,333, almost all of the funds are designated for a specific purpose. The other one is **Banking Service Account, at Conservation Employees Credit Union**, on receipts side we have Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) contributions from various states, national pheasant coordinator contributions from states, before we moved them to River Region Credit Union, Ohio project reimbursements and interest. On disbursement side you see CLfT, Pheasants Forever for pheasant coordinator, Ohio projects, communications software for MLI and transfers made to new account at River Region Credit Union. The balance as of December 31, 2021, was \$90,266 with \$79,461 of that earmarked for Ohio projects. The **Conference Account**, is our operating account. Receipts are for this annual director's meeting from sponsors and registrations, affiliate dues, membership dues, banking fees and indirect costs, which had a major increase this year, \$35,761 up from \$16,000 year before, and a small amount of interest and total receipts are \$154,048. Disbursements include expenses for the conference, executive secretary pay and travel, treasurer pay and travel, tax preparation fee, insurance, which is on three-year cycle with no payment made this year, website maintenance, North Central Section of The Wildlife Society and miscellaneous items. Overall, the balance as of December 31 was \$169,517. A good cushion in operating account, an increase of about \$60,000. **Southern Wings Account**, we have contributions from the states that we turned around and paid out to the American Bird Conservancy. **Federal Account**, had federal reimbursements from the USFWS, \$453,000. This is the number we need to pay attention to because if we go above \$750,000 we may have to do a single audit. Also, have a little interest and on disbursements side USFWS state liaison and technical coordinator pay and travel, Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI), R3 evaluation and toolkit projects and miscellaneous. Our balance as of December 31 was \$10,380. **Credit Union Share Account**, maintaining \$25 in that account. The **Money Market and Securities Account**, there is interest, dividends and capital gains and we have some funds that were swept out of our cash subaccount within this fund and they were reinvested so it isn't really true disbursement. The market value of the securities we hold has increased significantly as the market overall has increased. Our balance as of December 31 was just under \$901,291. Now to the Conservation Enhancement Fund. **Conservation Enhancement Credit Union Checking Account**, \$90,000 from 2021 conference, we transferred money from share account so we could make payment for 2022 conference and some interest; on disbursements side we paid the profit out to The Wildlife Society (TWS) and American Fisheries Society (AFS) in Minnesota paying back conference deposit for Iowa and the North Central Section of AFS and TWS; 2022 MFWC and MAFWA administrative fee transferred to conference account, you will see deposit on page 4; for balance as of December 31 was \$23,849.

501(c)(3): **Conservation Enhancement Share Account at Credit Union**, this is our savings account; we had interest receipts and transferred from here to the checking account; balance as of December 31 was \$60,704. **Conservation Enhancement Account at the Broker**, we had dividends and capital gains receipts, had funds swept and reinvested; had change of market value, a positive \$843; for total as of December 31 of about \$7,000. **Conservation Enhancement Fund Summary**, shows assets and designations, we talked about these balances and this is as of December 31. Receivables for deposits we made for conferences for Iowa total \$16,000, we will get that back when close that conference and brokerage account for total assets of \$107,628. Designations are listed, Kansas from 2012 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference (MFWC) funds that we are holding for them, also holding some Ohio from 2019 MFWC, these were under prior arrangement before we started paying those funds out, we also have funds we set aside, \$4,500 for Kansas staff to attend Iowa conference, Kansas was next in line to host that conference. One reason why I am doing this summary is to show the eleven states that contributed \$5,000 each to start up a contingency fund because moving through new process of supporting the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference for a total of \$55,000. Line 21 we have the CEF operating funds that we use for expenses like tax preparation fees, etc.; with total designations of \$100,194 and undesignated balance of \$7,434. A little bit more than investment account. *Colleen* – Most of us look at a lot of these kinds of reports in and outside our agencies and this is the most easily read and understood of any I have worked with. *Pete Hildreth, Iowa moved to accept, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second. Motion carried.*

#### **Audit Committee Report**

***Colleen Callahan, IL*** – Twice per year the audit committee selects 10 receipts and 10 disbursements from our bank account, Roger provides the supporting documentation, this has been completed and no discrepancies found. No approval required.

#### **Investments Committee Report**

***Shannon Lott (for Dan Eichinger), MI*** – Committee also consists of Brad Loveless and Roger. Hopefully, everyone knows the contract was signed, electronically and I asked Roger to stay for questions. *Colleen* – Dan would have liked to be here but because of his commitment in tribal negotiations he couldn't. Dan spent a yeoman's amount of work and time on this in research and making recommendations so confident we made appropriate decision.

#### **Bylaws Committee Report**

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO*** (*Constitution and Bylaws with proposed changes - Exhibit E*) – Revisions to the bylaws, go page by page and point out revisions. Changing date on cover page to July 2022; page 3, under Article II, other association positions, new section 4, treasurer, executive secretary, recording secretary and contractors are required to sign confidentiality form; bottom page 7, Article VII, under dues, current version of bylaws, any time there is an annual dues change we change that, for the next bylaws I will have proposed language that just says there will be period changes to membership dues so we are not having to make this change all the time, we do make annual adjustments based on CPI. Appreciate email Ollie sent out with amount of new dues, \$4,160 per state and \$110



for provinces, payable in advance. Moving onto Article XI, types of committees and boards, under section 2, paragraph B, adding sentence to Auditing Committee explanation, changing auditing accounts on a semi-annual (versus annually) basis instead of annually and adding sentence, “An external audit by a CPA firm approved by the Executive Committee shall be conducted every five years.”, clarifying current practice; page 10, the biggest proposed change, inclusion of Midwest Landscape Initiative Steering Committee as a standing committee of MAFWA. The executive committee did discuss this and do recommend this revision. There are great benefits to having the MLI serve as a MAFWA standing committee and be able to give directors oversight and understanding and aligns the work we are doing in a way that makes more transparency and oversight by the members. The new provision is “The Midwest Landscape Initiative Steering Committee shall be comprised of five Directors and three senior representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the MAFWA region. The Midwest Landscape Initiative is a collaboration of partners engaged in the conservation and management of fish and wildlife in the Midwest; it serves as forum to identify shared landscape-scale priorities and co-develop effective conservation actions to address them. The Steering Committee may include ex officio members and may form subcommittees, working groups, teams, or other collaborative approaches to aid in the development and implementation of effective conservation solutions for shared priorities.” We word-smithed this several times and ended up in good spot. Under section III, we added “The Association recognizes the following Ad Hoc Committees; Feral Swine (established in 2013) and Chronic Wasting Disease (established in 2021)” As we also do we tweak the technical working committee lifespan which we do on three-year cycles; and on occasion review of a technical committee is still needed, as is the case with removing National Conservation Need (NCN) committee, there is new process and mechanism to identify those priorities and adding Social Science/Human Dimensions Committee with consideration through 2024. Extend Climate Change, Midwest Public Lands Technical Working Committee and Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee to 2025. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri made a motion to accept revisions; Tim McCoy, Nebraska second.*** *Tami* – The Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, will we be changing their name? *Sara* – It is timing in the agenda, we will consider that committee change later in the agenda, so we could come back to bylaws later in the agenda or bring that change for next consideration. *Ollie* – We will change next year. Will need to change R3 too. *Sara* – We will reflect those changes next time. ***Motion carried.***

### **Resolutions Committee Report**

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO (Exhibit F)*** – Start with no action item, but while we have been having a fabulous meeting here in South Dakota many of our law enforcement officers (AMFGLEO) have been meeting in Des Moines this week. During their deliberations they passed a resolution in support of Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) and they wanted directors to be aware of this resolution; for their Association, so no action needed here. I said I would share it so I will read whereas provisions. “WHEREAS, roughly one-third of all U.S. wildlife species are at some degree of elevated risk of extinction; and WHEREAS, more than 1,600 U.S. species are already listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act and nearly 150 U.S. species have already gone extinct; and WHEREAS, the ongoing rapid decline of so many species

and the habitats they depend on threatens American's quality of life, the ecological services we depend on such as clean air and water, and our outdoor recreation industry, which contributes \$887 billion to our national economy annually, through American jobs, consumer spending, and federal, state, and local tax revenue; and WHEREAS, each state is required by law to develop a State Wildlife Action Plan, which identifies imperiled species and outlines specific actions that would assist with the protection and recovery of more than 12,000 species in need of proactive conservation efforts; and WHEREAS, unless our nation invests in proactive, on-the-ground, collaborative conservation efforts, we risk losing thousands of fish, wildlife, and plant species, as well as our nation's rich wildlife heritage, to preventable challenges; and WHEREAS, the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) would be the most significant investment in wildlife conservation in a generation; and WHEREAS, RAWA establishes a 21<sup>st</sup> century funding model for the proactive conservation of fish and wildlife and would direct \$1.3 billion in existing revenues to state fish and wildlife agencies to implement their science-driven State Wildlife Action Plans, which includes law enforcement activities directly related to protecting and conserving species of greatest conservation need and the habitat of such species. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers hereby 1. Urges that all State and Federal legislators support this landmark, bipartisan legislation to the greatest extent possible. 2. Stresses that appropriate funding from this historic legislation be directed to law enforcement efforts directly related to the protection and conservation of species of greatest conservation need and the habitat of such species. 3. Recommends that all state, federal, and tribal partners work collaboratively to ensure passage of this landmark legislation for the purpose of avoiding the need to list species, or recovering species, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 or under State law." The first resolution for the members consideration comes from Fish and Wildlife Health Committee. I want to remind newer members that these resolutions are not binding on member states, and we would like to see more resolutions coming from our committees for our consideration. The resolution process is not utilized by committees as much as it should be and I appreciate when a committee takes the time and effort to put a resolution before us. We take it seriously and take it to heart and seriously consider them. Thank Brian and Brad as my resolution committee co-members. We support this resolution and support for this to come before the full membership for your consideration. I hope the members have read the Whereas statements. They have asked for support for added staff capacity and resources to respond to Fish and Wildlife health threats. The therefore statement, "NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Directors at its annual meeting in Custer State Park, South Dakota on June 30, 2022 support the need to invest resources into expanding fish and wildlife health programs in their States and Provinces." I think we can all recognize the laborious efforts of our health staff members and additional stresses and issues they are having to respond to in an ever-increasing rate. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to pass resolution from Fish and Wildlife Health committee, Dave Olfelt, Minnesota second. Motion carries.*** Brian – Will LE resolution be shared with this delegation? Sara – That is up to the Association. The director was aware of the resolution. Kendra – I would like to have that copy. Brian – Share to show another member of our community supports RAWA. Sara – We can recommend or suggest to the Association that they share. Ollie –

Sometimes they share with other Associations but that is not on this particular resolution. *Colleen* – That doesn't prevent us from doing it does it? *Sara* – There is a recommendation to forward to AFWA and have Sean and campaign use it as they see fit. *Colleen* – Preference of this body that they will be notified of this and encourage their sharing of this resolution. *Tim* – Yes, Sean has a list of all positions of AFWA, MAWFA and others. *Sheila* – I would like to have that too for our records. *Colleen* – Ollie, note we will make that recommendation to AFWA. *Sara* - One final resolution for members consideration. I will read the Whereas statements. "WHEREAS, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has so efficiently and enthusiastically organized and conducted the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies after a 2-year COVID-19 delay; and WHEREAS, Secretary Kevin Robling and staff have worked together with local and national conservation partners making all the participants welcome; and WHEREAS, the members of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies wish to express their gratitude for all the collaborative efforts of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at its annual meeting in Custer State Park, South Dakota, on June 30, 2022, acknowledges the hard work and hospitality of Secretary Robling and his staff from the Great State of South Dakota, and hereby passes this resolution in a showing of great appreciation." ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved for adoption, Colleen Callahan, Illinois, asked for acclamation.*** (applause) *Kevin* – We had a great team of staff working on this. Thank you.

#### **Awards Committee Report**

***Kendra Wecker, OH (MAFWA Award Winner Nominations – Exhibit G)*** – We had a nice awards luncheon, presented five awards and past president and president's award. I ask that we move up submission consideration time to have time to notify winners. *Sheila* and I will talk about that, probably a couple of weeks.

#### **Executive Secretary's Report**

***Ollie (PowerPoint – Exhibit H)*** – Appreciate all of you being here and thank you directors for making the commitment, it is important to fill your seat. Amanda would have been here but came down with Covid and Dan got caught up with tribal negotiations, they both wanted to be here. Thank Kevin and South Dakota, after two years away, spent a lot of time in 2020 getting ready for this conference, Covid hit in March, and it was cancelled. Because of your perseverance and tenacity, we are finally holding this meeting. I appreciate Tony Wasley being here. The President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has attended our conference consistently and I have always made a special effort to get the director of USFWS here. But Martha Williams could not be here due to schedule conflicts. About half of our meetings, we have been graced with the presence of the Director of the USFWS and that is important. We always get last minute requests to be on the program and I got one last week from the Center for Conservation Excellence, I had to turn them down, but I will pass out a handout (*Exhibit I*). Maybe they can be on the schedule next year. Also, got a request from John Fischer to be on the program and turned him down. I had a request from Dave Chanda to be on and I turned him down too, but he got on the program and that is how it goes. The programs get packed and we do get last minute requests and sometimes we just

don't have space on the program. We only meet for 2 ½ days, that is the way directors like this conference, get in and get out. Do have special memories of Rapid City, Ron and I came here about six weeks ago, we traveled here to meet Kevin and introduce him to our respective associations. I was here in 1985 at Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Committee meeting. My first meeting was in 1972. I was here when South Dakota hosted the Prairie Deer Conference. We flew up in the department's aircraft, a single engine Cessna and the department pilot flew us right up to the face of Mount Rushmore before he landed. I don't even know if that was legal. We departed on June 9 and flew out to see pronghorns and noticed this huge black cloud over the Black Hills. Got home safely that night and the next morning we woke up to find that the black cloud dumped 15 inches of rain and created the most devastating flood in South Dakota history. 238 people died, they got trapped in canyons with campers, the river breached the dam and there were over 3,000 injuries, 1,300 homes were destroyed and 5,000 vehicles totaled. You don't ever underestimate the power of moving water or the power of Mother Nature. There was six feet of water in the hotel we were staying in along Rapid Creek. I am happy to be back in Rapid City. Covid continued to have impacts and we cancelled the 2020 meeting, the first time we did not meet since WWII, had first virtual conference last year in 2021. I am so happy we are meeting together face-to-face. Said farewell to two powerful directors, Terry Steinwand from North Dakota and Jim Douglas from Nebraska. Terry wanted to be here but had change in plans, so he extends his greeting to each of you. Working hard on MLI and R3 fronts and we applied last month for Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator funding. We will be looking at proposal to establish a Midwest R3 coordinator later on in this meeting. Ron Regan and I go out to meet new directors, so we travelled to meet Jeb and Tim, appreciate you both being here. Back to grant contract work. Because of all the activity going on in MAFWA our grant contract work has really escalated. We have hotel contracts, Delaney contracts, FWS, R3, Ohio DNR, Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow and Southern Wings. Had PR Modernization Act, America's Conservation Enhancement Act and Infrastructure Bill, America the Beautiful, America's Rescue Act, RAWA, and you can see what is coming our way. I need help, we are maxed out and we don't see any slowdown in sight. I want to say a few words about the Midwest Landscape Initiative, super proud of them, you have heard of build back better, and that is what we are doing in MLI, building from ground up, with multiple conservation partners. We have been chasing endangered species listing process by law for many years and we need a new approach to get ahead of the listing process, this is it. You have just solidified this through the bylaws change and making MLI a standing committee within the Midwest Association, an integral part of who we are. Important, thank you for doing that. Shout out to Craig Czarnecki and Kelley Myers and all the FWS staff and all the other conservation partners and your staff working on this. A lot of people doing the heavy work in MLI. Super proud and fun to watch it develop. Spend a lot of time planning for this conference and important to work with host state and Delaney Meeting Event Management, it is all in the details. Shout out to Emily Kiel from South Dakota and Meg Boera from Delaney Meeting and Event Management. They were great to work with and we were able to raise over \$62,000 in sponsorship support for this conference, 28 sponsors. We can't live without this important group of people, thank them for supporting MAFWA. We had president transition during the year; didn't expect Keith Warnke to suddenly retired in middle of April and our first vice-president

graciously took the reins. The president sits over some-50 appointments. Thank you, Colleen. Thank Jeb for stepping up to be Director/Liaison of furbearer committee. I manage our website, I edit minutes, keep manuals up to date and all the background of things that need to get done. Ron and I come out to meet new directors, shout out to Ron Regan, a friend for over 40 years, he does so much for all of us and we appreciate him. Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference is proceeding nicely in spite of Covid. Had first virtual conference hosted by Minnesota DNR in 2021, first virtual hybrid hosted by Iowa DNR this year. Kansas is up next and that will be February 12-15 in Overland Park. South Dakota is up in 2024, first time for them since the MFWC started in 1935, South Dakota has finally gotten a hotel big enough to host it. Reiterate importance of directors sending staff to these conferences and committee meetings, important for staff to get out and meet their peers. Tribute to Ed, great friend for a long time and served our Association faithfully for many years including being our President in 2015. Ed, we will miss your leadership and your friendship and your thinking--farewell. Roger, Sheila and Claire do so much work for us, we appreciate it, thank you. Welcome Lorisa aboard and for your agreement to follow Ed's footsteps. Kansas, Brad your department for years has helped our Association by providing Sheila, for 25 years now she has been our Recording Secretary, she does minutes, helps Award Committee, does reports and offers printing services, a huge contribution to MAFWA. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, also makes a huge contribution to this Association, they provide my office space, computer, phone and copy machine. Tami, Eric and Rachel, thank you. A big contribution to our Association for me for 18 years now. Our next conference will be in Green Bay, Wisconsin, tentative dates June 25-28. We should be back on our normal historic schedule coming in on Sunday with reception on Sunday evening and out on noon on Wednesday. We haven't signed hotel contract yet once signed I will get this out so it can be locked in on your calendar. Back to traditional Sunday to Wednesday noon, our pattern for a long time, keep to that unless you want change. Our Law Enforcement Committee is meeting with us, they do every three years, they will have separate meeting, with social functions and most meals together with us. I want to thank directors for allowing me to serve as your executive secretary.

*Colleen* – Thank Ollie for your service and conservation throughout your career and then to MAFWA, Ollie thank you.

### **Approval of Affiliate Members**

*Ollie* – We have one application for affiliate membership. We have 28 affiliate members now. Heard from ACI Worldwide this morning, they were founded in 1975 and specialize in real time payments in licenses and other applications. They are here for first time at our conference and as a sponsor this year. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept ACI Worldwide as an affiliate member, Jeb Williams, North Dakota second. Motion carried.***

### **OLD BUSINESS**

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

*Ed Boggess* – Claire Beck is the superstar and will rapidly outpace anything I ever did. We thought it would be good to reiterate the role of MAFWA in monarch conservation.

Been a national leader. In 2014, monarchs were petitioned for listing. Science showed upper Midwest was the biggest production area for the biggest monarch population in the world although found in a number of countries; 98% are eastern population, produced in upper Midwest and overwinter in Mexico. The Midwest Region of Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was given the national regulatory side of monarchs and this Board decided to tackle the monarch issue and put funding forward. MAFWA hosted a meeting in Iowa in 2015, put together funding to support that, applied for NFWF grants and I was partially successful getting funding for a state summit with support from the National Wildlife Federation. Kelley followed up on that when she was Iowa Director. I retired from Minnesota and was hired in 2016 and we were able to hire Claire and bring her on board to work out strategy. Mid-America Strategy was finalized in 2018, pulled in all MAFWA states plus south-central states, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas which are key to migratory pathway of monarchs. They are produced largely in the upper Midwest and migrate to Mexico and using connected the resources on the way down. The monarchs need to survive the winter and retain enough energy to produce eggs, migrate back and produce the first generation of monarchs and then move up into southern Canada and all the U.S. The heart of that is the Eastern Great Plains up to Ohio. Monarchs are in all the states except Alaska. The strategy we produced goes beyond the MAFWA geography. This board created a Monarch Board that includes representation from MAFWA and those three south central states. The Northeast Association is represented as an Association and they were part of the Mid-America Strategy, not part of NFWF grants but were affiliated to Strategy, not state by state work. I would also like to recognize Nebraska and Jim Douglas, I accompanied Jim to meeting at WAFWA where he put monarchs on the agenda several years ago and I talked to the WAFWA Directors about what MAFWA was doing and they decided they should do a Western Monarch Plan, which they did. Both the Mid-America Strategy and the Western Monarch Plan were featured prominently in FWS finding of 2020 of warranted but precluded. Which means they believed the science of that time that showed that monarchs should be listed as threatened or endangered but precluded by higher priorities because they have a whole series in the queue they are working on. This is old business this year but will be new business next year. Part of the Strategy, a 20-year Strategy was annual review of the science and five-year update. Claire will talk about what we are proposing. Claire and I have been primarily doing MLI but also assume monarch responsibilities on back burner but moving forward. I convened the Mid-America Board, an unofficial board, rather than a funding and policy board. They represent you and you have seen communication from me that we are scheduling a meeting in next couple of weeks, July 14 at 2:00 pm Central Time. Please try to get somebody to that. I won't go into much detail today because we have the whole new governance structure of MLI and monarch as single species. If you read the Strategy, a long document, but it is strong on landscape conservation and importance of incorporating monarch conservation efforts with other similar grassland species. That was a pre-cursor to MLI-type approach. We are going to approach the idea of working with governance that is set up around this organization and this issue just to get it back on Director's radar. More focused discussion about governance and whether or not MLI connection or if we just continue with this structure we have because it does extend beyond states represented here.

**Claire Beck** – Nice to see you. Original Mid-American Conservation Strategy was finalized in 2018, we committed to update every five years, which is next year so by next June. So, we have started the process. You approved by electronic vote the use of leftover state cash match funds from the NFWF grant for us to be able to bring on a cooperative agreement with Monarch Joint Venture to do the initial drafting and review to do this update. That is underway and we will hopefully be streamlining and making this a little more straight forward and not as long. It is going to be important that we do this because a final listing recommendation by due by September, 2024. We will do Strategy update and make sure we have all of our states on board with monarch habitat to play into the Service as they revisit that listing in 2024. **Sara** – Do you feel you are getting what you need from the states at this time? **Claire** – Yes, pretty good participation, need to make sure we have good participation from states and Service and open that line of communication as we go through this process of entering data and updating database. All of the back and forth we need to have input in that listing decision process. We are getting the wheels turning on that now. Feel like we are but definitely encourage your staff to participate, need each state to have input into this update as we commit to our regional goal. **Kevin** – How is MLI and Mid-America Monarch Strategy involving producers, landowners, farmers and ranchers. According to landscape scale changes they have to be at the table, this is a working lands concept. Explain so I am more familiar with that process. **Claire** – As far as Mid-America Monarch Strategy we had Farm Bureau involved, to a certain extent, in first iteration of the Strategy as well as NRCS. Most of that involvement was at the state level rather than regional level because of different relationships there. We had FSA, NRCS and Farm Bureau, depending on the state, more or less involvement at state level. **Sara** – Missouri for monarchs is electric cooperatives and a host of conservation organizations, like cattlemen’s associations, corn and soybeans and agriculture, etc. To your point, at state level, because state collaboratives are driving, data sharing, etc. and those relationships are critical. A great point. **Colleen** – Same list in Illinois too.

### **R3 Committee Organizational Guides**

**Megan Wisecup, IA** – (Exhibit J) MAFWA R3 Committee is requesting an update of our guidelines, a change name. We would like to change our name to Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Technical Working Committee. The original name only had recruitment and retention, so want to include all three “Rs” out there and to cover all recreational activities this committee works on, not just those two. **Sara** – I am curious and appreciate scope of what committee is doing, it is fantastic. As I read through the many objectives you are going to outline for us you have such a good job including relevancy, so why not include that too? **Megan** – Okay we would be open to directors adding the fourth R. Relevancy is all through our mission statement so I don’t think there would be any objections if everyone is supporting that. **Colleen** – Discussion on adding relevancy to name change? **Brian** – SEAFWA changed our name with approval of directors to R3, because of heritage in the industry. It was included and inherent in R3, important part of what we are doing, but built into recruitment aspect. **Sara** – Some would suggest relevancy efforts hopefully do lead to active hunting and participation but not necessarily. Part of what we are seeing with relevancy, we as outdoor enthusiasts and stewards, want to connect with audiences

whether they end up actively engaging in hunting or fishing or not. Not necessarily agree, as we look at relevancy roadmap that it is beyond just R3. *Brian* – I agree. In SEAFWA and I believe would be the case in MAFWA as well, is participation and engagement, not just hunting and fishing like wildlife watching and other types of recreation. *Sara* – If in mission statement or otherwise make sure as we connect with newer audiences that it is not just recruitment, depends on what R3 means, but ensure, as said in mission statement, recruitment, retention and reactivation along with engaging broader constituencies. It is in addition to be sure we are speaking with same terms and meaning the same thing.

*Colleen* – This is an action item, think it about this broadly. My input would be to leave it to assumption that it includes relevancy and don't say it specifically to broader audience. Step up and for MAFWA to be a leader, my input is it should include relevancy as well. Some other discussions? *Tami* – I support the direction Director Pauley is suggesting. When you look at the objectives as well, hire and manage regional R3 and Relevancy coordinator, so putting intention in name of position. So that intention to have it in the name of the committee aligns with that. Someone serving in that role would be acting and serving the Association as the R3 and Relevancy Coordinator sends a significant message. *Tim* – Hazard I worry about is that we think we cover relevancy by putting it in here, but it has to be in everything we do. It really makes sense when you look at the position we are trying to pull together. *Kevin* – Support putting relevancy in there as well but want to make sure that we do talk about it. I don't see any issues adding relevancy to the title. ***Kevin Robling, South Dakota made motion to include Relevancy in title of R3 committee name, Tami Ryan, Wisconsin second.*** *Phil Seng, DJ Case and Associates* – We work with state and federal agencies all over the country and this issue is very current on lots of peoples' minds. As we all know, words do matter, whatever you decide is fine but be clean in the content, whatever those elements you are working on, be clear with what words you use so there is common understanding. This is a common place where I have seen points converge, all think they are talking about the same thing but they are not. Relevancy is one of those key terms and R3 are key terms that means different things to different people. Be careful as you do this and be sure whatever efforts you can make to make sure people are speaking the same language is the right thing to do. *Colleen* – Maybe 3 Cs, collaborate, connect and clarity. *Sheila* – Kevin Robling made the motion to include relevancy in the committee name. *Kevin* – Megan, say the full name so we are all clear here. *Megan* – It would be the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation and Relevancy Technical Working Group Committee. *Colleen* – That is a mouth full. So now you what we are voting on. ***Motion carried.*** *Megan* – The change of our mission statement “To foster increased communication, collaboration, coordination and execution of region-wide recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts along with engaging and serving broader constituencies in order to advance fish and wildlife conservation in the member states and provinces.” All of the objectives were updated as they hadn't been updated since 2013. Objective 1) Hire and manage a Regional R3 and Relevancy Coordinator to enact strategies to meet objectives as directed by the committee. The main roles and responsibilities of this position are as follows: a. Identify, coordinate, and manage grant funding opportunities; b. Assist states with securing funds and implementing multi-state and regional marketing campaign efforts; c. Assist states with identifying and implementing strategies for



engaging and serving broader constituencies; d. Communicate and foster cross-committee collaboration regarding R3 and relevancy priorities at the regional and national levels; e. Provide technical assistance and timely insights to states regarding R3 related efforts and opportunities. Objective 2) Maintaining and increasing our understanding, acceptance, and support of recruitment, retention and reactivation of programs and benefits among anglers, boaters, hunters, trappers, and recreational shooters. Objective 3) Identify opportunities to increase relevance to non-traditional audiences. a. Establish and implement regional action items through collaboration and grant funding opportunities. Objective 4) Develop multi-state and regional grant projects that provide tools and resources to help member states and provinces further their R3 and relevancy priority initiatives. a. Through partners and collaborations, needs are identified; b. Grants proposals are written and submitted for consideration, in coordination with member states and provinces and their directors; c. Funds are procured and projects are implemented and evaluated; d. Tools and resources are distributed to Midwest states and beyond. Objective 5) Provide leadership and technical assistance to Midwest states Directors, R3 Coordinators and Partners regarding R3 related issues, needs and opportunities. a. Stay up to date on relevant R3 research, publications, and other findings, then disseminate this information to member states and provinces. Objective 6) Collaborate and share information with other fish and wildlife agencies and national organization committees including the other three regional R3 committees on regional and national R3 and relevancy efforts and planning. a. other partner committees include, but not limited to, Midwest Private and Public Land Working Groups, Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee, Midwest Landscape Initiative, AFWA Angler & Boater R3 Committee, AFWA Hunting/Shooting Participation Committee and AFWA Education, Outreach & Diversity Committee. Only other change, there was not a process to replace the chair or vice-chair, so added sentence under officers, “During the annual committee meeting, held on even years, the position of Chair and Vice-Chair will be reviewed and a call for a vote of confidence and/or new appointments shall occur.” That gives individuals the ability to step down at any time with confidence that chair or vice-chair will continue efforts moving forward. Colleen – Need a motion to approve. **Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved, Kevin Robling, South Dakota second.** Tami – Do we have relevancy recognition in this and wonder if that should be in here, reflecting on comments from DJ Case? Sara – We do have a definition and that will be added to name. Tami – Wanted to be sure we were operating from common ground. Brian – Is working group included in your name of the committee? Megan – Yes. Brian – Bylaws say Technical Working Group Committee, change to R3 technical working committee instead of working group committee. Colleen – It can be, but does it need to be, what is the opinion there? Sara – R3 and Relevancy Coordinator, so R3 and Relevancy whatever committee. Brian – Just make it technical working committee, so take out “group”. Colleen – We will make that change. **Motion carries.** Kevin – Thank Megan and Jeff for their work on this, they spent a lot of time on it and did a great job.

Colleen – Next item is not listed on the agenda, the Wildlife and Fish Health Committee Report that Ollie will present.

**Wildlife and Fish Health Committee Report** – *Ollie* – We have the same recommendation from our health committee. Dr. Lindsey Long from Wisconsin is the chair and Sherri Russell from Missouri is the Vice-Chair. This committee's organization guides were approved a long time ago when Bruce Morrison from Nebraska was the chair. He insisted this committee be named the Wildlife and Fish Health committee because he wanted wildlife to come before fish when the rest of us are used to saying fish and wildlife. The committee went through committee structure and organizational guidelines and operating procedures and made a significant number of amendments to the guides. Whenever we form a new committee, which we did with Social Science and Human Dimensions Committee, our bylaws require a set of operating procedures and a mission statement for approval by this Board. Our R3 and our health committees helped approve guidelines from previous board meetings. Things happen over time so these are changes and adjustments needed. This is a revision of previously approved guidelines. Once this is approved it will be Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee. Our bylaws say technical working committee. These are in line with other committees organizational bylaws. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept, Brian Clark, Kentucky second.*** *Tami* – This is probably for next year. We are going to be talking about these regional health coordinators who will report to committee chair. Just a suggestion, we might consider adding that into the officer section of those guidelines. *Colleen* – Repeat. *Tami* – In officer section acknowledge that regional health committee coordinator will be reporting to this committee chair. I don't know if that is officer role or not. *Ollie* – That has already been discussed in the executive committee. *Sara* – She is saying for next iteration of this and I think that is a great suggestion. *Colleen* – Vote and note to make this change next time. Motion on the floor. ***Motion carried.*** *Colleen* – Noted that we need to bring that up again for clarification next time we meet.

#### **National Wild Pheasant Plan Update**

***Scott Taylor, Executive Director – (Exhibit K)*** – I am the National Wild Pheasant Plan Coordinator and I work out of the World Pheasant Science and Technology Center housed in my spare bedroom in Manhattan, Kansas. Since we have a few new folks in the room; my position is funded by contributions primarily from state contributing partners. MAFWA acts as our banker not just for MAFWA states but all the states in the partnership. Every May Roger and Ollie send out invoices to you and holds that money. PF hosts my position and invoices MAFWA for my expenses less \$10,000 that they contribute. The state contributions cover about 90% or so of my position. I am serving because of your contributions, thank you. We are currently in the sixth year so arrangements we have had with states financially seems to be working very well. We have a few of the management board members in the room, Jeb, ND, Tom Kirschenmann, SD, Ed Boggess was on for a while, our board chair is Dr. Russ Mason from Michigan. The tech committee is comprised of the pheasant biologists from across the states. As a tech committee we get together once a year and that meeting is coming the first weekend in October in Pocatello, Idaho so if you could support your tech committee member attending that meeting that would be fantastic. In 2019, we got together in North Dakota as a partnership with tech committee and management board to talk about revising our national plan. The first edition was completed in 2013, so our kickoff meeting was in fall of 2019. We muddled through and did revise our national plan

and that was approved by the management board about 11 months ago. Haven't met since we revised the plan. The plan focuses on what we want to collectively accomplish with the partnership. Like to be where we were back in 1950, but not a relative goal, more a roadmap of what we want to do together. The question the original plan focused on was Farm Bill centric as many of our states are dependent on habitat provided in Farm Bill for pheasant management, to get us where we needed to go. That has been true for many decades. The centerpiece of the original plan and this plan is answering question on how much habitat we need, how much is enough. In particular how much CRP do we advocate for to meet our collective pheasant management goals. We came up with a method, that Travis alluded to yesterday, a lot of different types of habitats and trying to characterize all of those and changes in acreages of all those habitats. We went through a process and came up with a way to do that. We put all of the habitat type acres in one habitat unit, the CRP acre equivalent, not every acre provides the same power to produce a pheasant and CRP just happens to have the most powerful habitat acre. Conveniently when you see CRP acre equivalents, we can translate those into other habitat types. The goal of each state, who can set its own goal, a unified process to get there but in the end each state picked its own goal and how many acre units we needed to have on the landscape to reach that goal. If you add them all up, we need about 62 million CRP equivalents across the pheasant range to reach our goal. Currently, at the end of 2019, we had 43.6 million acres, so we need an additional 18.7 million acres. That is all laid out in the plan. Translating that into what we need nationally for CRP enrollments is key. If USDA gave us 18.7 million new acres of CRP and we got to put them exactly where we needed them according to what each state would need, then 18.7 would be enough but it doesn't work that way. We need acres across the country and hope they end up in the right places. Based on our assumptions it looks like a goal of 45 million acres of traditional CRP, general CRP and continuous sign-up CRP, not grassland CRP which is a curveball that has come in the last few years. 45 million acres of traditional CRP is what is needed. That would get 12 of the 24 states in the plan to their goal and 10 others close to their goal. There are a few states like California and New York that CRP doesn't get into, so no amount of CRP will fulfil their needs. That 45 million acre recommendation is in the plan and that number was entered into the conversation in AFWA's Farm Bill recommendations. AFWA settled on a 40 million acre recommendation, so pretty close to what we are recommending. We have a Dashboard and plan data stops at 2019, we want to make sure we are tracking habitat moving forward so I have been doing that. Basically, it shows you can select any state in the plan and look at how many habitat units they currently have as of 2021, what their goal and deficiency is. It shows where each state is regarding habitat units, bird populations and hunter participation based on their peak levels they have seen since 1990. Can look at time series of these variables and intervals and see where each state stacks up on any variable since 1990. You can also see who is leading or in the middle of the pack. A number of other tools are built on national plan habitat model used to figure out how many acres needed across the range. They are all based on habitat model and allows user to interactively explore what happens when you gain and lose acres. There are also places we park the data that plan is based on. This isn't a public-facing tool it is just for our partnership, free for partner use and reference. Plan model is 30,000-foot view of what is going on habitat-wise, state average looking at relationships of present populations and habitats. What states need to know to identify the

best areas within their states to do pheasant work and requires a GIS approach. The states have mountains of data they collect for various reasons, usually trying to predict next seasons' hunting prospects. I am trying to collect that data and use as basis to do GIS-based habitat models. Once we have those models we can make those same types of interactive tools, have plan model and make a much more relevant dashboard and set of tools on our web page. That is how I spend my time primarily. Trying to develop tools and looking at how they are going to be used. Talked to Kelley and Claire on MLI to make sure whatever we are developing can be fully integrated into the larger picture. Where you want to consider pheasants in decision making. Pheasants Forever is doing an institutional push to try to better quantify the outcomes of their projects, not just counting acreages but trying to tell a better story of what those acres produce in terms of carbons, pheasants and all the outcomes we are trying to accomplish to try and come up with ways to quantify things and tell the story. Tools we develop will be relevant for them and us in partnership with the states and allows us to tell a better story. *Brad* – Our pheasant biologist, Jeff Prendergast, really benefits from the work Scott is doing in collaboration with other states. If you aren't receiving the newsletter Scott puts out, have your pheasant biologists forward that to you. It is a really good newsletter which includes science and humor, up to date information. You can figure out what the state of the science is as well as the work being done. It is a valuable service; we appreciate your work. *Kevin* – On CAEs, are we looking at expanding small units, spring wheat and winter wheat, how does that enroll in all these conservation groups? See a lot more wheat on the landscape, is wheat a part of the solution? *Scott* – It can be, based work on five studies done in Midwest in CRP areas, ND, SD, IA, NE and KS and we looked at the relative power of CRP, small grains, pasture, grassland and plowed land and how each of those types produce successful nutrients. Based on all that science, CRP is most powerful, small grains 30% as powerful, other types are 21%. Essentially it is three acres of small grains to equal the power of one acre of CRP, so not insignificant. We have been CRP focused, sort of a policy knob we can try to turn. When Travis showed South Dakota's graph it reflected mainly the losses of small grain and CRP over time. The other habitat types are more stable. Certainly, anything we can do to keep small grains, particularly winter wheat, out there we should take those opportunities. *Kevin* – Maybe conservation community should promote that more and those aspects of it. The novel is profitability, right now winter wheat is probably \$11/bushel making producer money, so I am happy to see the landscape turn into wheat rather than corn and beans. *Scott* – That is short-term market glitch that is sustained over time. *Colleen* – Another example of nexus between agriculture and conservation. *Brad* – I appreciate Scott's discretion on not telling everyone that Kansas has a better pheasant population than South Dakota. *Scott* – I will wait until Wisconsin meeting to bring that up.

*Colleen* – I plan to take a break at the end of old business and reconvene with new business. *Kevin* – Creekside Lodge check out was 10:00, I pushed that back to 10:30 so if you still have stuff in your room you need to clean that out so that they can get ready for the next guests. *Colleen* – We can take the break now so people can do that.

*Refreshment Break sponsored by D.J. Case & Associates*

*Colleen* – We want to recognize our great sponsor, DJ Case and Associates. We appreciate everything you do for us and our Association. *Phil Seng* – It has been our pleasure to sponsor this meeting for many years and will continue to do that. I have had the pleasure of working with most of you and all of your states in the Midwest. DJ Case is a communications and consulting firm all related to natural resource conservation. We work with state and federal agencies and conservation organizations around the country helping them communicate better about wildlife natural resource conservation issues. We have lots of social science, focus group surveys, etc., communication assistance, facilitation and all that kind of service. Dave Case started the company in 1986, there are 20 of us now and we work with 40 fish and wildlife agencies around the country. Our approach is to be an extension of your staff. Sometimes need advocates to teach social science, web development or need surge capacity or some big thing that comes up that you need help with we can step in and try to seamlessly fit in with your staff and do the best job we can for you. Proud to have worked with all of you over the years.

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

***Sara Parker Pauley, MO*** – I serve as co-share of MLI with Craig Czarnecki, USFWS. Jim Douglas was original co-chair, an impossible act to follow, he is the godfather of landscape conservation in many ways. I appreciate the opportunity to represent the state members on the MLI. I want to call on the other steering committee members, Tim, Amanda, Pete, John Rogner from IL. Thank you for allowing them to participate. Kelley and I hope many of you participated in the MLI 101 webinar last week or that your staff did. It was excellent introduction to all the great work that has been happening with the MLI the last several years. There is going to be an action item at end of this, ask you to vote on amendment to the cooperative agreement with the FWS, we will walk through what that amendment includes. Ed, getting tired of debts of gratitude but we would not be here with the MLI without you and Claire and without the great staffing capacity added to the team. Ed has been there from beginning as liaison to MAFWA, to state members, so thank you for everything you do. I am excited about Lorisa joining too, Ed is a tough act to follow too so it will just look different. I appreciate Lorisa and her willingness to step into this role. I will turn it over to Kelley and come back for vote on the amendment to the cooperative agreement.

***Kelley Myers, FWS*** – Thanks for introduction. Webinar we started last week was intended because we knew we were going to be short of time here so we wanted to be able to have a place we could really talk about all the work we have been doing over the last year and what we are doing next year. We also provided an opportunity for feedback with breakouts after. The first hour was recorded and we will make that available on our website. We learned a lot in this virtual space. We capped out at 100 so now we know we need to provide more capacity. We can come meet you where you are at any time. Happy to come and talk with your staffs, your teams or one-on-one with you or whatever. We are going to be more aggressive about getting to know our partners and bringing more people into MLI. From last year's update we have added capacity, Ed, Claire now Lorisa who was instrumental in being able to put this forum together and start working toward activities and projects we have. We added a landscape conservation biologist, Dr. Alex Wright, and he comes to us from a state university, his background is decision making so

he adds a level of organization and clarity that Bill Moritz called for in review he conducted last year on MLI. Alex is helping us come up with our work plan and 5-year plan and leading our habitat assessment work group and development of some goals for our blueprint. We have been reluctant to extend those maps in other regions to the Midwest. We have been going through a robust process to establish 50 plus indicators of good health for the Midwest. We are including social indicators in that as well. Alex has been leading a team of your staffs across the region, Service, state, USGS and a couple NGO members as well who are helping develop that base information for that blueprint. What datasets we need to bring in, working with partners and saying we are not going to duplicate this plan, not trying to come up with one map to rule them all. After we bring all of the information and resources together we can evaluate the health of our landscape for solutions. We stole a great person from Ohio, a person who understands state wildlife action plans, understands technology, understands conservation in the Midwest and can go out and communicate to everyone; from those not involved in conservation to those down in the weeds. We hired Kate Parsons to be our User Support and Engagement Coordinator. She started last week. She will be working closely with me and Lorisa to reach out to all of you and our partners to make sure what we are developing is relevant and a useful utility to you and your partners. We want to know what you have to share with us that you want included. Big campaign to share more updates. We also added a spatial analyst, Rachel Carlberg with the FWS, she is amazing. She has joined in temporary capacity as part of her fellowship, she is a trainer at National Conservation Training Center and we have her through November. I am going to try to keep her because she is phenomenal. She and Alex put together spatial team and we are looking to grow that to include other GIS spatial analysts across the region so all of our systems can talk better than they do today. I want to answer Kevin's question on what we are doing to engage working lands. Went through what we cared about and what our priorities were, we identified our big challenges and opportunities across the Midwest. One of the top six is working lands and we have to work on that. Our approach is at state level a lot of the time and local partnerships, so states are bringing their perspectives and local partners and biologists are coming to the table on projects. We rely on them to bring that perspective. We are reaching out to NRCS, FSA, Forest Services and it is our intention to keep table at steering committee aligned with service and states. We are trying to include those primary responsibilities for managing fish and wildlife resources, helping states shape our direction and priorities. When it comes to solutions and accomplishing vision it is all hands-on-deck. When we get down into recommended actions and come up with problem statements around particular geographies that is when we are going to be engaging different groups. An example of this, something we just kicked off, we and several of your staffs are involved already, a Midwest grassland roadmap, part of central grasslands roadmap and big part of eastern MAFWA geography, focused on contiguous acres with cedar encroachment. Focused on 100<sup>th</sup> meridian and east. Looking at places where agriculture is predominant land use, have more rain, water quality not quantity are the issues and reboot issues started around grasslands. We identify, through regional species of greatest conservation need project, our primary terrestrial landscape in the Midwest are grasslands, birds, invertebrates, pollinators, so going to get ahead of blueprint. Starting to put together a summit, similar to Central Grasslands Roadmap, focused on Midwest grasslands. We are engaged with NRCS on that and will be bringing

in lots of different producer groups. We look forward to engagement across all your programs. It is not to duplicate what Central Grasslands is doing, it is different land use and considerations. In Nebraska, you might find one field more relatable to the western/Central Grasslands roadmap and on the next field more agriculture and we want to scale up for what is meaningful in that place. Have Brad on steering committee as ex-officio because of the joint task force looking nationally at how we are doing landscape conservation. We have been going our own way, working hard that everything we do we co-develop; not Service staff create something and give it to the states to look at, it has been slow but every step of the way we have had a table where we have come together and working to come up with solutions together. The way we work our teams is we have a team meeting, partner or committee meeting and for an hour or two we get full attention of staff. We get ideas, then Claire, Alex, Rachel, Lorisa with Ed and maybe one of our consultants, Karen Terwilliger, we come up with actions to take back to that group at next meeting. It truly is, at every step, being informed by various groups. One place we have a lot of work cut out for us is tribes, we have had little to no tribal engagement. We need to recognize that the tribes also have a legal responsibility to the lands we are talking about. We will be working on that with local relationships that happen there. Claire has a plan, working with regional social scientists in FWS and tribal liaisons and asking for help from each of you as we move forward on how we want to engage and learn about the tribes in our region, how they are managing resources and how they might belong in this effort. Key take aways. Working with your staffs, lots of ways to engage, plan to follow-up with letting you know who on your staffs are working on this and make sure you are aware of who they are. I love having them and we get to work with all the rock stars. At the same time, we promise if you send your staffs to work with us and contribute on these committees, we will provide professional development and team building opportunities for them to work and grow across the region. They don't have to be on committees to participate. As we develop more products, we will have more opportunities for feedback loops and we look forward to sending out ideas and working across your organizations to ensure you have opportunity to provide input on direction we are proposing to go. We are a forum, unique space where we can bring together issues and watch presentations about what is going on in South Dakota and similar things happening in Iowa and Ohio and connecting dots. We are forum but we do stuff, a fun place to be. If you are ever struggling through an issue, feel free to call me or Lorisa and it may be something we can take on for a little bit and find the right place for it to live, like CWD. We are happy to hear ideas and get feedback. Meet you where you are, we do travel, have Zoom, Teams or Facetime, we can figure it out. If anyone doesn't understand what we are trying to do please talk to us, we want everyone to feel connected to this, especially since we are now a committee of MAFWA with shared representation with the Service. Appreciate staying connected, MAFWA is a great place and I love the Midwest and what we do with resources and challenges we have on our working landscape that are unique. Want to be sure we are a strong voice. We are going to ask for approval of next cooperative agreement. We are doing a lot of work to help be RAWA ready. America the Beautiful challenge grants have been a nice spot for us to say how we can pull a meeting together around the region, what everyone can apply for in grants, and we get a lot of people. The idea we are trying to have more cooperation, providing support on grants and stand ready and be thinking about that as we are putting our blueprints together. Claire is

leading a group of statewide action planners to have regional statewide action plan for creating a dashboard tool and have a small pilot group helping design that. Phenomenal to see SWAPs across the region laid out on a big virtual table to see how the elements align. Might find more connections. We are doing things and can't wait to show you what that looks like. Should have gotten annual report (*Exhibit L*). Thank you Nebraska for graphic designer help.

*Sara* – Huge thank you to Kelley Myers, a total rockstar. I sit on steering committee in SEAFWA on their landscape collaborative. You have mentioned Madam President how MAFWA leads and what I love about this relationship is that it is built on relationship, built on trust and coming together, shared governance. Forgive me Brad for not recognizing you as our newest member to the steering committee. We set the stage for how we want our regional association to be working with the Joint Task Force at the national level on landscape conservation. We are delighted to have Brad aboard who sits on that National JTF. The amendment to the existing cooperative agreement (*Exhibit M*). In the past the funds were used for WMI to provide some crucial assistance, Bill Moritz did great job on that, and provided some information about SWAPs and landscapes that fed the report. We also had engaged Judy Stokes Weber to come up with a communications plan strategy, which is being implemented now. This amendment will continue this cooperative agreement for two years. A change from the past is that some of the funding that went to Ed Boggess, Missouri Department of Conservation is going to take care of staffing cost for Lorisa, this agreement will pay her travel expenses. As a reminder to state directors not on the steering committee, Lorisa is the state liaison just as Kelley is the coordinator, Lorisa represents state interests. There are going to be times when Lorisa and I will want to get on phone with directors not on the steering committee to see if you have any concerns or issues or just to update you, so expect us to try to engage you once or twice a year. It will include Claire's time, travel related expenses for Lorisa. *Kelley* – Funds for continued website and potential build out and tools available. Claire learned how to build websites, but we need someone to run that, so a little under professional development. Claire with us for five years and not everyone wants to be an employee of an organization but we want to keep mindful of where she wants to go with her career and try to ensure we are providing challenges and awards so she stays with us. She is a huge talent and knows all of our stakeholders well, we want to make sure we take into account that she has taken on more obligations and leadership of different groups. Also, as Ed mentioned, there was a monarch piece in the last agreement and that will stay but we will evaluate that. Monarch work gave life to MLI, but we don't want to be a single species organization, shore up that work to give monarch attention but if there is potential fold it in to MLI work. This is an assessment we will go over next year. *Sara* – Critical for funding for this cooperative agreement from USFWS. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri, moved to adopt amendment to cooperative agreement with USFWS related to MLI, Pete Hildreth, Iowa second.*** *Kevin* – On goals aspect, 10% increase in healthy acquisition of public lands and waters, what are we using as a baseline to measure success moving forward? *Kelley* – When set goals they were aspirational. To say we have a metric and we set goal for what we know baseline is today and we want 10%, it was, let's be aggressive in timeline and amount and that is something that indicator team is working through establishing now. Where we are today, with Midwest Partner Action Plan who is providing state of Midwest dashboard, be part of that; how we are doing



today and where do we want to be and will use blueprint to get there. We are still establishing based on what we think those indicators of health are but need to do datasets to do it. *Kevin* – As far as state involvement, SD was not involved in last couple of years. It would be helpful for me to have a check list of expectations or what you are looking for with state involvement. ***Motion carried.***

*Colleen* – Under new business the first item is R3 Committee organization and we have already done that.

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

***Megan Wisecup, IA DNR*** – (*Exhibit N*) Updates from nonlead partnership that the health and R3 committees have been working together on. Back in 2020 you passed a MAFWA non-lead resolution and joined the North American Non-Lead Partnership. You challenged both of our committees to work together and come back with recommendations on how we could start implementing that relationship within the states and across the region. We came back in 2021 with immediate and long-term goal recommendations that were accepted by this body. Since then, we developed a small working group with members from Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Michigan and Missouri. We started doing a literature review to try to get a baseline our committee could operate from looking from both fish and wildlife health perspective and from hunting shooting sports industry perspective. We started that initial work and had some initial discussions with IHEA USA regarding creation of an online training course for volunteer hunter education instructors to have consistent messaging when talking about non-lead and alternative ammunitions to our students. There is some work started on that putting together an online module for instructors and to incorporate key messaging in student modules as well to be delivered in-person or online. We have also had some discussions with Leland and Chris from North American Non-Lead Partnership looking at potential multi-phase multistate conservation grant to assist with implementation on various recommendations. Since we met with Ex Com in April we went ahead and drafted a state conservation grant that was approved for us to submit, it was not selected to move forward. We had wonderful comments on how well thought out it was and worthy the project was but didn't feel at that time that was best way to fund the opportunities right now. Had initial email between Lindsey and I, and we plan on bringing our committees back together later this summer to start discussing what we can continue to move forward. That does not need funding at this time because IHEA USA does have some funding already in place for online course work for volunteer training and also to house some our states that may want to move forward with some staff training by hosting workshops in their states. We have some great work we can still accomplish without funding while we look for some alternative sources and pleased with progress so far.

### **R3 Coordinator Position**

***Megan Wisecup, IA*** – (*Exhibit O*) R3 and Relevancy Coordinator position quick background. This conversation has been going on for many years now with initial conversation in Denver in 2019 as part of the North American. We brought together a group of directors along with myself, Jeff and Keith Warnke to discuss the R3 Committee and how we should proceed with the limitations in the states. We discussed multiple

ways to start working on that and possibility of the concept of regional position to help do the coordination. Since then, a lot of things have come into play to help elevate the need for this position, such as all the different funding sources now out there for multistate grants. We want to thank Roger and Ollie for all their work. Need to have someone dedicated to help bring consistency and continuity to some of those processes. We are asking for you to move forward with the position, looking at initial three-year commitment from states to give individual proper amount of time to get their feet under them and for us to do a proper evaluation on how the coordinator position is functioning. We are looking for a decision from all of you to enter into a contract with WMI to hire and co-host a MAFWA regional R3 and Relevancy Coordinator position. Primary roles and responsibilities would be coordination of grant funding opportunities and to address MAFWA's R3 priorities. Regional person is key to this and there is lot of great information and tools coming out at the national level, but regions are a little different, so having someone familiar with the landscape in the Midwest would help us pull down the tools and actions that are working and relevant be sure we are properly disseminating to states with limited resources. Also, help states secure funds and marketing campaigns. I had opportunity to talk to Dave Chanda and he was excited about this concept, having one person from organization to reach out to and coordinate with in the 13 states would be easier on them and us with leveraging work to individually accomplish. We would also be able to work on coordination and with other committees, like MLI, access committees and education, outreach and diversity; so, having that person connected to all those committees would ensure R3 has its place woven into many of those. Another big selling point is we need to be able to help with development of statewide strategic plans, provide technical assistance and timely insights to states regarding R3. Turn over happens quite often, especially in R3 level positions and having someone there to help onboard them would give them a good jump start. There is a multitude of resources out there so having someone in tune with working in the Midwest on what has worked, lessons learned and institutional knowledge to pass on in timely manner to help get them jump started. Through selection process we reached out to six entities interested in potentially hosting the position. We had conversations with all of them and it came down to a few key factors that rose to the top. Had to be on neutral ground, an organization that could help us encompass all outdoor recreation, whether hunting, angling, shooting sports, boating, wildlife viewing, state parks, camping; neutral ground. Someone who has capacity to manage multiple agreements as a script audit and multiple funding sources coming in and going out and could negotiate contract with all 13 individual states. Other important thing in this process, wanted to keep supervision and guidance within the R3 and Relevancy Committee, so chair would serve in that role to supervise that position as committee set whole frameworks. *Roger* – What is the funding source for this position? *Megan* – We are looking for states to contribute funding and it could be a mix of state and federal funds. *Colleen* – At what level? *Megan* – The level we are looking at for the three years is based on experience, low level would be about \$8,000 and high just over \$9,000. After year three we would hope to be able to leverage additional dollars out there; once that person is established. In order to continue this position, the states match would be lower and lower each year. Hopefully eventually be able to fund themselves. That is a model WMI thought they could help guide us on. *Pete* – For clarification, it sounds like it could vary on level from \$8,000-\$9,000 per year for three years. *Ollie* –

That would be billed by WMI, not Roger and this is a half time position. *Megan* – WMI would have agreements with all 13 states and the individual would on average work no more than 74 hours in two weeks. *Ollie* – It would be supervised by the chair of your committee. The position would be located in our geography. You have already identified an interview panel which includes Director Robling, you and someone from WMI? *Megan* – And Jeff Rawlinson, the vice-chair. *Kendra* – Is the position PR reimbursable for the states? *Megan* – I don't know. *Kendra* – I assume so. *Tami* – I have a number of questions. First one, this position would report to R3 Committee but that is not reflected in the description. *Megan* – There is a line about managing coordinator under officer section. *Tami* – Regarding conversation about non-lead partnership, with this R3 and development emphasis have you considered this position also being non-lead outreach and educator? There are a lot of intersections. *Megan* – We have discussed that and this position and position for fish and wildlife health could help communicate that across the states. *Tami* – I am inclined to suggest to be more clear, that non-lead connection and role and working collaboratively with that other position, the two positions are connected. *Megan* – We do have three more detailed documents that go into more detail; this is brief version. I can make sure you get copies of those. *Colleen* – Comments or concerns? *Tami* – Regarding funding from each state, what about Association that we meet with every three years (AMFWLEO)? Consideration to put funds in this as well. *Megan* – Law enforcement? *Tami* – I think it is needed at that level as well, so was wondering if they would help fund this position. *Sara* – The association is not but member states are. *Tami* – Conservation programs in member states, our enforcement division is a separate entity in Wisconsin so it would be nice if they could. *Colleen* – I don't have the answer to that. I guess that could be a future consideration or presented to them for their consideration. *Tami* – Maybe that is something we need to do internally. *Colleen* – It could be presented to them for their consideration going forward. This is a state commitment and we could collaborate potentially. *Brian* – You did survey of committees of directors about willingness to maintain R3 points contact in the states as we required in our state. Did you share the input as your ask was reflective of that and expectation of what that salary would be and willingness to pay on behalf of the states you were surveying? *Megan* – Yes, we have had several calls and in-person meetings and one-on-one calls with states to get their input on what their needs and expectations would be and what they felt was a fair contribution. We incorporated that into our state report in 2019 or 2020 when conversation initially kicked off. We brought back to our committee in April and held a special call to look at conservation grants to fund this position specifically and provided our final documents to them and was met with unanimous support. There was no indications of any issues at that time. *Kendra* – I would find this position very helpful, just to have a point of contact for a lot of grants. ***Kendra Wecker, Ohio moved to approve position, Tim McCoy, Nebraska second.*** *Sara* – Communicate my strong support for this position, the only caveat for membership to consider is a tweak to the motion or what that might mean. Listening to Ollie this morning on the significant need for additional capacity and knowing other associations like NEAFWA have moved forward with a broader grants coordinator, knowing this position is focused on grants specifically, my question for the membership is, if it is clearly communicated that R3 is the first and primary focus of this position. Recognizing it is only a half time position, if there is additional capacity, could this position also assist MAFWA with other grant needs? My

guess is there may not be a lot of additional capacity, especially initially. But if this position, over three-year period of time, with financial commitment of the states, if there is additional capacity identified, could this position also work on other MAFWA-related contract or grant needs? Ask members to consider and provide feedback. *Colleen* – Primary focus as outlined on R3 grant needs and IF additional time and capacity that individual could work on other MAFWA grants that are not R3 related. *Sara* – Innovation grants or other multistate grants. I want to make sure we allow them and states are aware, if there is agreement, that states have approved that person's ability to work on other grant needs. *Colleen* – For example, two years from now, we ask this individual to work on a grant that is not R3-related and that individual would say I can't because I am only R3. This conversation, if approved or agreed upon, would give them that capacity or approval to do that. *Sara* – Yes. In three years from now this position might be paid for by multistate grants and those can be specific that they have to work only on R3, maybe 3-4 years from now. Right now, we are providing general state funding to this position we don't have that restriction. It will also give us time for Ollie, who continues to try to communicate diplomatically that he has a lot on his plate and give the board additional time to consider maybe another position. In that interim period of time allow flexibility. *Colleen* – Flexibility is the right word. *Kendra* – I think it is a great idea to provide flexibility and clarify what they are doing so we can provide funding. How we pay that bill, pay with PR and RAWA, but need to clarify. Flexibility is important. *Tim* – My only concern on this, if you are using your PR dollars that are tied to hunting, fishing and R3 items, we are going to have to watch that closely. How you pay for it will be important and you are trying to use it for general support on something else that is a red flag on your agency. *Brian* – My initial feedback would be, it might be a little mission creep for the position with it being half time. We think it would be a pretty demanding job to focus on this for the region. Regarding multistate grants, SEAFWA committee, which I chair for R3, floated and were not asked for full proposal for a coordinator position, finding more state buy-in. After funded for a year, potentially three years, we would have initial idea that we wouldn't have certainty of state buy-in to be able to fund the position. The way MAFWA is, the states are buying in for the position as a collective of multistate grant funding. The feedback was the review committee saw this in better light with state investment. *Sara* – In essence you are suggesting states assume permanent commitment? *Brian* – That multistate grant fund probably would not be the alternative way to fund this position. *Megan* – For the position in its entirety they would not want us to say we are going to fund this position just with multistate grant funds, they don't like staffing put in there. It would be to say we would apply for multistate grants, that you couldn't take out a portion to build that salary, not just from one grant, but funds from each grant for administration staffing oversight. *Sara* – The way the proposal is it is a three-year opportunity for states to find additional funding and you just provided a more realistic perspective that this may be longer term commitment by the states. *Brian* – Yes. Megan provided good clarification that there is going to be administrative funds but that multistate grants shouldn't be used for salary and benefits for a position per se, like the Southeast was proposing it, they should hire the coordinator through one grant. *Colleen* – Which would limit the flexibility suggested? *Brian* – Yes. That wasn't my point specifically, but it is a demanding position for a half time job and I couldn't envision the person doing a lot of other grant management. *Sara* – That is why clarity is so important

to identify this is the right way and the supervisor assures this is a priority. Tim brought up good concern, if states are using PR dollars that is going to be a challenge for states to figure out the funding mechanism. *Tim* – I would prefer not to get in that position where you are using those funds. *Sara* – I get that. *Tim* – I have a question for Ollie. This person is going to focus on R3 and recently, how many of those grants you were talking about are related to the work of this R3 group on multistate conservation grants? *Ollie* – Some of them are, we have four. *Megan* – We have toolkit. *Jeff* – We have toolkit and funding outside we are working on. Ongoing grants, initial grants we started and keeping those projects moving forward as well. *Megan* -- Some of those other contracts have other grants under them as well. *Ollie* – It is an active committee, a good thing. I am not complaining. We are working hard on new PR modernization \$5 million a year. There are three or four specifically to R3 and one or two more coming. *Tim* – The way this is written part of this person's role is really to help with grant management piece of that. We are trying to access value in helping manage this, not just broad. *Sara* – Funding piece is triggering me. Keep motion as is and over time at annual meeting reevaluate that position and see if some additional help. Ollie is still overwhelmed but maybe that is a different discussion. *Colleen* – Monitor as it progresses, as position is brand new we can't predict but we can assume it is going to get even more hectic. ***Motion stands as presented to approve R3 position.*** *Kevin* – Quick point, as far as SD is concerned, one of the things we talked about here is perpetual commitment to states for funding and it would be a huge desire for SD to find alternative ways to pay for this three years down the road. That will be a continued desire, to continue looking for those ways. In year four it would be great if some other funding source could take the bill. *Sara* – With this position, they would be looking for other mechanisms and committee would be looking for other funding. ***Motion carries.***

## NEW BUSINESS

### CSS/HD Committee Organizational Guides

***Faren Wolters, SD*** – (Exhibit P) *Ollie* – Faren is not here, she is changing jobs and in the process of moving. Last year you approved forming a new committee in MAFWA, the Social Science and Human Dimensions committee, Faren was chair. Our bylaws require a new committee to come up with formal mission statement and organizational guidelines and bring them before this body for approval. This was given to you in back up materials. Preamble here adopting these guidelines which essentially formally establishes the committee and you did that with the bylaws. They added a name to the committee, the Conservation Social Science and Human Dimensions technical working committee. We received the mission statement. They have four objectives and duties and responsibilities which are all in line with rest of MAFWA committees and the remainder describes how the committee operates, how they select the chair, where they and who votes and who cannot vote, who officers are and how they are selected. The technical bread and butter of how the committee functions. It is in line with other committee organization guidelines and I recommend approval. ***Brian Clark moved, Jeb Williams, North Dakota second. Motion carried.*** *Brian* – Do you have a liaison from directors for that committee? If you need a liaison, I would be it. *Ollie* - Kevin is the liaison. It was his employee. *Kevin* – I would be happy to turn it over to Brian Clark. *Ollie* – Brian is taking over as liaison and

we do have a new chair, Adam Landen from Minnesota is new chair. Not all of our states have a human resources or social science person, but we are hoping that will change as RAWA gets implemented.

### **Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator**

*Ollie* – (Exhibit Q) USFWS received funds from America's Rescue Act to work on wildlife diseases of pandemic potential. USFWS met with AFWA's Fish and Wildlife Health Committee on the best way to use the funds. They came up with the idea that each regional association should have a wildlife health coordinator position. We asked our health committee to take a look at that. They brought that to executive committee in January and recommended that we do establish a regional coordinator position in the Midwest. In March, Ron Regan brought the four regions together and we met with USFWS who explained the funding mechanism. We have the money now. I worked with WSFR office in the Twin Cities and Kelley Myers. We were going to add it to the amendment you approved a few minutes ago but WSFR office thought we should go with a separate NOFO agreement. Our office in the Twin Cities got that approved and announced it last month. It is \$150,000 a year for three years, I applied for that funding with the help of the WSFR office. We have a position description, have an interview panel set up and 25% of this position is dedicated to CWD. There was a push for a CWD Coordinator in the Midwest and this is a combination of that. Award will be announced shortly and Kelley and Roger will download the funds. I told the committee they should put out a request for applications, I don't know if that has been done. Sara, Lindsey, Tami Ryan and Jason Sumners from Missouri are the interview panel for this. It happened so fast you never heard much about this as a Board. It looks like, before end of calendar year, we will have a person on board. No action needed, just an update on where we are. The executive committee already said to move forward so we have.

### **Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership**

*Ollie* – This came to us at turn of calendar, in January. Steve Krenz from the USFWS came to us, he coordinates this partnership. He said that under the new America's Conservation Enhancement Act that they were transferring management of the funds for the national fish habitat partnerships over to the National Fish Habitat Board and away from FWS who has currently been coordinating 8 of 20 fish habitat partnerships around the country (and don't have the funds to do that anymore). They have come to our Association to ask us to take over the administration of the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership (GPFHP). That is a rivers and streams partnership, covers western part and a bit beyond our geography but it fits well in MLI. The problem is the National Fish Habitat Board met in April and are trying to sort all of this out. It is hard to get good information about this. I did find out that it requires one-to-one match, a big change from previous funding mechanism. I don't have enough information for you to make a decision on this at this point. Steve will finish his job at end of September. His GPFHP Board could go to some other group and ask them to take it on but asking us first. I have two letters to accept this, one from Brad Loveless from Kansas and from Fisheries Chief, Scott Gangl, from North Dakota urging us to take over administration. There is one more partnership in our region that is losing coordinator, Fish and Farmers Partnership, they haven't come to us to take over administration. Until I learn more, unless you want to

take over on your own there is not enough information to provide. It fits our MLI well but still baking the cake so until we get more information put off to another meeting. *Colleen* – Putting it off is what the head nods are saying.

### **2023 Budget Approval**

***Roger Luebbert, Treasurer (Exhibit R)*** – This is conference account proposed calendar year 2023 budget with draft date of June 27, 2022. There are six pages, the first two pages cover the 2021 budget versus the actual; the next two pages are the current year (2022) budget status; and last two are the proposed budget. This is not cast in stone and can be changed. On pages 1 and 2, line numbers along the left, bottom of page 2, this is 2021, budget versus actual, line 36, receipts over disbursements. We thought we were going to run a deficit of about \$24,000 but if you look at the actual column, receipts exceeded disbursements by \$64,000, a good year. Some of the major players are under line 11, federal indirect costs. On revenue side we thought we would take in \$16,860 but took in \$35,761. We had more federal projects than we anticipated and they were larger. Another one that contributed to that change, line 22, total conference disbursements. We thought we were going to have an in-person meeting and thought we would spend \$54,935, we had a virtual meeting and spent \$13,589, so a \$21,000 favorable variance. Those were the major players in 2021. Pages 3 and 4, current year, not a lot of numbers yet, will see more activity in July and August. Executive Committee sees this report at every meeting. Line 6 and 7, membership dues, this year and in a couple weeks I will be sending invoices to states for \$4,160, a 1.2% increase. At the time we put this budget together, a \$49 increase. Moving on to the exciting part, pages 5 and 6 where we look at proposed budget. Columns at top are 2020 actual, 2021 actual and 2022 budget, which provides historical information. The second column from the left is proposed budget and last column is how we arrived at those numbers. Go through exceptions. Lines 5 and 6, membership dues, per our bylaws it changes due to consumer price index (CPI) and we are using the Midwest CPI in this case from January 2021 to January 2022, 7.88% change. If you approve this budget this will be membership dues for next year, 2023, 13 months from now, \$4,487, about \$328 change. Moving on to federal indirect costs, hard to get an estimate on so I used average 2020 and 2021 actuals and came up with \$26,175. Total receipts \$180,275 is the proposed budget. On page 6, first lines I want to cover, line 16, Delaney Coordinator fees \$16,550, draft contract, but actually draft proposal, open for negotiation so may see this number drop, may be high side. Prizes and awards, we pulled back a little, I used 2021 actual adjusted for inflation. Lines 22 and 24, Executive Secretary pay and Treasurer pay increased for inflation per contract. Line 26, contract manager, this is the one to help Ollie, last year you budgeted so currently \$8,000, we have not been able to fill that position and would like to put more money into that position. For now, we have same amount for 2023, it is on low side and would love to be able to put more money in that line. CPA audit is on a five-year cycle, next audit is 2024. We may have one before that if we start getting into a Federal single audit if we have more federal funds, over \$750,000. Line 30, insurance, is on three-year cycle and it comes due in 2023. Total disbursements, \$178,820, about \$1,400 less than receipts so this proposal is about break even budget. *Colleen* – This is the proposed 2023 budget. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to accept proposed budget, Brian Clark, Kentucky second. Motion carries.***

**Greater Prairie Chicken and Sharp Tailed Grouse** – (*Exhibit S*) Tim McCoy – On Greater Prairie Chicken and Sharptailed Grouse Conservation Strategy summary. This project has been ongoing for about three years, it got interrupted by COVID. The purpose was to come up with range-wide conservation plans for greater prairie chickens and sharptailed grouse. Work going for a long time, somewhat through WAFWA and I am chairman of habitat committee and grassland committee initiative. A lot of great work has been done on this. A couple of key folks that have really been involved, Mike Houts, Kansas Biological Survey, John Thompson and Kent Fricke from Kansas. Your states have been involved in driving this and putting it together. This is one that I was told there was some uncertainty, it was presented to directors at one time. I don't know if there is something that was passed but they felt they needed to report back. The final report is supposed to be done today. What I gave you is the short version and this will be posted online. I will share with MAFWA directors. I want to convey appreciation for staff that helped with this, a big undertaking. Started with lessons learned with Lesser prairie chicken work of not having very good, coordinated information up front. It also ties in with a lot of MLI-type work going on for some of us that are west and east (MAFWA and WAFWA) we get a lot of that.

*Colleen* – I had brought up a question if there was any interest in establishing a Technical Data committee, as exists in AFWA that we don't have in MAFWA. I have had some discussions since then and there may be some interest in calling it a business committee and talk with engineers and HR and not just IT. I don't have a request but just asking you to continue to think about how we might address each other in our administration work. Leave it at that.

### **Closing Comments**

*Colleen Callahan, Illinois* – President's Remarks – My thanks to all of those that have stepped up and volunteered. It was late on a Sunday night or early Monday morning that Ollie contacted me and told me I had become MAFWA President and told me what I needed to do. He, as he always does, became immediately helpful in reaching out to individuals to ask if you would help. I would have preferred to make those calls personally to ask you as President, but it wasn't in my day planner. I appreciate Ollie's work in helping with that and for those of you that accepted those requests. Finally, want to depart thinking about one of the presenters said at the North American. She was a phenomenal speaker, a great presenter and said something I thought was extremely profound. She said, all of us here at this conference are interested in conservation in some way, broadly or narrowly, but she said we should all leave thinking that we should act like nature because nature is diverse and nature is colorful. As we approach our work in conservation, all of the reports we heard, new committees, we should approach it as thinking about nature, diverse and colorful.



**Wisconsin Spotlight (2023) Moved to first item**

**Conference Adjourns** - *Brian Clark, Kentucky moved to adjourn, Kevin Robling, South Dakota second. Adjourned at 11:54 am.*

DRAFT