



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee

Meeting Minutes

Chair: Doug Vincent-Lang (Alaska)

Vice-Chair: Dave Kay (Alberta)

Tuesday, September 20th

9:15 AM – 12:15 PM (Central Time)

Texas Ballroom H

112th AFWA Annual Meeting

Committee Charge:

Advocate the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and promote the sustainable use of fish and wildlife resources at the international level.

Subcommittees and Working Groups:

U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group

Agenda

- **Agenda review, adjustments, and opening comments (Dave Kay)**
 - Vice-Chair Dave Kay opened the meeting and welcomed the in person and virtual meeting attendees.
- **Introductions (Dave)**
 - In person participants introduced themselves
 - ~70 individuals, both in-person and virtual, attended the meeting
- **Approval of Minutes from the previous meeting (Dave)**
 - The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by unanimous vote
- **Update: Current Multi-State Grants (Bryant White)**
 - Current Grants
 - Grant 1
 - “Maintaining the relevancy of the AFWA North American Trapper Education Program”
 - The North American Trapper Education Program is maintained by AFWA at no cost to agencies and available for use by all agencies. A MSCG was awarded to create trapper education videos and update the trapper education manual based

on the updated national trapper education standards created by AFWA and IHEA in 2019.

- Seventeen videos (including the trailer) have been produced and uploaded into the program. Videos will be close captioned in English and Spanish
- The manual and online program have been reviewed and edits are being made to both so that we can maintain IHEA certification. The IHEA review is expected to be completed by December 1, 2022.

- Grant 2
 - “Modernizing Trapping Matters Professional Development Workshops and Wild Fur Schools Delivery Through Updated Messaging and the Creation of Distance Learning modules”
 - This grant allowed for creation of distance learning modules for virtual delivery of professional development workshops on regulated trapping. Production of all videos occurred in August, and we anticipate having the online program available for agency use by December 1, 2022
 - Delivery of workshops will take place in person (5 workshops were delivered under this grant).
 - Six national focus groups were conducted to evaluate messages used to gain approval of sustainable wildlife use and trapping. A final report is expected by December 1, 2022. Results of this project relative to messaging will be incorporated into the Trapping Matters Workshop and education modules.

- Grant 3
 - “Trapping Matters - Communication Message Training”
 - This grant also allowed for creation of distance learning modules for virtual delivery of professional development workshops regarding trapping
 - We delivered 14 in person of Trapping Matters Workshops and 5 wild fur schools. In all, over 800 agency staff and university staff and students attended these workshops and schools.

- **Future Multi-State Grant Opportunities (White)**
 - Repeat the AFWA National Trapper Survey to collect information on trap types used by trappers (to document use of BMP traps and guide future research), furbearer species preferred, number of trappers nationally (to document current growth in trapper numbers....yes, trapper numbers are increasing!), understand trapper demographics, etc. This will be the fourth iteration of this survey which was conducted in 1992, 2005, 2015. We need to repeat this survey every 10 years to guide research and communication efforts.
 - Conduct a national R3 effort specifically for trappers. While much has been done relative to hunter and angler R3, no projects we are aware of have focused on R3 strategies for recruiting trappers.
 - Developing social media packages for agencies to use for trapper recruitment and to educate the public about the importance of trapping in wildlife

management. (This will be a component of the grant mentioned above) This is a critical need because the public is highly uniformed about trapping and, as a result, easily misinformed by groups with anti-trapping agendas.

- These ideas will be moved forward, and proposals will be developed. Proposals will be reviewed at the March meeting.

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- **IUCN- Hunting Situation Analysis (Shane Mahoney)**

- The IUCN has a huge impact on conservation world wide and more organizations need to join. There are already more than 1,400 member organizations (including AFWA), with offices in 160 countries, 1000 staff members, and 15,000 experts in 6 commissions. SULI is working on the HAS which is a science led, rigorous process. Working to slow down the destruction of biodiversity.
- IUCN is a supporter of the sustainable use of natural resources and if they were not this would be a serious problem.
- SULI is one of many specialist groups and works to note the benefits of sustainable use, its overall value for wildlife and how use leads to habitat improvements. A great deal of time is spent on policy...reviewing and writing. But, this can be a very political process.
- The Wildlife Hunting and Harvesting Situation Analysis is the most extensive review to be done by IUCN. Some, including Dr. Mahoney, were hoping this would include hunting and trophy hunting at the global scale but the HAS will focus primarily on Africa. Africa will be at the epicenter and there will be ethical debates around trophy hunting and wildlife use, conservation impacts, how much money from trophy hunting actually trickles down to the local communities. Typically in Africa, people of color do not own the properties or benefit from trophy hunting. There are human rights abuses in some cases. Can there be wildlife management without hunting? Likely what will happen is that lands would be converted to livestock grazing and eliminate many species of wildlife.
- 70-80% of trophies from Africa come back to the US. If this collapsed there would be no replacement.
- But, the HAS will be a very hotly contested piece of work.

- **IUCN - Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group- What it is and Why you should join. (Shane Mahoney, Jim Heffelfinger)**

- Because of the nature of the HAS, it is important that this Committee get involved. The committee was encouraged to have those with some expertise in hunting/conservation/management join SULI and participate in the review process and encourage other groups to do so. It happens that some groups (with agendas) produce letters regarding sustainable use that are not scientific (e.g., a recent letter on the Mexican Gray Wolf) and present views biased against sustainable use and these letters can carry a lot of weight.
- Even though we have seen a great recovery of many species in the US, other countries are struggling to sustain their wildlife populations. The US is the epicenter of hunting in the world and our story needs to be told.
- There is no cost to joining SULI and simply filling out the form to become a member of the group and submitting it is all that is needed. A form can be

downloaded: <https://iucnsuli.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SULi-Membership-Form-2021-2025-v.0512.pdf>

- the form can be submitted to Shane or Jim at: shane@conservationvisions.com
- jheffelfinger@azgfd.gov

- **Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Program (Dave Windsor)**

- Dave (CLFT Program Director) reported on the creation of several videos to enhance the online distance learning modules previously developed. In addition, Dave provided a presentation to the Committee on the development of the virtual trapping workshop that has been created and was filmed recently by DJ Case and Associates. We anticipate the program will be available for use in the coming weeks.
- <https://clft.org/past-programs>
- <https://clft.org/conservation-hunting-america-online>
 - Conservation & Hunting in America (C&HA) is an online distance learning program for natural resource agency professionals to explore the conservation theories, policy, and practices that apply to hunting and the sustainable uses of wildlife in North America.
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 - This program grew from our highly successful Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLFT) workshops with content being delivered by over 20 experts from the natural resource profession. The program is comprised of approximately 16 hours of total learning, divided into 11 hours of self-directed digital learning interspersed with (5) 1 hour facilitated discussion sessions. Each cohort will have a CLFT staff facilitator and on occasion 1 or 2 guest experts to help answer questions about the material covered during each discussion.
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 - Cohort sizes are kept small and maintain the same 8-12 participants throughout to ensure meaningful conversation and the opportunity for every participant to ask questions and reflect on how the topics apply to their professional responsibilities. To ensure that every participant can get their questions answered, each group will also have a discussion board, allowing questions to be sent to CLFT staff at any time while participants explore the digital content.
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 - Each cohort is conducted over a 15-day period with Zoom discussions scheduled twice a week at predetermined times.
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 - Program participants are expected to have access to the internet, computer with a camera, and microphone in order to fully engage and complete the course. It is expected that the total experience will require about 90-120 minutes per day on average, spread over 11 continuous working days.

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- The Wildlife Society allows 16 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in Category I of the Certified Wildlife Biologist Renewal/ Professional Development Certificate Program.
- <https://clft.org/hunting-conservation-online>
 - Hunting for Conservation (HfC) online is designed specifically for university students majoring in natural resources who do not hunt and provides them with an understanding of the diverse values and important roles of hunting in North America. Course material is based on many of the same principles and goals of our in-person Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) workshops for natural resource agency employees.
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 - Through several modules, students explore the conservation theories, policy, and practices that apply to hunting and the sustainable uses of wildlife in North America. Content for the program was developed by CLfT staff and over two dozen CLfT instructors and presented in the forms of video presentations, written materials, and assessments.
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 - The program is a non-credit course hosted in partnership with Purdue University-Online Learning.
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 - Upon successful completion of the program, students receive a certificate and an electronic badge.
- **Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Partner with a Payer update (Tom Decker)**
 - This is an outreach program of the US-FWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) program that is designed to help manufacturers who pay excise taxes into the program see how those dollars benefit conservation initiatives.
 - See <https://partnerwithapayer.org/>
 - Tom also reported on the creation of a new Branch within FWS: Communication, Analysis and Partnerships (CAP).

- **Safari Club International (Regina Lennox)**

- **Beebe Frederick** provided a report on some of the current work of SCI: SCI is engaged in a number of cases **defending sustainable use of wildlife**. Among others, our current case load includes: defending the removal of Louisiana black bear from the Endangered Species Act list of threatened species; defending the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's issuance of permits allowing the import of leopard trophies from Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania; and defending the hunting of bears over bait in Idaho and Wyoming. Also, more specifically:

SCI is defending the **expansion of hunting opportunities on national wildlife refuges**. The Center for Biological Diversity sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to challenge the 2020 Hunt Fish rule, which expanded hunting and fishing on over 2 million acres and almost 100 national wildlife refuges across the country. CBD alleges that the Service failed to adequately consider the impact of this expansion, including potential harassment of ESA listed species from

increased hunter traffic and detrimental impact to listed species from expanded use of lead ammo and tackle. CBD has raised claims under the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

SCI, along with the NRA, Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, sought to intervene to defend the 2020 rule. The district court in Montana denied that motion, and SCI has appealed. Meanwhile, CBD and the Service are negotiating a settlement. CBD and the Service have informed the appeals court that they reached an agreement in principle, which would be implemented in part by the **2022** Hunt Fish Rule (i.e., this year's rule which was published last week, not the 2020 rule challenged in the lawsuit). The 2022 Hunt Fish Rule prohibits the use of lead ammo and tackle on newly opened hunting and fishing opportunities (18 refuges, ~38,000 acres). It also pledges to phase out lead ammo and tackle completely on the 18 refuges. The take away is that the 2022 Rule restricts lead ammo and tackle on a limited number of refuges, but it may reflect a trend of prohibiting use of traditional lead ammo (as well as fishing tackle) on refuges whenever the Service opens new hunting and fishing opportunities.

SCI has **defended hunting opportunities in Alaska for many years**. Most recently, in 2015, the National Park Service restricted certain hunting on National Preserves in Alaska. Primarily, the Service restricted an extended hunting season for wolves in certain remote game management units; hunting of black bears over bait; hunting of black bears with dogs; hunting of black bears in dens [done in certain Alaska Native communities in the winter]; and hunting of swimming caribou in certain remote units [also done by Alaska Native communities]. SCI, Alaska Professional Hunters Association, and the State sued to challenge these restrictions. In 2020, the National Park Service withdrew these restrictions. A group of organizations led by Alaska Wildlife Alliance sued to challenge the withdrawal rule. SCI, APHA, and the State intervened to defend the rule.

Most recently, the National Park Service has refused to defend the 2020 withdrawal rule. Instead, the case has proceeded with plaintiffs challenging the rule, and SCI et al. defending it. The National Park Service undertook rulemaking to presumably reinstate some of the restrictions. That rulemaking recently cleared the White House Office of Regulatory Affairs, which means it will soon be published as a proposed rule. We are not yet sure which restrictions have been reinstated, but "all of the above" is most likely.

SCI is also defending the 2020 delisting of gray wolves under the ESA. In 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Service removed the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act lists of endangered and threatened species in the lower 48 states. Three sets of plaintiffs representing a large number of groups sued to challenge that delisting. In 2021, a federal district court in California vacated that delisting and reinstated ESA protections for the wolves. SCI was the first organization to appeal; then the State of Utah; then the Federal Defendants. After ongoing mediation, the Ninth Circuit has ordered the Federal Defendants to provide a status report regarding their "internal deliberations on their approach to the appeal" by October 7. The Ninth Circuit has set an initial briefing schedule with opening briefs due in December. If the Federal Defendants do not go forward with the appeal, defending the delisting will be more difficult for SCI/NRA and the State of Utah, as well as a number of cattle growers organizations that were recently admitted to the case.

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- **Update: Best Management Practices for Trapping (Bryant White)**

- The BMP program continues to conduct research to evaluate trapping devices for furbearers and develop outreach materials to assist agencies with regulated trapping programs.
- Trap testing projects were conducted in 8 states during the 2021-22 trapping season and focused primarily on cable devices for the capture of bobcat, gray fox and swift fox. The Collarum trap (also a cable device) was tested on coyotes. Colony cage traps were tested on muskrats.
- Captured animals were necropsied during July in Madison, Wisconsin.
- During 2022-2023, if AFWA is able to get a grant through the American Rescue Plan, trapping field projects will be partnered with disease surveillance for SARS-Cov-2 in wildlife. Field projects will focus on the capture of bobcats, gray fox, kit fox, red fox, and coyote.
- New outreach materials have been developed including:
 - Science Briefs:
 - [Animal Welfare in Trapping](#)
 - [Animal Selectivity in Trapping](#)
 - [Sustainable Wildlife Use](#)
 - Conservation Briefs:
 - [Trapping and Public Safety](#)
 - [Trapping and North American Model of Wildlife Conservation](#)
 - [The Implication of a Statewide Ban on Trapping: The Massachusetts Experience](#)

- **Update: AIHTS Implementation and Trap Testing in Canada (Dave Kay)**

- The Canadian program and US BMP program continue to work in partnership on the evaluation of trapping devices. Lethal snares used for the capture of coyotes are being tested in Canada, and the program will soon begin testing these devices for the capture of wolves.