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**Wildlife Resources Policy Committee Report**

Chair: Jim Douglas

Vice-chair: Chuck Sykes

Meeting of September 14, 2016

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting

Philadelphia, PA

**Committee Charge:** *To discuss and develop recommendations on Association positions related to federal laws, regulations and policies concerning habitat conservation, wildlife resources and related funding for such programs as well as wildlife management practices including those concerned with problem or nuisance wildlife, and emerging issues (e.g., commercial trade). The committee also stays abreast of threatened and endangered species wildlife issues, state legislation pertaining to wildlife management and wildlife diversity funding initiatives.*

List of Meeting Attendees

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| Jim Douglas (NGPC)\* | Bill Reeves (TWRA)\* | Steve Beam (KFW) |
| Ollie Torgerson (MAFWA)\* | Michelle Tacconelli (SCI)\* | Mark Gudlin (TWRA)\* |
| Keith Norris (TWS)\* | John Bowers (GDNR)\* | Larry Kruckenberg (WAFWA) |
| Catherine Sparks (RIDEM) | Sean Saville (AFWA) | Todd Bishop (IDNR)\* |
| Jake George (KDWPT)\* | Jeremy Coleman (FWS) | Dale Nolte (APHIS-WS) |
| Clayton Wolf (TPWD)\* | Mylea Bayless (BCI) | Martin Mendoza (APHIS-WS) |
| Mitch Marcus (INDNR)\* | Frank Quamen (BLM) | Joshua Winchell (FWS) |
| Breck Carmichael (SCDNR)\* | Reid DeWalt (CPW) |  |

\* Denotes Committee Member

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

The meeting convened at 10:06am by Chairman Jim Douglas. He asked participants to introduce themselves.

Wildlife Services Report

Martin Mendoza (USDA-APHIS) reported that Janet Bucknell is the newest member of their leadership team. She replaces Charles Brown. Wildlife Services received funding for a training academy to provide state-of-the-art training on wildlife damage issues. An MOU was signed with Mississippi State University. A federal court ruling has vacated depredation orders for double-crested cormorants. This will affect statewide permits from the FWS to Wildlife Services. This leaves aquaculture producers with only nonlethal measures to control depredation. The FWS may need to do a new EIS to address this problem. Wildlife services is working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on black vulture permitting and the Farm Bureau on solutions. A white paper on this issue is under development. Dale Nolte reported that feral swine control continues at the local level. Last year four states moved to detection status. A contingency fund will be maintained for feral swine reemergence. We expect to announce the elimination of feral swine in New Jersey and Wisconsin next year. Helicopters have been a good tool. We will add three helicopters next week for a total of five. Wildlife Services is looking for new ideas such as videos to help educate the public about feral swine.

Jim Douglas-What is the status of feral pig toxicants?

Martin Mendoza-We are still working on developing a sodium nitrate toxicant. The drug approval package was sent to EPA. We hope to start field trials in January 2018. The AFWA Fish and Wildlife Health committee sent a letter supporting registration. European guard dogs continue to be evaluated to protect livestock from depredation. Seventeen producers are participating in an evaluation. This past August four dogs were removed for showing aggression or improper handling. We hope to analyze data and have results and a draft paper available at the North American conference.

Jim Douglas-Have guard dogs been successful in other countries?

Martin Mendoza-Yes, they seem to be effective in keeping wolves and grizzlies away from livestock. These dogs weigh 150 pounds and we have identified the breeds in Europe that work

Keith Norris-Are you only working with sheep?

Martin Mendoza–Yes.

Keith Norris-Can guard dogs be used to keep wild sheep and domestic sheep separated?

Martin Mendoza-There have not been any studies on this.

Breck Carmichael-What states have eliminated swine?

Dale Nolte-New Jersey, Wisconsin.

Joshua Winchell-Have any diseases been found?

Dale Nolte-Yes, swine brucellosis.

Question-In the states where swine has been removed do those states have statutory control?

Dale Nolte-Yes they do.

Jim Douglas-In those states, have dollars been set aside to do monitoring?

Dale Nolte-We maintain funding for monitoring; early detection is key.

Clayton Wolf-Texas is doing experimental field trials.

Martin Mendoza-Texas has been a great partner.

Jim Douglas-How did you overcome non-target problems?

Clayton Wolf-We are working on a weighted lid delivery system and Louisiana is testing facial recognition of hogs. There will be better technology available in the future.

Larry Clark-AFWA has been supportive of sodium nitrate labeling. Delivery exclusion and seasonal or spatial distribution are important to avoidance of non-target species. We are working with Texas on both swine and vulture control. We are using magnets to avoid non-target animals. This is a cheap solution. We are confident we can address the non-target issue.

Martin Mendota-Wildlife Services has been facilitating a new multiagency MOU on aircraft strikes for the past three to four years. Nine agencies have an interest in signing. Discussions between Fish and Wildlife Service-Ecological Services and the Federal Aviation Administration over mitigation language has slowed progress. The MOU was not intended to address mitigation but is to be used to facilitate discussions when issues arise. There is a meeting with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service this week to discuss the MOU. If an agreement can’t be reached, one option would be to proceed without the Fish and Wildlife Service. This is not desirable since the Service should be at the table. We hope to have more information next week.

Jim Douglas-Thanked Wildlife Services for their report.

Amphibian & Reptile Subcommittee Report

Cathy Sparks-The Amphibian and Reptile subcommittee met yesterday. The subcommittee is looking at policy and regulation needs to strengthen state authority. Several states are examining their regulations. Northeast Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation presented on two pieces of work related to messaging on human transportation of diseases. An FAQ on Rana virus and fact sheet on disinfection were distributed. Both of these resources will be helpful and can be distributed electronically. We are looking at Bsal as an opportunity to address wildlife disease not covered under agriculture or human health. We are thinking about ways to enhance state authority. There are no action items from the subcommittee but we have updates on a few additional items. Last summer the subcommittee held an interim conference call. We reviewed the work plan and discussed mitigation. This was driven by a report from the US Geological Survey about a commercial shipment of Chinese Firebelly Newts. These newts carried a virus that cause mortality in carp. We want to adjust the work plan to be nimble and use conference calls to discuss hot topics. The work plan will be finalized in November. The subcommittee will be distributing the Bsal response plan. Priya has more information on that. I would like to thank Priya for her support of the subcommittee.

Jim Douglas-Do you also interact with the Wildlife Health Committee?

Priya Nanjappa-Yes, this is on their agenda and we are working closely with the committee.

Jim Douglas-What communication pathways are you using?

Priya Nanjappa-I can work with Mark to send information to this committee.

Priya Nanjappa-For emerging disease issues, if we don’t have the infrastructure to address wildlife diseases then we won’t be prepared to respond.

Jim Douglas-We had carp virus and the public thought that it was something good, but it is not.

Cathy Sparks-I appreciate your question on communication, we would like to improve communication.

Jim Douglas-We want to be helpful to the subcommittee.

Cathy Sparks-We can provide you with a copy of our agenda.

Mitch Marcus-Is there a connection to field staff and the work of the subcommittee?

Priya Nanjappa-We maintain a list of state contacts.

Bear Diversionary Feeding Policy Statement

Jim Douglas-The bear diversionary policy statement was left off the agenda of the AFWA Executive Committee last year. We discussed at the Executive Committee yesterday and they would like more information on the genesis of the policy statement. Can someone here shed some light on that?

Ed Boggess-When I was chair of this committee, I worked with Cal Baca and asked the Human and Wildlife Conflict Working Group to work on the policy. There were issues with bear conflict in western and eastern states and in my state of Minnesota. The intent of the policy was to avoid bear conflicts such as the public’s request for agencies to feed bears outside urban areas.

Jim Douglas-Some Directors on the Executive Committee understand the need but wanted more information. There were also suggestions for adding new language to the policy statement.

Ed Boggess-There were several attempts to pass the resolution but concerns about hunting regulations have been raised. We discussed this with the AFWA Executive Committee but this has been slow moving.

Jim Douglas-I would like the working group to do some additional work on this so we can keep this moving along.

Update on White-nose Syndrome

Jeremy Coleman-White-nose syndrome is now found in 29 states and 5 provinces. The disease was most recently detected in Mississippi, Nebraska and Oklahoma and we had our furthest westward detection in King County Washington. This represented a major change in the spread of the disease. Two species found in Washington are vulnerable. We are working with state and federal agencies to do surveillance, but challenges exist. The western states would like to work with other states to do surveillance. We will need western states to help with the response. The disease is coming and we can expect western species to suffer the same fate as species in the east.

We have implemented regional responses. Some treatment prospects look promising. We are teaming up with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to create a fund for research on treatment and management. The northern long-eared bat is listed as threatened and the status of the little brown bat is being assessed. We are updating a guidance document for decontamination protocol. In the West, user groups are cooperating to prevent the spread of white-nose syndrome. We have new surveillance protocol. Some hibernating bats in the West could be vulnerable. We just announced $1M in grants to states to support research and response. We are planning to provide grants for six years and are pushing the research community to come up with a treatment.

Jim Douglas-Asked if there were any questions?

Update on Regional Bat Conservation Efforts

Mylea Bayless-Thanked the committee for the opportunity to give an update on North American bat monitoring. Thirty-one states are collecting pilot data. USGS is providing funding for a coordinator. Plans are to hire a data manager and analyst. In March, web training for on the ground field implementation will be held. We encourage states to respond to a survey. I will provide Mark and Jen with a link. The North American Bat Conservation Alliance is developing a conservation strategy. A bats and wind energy cooperative is surveying states on incentives for wind energy. I will send Mark information to distribute to the committee. There is a growing concern about the impacts of wind on migratory bats such as hoary, yellow and silver-haired bats. We are working closely with Priya and the Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation on wildlife disease response. I can provide more information to Mark.

Mitch Marcus-Is this a passive system? There is work going on in Indiana.

Mylea Bayless-Yes.

Jim Douglas-Who is involved in the alliance?

Mylea Bayless-There are four US working groups and one from Mexico. The alliance includes state and federal partners. Jeremy Coleman serves as one of the representatives. A Letter of Intent was signed between the US and Mexico.

Human/Wildlife Conflicts Working Group Report

Brian Wakeling-Several handouts were distributed. Two task forces were formed to work on best practices for deer and bear conflicts. The purpose is to identify strengths and weakness and share information. We would like the committee to review our work and want to keep Directors informed. We plan to submit these for publication. The timeline is to wrap these up in about a year. Both task forces reported that a lot of information is available and they would like to pull this together in one place and get Director’s support. We will be polling the working group to see if there are other issues of importance.

Jim Douglas-I forwarded the Diversionary Feeding Policy Statement to the AFWA Executive Committee. They had some questions for the working group. The Executive Committee had some cautions about the document and the approach because there are differences in bear management amongst the states. I may share rough outlines of your work with the Executive Committee at the December meeting.

Brian Wakeling-I would encourage you to share the outlines broadly.

Jim Douglas-I will discuss with Brian and Mark. This is good work and it is appreciated by the committee.

Brian Wakeling-We are happy to get direction.

Update on Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources

Mark Humpert-AFWA has hired Sean Saville as the Blue Ribbon Panel campaign manager using funds contributed by the states. Sean introduced himself to the committee. Collin O’Mara of the National Wildlife Federation and Jeff Crane of the Congressional Sportsman’s Foundation are leading legislative efforts. In July, Congressman Don Young (R-AK) and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (D-MI) introduced HR5650, the Recovering American’s Wildlife Act. This bill reflects the funding recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel, $1.3 billion annually to state fish and wildlife agencies to implement State Wildlife Action Plans. Thus far three Republicans and five democrats have co-sponsored the legislation. The goal is to get at least 10 Republicans and 10 Democrats to co-sponsor the bill. It is hoped that a companion bill in the Senate will be introduced yet this fall. Although there is little chance the bill in the House will advance this fall, we expect that bills will be introduced in the House and Senate early next Congress and that a campaign will be launched to build support behind the legislation. Dr. Steve Kellert and Dr. Steve Williams are co-chairing a working group to develop recommendations on how to maintain/improve relevance for fish and wildlife conservation to address the second recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel. The working group has met once and will meet a second time before the end of the year.

Committee Work Plan

It was suggested that the Human Wildlife Conflict Working Group add a bullet under expected actions for the best practices work that they are undertaking.

Jim Douglas-I am always open to additional ideas for the committee and if there is a need for a conference call, let me know.

The meeting adjourned at 11:28am.

**Progress and Opportunities**

Progress made toward achievement of Goal 2 in the Association's Strategic Plan:

* Protect state agency statutory authority for management of fish and wildlife resources within their borders
* Promote state, provincial, territorial and federal agency understanding of authority and jurisdictional issues.

**Threats and Emerging Issues Identified**

None

**New Opportunities Identified**

None identified

**Action Items**

None

***Submitted by***: Jim Douglas