



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Agricultural Conservation Committee Report

Chair: Greg Johnson (KY)

Vice-Chair: Jim Leach (MN)

March 8, 2017

Davenport Grand Hotel – Spokane, WA

Committee Charge

The **Agricultural Conservation Committee** is charged with advancing administrative and legislative policies which create, enhance, and protect fish and wildlife habitat and expand recreational access on farm, ranch, and forest land. The Committee is also charged with helping document program and policy benefits and outcomes, as well as assessing the habitat risks and impacts from biomass production, food and fiber production, and urban expansion to inform Committee policy recommendations.

Meeting convened from 1:00-5:00pm on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, chaired by Commissioner Greg Johnson (KY).

Scheduled Discussion Items

Speakers and Presentations

- Bill Moritz (Michigan DNR) and Ed Boggess (MAFWA) gave a presentation on MAFWA's Monarch Conservation Coordination and Planning efforts, including an update on developing a regional framework for monarch conservation. MAFWA President has appointed an Interim Monarch Conservation Leadership Group, which includes representation from MAFWA, SEAFWA, and NEAFWA, that is charged with drafting a governance structure for the regional monarch conservation strategy.
- Dave Smith (Intermountain West Joint Venture) and Sal Palazzolo (Idaho Fish & Game) gave a presentation on ongoing efforts related to flood irrigation and working wet meadows efforts in the West, with a focus on how Farm Bill programs, and EQIP specifically, are being used to provide and enhance wildlife habitat. The Committee also discussed possible improvements to Farm Bill conservation programs to increase use and effectiveness of flood irrigation practices on the landscape.

2018 Farm Bill Platform Review and Discussion

- Committee leadership and AFWA staff provided an overview of the Association's work in preparation for the 2018 Farm Bill, including an update on the efforts of AFWA's 2018 Farm Bill Working Group. The Working Group met in January 2017 for a multi-day, in-person meeting to develop a draft of AFWA's Farm Bill platform. This draft document, AFWA's Policy Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill, was shared with the Committee in advance of the meeting for review.
- A lengthy discussion of AFWA's Farm Bill platform and recommendations took up the majority of the Committee's meeting, yielding several changes to the draft platform document. These changes included:
 - o Adding language to the Conservation Reserve Program section recommending that USDA consult state wildlife agencies for allowing grazing on additional CRP practices;
 - o Adding a recommendation that the restoration of native wetland and grassland vegetation and hydrology should contribute to the goals of WRE wetland functions and values; and
 - o Adding a recommendation for conservation programs to be implemented in a manner that supports the long-term health and sustainability of rural communities, agricultural production, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Following this discussion, the Committee approved a motion to recommend AFWA's Policy Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill (as amended) for adoption by the Directors at the AFWA Business Meeting.

Federal Agency Updates

- Ed Christopher from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided an brief update to the Committee on FWS efforts related to Farm Bill and private lands conservation. Due to time constraints, a full summary of the FWS update was provided to the Committee following the meeting via email.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency were both unable to send representation in-person, and instead provided a written update to AFWA staff prior to the meeting. Due to time constraints, both updates were provided to the Committee following the meeting via email.

Action Items

- The Agricultural Conservation Committee moved AFWA's Policy Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill as part of its committee report and recommended the document for adoption by the Directors at the AFWA Business Meeting.