**SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER**

**Chair: Jason Olive (Arkansas)**

**Vice-Chair: Jon Sjoberg (Nevada)**

**Date: March 9, 2021**

**Time: 10:00-12:00 CT** **Virtual**

**Subcommittee Charge:** Identify, support, and communicate science, legal, policy and public involvement issues related to water that are of importance to fish and wildlife; and to support and build on recommendations from AFWA Drought Forum.

**Agenda**

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| 10:00   | Call to Order/Review Agenda – No changes |
| 10:05   | Approval of Minutes from the September 2020 meeting - Gary, Ben - Approved |
| 10:10  | Government Affairs Updates – *David Lind, AFWA* * Summary document will be sent out to Subcommittee members
* Great American Outdoors Act- LWCF, etc.
	+ Enacted last year
	+ LWCF has a permanent appropriation
		- $405 million federal
		- $360 million state grants
		- $135 million other non-federal
		- Secretarial Order – Rescinded by Biden
			* Implementation task force – States would get $105 million for habitat and SGCN
			* Permanent acquisition
	+ $500 million for NPS, USFS, etc for maintenance backlog
* America’s Conservation Enhancement Act- NFHP, etc.
	+ Included NAWCA, NFWF, Chronic Wasting Disease, and NFHP
	+ Chesapeake Bay Program
		- $90 million authorized escalating to $92M for FY2025
	+ NFHP $7.2 million authorization – Unclear if all parts of the program or just projects
		- On appropriation list
		- 5% administration
		- $2 million for tech and science for 5 federal agencies
* WRDA 2020
	+ Multiple titles
	+ AIS funding provided to $90 million
		- $30 million watercraft
		- $15 million aquatic plants
		- $3 million for monitoring
		- Research and development
		- Asian Carp for $25 million
		- Pilot program for $10 million for Upper MO River Basin to mitigate effects on public infrastructure
		- USCOE to update guidance and expand their research both species and waters
		- Two new locations for inspections
		- Remove plants
		- In Rivers and Harbor Act – Slow Asian Carp in all six sub-basins
		- Alpine Lakes program - $25 million
		- Asian Carp Program in Cumberland and TN Rivers – YY technology
	+ Inland projects – 65-35 cost share to FY2031 – $113M
	+ Natural infrastructure
		- Emphasize non-tech support and resiliency planning
		- Update planning guidance on sea level rise
		- Small flooding control
		- Flood protection
		- Feasibility studies to include on projects to include long and short-term benefits
	+ Planning assistance to states to include water supply
	+ NAS study on sharing water supplies and demand
	+ Inland waterways – Non-federal interests can do work
	+ Upper MS River environmental work - $40 million
		- $15 million – monitoring and research
* Energy Act of 2020
	+ Committee to coordinate activities between agencies
	+ Smart energy and water efficiency - $15 million for advanced tech grant
	+ Fits into Water Security Grand challenge but not directly
		- Wastewater to water
		- Small modular water systems
		- Desalination
	+ Waterpower – Green energy and hydropower, particularly pumped-storage
	+ RD program to reduced environmental effects to DOE
* Executive Orders since September relevant to SOW
	+ Regulatory freeze in place on all orders published but not implemented
		- USACOE Nationwide permits – Likely will change with 300’ threshold on streams
		- List will be provided
		- Climate Change – 30X30
			* 90 days to build plans
			* Good collaboration noted
			* Existing protections will be included and will be multiple use
* Omnibus Appropriations relevant to SOW
	+ $1.08 billion for water conservation and rehab projects
* RAWA is almost ready for introduction in both chambers
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| 10:40  | 2020 AFWA Water Database Webinar Next Steps Update – *C. Estes, Life Member* * August 2020 webinar site is periodically updated with USGS webinars and relevant information
* Matrix of water data sources, etc.
	+ Using NFHP 2006/2012 Federal Caucus matrix as a conceptual model to show who has what information and resources to support water data collection, analysis and decision making (will be expanded to include states and NGO’s)
	+ Internet of Water, WSWC and WestFAST – Trying to develop initial version of our prototype per the August webinar
		- Likely will take six months to complete an initial version to review and supplement with our workgroup under the SOW
		- The concept of the matrix may also help inform the Interagency Operational Plan content that has to be developed by the NFHP Board by next October
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| 10:50  | FWCA Next Steps – *Jen Sheehan, AR* * Recommendations were moved to Committee
	+ Motion to move recommendations to Committee – Jon, Gary - Approved
	+ Environmental Review/FWCA Committee is next step to get established
		- Some overlap with existing committees
		- Jen has discussed with Wildlife Policy Committee – Really only overlap is water and no opposition
		- Education materials on FWCA
			* In progress
			* State Wetland Manager Association discussion has occurred and are willing to assist in developing materials
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| 11:00 | IFC/AFS Instream Flow & Water Level Conservation Training Center MSCG Update – *C. Estes, Life Member* * The project steering committee (SC) has met twice and will meet again soon. SC Members: Weedman, Austen- co chairs Others : Carslisle, Orth, Hardy, Reiser, Stalknaker, Locke, Annear, Estes
* Project requires business plan to be developed. Preliminary outline is nearing completion as of 3/1/2021.
* Plans are to circulate a future draft of the Plan for review by SOW, FWRPC, Fish and Wildlife Chiefs and other water stakeholder interests (assigned to each SC member) for review and comments within a few months.
* Purpose of the Plan is to establish and fund a full-time instream flow and water level conservation (IFWLC) training center.
* Workshop at November AFS conference in Baltimore related to the IFWLC Training Center project in is tentatively planned.
* Startup issues and challenges with COVID may require project schedule adjustments
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| 11:15  | Update on USGS Gaging Gap Analysis and Funding – *Sue Lowry, ICWP** 53 organizations signed on to multi-organization support letter of support for USGS gage funding- led by ICWP- historically signed by AFWA
	+ All levels of AFS and Wildlife Society are welcome to sign – Contact Sue Lowry if organization other than AFWA who hasn’t previously signed wants to be added. 2021 draft letter should be ready in a few weeks.
* HR2 – Support for large increase to federal priority program - $45 million to fully fund and update up to 1,500 more gages.
	+ Cooperative water program is the other side – Some increases recently.
	+ Has been flatlined with about 50 gages lost in the last few years.
	+ New gage may or may not qualify – flood forecasting, tribal boundary, and compacts are priorities.
* Get lost gages back online ($1.5 million) and increase coverage with climate perspective.
* WSWC and ICWP will have a virtual meeting – April 14-15 with USGS
	+ ICWP.org has registration info and no charge
* Gage losses are from increased maintenance and operation costs.
* USGS Gap Analysis– *C. Estes, Life Member*
	+ Have obtained support from ICWP and WSWC to encourage USGS to redo 2013 gap analysis which includes data priorities and needs for next generation of gages
		- How to support next generation of gages? – DE, IL and CO Rivers so far.
		- Need to keep and expand physical gages for calibration to support modeling and other approaches for improving flow estimation modeling of ungaged locations and sites with limited historical records.
		- Both data collection and development of next generation equipment, methods and modeling need to be supported. There is a concern with funds being moved away from standard gages to high tech next generation gages (i.e. potentially eliminating data needed to affirm and test next generation technology applications and limitations nationwide).
			* Discussions are ongoing regarding reestablishment of an Advisory Committee on Water (similar to the former USGS ad-hoc Water Census Committee).
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| 11:20  | Discussion on future webinars (e.g. USGS NHD and NHD+) – *Jason Olive, AR* * Water data crossover discussion last August was successful.
* Provide ideas for new webinars to Jason.
* USGS – NHD+ Overview Webinar- idea is based on AFWA 2016 letter to EPA and USGS regarding flow alteration data gaps.
	+ Another key issue is that NHD+ Hi Resolution has a number of gaps across the country.
	+ WOTUS regulations assessment also pointed out the issue with the lack of full NHD+ universal 50 state coverage.
	+ Presentation would be given by USGS NHD+ national lead on basics, status and gaps – August 2021 timeframe
		- Need to know USGS approach as many states are working on the hydrogaphy data issue.
		- Need to have staff engaged too, and they need to know how this aspect of USGS works and how to participate.
		- Start with a high-level course basics discussion on status and why it’s important – maybe have an advanced uses follow-up at a later time.
	+ Indicate interest to Jason Olive – will send a poll to SOW to gauge interest.
* ICWP – As a result of last August’s webinar, Gary Whelan was invited to give a presentation on the NFHP database and ACE Act in May.
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| 11:30  | SOW appointments reminder – *Jason Olive, AR* * Reminder to have staff reach out to get them added as members as they are more open than Committees
	+ FWRPC members can appoint staff as members to the subcommittee
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| 11:35   | New WAFWA Water Liaison – *Christopher Estes, Life Member* * Cindy Loeffler has been filling this role until retirement in December.
* Purpose is to integrate western water issues, serve as WAFWA liaison to WSWC and AFWA, and help inform national AFWA outcomes.
	+ To ensure SOW and FWRPC efforts on items such as water issues and resources are communicated to Congress.
* Kevin Mayes, TX Parks and Wildlife Department, has been nominated to replace Cindy Loffler, with a final decision to be made at the summer meeting of WAFWA.
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| 11:40  | Discuss SOW Priorities, Operations & Next Meeting – *Jason Olive, AR / Jon Sjoberg, NV*  |
|  | * Bridge to all other AFWA committees that are dealing with water- per AFWA Drought Action Plan.
* Jason has been keeping other involved AFWA committees informed, including: Climate, T&E, Oceans, Energy and Wildlife, etc.
	+ - Requesting agenda items from others for this meeting.
		- Looking for outreach options to each committee.
* Work-plan
	+ - Meetings are built around it.
		- 2021 Priorities – FWCA, IFC Training, Government affairs, USGS Gaging and Databases.
* Next meeting – AFWA Sept 12-15 – Providence, RI, planned in-person.
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| 11:55 | Action Items and Meeting Wrap – *Jason Olive, AR* * Poll on USGS NHD+ webinar interest will come from Jason.
* Jennifer will present the FWCA ad-hoc committee’s proposals to FWRPC.
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| 12:00 | Adjourn |

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