****

**National Grants Committee Meeting**

**Sara Parker Pauley ‐ Chair**

**Tony Wasley ‐ Vice Chair**

**September 9, 2020**

**1:00PM – 3:00 PM (CST)**

Meeting convened at 1:00 PM by Sara Parker Pauley. 73 participants attended, including 5 (out of 8) current Committee members:

* Sara Parker Pauley (Chair)
* Tony Wasley (Vice Chair)
* Dale Garner (members)
* Catherine Sparks (member)
* Bryan Burhans (Member)

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

* Call to Order, Introductions, Announcements, and Agenda Review – ***Sara Parker Pauley***

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM (CST). The Chair welcomed attendees.

* Approval of the March 2020 (NA Conference) Meeting Minutes - ***Sara Parker Pauley***

The meeting minutes from March 2020 meeting were approved.

* Approval of July 2020 Meeting (NGC members call) - ***Sara Parker Pauley***

The meeting minutes from July 2020 meeting were approved.

* Update on 2020 R3 MultiState Conservation Grant Program – ***John Lord, AFWA***

“Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act” was approved in December 2020 as part of overall budget package. As part of that, $5 Million were made available for R3 Grants.

AFWA in cooperation with AFWA Committees’ Chairs established the Technical Review Teams that included subject matter experts to make sure that those funds were used properly and where they were most needed. A Priority List was sent to FWS. And we hope we are in track to get those grants awarded in time.

The great thing about the Multistate Conservation Grant Program is that it is a great partnership between the Association and the WSFR Program. And of course, this puts a great amount of work on WSFR staff by creating new program that adds more grants.

A list of the awarded grants will be in AFWA’s Website.

* WSFR Update – ***Bob Curry, WSFR***

*2020 R3 MSCGP Grants –* The Director has the package. She had few questions and we sent the information back. We expect that she will be signing off on the package in a very near future.

* Changes to MSCGP Processes and Role of NGC – ***Sara Parker Pauley***

During the last call with the National Grants Committee (NGC) we talked how the role of NGC is changing while the process is undergoing changes. For those who reviewed the Call Minutes (July 2020), we suggested that after this meeting we might have some time where members of NGC might spend some time looking at the new process, the strategic plan, hearing from partners how this process is working and talk about refining the scope for NGC. That would include how we look at the priorities, how we do a better job in the back end of grants making sure that information is getting out or we are hearing about the results of the grants that are funded.

Sara opened the discussions to the committee members.

Cathy Sparks asked if there was a survey for the Technical Review Team to get a feedback on the new process.

John Lord - This is the next step for AFWA. We are planning to have a formal survey to get some feedback from the reviewers’ perspective. We have received some anecdotal feedback on how things went.

Just to give some background, we had 4 Technical Review Teams with over 60 reviewers (from state and federal agencies, NGOs, Industry and other partners) who volunteered to review the Initial Proposals and the Full Grant Proposals.

Tony Wasley – Expressed gratitude for all the reviewers that really added value to the process. One of the reasons why we are having this discussion right now is because we recognize the limitations of the committee members being able to understand the breadth of the projects from various subjects that addressed National Conservation Needs. With this new process we have seen some great improvements with having the subject matter experts evaluate those projects. In doing so we can have a lot more confidence in relative value of those proposals specific to those areas.

We may still have some challenges and the need to have more discussions. How do we begin to compare across Strategic Priorities and how do we emphasize which priority in which time? It’s one thing to rank projects within their priority but when we start looking across different priorities, it is a bit of a challenge.

* WSFR Update – ***Bob Curry, WSFR***

*WSFR Update on 2020 MSCGP Cycle –* For FY 2020 after sequestration and some carry over, $6.939 Million were available for Traditional MSCGP. 40 projects were recommended by AFWA, they were approved by the Fish and Wildlife Director and were awarded for a total amount of $6.928 Million.

*2020 R3 MSCGP* update was covered earlier.

*2021 MSCGP Grants –* For Traditional MSCGP we estimate it will be about $6.5 Million available after sequestration and recoveries. For R3 MSCGP there will be about $5 Million available after sequestration and recoveries.

I also would like to brief shortly on PR Modernization Act. After the act was signed into law in December 2019, Paul issued an high level Implementation Directions back in March. Within WSFR we established a Wildlife Restoration Hunter Ed Advisory Team, with subject matter experts to address hunter and recreational shooter activities under the new act. Those were simply to just provide guidance and review for issues or requests that came up for funding. In coordination with the JTF we have established Modernizing PR Guidance Team (July 2020). The Guidance Team purpose is to develop draft guidance prior to rulemaking which hopefully will happen in 2022. The PR Modernization Guidance Team is taking the comments/issues from the Advisory Team and addressing them and looking at using those to provide guidance for the whole program. We are using the communication process that we have for the JTF. Modernizing PR Guidance Team is comprised by state directors, subject matter experts, federal subject matter experts and the team is working through a charter testing a new protocol we have working with JTF on developing WSFR policy.

* 2021 MSGP Priority List Discussions and Recommendation for the State Directors – ***John Lord/AFWA***

The major change for the NGC from last year to this year is that we are trying to be more strategic how we identify the priorities. The other change was establishing the Technical Review Teams with the subject matter experts to review and make the recommendations and forward those to NGC instead of NGC having to review all the proposals, which wasn’t as effective as the new process.

A summary of the recommended priority list was shared with the NGC and it was shown on the screen for the participants.

The available funding was calculated by first deducting National Survey required funds (about $2 million) for 2021.

The Association in its funding principles, several years ago, identified a few funding areas to be funded annually as priorities of the Association. Those include Coordination, the Management Assistance Team and the Farm Bill.

The R3 grants have a separate funding pot. This is the new funding that was created through PR Modernization Act. That only funds the R3 Initiatives on the Wildlife side.

And you notice the rest of the priorities, Science and Conservation, Relevancy, Inclusion and Diversity and Trust Fund Stewardship. It is worth noting that Relevancy, Inclusion and Diversity is a brand-new type of priority for the Association based on the Association’s new Strategic Plan.

When you look at the funds and break it over the 5 areas, there weren’t enough grants recommended under the Coordination and Trust Fund Stewardship to use the funding allocated for that area, so we allocated the difference to the other priorities. We recommended as many of the projects as we could under this budget that were ranked by the subject matter experts. So, not everything that was recommended by the review team was funded. Also, it’s not really a clean break of the amount of funding that went from one priority to the other priority and that is based upon the relative size of some of the grants that were recommended to us. I hope this explanation makes it clear how we took what review teams did and put it together in a way that funded the maximum amount of grants that they felt had a merit to be funded and also utilize as much of available funding as possible without using more than is available.

Sara asked for a motion to approve the Recommended Priority List. The motion was moved and approved by the National Grants Committee members.

* An Overview on 2020 MSCGP Grant – Quantify and Communicate the Benefits of WSFR Excise Tax Payment to Strengthen State-Federal-Industry Relations - ***Jim Curcuruto, National Shooting Sports Foundation***

Traditionally, the MSCGP has been the major reason why the NSSF has been involved in R3. We would have not been able to conduct most of the projects without this funding.

Few years back we received a grant through MSCGP – *Future Gun Owners of America*. About 24 million Americans had interest on gun ownership and when we conducted the study, we learnt more about them, segmented them in different groups and that information is coming really handy right now. We are projecting to have 8 million new gun owners this year and we have got a major head start because of that grant funded through MSCGP mane years ago. We are working with Industry in messages and images to reach out to these people today and we don’t have to wait a year from now. We are seeing great results.

*Quantify and Communicate the Benefits of WSFR Excise Tax Payment to Strengthen State-Federal-Industry Relations* - Industry’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) contributions exceed $1 billion annually. As more manufacturers are acquired by parent companies with no connection to the outdoors, attempts to seeks exemption from excise tax payments are expected. Many executives don’t understand how their sales depend on outdoor opportunities created by WSFR. Targeted communications will be developed to communicate to industry in their language – sales and customers — with messages delivered from within their ranks. The goal of this project is to document historical license and industry growth and correlate these with WSFR investments to show how resource management efforts and industry are co-dependent by sharing case studies that quantify the sales generated per WSFR dollar spent to help executives’ questions regarding the return on investment from their WSFR payments.

**Action Item:**

Approve 2021 (R3 and Traditional) MultiState Conservation Grant Program recommended Priority List

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM