

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2023 Wildlife Diversity Committee Report

Report submitted by Owen Boyle, Chair, to Ollie Torgerson on 26 May 2023.

Meeting Time and Place

The Wildlife Diversity Committee (WDC) annual meeting was held in-person for the first time in four years and, for the first time ever, the WDC met jointly with the MAFWA Public Lands and Private Lands work groups and the Midwest Landscape Initiative from May 9-11, 2023 at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The WDC also held quarterly video conference calls on August 9, 2022, November 1, 2022 and February 7, 2023. Detailed meeting notes are available from the WDC chair or committee members.

Attendance

The WDC is made up of Wildlife Diversity Program Managers, Endangered Species Coordinators, and Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators from the 13 MAFWA states. The annual meeting was attended by committee members from 10 states with multiple states sending more than one member: IL – 1; IA – 1; IN – 1; MI – 2; MN – 1; MO – 1; ND – 1; NE – 2; OH – 1; WI – 3 (WDC attendance list in Appendix 1). Additional participants included invited speakers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, and MAFWA staff, including Executive Secretary Ollie Torgerson.

Executive Summary

The primary focus of the joint annual meeting was to better position the MAFWA states to successfully compete for the myriad large federal grant opportunities currently focused on several MAFWA priorities including multi-state landscape conservation of priority habitats, tribal engagement and climate change mitigation and adaptation. This first-of-its kind joint annual meeting successfully provided the spark for what committee chairs hope will not only result in significant new grant funding for the region, but a more collaborative framework under which MAFWA committees increasingly work together to scale up our landscape conservation efforts. See Appendix 2 for the joint meeting agenda and Appendix 3 for the WDC business meeting agenda that occurred on day one. The process, outcomes and next steps of the landscape conservation projects portion of the joint annual meeting and table of landscape conservation project ideas generated at the meeting as summarized by MLI and committee chairs is being provided in a separate document to the directors, but can be considered an additional appendix to this report.

Director Action Items

We ask the directors to support very large, multi-state landscape conservation project grant proposals by:

1. funding a grant administrator position for MAFWA to act as the fiscal agent for the partnering states when grantors allow. This will alleviate the need for a single state to shoulder the additional workload of grant administration and awkwardness of bearing responsibility for the work of partner states and make the distribution of funds to states more efficient.

2. if applicable, removing barriers that limit your staff from working more across program areas within your agency and with other states. The joint annual meeting demonstrated the synergy that occurs when staff with different roles, responsibilities and expertise under the broad umbrella of landscape conservation think holistically and collaboratively to generate project ideas that incorporate game, non-game and Species of Greatest Conservation Need, public and private lands management, priority habitats and ecosystems, and socioeconomic co-benefits to ecological priorities.

Director Information Items

Implementation of recommendations from AFWA’s SWAPs and Landscapes report – MAFWA conducted a survey of SWAP coordinators to identify areas of common interest in the Midwest among the recommendations from the [AFWA SWAPs and Landscapes report](#). The survey was based on the five guiding principles and actions described in the report [pages 13-17]. The survey found:

- Strong support for common lexicons for threats and conservation actions
- Support for adopting a common regional habitat lexicon and creating crosswalks from state habitat classification systems to the lexicon
- This is a priority, but needs to be done ASAP as states have started 2025 SWAP revisions
- Support for making SWAPS more accessible to larger audience
- Mutual funding—SWAPs and RSGCN can help prioritize multi-state landscape conservation projects

Nationwide Conservation Agreement for Listed and At-Risk Bumble Bees and Other Pollinators on Energy and Transportation Lands – This project is developing a programmatic conservation agreement and Enhancement of Survival (ESA Section 10) permit application for submittal to USFWS to maintain and enhance habitat on transportation and energy lands for 6 candidate, petitioned, at-risk or federally listed bumble bee species with overlapping habitat requirements across the lower 48 states. It will be modeled after the successful “monarch CCAA” and is being led by the developers of that agreement—University of Illinois, Chicago and Stantec—with funding through a non-traditional Section 6 grant secured by Wisconsin DNR. Providing regulatory assurances for solar farm developers will remove one of the primary barriers to planting new pollinator habitat on tens of thousands of acres in the Midwest and could greatly enhance our ability to recover numerous pollinator and grassland bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need. A continuing role for this committee will be to determine how each state that has insects on their state endangered species lists can provide similar regulatory assurances under state law.

WSFR-approved Section 7 language for Candidate Species – USFWS Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration grant specialists are requiring Section 7 reviews for species that are candidates for federal listing, a process that can be time consuming for state staff. Moving forward this committee will compile a library of Section 7 review language for these species from states that have received approval from WSFR to make this process more efficient. We did this last year for monarch butterfly and multiple states found it helpful.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

Leon Hinz, IL DNR, will assume WDC chair duties and arrange for quarterly conference calls and the annual meeting in May 2024 in Illinois (location TBD).

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Wildlife Diversity Committee annual business meeting participant list

Fullin, Katy	Iowa DNR	SWAP Coordinator
Hinz, Leon	Illinois DNR	SWAP Coordinator
Johnson, Scott	Indiana DNR	Wildlife Science Supervisor
Kleitch, Jennifer	Michigan DNR	Endangered Species Specialist
Henehan, Tony	Michigan DNR	SWAP Coordinator
Cariveau, Alison	Minnesota DNR	State Wildlife Grants Coordinator
Elliott, Anthony	Missouri Department of Conservation	Terrestrial Diversity Unit Supervisor
Link, Greg	North Dakota Game and Fish Dept.	Chief, Conservation and Communications Division
Andersen, Brett	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Wildlife Diversity Program Manager
Nevison, Sarah	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Wildlife Diversity Biologist
Hazelton, Erin	Ohio DNR	Wildlife Diversity Administrator
Bergeson, Tara	Wisconsin DNR	Species Management Team Leader
Boyle, Owen	Wisconsin DNR	Species Management Section Manager
Koslowsky, Shari	Wisconsin DNR	SWAP Coordinator
Beck, Claire	MAFWA/MLI	Landscape Conservation Technical Coordinator
Parsons, Kate	USFWS/MLI	Engagement Coordinator
Salas, Dan	Stantec	Senior Ecologist, CSE

APPENDIX 2 – Annual joint committee meeting agenda

Meeting planning team: Anne Reis, Haley Frater and Owen Boyle (WDNR); Claire Beck (MAFWA); Kate Parsons and Alex Wright (MLI)



MAFWA PUBLIC & PRIVATE LANDS WORKING GROUPS, WILDLIFE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE & MIDWEST LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE 2023 MEETING May 9-11, 2023 Wilderness Resort Wisconsin Dells, WI

Theme: LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Context: Normally an annual event, the MAFWA Committees have not had in-person meetings since 2019, and all four of our teams have never met jointly. This meeting will be a chance not only to connect with your team, but also with people from other closely related teams: Public Lands, Private Lands, Wildlife Diversity, and Midwest Landscape Initiative. The goal of this meeting is to think big and think creatively to identify multi-state or landscape-scale projects that can be accomplished through diverse partnerships across the 13-state region that will tangibly move the needle on our shared conservation priorities.

Outcomes: An increased sense of collaboration among states and MAFWA working groups/committees and identified opportunities to better deliver landscape conservation across the region. To include a list of multi-state project ideas that our four teams can present to the MAFWA directors in June as a collaborative statement of where we want to focus our landscape conservation efforts, where those efforts can benefit from collaboration across teams and states and where our teams could benefit from administrative support from the directors to help us plan and apply for large federal funding opportunities related to the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (e.g., the 2024 America the Beautiful Challenge).

TUESDAY 5/9/2023

Registration & Check-in: Sandstone Corridor

7:30 - 9:00 Breakfast | Sandstone 2

9:00 - 9:30 General Session | Sandstone 2

Land Acknowledgement – Anne Reis, Wisconsin DNR

Welcome from the Ho-Chunk Nation – Bill Quackenbush, Cultural Resources Division Manager

Welcome from Wisconsin DNR – Diane Brusoe, Administrator, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Introduction by Chairs – Anne Reis, Haley Frater and Owen Boyle, Wisconsin DNR

9:30 - 9:55 Scaling up - Partnership-supported Landscape Conservation in SW Wisconsin –
Cindy Becker, Project Manager, Southern Driftless Grasslands

9:55 - 10:20 Collaborative Partnerships - Reconnecting Wisconsin's Northwest Sands Landscape
– Robert (Bob) Hanson, Wisconsin DNR Northwest Sands Wildlife Biologist

10:20 - 10:30 Overview of Landscape Conservation Project Topics and Funding Opportunities
for Breakout Activity on Wednesday, Kate Parsons, Midwest Landscape Initiative

10:30 Break

10:45 - 12:00 Partnering with Tribes – A Balancing Act - Richard Monette, Law Professor at
UW- Madison and Director of the Great Lakes Indian Law Center

12:00 - 12:45 Lunch | Sandstone 7

12:45 - 5:00 Committee Business

Public Lands Working Group in **Sandstone 89**

Private Lands Working Group in **Sandstone 3**

Wildlife Diversity Committee in **Tundra EF**

5:30 Cook-out @ Mirror Lake State Park at the Bluewater Bay Shelter

Transportation on your own or carpool

If asked, notify park staff that you are with MAFWA for waived entry fee

WEDNESDAY 5/10/2023

7:30-8:30 Breakfast Sandstone 2

8:30 - 9:00 Welcome and housekeeping | Sandstone 2

- 9:00 - 9:45 Introduction to the Midwest Landscape Initiative | Sandstone 2**
- Sharing of new landscape conservation products, including the Midwest Conservation Blueprint, Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need, etc.
- 9:45 - 12:00 Landscape Conservation Projects Small Group Breakout Activity** - facilitated by working group/committee chairs and MLI staff
- Breakout Room **Sandstone 89**
Breakout Room **Sandstone 3**
Breakout Room **Tundra EF**
- 12:00 - 12:45 Lunch | Sandstone 7**
- 12:45 - 1:45 Landscape Collaboration Discussion | Sandstone 2**
- Breakout Report Outs
- 1:45 - 2:30 Next Steps: Moving Interjurisdictional Projects Forward | Sandstone 2**
- Group Discussion, How Do You Want to be Involved and Engaged with this Work?
Committee Chairs, Plans to Report Out to MAFWA Directors at Annual Meeting
Ollie, Regional Leadership Support of this Work
MLI Staff, How We Plan on Moving These Projects to Reality
- 2:30 Break**
- 2:45 - 4:30 Committee Business (if needed)**
- Public Lands Working Group in **Sandstone 89**
Private Lands Working Group in **Sandstone 3**
Wildlife Diversity Committee in **Tundra EF**

Dinner on your own or in groups

THURSDAY 5/11/2023

Breakfast on your own (be sure to check out before you leave)

- 8:30 – 8:40 Meet outside Wilderness to load into mini-vans**
- 8:40 – 9:00 Travel to Badger History Museum**
- Located at S7560 U.S. Highway 12, North Freedom, WI 53951
<https://goo.gl/maps/Mv4mfkpVbj4kDfod8>

9:00 - 12:00 Field Tours

Site 1 | Badger History Museum

Verlyn Mueller, Curator/Archivist

Site 2 | Mąą Wakąçąkra Horaje

Randy Poelma, Environmental Sciences Program Manager Site

3 | Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area

Nancy Frost, Sauk County Wildlife

Biologist James Carter, Property Supervisor

Site 4 | USDA Dairy Forage Research Center

Dennis Hancock, Director

Alison Duff, Research Ecologist

Jose Franco, Research Agroecologist

12:00- 12:45 Boxed lunch at USDA Conservation Club (or to go depending on travel plans) 12:45 –

2:00 Field Tour

Site 5 | Baxter’s Hollow, The Nature Conservancy Mike

Mossman, Retired DNR Research Scientist

2:00 – 2:30 Travel back to Wilderness Resort

2:30 Field Trip End | Head back to your home state

Appendix 3 – Wildlife Diversity Committee annual business meeting agenda

MAFWA WILDLIFE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING

May 9, 2023

Tundra EF, Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells

Moderator: Owen Boyle (WI)

Note taker: Shari Koslowsky (WI)

State Wildlife Action Plans

1:00p.m. **Implementation of recommendations from AFWA's SWAPs and Landscapes report**
A focus on the topic of SWAP databases and dashboard tool – Clair Beck, MAFWA/MLI

2:00 p.m. **How do states get feedback from internal and external SWAP users?**
– Alison Cariveau, Minnesota DNR

Has anyone conducted a survey or evaluation of your Wildlife Action Plan's usefulness and useability by staff and partners?

Endangered Species

2:15 p.m. **Section 7 phase 1 reviews for new species of federal interest**
– Scott Johnson, Indiana DNR
Please come ready to share examples of language you use for species like tricolored bat that aren't yet listed but are popping up on iPAC reviews

2:30 **Break**

3:00 p.m. **Bumble bee Section 10 agreement: How can states mirror regulatory certainty?**
– Dan Salas, Stantec and Owen Boyle, Wisconsin DNR

3:45 p.m. **Committee Business**
– Owen Boyle, Wisconsin DNR

- Committee priorities for tomorrow's session?
- Content for annual committee report to the Directors
- Resolutions for the Directors
- Committee chair succession

4:00 p.m. **State Updates**
– All

4:30 p.m. **Adjourn**