



# **AFWA Committee Handbook 2022**

The Voice of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

## Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to chair or participate in one or more of the Association's committees, subcommittees and working groups.

Long-term conservation success requires the active involvement of an assembly of agencies, organizations, and individuals with diverse backgrounds, visions and values. Committees are the crucial mechanisms by which members and stakeholders are able to collaborate and coordinate on cross-cutting fish and wildlife conservation issues including funding, legislation, regulation, science-based management, species-based interests, public outreach, and professional development. Indeed, Committees are *the* primary source for the collective views of the Association and the engine driving the future of natural resource conservation.

This Committee Handbook provides a concise look at the Association's Committee structure and responsibilities while offering some helpful tips based on past experience. The document is divided into sections that should make it easy to find what you're looking for at a glance.

Please note that the Handbook is intended primarily as a reference, and does not purport to cover all circumstances.

## Committee Structure

The Association maintains 32 Standing Committees and approximately 37 Subcommittees and Working Groups, which comprise more than 1,000 professionals from the United States, Canada, and Mexico as available.

**Standing Committees** are those that are not expected to change much over time and are often responsible for the creation of important national conservation actions and positions. The Association's bylaws require that a list of all Standing Committees be made and published annually (Appendix). The Executive Committee is authorized to establish a new Standing Committee.

**Subcommittees** are formed at the prerogative of the President. These entities generally address ongoing issues of relevance to the full Association and work under the corresponding Committee. Some Subcommittees are established with a finite duration in mind, while others are longer-lived and perform essential work on an ongoing basis for their Committees. Presidents strive to avoid the proliferation of Subcommittees, preferring to work within the standing committee structure instead.

A **Technical Subcommittee** is a comprised solely of state government members, and is created to provide a venue to work with the federal government. The Federal Advisory

### *Did you know...*

Almost without exception, the Association's proudest accomplishments began within our Committees.

For example, the report of the Legislative Committee at the Annual General Meeting held in New Orleans in 1918 touted our first legislative success with the enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Act put forward the Association's first international success two years earlier — support for the Migratory Bird Convention with Great Britain.

Committee Act (FACA) specifically provides for pre-action consultation with state officials and Technical Subcommittees enable the Association to offer a way to facilitate this collaboration.

Currently, Technical Subcommittees exist within the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee for trap testing and negotiations with Europe and within the International Affairs Committee on matters relating to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

**Working Groups** are formed and populated at the prerogative of Committee chairs. These groups, in contrast with Subcommittees, are established for durations as brief as a year. Working Groups may extend their terms to complete the tasks for which they were formed. They are most commonly established to perform a specific task or set of tasks relevant to the work of a Committee, and disband after completing such tasks.

Members of Subcommittees and Working Groups must also be members of the corresponding Committees.

A list of Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups, including links to specific descriptions, can be found on the Association's website at [www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org) in the Committee section.

## Appointments and Committee Selections

State fish and wildlife agency leaders, appointed by the President of the Association, lead each committee. Chairs and Vice-Chairs serve at the pleasure of the President. Standing Committee members serve renewable terms of two years.

### *It's a fact...*

The Association's Bylaws require employment by a Governmental, Affiliate, or Contributing Member; or status as an Associate or Life Member, for appointment to a committee.

*See Appendix for Membership level descriptions.*

### **Selection Process**

The Association issues a request for nominations for committee and subcommittee assignments in late Spring of each even-numbered year to member agencies and organizations, and for volunteer assignments by Associate members. From these nominations, the incoming President makes the selections shortly after the Association's Annual Meeting considering a variety of factors such as geographical representation and committee size. The goal is to ensure all committees are fully staffed and functional at the beginning of each biennial cycle.

**State fish and wildlife agency directors** are asked to consider chairing or vice-chairing only one committee and to discuss priorities with the President. At the suggestion of the Executive

Committee, and in the belief that each state director should be actively involved, directors without committee assignments will be assigned to a committee.

In addition, because committees should reflect and advance the policies and positions of **Governmental Members** (as defined on page 14), each governmental member is requested to appoint a policy-level representative and a subject matter specialist to each committee with which they are concerned.

To keep the committees to a manageable size, **Affiliate and Contributing Members** are asked to officially assign only one person per organization to a committee, though additional representatives are welcome to attend meetings. Recognizing the value of their participation, **Associate Members** are invited to volunteer for committee work. Finally, **individuals** should not be nominated to more than two committees since members will be expected to spend time on committee work.

■ **IMPORTANT: Committee members must reaffirm their interests by re-nomination or re-volunteering biennially.**

The Executive Director of the Association will assign Association staff to each committee. Committee chairs should feel free to engage assigned staff members in any process of committee work when staff can be of assistance.

In general, staff can assist with developing meeting agendas, minutes and reports; creating email lists; setting up conference calls; and facilitating communication between the Chair and the committee.

### **Committee Notifications**

Once an incoming President appoints committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and members, Chairs receive a list of members from the Association's Washington office. This list contains available phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

As Chair, your first responsibility is to review the committee's charge and to understand and prepare to implement it. This is a good time to review the personnel assignments and make additional recommendations as appropriate.

Once you receive the master committee list, you should send a welcome note to members acknowledging their selection, confirming their contact info and encouraging them to provide input on pertinent issues in the committee's focus area. The Committee charge that was sent to you by the President with your appointment is useful for all and is an appropriate attachment to your letter of welcome.

### *Effective Committees Communicate...*

The best way to ensure that your committee is committed to its charge for the long haul is to get in touch as soon as the biennial committee list is available to welcome members on board.

### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of the three elected officers of the Association, eight additional members, and the previous year's or immediate past President. The eight additional members are elected to the Executive Committee at the Association's Annual Business Meeting by the voting members present or by proxy. The President of each regional association serves as an ex officio, voting member of the Executive Committee, as well as one representative from Canada and one from Mexico as available.

The Executive Committee (Board of Directors) manages the corporate affairs of the Association and provides strategic direction. All matters not especially provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws are determined by the Executive Committee, until specially passed upon at a regular meeting. The Executive Committee is also responsible for approving the Association's annual budget.

# Committee Meetings

Committees meet when the Association convenes for its Annual Meeting in September, and again in conjunction with the North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference convened in March of each year by the Wildlife Management Institute. Some committees, however, meet quarterly while many Chairs find a call-in teleconference several times a year helpful in keeping members current or to provide a venue to sound out the committee on a pending issue. Participation through e-mail, listservs, and video conferencing is increasingly commonplace. Convening extra meetings is the sole prerogative of the Chair.

## Meeting Planning

Several months prior to a regularly scheduled meeting, Chairs are contacted by an Association representative, member of the hosting state or province, or the Wildlife Management Institute to determine your meeting needs. You will be asked for five pieces of information – a request that should receive immediate attention:

- ① Do you plan on holding a meeting at the upcoming Meeting?
- ② How many persons are expected to attend?
- ③ How you would like the room configured?
- ④ What are your audio-visual requirements?
- ⑤ What is the duration of your meeting – 2 hours, 4 hours, other?

When planning a meeting, Chairs should be sensitive to the other obligations of committee members. This is especially true of coordination issues when one or more committees need to be contacted. Chairs are also responsible for keeping in contact with the President and Executive director and keeping them updated.

## Meeting Agendas

It is standard practice for each Committee to provide members with a copy of the agenda for the upcoming Meeting at least 30 days in advance (a draft is fine), using the Association's template (Appendix). In addition, Association staff assigned to the Committee will ensure that the working or final agenda is posted on the Association's website.

### *Call your meeting to order...*

It is up to Committee Chairs to determine how formal or informal to conduct meetings. Consistency is key and making sure everyone knows the rules.

Past practice has shown that a "Call for Agenda Topics" from the Chair several weeks in advance is helpful in creating this agenda. Alternately, some Chairs assemble a proposed agenda

and circulate it for comment and amendment. The choice of procedure is the prerogative of the Chair.

## Running Meetings

Reasonable formality and decorum are important in conducting committee meetings. The Association prides itself on the professional and businesslike way our meetings are conducted, the careful manner in which decisions are made, and ultimately

the soundness of committee recommendations.

Committee Chairs have great discretion in running meetings, but meetings must be convened promptly when scheduled and conducted according to rules of procedure. While some meetings are informal, others, because of the size of the group or the contentiousness of the issues to be

discussed, are kept highly structured. Some meetings are guided by Robert's Rules and others are more informal, relying on discussion and consensus to reach positions.

In the meeting space, always make sure committee members get priority seating around the table. Once members are assured of priority seats, you may invite visitors to sit at the table or not if you feel that the members' interests are best served by maintaining a clear distinction between members and other attendees. Some committee chairs make name tags for each member thus subtly, but clearly, identifying members. Proper action is a function of the size of group and potential debate.

While the Association has established these guidelines, generally the procedure for the conduct of committee meetings is left to the individual Chair. This is a decision you can make based on what best suits your committee. Your responsibility as Chair is to provide the opportunity for all members to participate and that recommendations reached reflect the view of the majority of the members present. If there are a lot of visitors present and a vote is necessary, you may want to have a roll call vote to verify that only members vote. What is most important is that everyone in attendance knows, at the beginning of the meeting, the rules by which your meeting will operate.

The Association encourages a general policy of keeping meetings open to all attendees who are wearing nametags with their organizational affiliations; all members of our community benefit from seeing and participating in the vital work coming from our many committees, subcommittees, and working groups. But we also recognize that certain meetings may include sensitive topics or votes (e.g., on legal, financial, or foundationally strategic questions), for which deliberation ought to be limited to governmental members with voting privileges enshrined in the Bylaws, or a subset thereof.

Before commencing discussion on a topic that may lead to a vote, a Chair (or Vice-chair when presiding in the absence of the chair) may exercise their judgment to call a closed session in order to provide for a frank and substantive discussion of the issue at hand. To do so, it is recommended that the Chair or Vice-chair make a brief and cordial statement describing **1)** the nature of the issue, **2)** the reason(s) that deliberation must be limited to governmental members or a subset thereof, and **3)** whether there may or will be a need for a vote by governmental members or a subset thereof.

The Chair or Vice-chair should then make a motion, have a governmental member second the motion, and then call a vote of governmental members to close the meeting, a majority of whom is necessary to do so.

Any votes should take place only after the session is reopened to all attendees.

*Meeting Tasks...*

1. Solicit and determine meeting agenda.
2. Send Resolutions Committee any items to go before the membership.
3. Send Association staff person final agenda.
4. Arrange to have someone take meeting minutes and type up the minutes post-meeting.
5. Chair meeting and direct discussion.
6. Present proposed Resolution and/or committee report at Business Meeting if appropriate.
7. Submit meeting minutes to Association staff person.
8. Follow and complete Action Items.

## **Meeting Attendance List & Handouts**

At the start of each meeting, you should circulate an attendance list (Appendix) to log who participated in the meeting and the capture current contact information. The list is important for Association records and of great help to staff working to keep information up to date.

Chairs should bring copies of the agenda and any other handouts to the meeting. If you require copying assistance, contact your assigned staff person. Often Chairs will include in the room configuration a table for attendees to place materials of interest to committee members.

## **When You Can't Be There**

Occasionally, Chairs have to miss a meeting due to other important commitments. However, it remains the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the Committee has a productive meeting. This makes it of great consequence for the Vice-Chair to be fully involved in the Committee's activities so that someone is ready and able to stand in.

Vice-chairs are appointed by the President, but usually nominations are discussed with would-be Chairs during the selection process. The Vice-chair is a very important person to the Committee, not only as a stand-in; but, as someone who assumes leadership for special projects that occur between meetings of the Committee.

## **Post-Meeting Duties**

After the meeting, the Chair or an assigned committee member is responsible for drafting and distributing meeting minutes/the committee report (Appendix). Your staff person can coordinate to have the minutes posted online in the Committee section of AFWA's web site.

## **Committee Functions & Reports**

The function of each committee is to consider carefully the merits of every proposal brought before it — a project, program, position, resolution, or other type of action — and to judge whether or not the proposal should be submitted to the full Association membership, Executive Committee, or President for consideration as appropriate under the Bylaws.

The committee's responsibility is to create a report stating the members' collective view that may include a strong endorsement or a mild recommendation, but should highlight enough factual data, pro and con, to permit other fish and wildlife directors to make a fair and responsible independent judgment about the proposal. Chairs are also encouraged to make recommendations to guide future committee activities.

Committee reports should contain the following sections (Appendix):

1. Introductory statement briefly listing the committee charge.
2. Progress toward achievement of goals in Association's Strategic Plan.
3. Deliberations, conclusions, or recommendations as appropriate, outlining necessary steps or actions to be taken by the Association.

## **Types of Committee Actions & Reports**

Committees typically make recommendations and pass motions, or draft letters adopting certain positions. All of these types of committee actions go to the members' Business

### *Association Approval...*

Committee recommendations or positions must be brought to the membership if they are to be adopted as the Association's position.

Meeting for adoption on behalf of the Association. The Association's Bylaws also provide that the Executive Committee has authority to act for the Association on a matter until it is specially passed upon at a regular meeting of the Association. Committees should use a motion when formally proposing that an action be taken.

**Resolutions** are used when the committee wishes to formally express an opinion. All resolutions must be submitted to the Resolution Committee, usually at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting, before coming to a vote by the membership.

The Resolutions Committee is responsible for soliciting resolutions from other Association committees or for developing resolutions from other appropriate sources. All proposed resolutions must be reviewed by the appropriate subject matter committee. The subject matter committees make recommendations to the Resolutions Committee. Resolutions should be aimed at establishing Association policy accomplishing a specific purpose and be designed in such a way as to permit follow-up by the Washington, D.C. office. The membership only considers resolutions during its annual Business Meeting. It does not consider resolutions during its meeting at the March North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference.

Committees making **requests for approval of programs or projects requiring funds** must first seek the approval of the Executive Committee prior to voting by the membership during the Association's Business Meetings. The Association's Bylaws give the Executive Committee oversight of budgetary matters and all funding requests must have a cost estimate attached to the proposal or recommendation.

■ **IMPORTANT: Any Committee recommendations to instruct or direct Association staff must be coordinated with the Executive Director who is responsible for staff supervision under the Bylaws.**

A Committee may **draft a letter or propose language for a piece of legislation** to be considered by members during the Business Meeting. While input from nongovernmental members may be considered, it is important to remember that only a letter drafted by a fish and wildlife agency committee member may be used as a proposed position of the Association.

### **Submitting Reports**

Generally, committee recommendations or positions must be brought to the membership if they are to be adopted as the Association's position. Committee reports, if any, are presented at the Business Meeting in September (and also at the March meeting if appropriate). If there are late-breaking, sensitive, or controversial issues requiring attention by the Executive Committee or the general membership, the Chair is responsible for requesting agenda time. With either group, brevity is always appreciated since those meeting agendas are so full. When the report is fairly routine, written reports suffice.

Committee reports should be made available either at the end of a meeting, or shortly afterward for submission to the Executive Director and the Association's Director of Communications. It is not uncommon for the Washington, D.C. office to receive requests for information from long past meetings. This makes coherent and well-drafted committee reports very important.



## **Publications & Finance**

Some committees author reports and studies or sponsor publications. In the world of furbearer management for instance, the definitive work in the testing of traps was developed by the Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee. That Committee has published several works that have been seminal in its area of expertise and are widely sought for reference and guidance.

Activities like publications and research require dollars and committees are encouraged to apply for grants from a variety of available sources. Committees occasionally seek appropriated dollars as well. Committees are not allowed to pursue outside funding, however, without the approval of the Executive Committee. Ask your assigned staff member for guidance.

## **Other Committee Chair Responsibilities**

As a Committee Chair, you have become a part of the Association's leadership. In the period between annual meetings...the Executive Committee and Committee Chairs *are* the Association!

In addition to the obvious responsibilities within the assigned area of your Committee, it is not unusual for a Chair to be asked by federal agencies or non-governmental organizations for reactions or advice on various issues. You may also be contacted by the Washington, D.C. office to help respond to a media inquiry surrounding a fish and wildlife conservation issue. Be mindful that in these situations that your "opinion" could be misinterpreted as an official position of the Association. If you are unsure in any of these situations, ask or refer the query to the President or the Executive Director.

If you would like to send a request for information to the states or respond to a request for comments from members of Congress, Governors, or by federal agencies, contact your assigned staff person first. The Washington, D.C. office will coordinate such correspondence and obtain required policy clearance if necessary.

**Thank you again for your contribution to the Association and its mission to protect and support state, provincial and territorial authority for fish and wildlife conservation in the public interest!**



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## **Standing Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups**

### Agricultural Conservation

- Conservation Reserve Program Working Group
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program / Conservation Stewardship Program Joint Working Group
- Farm Bill Easements Working Group
- Forestry Working Group
- Public Access Working Group
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program Working Group
- Private Lands Working Group

### Angler & Boater R3

### Amphibian & Reptile Conservation

### Annual Meeting/Awards

### Audit

### Bird Conservation

- Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group
- Grassland Work Group
- Harvest Information Program (HIP) Work Group
- Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group
- Partners in Flight / Shorebird / Waterbird Working Group
- Resident Game Bird Working Group
- Waterfowl Working Group

### Budget

### Climate Adaptation

### Education, Outreach & Diversity

- Diversity & Inclusion Working Group
- Education Working Group
- Outreach & Marketing Working Group
- Project WILD Subcommittee
- Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group

### Energy & Wildlife Policy

- Solar Wildlife Working Group
- Wind Wildlife Working Group

### Executive

### Federal & Tribal Relations

### Fish & Wildlife Health

- Lead and Fish and Wildlife Health Working Group
- Aquatic Animal Health Working Group

### Fish & Wildlife Trust Funds

- Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group
- Trust Funds Collection Working Group

### Fisheries & Water Resources Policy

- Subcommittee on Water
- Bird & Fish Related Conflict Working Group

Drug Approval Working Group  
Hunting & Shooting Sports Participation  
International Relations  
    CITES Technical Working Group  
Invasive Species  
    Feral Swine Working Group  
Law Enforcement  
    Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact  
    Working Group  
Leadership/Professional Development  
Legal  
Legislative & Federal Budget  
National Grants  
    Multistate Conservation Grant  
    Program  
Nominating

Ocean Resources Policy  
Resolutions  
Science & Research  
    Human Dimensions & Social Science  
    Subcommittee  
Sustainable Use of Wildlife  
    Furbearer Conservation Technical  
    Working Group  
Technology & Data  
Threatened & Endangered Species Policy  
    ESA and Climate Change Working  
    Group  
Wildlife Diversity & Conservation Funding  
Wildlife Resource Policy  
    Bat Working Group  
Human/Wildlife Conflict Working Group



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## **Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Membership Levels**

### **Governmental Membership**

Eligible Government Members include:

- 1) Each state of the United States;
- 2) Each agency of the United States Government;
- 3) Each province and territory of Canada;
- 4) Each agency of the Government of Canada, the Republic of Mexico, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

### **Regional Association Membership**

Currently, we have four Regional Association Members — The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

### **Affiliated Organizational Membership**

An Affiliated Organizational Member must be an *organization* of international, national, regional or statewide origin whose objectives are similar to, or supportive of, one or more of the objectives of the Association and whose membership is made up of individuals officially engaged in conservation of natural resources through their employment in public agencies.

### **Contributing Membership**

A Contributing Member requires that you must be a non-governmental organization, institution, foundation, society, corporation or person that supports the objectives of the Association.

### **Associate Membership**

To become an Associate Member, as an *individual*, you must be a past or present state, provincial, or territorial game and fish or conservation official; any federal, state, provincial or local game, fish or conservation official or employee regularly employed and under salary. You can also become an Associate Member if you are a delegate, officer or staff member of national, regional, state, provincial or local game, fish, wildlife or forest protective and conservation association or organization devoted to the conservation of renewable natural resources.

### **Life Membership**

To become a Life Member, you must already be an Associate Member.

### **Honorary Life Membership**

Honorary Life Members are elected by the Association and represent life members or persons who have rendered distinguished service in the cause of conservation administration. Honorary life member status is awarded during the Association's Annual Meeting.



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**[Committee Name]**

Chair: [Name]

Co-Chair: [Name]

**[Date]**

**[Time]**

**[Venue Location]**

**[City, State]**

## **Agenda**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
	Call to Order	
	Reading of Minutes from Previous Meeting; Corrections to Minutes; Vote Minutes Stand	
	Reports	
	Unfinished Business and General Orders	
	New Business	
	Announcements	
	Adjournment	





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**[Committee Name] Committee Report**

Chair: [Name]  
Meeting of [Date]  
[Venue Location]  
[City, State]

**Committee Charge**

Meeting convened during (insert start and end times), chaired by (insert name). (insert number) participants in attendance, including (insert number) current Committee members:

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

(Provide bulleted list with brief annotation about nature of each discussion item and substantive conclusions)

**Other Discussion items**

(Provide bulleted list with brief annotation about nature of each deliberation and conclusion)

**Progress and Opportunities**

Progress made toward achievement of goals in Association's Strategic Plan (identify specific goal and progress):

Threats and Emerging Issues Identified:

New Opportunities Identified:

**Action Items**

(Include brief specific action statement in bold type and briefly describe the action requested and outline the necessary steps)

Submitted by: (insert Committee Chair name)