

Engagement and Education Committee

AFWA Mtg 2024

Agenda

Call to Order/Review Agenda

Introductions & Welcome: Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)

- Everyone welcome to the table
- Round robin introductions

Working Group/Subcommittee Reports

- Education Working Group
 - Had high attendance, close to 50 people
 - Will have the notes and presentation available to those that participated
 - Starting project about doing effective evaluations and collecting data that can be used by state agencies; work with human dimension to develop evaluation questions
 - Next webinar is in November
- Engagement & Connections Working Group
 - Had a workshop about inclusive employee R3; well attended
 - Had 55 people attend WG meeting
 - Coffee Talks have been very popular and engaging; next one taking place at end of October; asked attendees what they'd like to see in the coffee talks → collected a great list of potential topics
 - Talked about including some of Engagement/Education topics/projects in the Knowledge Hub that is just being launch
 - Will start partnering with the Human Dimensions committee to get into the people side of conservation with our work; see where the overlap is
 - Engagement Academy: took place in May 2024 with 22 participants; was very well received and had a rating of 4.74 starts out of 5 by participants
 - DJ Case is going evaluation of the Engagement Academy, and they did an initial report out of findings
 - Good discussion about re-prioritizing some items that are important to the public, and stepping back from other items so there is capacity → can't do everything
 - Updated the working group charge to go along with the new name.
- Outreach & Marketing Working Group
 - Had presentations of project in the field and seeing how we can apply that to our agency work
 - Public perception studies → looked at that the public priorities are and how they want to be reached; study done in the SEAFWA states and the next phase are the NEAFWA states.
 - Current MSCG about rebranding our conservation and relevancy communication toolkit → looking to apply the findings from the Making It Last campaign with less prescriptive applications that is more of a formula that can make it state specific with no tag line. Will be tested in the field soon, after the elections so efforts don't get diluted.

- Working with the WDCF Committee about getting some story telling about the work of state agencies, especially how it relates to SWAPS
- Partnering opportunities available with the National Deer Alliance
- Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Working Group
 - Review/discussion of the initial results of a MSCG that this working group is partnering with Vtech about removing barriers of wildlife viewing for people with disabilities; looking at accessibility for all
 - Presentation on neurodiversity and birding; what can be done to include those who are neurodiverse; a project for a pop-up toolkit to increase trail accessibility
 - Updating our charge to be in alignment with our new committee name and charge.
 - Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy taking place Feb 16-20, 2026, in Seattle, WA. More information available at www.WVNTAcademy.com
 - Monthly working group calls- a great resource and forum for those who cannot attend the larger AFWA and NA Meetings can be involved and engaged.
- Joint Working Group: Engagement & Education and Wildlife Diversity and Conservation Funding Committees
 - Had good representation from both the Engagement and Education Committee and Wildlife Diversity Conservation Funding Committee
 - Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) updates; could still get added in the lame duck session; the Senate Bill is posed to move. Reached out the Senate Finance Committee to help identify a pay-for; looking at creating some social media templates that any state can use → creation of assets.

Engagement Academy- David Buggs (TX), Jen Newmark (WMI), Taniya Bethke (CAHSS)

- 3-day event at NCTC in May 2024
- Got feedback about how to improve, looking for longer academy
- Next academy will likely be in 2026, with workshops happening in 2025
- May look at engaging conservation law enforcement in future workshops or the next Academy

Agencies Can Make New Friends and Keep the Old: [Resources and Research about Wildlife Viewers and Accessibility from Virginia Tech](#) - Ashley Dayer, PhD, and Freya McGregor

- Have been involved in 3 MSCG around wildlife viewing; current grant is around addressing barriers and access to wildlife viewing for those with disabilities.
 - Currently have published a literature review and webinars on the initial results from this project
 - Will be doing a virtual workshop later this year to develop robust recommendations for state agencies
 - Want more information? <https://viewing.fishwild.vt.edu/>

America's Wildlife Values Survey (AWVS) 2027- Dr. Tara Teel, Colorado State University

- Preparing for the 2027 Wildlife Values Survey in North America
- Key Questions: 1) how do agencies adapt and remain relevant, in the face of societal change, to an increasingly diverse constituency? 2) what are ways for the to more effectively engage new audiences while still being responsive to the needs of traditional stakeholders? 3) How can they garner broad-based support to ensure sustainable funding exists in the future?

- Conditions of Modernization → Changing Social Life → Changing Values & Behavior
- Domination Orientation vs Mutualism Orientation
- Wildlife Value Types:
 - Traditionalists
 - Pluralists
 - Distanced
 - Mutualists
- The 2018 study demonstrated evidence of change of wildlife values in the west with a shift toward mutualism (tied to declining *trust* in state wildlife agencies)
 - Some values are very example specific
 - Generally, less support for traditional forms of wildlife management
- New study will be looking at more geographically important data to see how people are thinking; will be different than just looking at the overall state average.
- Emerging Issues of Interest:
 - How to build consensus among the diverse public interest
 - Perceptions of habitat and health of natural environment; importance of environmental concerns
 - Authority around managing for wildlife
 - Human-wildlife conflict
 - Public access to the resource for wildlife-related / nature-based experiences
 - Acceptability of hunting for different purposes
 - Use of emerging technologies, such as drones
- Next Steps include
 - Continue outreach to build awareness and support
 - Proposal MSCG 2025 & 2026
 - Offer different levels of state participation
 - Employee survey as a separate grant proposal
- Can find more information at: www.wildlifevalues.org
- [Copy of presentation HERE.](#)
- [Copy of AWVS one-pager](#)

Association for Conservation Information: Where Outdoor Communicators Connect- Blake Podhajsky (ACI President)

- A non-profit organization of natural resources communicators. We serve to further natural resource conservation and exchange. We are made up of professionals representing state, federal and Canadian wildlife conservation and parks and natural resource agencies as well as private conservation organizations.
- Have annual ACI Conference; Next conference will be July 22-24, 2025 in Atlantic City, NJ
 - Have a scholarship program to help those (especially new participants) attend the ACI Conference (includes registration and travel costs)
- The ACI Awards Contest is one of the most popular and successful ACI programs, which recognizes excellence and promotes craft improvement through competition.
- New website will be launching in 2025

- www.ACI-NET.org
- Have a bi-monthly newsletter called The Balance Wheel; can sign up TODAY on the ACI website.
- Have a new podcast call The Outdoor Communicators Podcast
 - Discussions about the craft of conservation communications with luminaries from around the world of conservation.
- ACI MSCG Updates:
 - Since 2019, ACI received \$2.3 million MSCG dollars
 - 6th year of R3 through marketing for pilot states- 5 state gets \$50K each to implement a R3 marketing campaign
 - YouTube Part 2- WI, AL, NY and OK will publish Deer Hunting 101 videos
 - Social Listening reports end in 2024. All 50 states receive
 - ACI photo library grant- over 10K photos uploaded to the [R3 ClearingHouse](#)
 - Student Air Rifle Program- how to turn students into hunters
- Will be updating our ACI logo and will launch with the new website. The logo rebrand will go out as a competition for state agency communicators.

Discussion: Review Annual Work Plan Expected Actions/Activities

Current Charge: To leverage member efforts to facilitate **Education, Outreach and Diversity initiatives** and address needs identified by AFWA committees and membership; strengthen and unify the conservation education efforts of AFWA members and partners; promote **diversity and inclusivity**; and foster networking and outreach partnerships among the growing field of wildlife viewing and nature tourism initiatives.

- MOTION: The Committee Chairs will be updating the charge to be more reflective of the name change of the committee.
- ACTION: Approved

Discussion: Future Work of this Committee (Everyone)

- Would be nice to have some of the work we're doing brought to the attention of everyone in the plenary sessions.
- Need to expand relevancy beyond the agency
- Is there a way to amplify the work being done, perhaps with our NGO partners help.

“Lightning” rounds (5 minutes each)

- Bob Mathews with CSF- presentation on how the state wildlife agencies are funded and why it's important to have support
 - The need for Wildlife Councils- charged with promoting the positive aspects of hunting and fishing to the general public through accurate and factual education and marketing campaigns.
 - Right now, only Michigan and Colorado have these councils and have shown great success.

Other Business

Adjourn