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**Teaming With Wildlife Committee Report**

Chair: Carter Smith

Vice-chair: David Whitehurst

Meeting of September 13, 2017

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting

Philadelphia, PA

**Committee Charge:** The Teaming With Wildlife Committeeadvocates for long-term, dedicated funding and annual appropriations for the conservation of at-risk fish and wildlife, nature-based recreation and conservation education. The committee supports the development, implementation and revision of State Wildlife Action Plans and builds, supports and coordinates the national Teaming With Wildlife coalition.

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

The meeting was convened at 8:08am. Carter Smith asked participants to introduce themselves.

Dave Chanda-Thanked the committee for their work on conservation funding.

Carter Smith-We have never had a better champion than Dave and thanked him for his support of funding and the Blue Ribbon Panel.

Carter Smith-Asked for a motion to approve the notes from the March meeting. Rick Jacobson offered a motion, it was seconded and approved unanimously.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants-Mark Humpert reported that the administration, House of Representatives and the Senate have all proposed increases for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program in in FY2017. The Administration and House propose increased funding for state competitive grants, whereas the Senate is proposing a $2M increase for formula grants.

Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources-Carter Smith Introduced Sean Saville, AFWA’s new Blue Ribbon Panel Campaign Manager. Sean previously worked for the National Audubon Society where he served as a grassroots coordinator and worked on the RESTORE Act. Carter welcomed Sean and said he is excited by his skill set and passion. The Blue Ribbon Panel recommended $1.3 billion for fish and wildlife conservation but there was a second recommendation that is every bit as important. Two leading thinkers, Steve Kellert and Steve Williams brought the issue of relevancy before the Blue Ribbon Panel. Demographics and pressures on agencies are changing so as we think about broadening funding streams we should also be thinking about relevancy. Steve Kellert and Steve Williams are leading a working group to look at this issue and advance the goals of the Blue Ribbon Panel. There will be a special session on relevancy at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Ann Forstchen will be helping with that.

Ann Forstchen-We will be holding the special session at the North American to make relevancy a reality. We will align with the Blue Ribbon Panel’s work.

Dan Taylor-What is the delivery mechanism?

Carter Smith-The Relevancy Working Group will produce a report with recommendations that provide a framework.

Mark Humpert-Congressman Don Young and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell introduced HR5650 in July. The bill proposes dedicating $1.3 billion annually in funding from energy and mineral royalties to state-based implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. We have developed a list of Republican targets that we will be meeting with in the House. We have set a goal of securing at least 20 co-sponsors.

Questions were asked about offsets, match and if money will be taken away from NAWCA.

Mark Humpert-An offset has not been identified, the source of funding is the same as LWCF but is not intended to compete with existing programs. Securing match may be a challenge for some states.

Naomi Edelson-Collin O’Mara was planning to attend the meeting but had a death in the family. Many National Wildlife Federation affiliates are engaged on the funding issue. We need to show the co-sponsors there is interest and a strong showing of support. If we have a bill with no co-sponsors, what does that say? We have identified 40 Republican targets, but any Republican will do. If you have a Republican in your state you can reach out to then you should do that. Congress is only in session a few more weeks and members can only co-sponsor when they are in session. You should reach out to your members. We would like at least 10 Republicans on the bill. We need to show the sponsors that we are a force out there.

Dave Chanda-When we go to the Hill on State Wildlife Grants, some appropriators say they can’t sign Dear Colleague letters. The same will be true for this effort.

Naomi Edelson-We should still ask appropriators if they can co-sponsor. Have any appropriators co-sponsored?

Mark Humpert-Yes, Congressman Fortenberry.

Naomi Edelson-Appropriators will the hardest to get.

Carter Smith-We are fortunate to have Collin O’Mara and Jeff Crane helping to lead this effort. Can we share the 40 targets with this group and Directors so we can coordinate?

Naomi Edelson-Great idea, we can share the list.

Bill Bates-Getting Republicans from public lands states would be helpful.

Comment-The offset will be the hardest part of this. Whose role is it to develop a list of offsets?

Mark Humpert-We can also focus on costs savings to make our case. The Lake Erie Water Snake and New England cottontail are good examples.

Sean Saville-We can make a case for the cost of inaction.

Keith Norris-It is not in our interest to say who we will take money from.

Joe Burns-You might want to emphasize that we don’t want to identify an offset.

Carter Smith-Asked Sean Saville to help coordinate outreach to the 40 Republican targets.

David Whitehurst-It is important when we meet with offices that we coordinate and report back to Sean. It is very important that we communicate those efforts.

Carter Smith-Thanked Naomi Edelson and Keith Norris for their work on the Blue Ribbon Panel.

Mark Humpert-We hope to have a Senate bill introduced soon. We are working on securing a western Republican as the lead.

Naomi Edelson-There is also an eastern Republican who is interested. When a member co-sponsors we need to thank them through Letters to the Editor, social media, letters, etc. The National Wildlife Federation organized an event for Congresswoman Dingell.

Carter Smith-That is a great point. Public agencies might be limited in what they can do so we may need to rely on partners.

Sean Saville-We need to check with offices to make sure they want to be thanked and think about who is the best messenger.

David Whitehurst-This is important, how do we coordinate on this.

Joe Burns-How does election year politics play into this issue?

David-I’m not sure we have the capability to determine this?

Bill Bates-We should have the energy community come out and support this.

Carter Smith-Asked David Whitehurst and Keith Norris for update on the Joint Working Group.

David Whitehurst-We have formed a working group with the Education and Outreach Committee to assist with Blue Ribbon Panel communication. The EOD committee has a lot of interest in this issue. Keith Norris offered to be a co-chair.

Keith Norris-Jen Newmark is the other co-chair, representing the EOD committee. We will help to coordinate with the committee on communications. We have another informal meeting this evening.

David Whitehurst-Asked Paulette Nelson if she had any comments.

Paulette Nelson-No, it was covered well. I’m looking forward to working with the committees.

Sean Saville-This committee has done a great job working on this issue and he thanked the committee. I participated in past Fly-in’s. This is a new challenge with newer opportunities. We are developing a larger advocacy strategy and plan. We need to come up with success stories. We are developing larger national messaging strategies. We have an opportunity from a messaging and branding perspective. We are being a little cautions so we can be strategic on bringing people together. The legislative strategy will be key to getting co-sponsors. I am happy to talk one on one. The sequencing of co-sponsors is important. We may be able to get co-sponsors to bring on their friends. We are developing guidance on questions and will be getting that out to the states. I am open to suggestions and ideas on how we move forward. I can add my organizing expertise. We have some unique opportunities in the business community that can help us gain congressional support. We can broaden our reach. We should not get ahead of ourselves. Perception and timing is important. We are looking ahead to the next Congress. If you have feedback on members of the Senate we should reach, let me know. I appreciate the faith given to me on this and am looking forward to speaking with many of you.

Carter Smith-Are there questions for Sean?

Rick Jacobson-If I am given an action, I’m happy to work on that action. It does not sound like you are ready to give us an action yet.

Sean Saville-Yes, that is right. Resolutions are helpful. I will be sending out examples soon. It is OK to make calls to Republican offices. We can share our target list. We need to think creatively about match. Grassroots organizing might be premature but we can talk to partners to make sure they are still in the tent but hold off on further public action.

Carter Smith-Rick made a good point. Let’s get clarity on how members can help. We need a little forbearance, we need to be very strategic and smart and take time to develop a strategic and thoughtful plan. We need to keep the horses in the barn a little longer so bear with us, there are some things we can do now.

Sean Saville-I heard from Becky and Glen that the branding is important. We need to think about what we call this, we need to be unified on the branding. I have developed some guidance.

Carter Smith-For next steps, we would like your governing bodies to pass resolutions. Sean will provide examples. A draft plan will be sent to this committee in October for review. Members sign on is an important priority. We need your help and will be asking for that. Keep your network supporters apprised of the Blue Ribbon Panel. We need to be disciplined with our messaging. When we get our messaging in place, then we will need your help.

Kendra Wecker-We put a lot of effort into the Teaming With Wildlife toolkit. Will we be dusting that off?

Sean Saville-That has been a topic of discussion. A toolkit will be important. Some old materials will useful but might need to be tweaked.

Keith Norris-This is something the working group can help with.

Sean Saville-Consistency and coordination is key.

Naomi Edelson-A template for state fact sheets is also needed. We should highlight State Wildlife Action Plans. It can be more effective if we speak about needs. We should use species that are in steep decline and are recognizable to the public. It would be helpful if states could assist with state fact sheets.

Carter Smith-Is there a template for state fact sheets? Who will be responsible for distributing?

Keith Norris-Naomi and I can work with Mark and Sean on this. We can pull information and have states review. We can get that out in the coming weeks.

Naomi Edelson-We could have states develop information in a spreadsheet and then we could format.

Carter Smith-We don’t want states to be burdened with giving too much information.

Naomi Edelson-We know the one message that works is preventing wildlife from becoming endangered and conservation is good for wildlife, taxpayers and business. This is the underlying message that I have seen work.

Carter Smith-A fact sheet is a great suggestion.

David Whitehurst-Is this something the joint committee can work on?

Keith Norris-I’m not sure if the committee is ready to start working on this.

Jen Newmark-Consistency is important.

Carter Smith-Are there any other actions?

Rick Jacobson-We need a clear and concise message on offsets.

Sean Saville-This is top of mind. Probably the first question we need to answer.

Dan Kennedy-The messaging is to Wildlife Diversity Program Managers. What is the intersection with the Threatened and Endangered Species Committee? How does this group interact with Threatened and Endangered Species?

Carter Smith-One of the messages that resonates is preventing imperilment. We want and need your help too.

Dan Kennedy-Start communicating with the Threatened and Endangered Species Committee.

Mark Humpert-Could the Threatened and Endangered Species Committee help with the question of how much is saved by preventing listings?

Dan Kennedy-Maybe the Kirkland warbler could be used as an example?

Comment-The Greater Sage Grouse is another case study to look at.

Sean Saville-Sage grouse was an example that got governor Freudenthal interested.

Naomi Edelson-I agree that we need stories on saving endangered species. The National Shooting Sports Foundation is working on this. It would be great if AFWA could help as well. Maybe the energy industry could also help.

Bill Bates-The Utah Prairie Dog is good example of cost savings to the state.

Carter Smith-There is no shortage of things to do. Let’s focus on this list for now.

Carter Smith-We would like to move a resolution up on the Blue Ribbon Panel. We asked some busy leaders to participate on the Blue Ribbon Panel and formal appreciation is appropriate. Are folks OK with the resolution.

Rick Jacobson-Motioned to adopt the resolution.

Brian Nesvick-Seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously.

State Wildlife Action Plans-Revision Guidance

Rex Sallabanks-The approval process for revising a State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) can be very long; sometimes taking a year. I would like to explore if it is possible to create a mechanism where a state can update their plan without going through the full revision process and creating more burden on the states and Fish and Wildlife Service. Idaho as a database that is linked to our SWAP that will be updated regularly. Will this constitute a revision? We feel that the updated SWAP won’t be our official version and we want to make sure that changes we make don’t affect our ability to use State Wildlife Grants. Some states may want to remove or add Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Based on current guidance, making any change to an SGCN list is a major revision. Should states have to wait 10 years to change their SGCN list?

Idaho would be interested in helping to lead a review of the revision guidance. We could put this on the agenda at the winter WDPM meeting. Maybe there could be a few volunteers that could participate on a conference call. I spoke with Paul VanRyzin at the Fish and Wildlife Service and they have also been talking about updating the revision guidance. We could begin talking about this and bring a recommendation to the committee at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and potentially a final product to the AFWA annual meeting a year from now. Is this a good or bad idea?

David Whitehurst: I suggest we set up a working group.

Joe Burns-SWAP’s are a cost effective way for the Forest Service to identify priorities. We support keeping the plans up to date. If the Forest Service can help, let us know.

Paul Rausch-This issue needs to be discussed. If the Fish and Wildlife Service can improve the process let us know. We would like to be a full participant in this discussion.

Carter Smith-Are volunteers needed?

Rex Sallabanks-We could bring this up at the next Wildlife Diversity Program Managers meeting. We don’t need a large group.

David Whitehurst-Would you have product by March?

Rex Sallabanks-We could have a list of potential changes by then.

*--A working group was formed to review the 2007 SWAP Revision Guidance--*

State Wildlife Action Plans-Species of Greatest Conservation Need Tool

Mark Humpert-Reported that the USGS continues to work on a database and tool for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. They are working with the states to populate the database with SGCN data from the revised plans.

Josh Avey-What is the purpose of this?

Mark Humpert-The tool will allow academic institutions and others to do analysis and categorize SGCN data to make it more useful to the conservation community.

Keith Norris-Reported that an entire issue of the Wildlife Professional was devoted to State Wildlife Action Plans.

Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program

Paul Rauch-Reported that there have been leadership changes at Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration. He said as the new Assistant Director, he shares our priorities. Communication will be a priority and said the Fish and Wildlife Service has cleaned up some internal issues and is working on some challenges with TRACS. The problems are not technical or programmatic but one of communication. WSFR wants to do better at getting information out to partners so it does not just sit in a database. Compliance is one of the most important things the FWS does for this $1 billion program and it will likely be under the spotlight. We don’t want to be tainted by any scandals. TRACS needs to get headed in the right direction and FWS is partnering with AFWA and WMI to conduct a review. Work continues on administrative fees. He wants to take a step back. I am not comfortable with the basis for administrative fees and we need greater involvement by the states. We are not sure if the amount of money provided through administrative fees is enough or not enough. This will be looked at after the TRACS review is complete.

Carter Smith-Said he appreciates the candor and spirit of cooperation.

Rick Jacobson-You are right about communications. Some of the fact sheets on TRACs were not clear. We need to know where TRACS is headed and be able to provide constructive feedback. The states have made a big investment in feeding and building TRACS. TRACS should make it easier to do reporting not harder. Conservation dollars need to go further.

Paul Rauch-Thus far 34 revised State Wildlife Action Plans have been approved, 16 are under review and 6 have not been submitted.

Tim Smith-TRACS is a tool that will measure effectiveness of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Outcomes were built by the Effectiveness Measures Working Group. We want TRACS to report on program accomplishments to show the contribution of WSFR to global efforts. The role of TRACS was originally to report accomplishments but the purpose has been expanded. The effectiveness measures framework for State Wildlife Grants has been expanded to all WSFR programs. We are working on a 5-year accomplishment report. TRACS currently has 700+ registered users, 5,000 projects and 95,000 legacy projects.

Jon Gassett-The Wildlife Management Institute was hired to evaluate TRACS and develop a common vision, shared purpose and goals. The evaluation was started in July and will be completed in December. We are examining the authorities that allow this system to work to see if there are any holes that should be filled. We have identified ten major challenges for TRACS. A meeting of the parties will be held in September to develop recommendations for the Joint Task Force on Federal Assistance. Some of impediments identified thus far include the following: 1) entry of duplicative information; 2) the hand off of data entry to the states; 3) the requirement to enter grant information into TRACS before getting approval; 4) what do outcomes mean and do they drive the direction of the program; 5) access of non-state entities to TRACS information; 6) the breakdown of communication between the Fish and Wildlife Service and states; 7) the use of effectiveness measures for all Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs.

David Whitehurst--At the last meeting we had a good discussion about changing the name of the committee. We had planned to do an electronic vote after the meeting but that did not occur. We don’t think there is a need right now to change the committee name. Discussions about branding for the Blue Ribbon Panel are happening. The committee name is good for internal purposes. I don’t think there is a need right now to make adjustments to the work plan but we are open to suggestions.

Naomi Edelson-There is a juxtaposition between advocating for State Wildlife Grants and work on the Blue Ribbon Panel. We can’t stop working on State Wildlife Grants. The Clinton campaign released a conservation agenda that includes doubling funding for State Wildlife Grants. Is there time to talk about this? We will have a new president next year.

Carter Smith-Thanks for this critical reminder. We have to continue advocating for State Wildlife Grants. Strategies may shift but the Blue Ribbon Panel should be additive rather than compensatory.

David Whitehurst-Thanked Naomi for bringing this issue up. We typically use this meeting to discuss next fly-in.

EJ Williams-Becky Humphries said during her presentation that the Blue Ribbon Panel has to be a new campaign with a new name. How relevant are her comments to this committee and its name change?

Carter Smith-We need to define the Blue Ribbon Panel campaign. We have this great institution and a great playbook in Teaming With Wildlife. Some things have changed since the first iteration of Teaming With Wildlife. Let’s not get hung up on what we call ourselves, but instead focus on our goals. We need to think about this, we don’t want to lose the institutional support.

EJ Williams-It is great that the marketing firm bought into this. Can we use their talents to also maintain current funding?

Carter Smith-That is a great point. We need to hold the line on State Wildlife Grants while striving for larger funding. We shouldn’t look at them as separate issues. We might have to wait a bit to finalize our strategy for State Wildlife Grants.

Kendra Wecker-I’m OK with putting State Wildlife Grant dollars into the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program, I like the flexibility and the match is better for states.

Joe Burns-How do we support both?

Keith Norris-If we get Blue Ribbon Panel funding, State Wildlife Grants will likely end but we need to keep the program until we get the new funding through Wildlife Conservation Restoration.

David Whitehurst-Do we need a planning requirement for Wildlife Conservation Restoration?

Naomi Edelson-The requirement for a State Wildlife Action Plan is the same. We need to raise awareness of wildlife in the presidential campaign if we want to be a force. The funding recommendation by the Clinton campaign is our way in. It will be hard to break through.

Keith Norris-Leadership to the national teaming with wildlife coalition is in the work plan. Another Action we could take is to update the Teaming With Wildlife coalition roster so we are ready for next year? Should we try and help do this since there is no longer Teaming With Wildlife staff at AFWA.

Carter Smith-We should be doing that.

Keith Norris-TWS is willing to help AFWA.

Naomi Edelson-National Wildlife Federation affiliates are willing to help too.

Rex Sallabanks-We don’t have any horses in the barn yet. We have some questions about starting a coalition and there are other states in the same boat. We need to build coalitions now so we are ready next year. This will force difficult conversation about the capacity to build coalitions. We will need help to restart our coalition in Idaho.

Keith Norris-The Blue Ribbon Panel has a wider net.

Carter Smith-This is the kind of thing that should be in the campaign plan that Sean is developing.

Naomi Edelson-We could ask every state to get 10 businesses to join the coalition. Clear targets work. If you have a coalition, you can do this. If you do not have a coalition, you can do this.

David Whitehurst-Our focus needs to clear and we should not deviate in the short-term.

Carter Smith-Thanked Rex Sallabanks for his work on the name change for the committee.

Davia Palmeri- The Threatened and Endangered Species Committee asked the Climate Change Committee to stand up a subcommittee on climate change. We are looking at conservation management questions such as hybridization and changes in range. We would like to focus on all species and would be willing to open up membership to this committee.

Carter Smith-Thanked committee members for their participation.

Meeting was Adjourned at 11:33am

**Progress and Opportunities**

Progress was made toward achievement of Goals 1, 2, 3 in the Association's Strategic Plan. This was accomplished by hearing updates and facilitating discussion on funding for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program, State Wildlife Actions and the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources.

**Threats and Emerging Issues Identified**

None identified.

**New Opportunities Identified**

None

**Submitted by**: Carter Smith