

Minutes
MAFWA Annual Meeting
June 25 – June 27, 2023
Lambeau Field
Legends Club Room
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Final Program – Exhibit 1

Sunday, June 25, 2023

MAFWA Executive Committee Meeting 4:30 p.m.

Welcome to Wisconsin Reception 6:30 pm sponsored by Brandt Information Services
Comments by Travis Warren

Hospitality Room 8:30 pm sponsored by National Shooting Sports Foundation

Monday, June 26, 2023

Breakfast 7:00 sponsored by Archery Trade Association

Meeting 8:00 am

WELCOME REMARKS and STATE HOT TOPIC SESSION

Honor Guard and Welcome to Wisconsin

Honor Guard – *Wisconsin officers performed Honor Guard flag ceremony and pledge of allegiance.*

Welcome

Casey Kruger, WI Chief Warden on behalf of AMFGLEO – presented honor guard and welcomed Adam Payne video presentation.

Video welcome from the Office of the Secretary (Adam Payne, WI DNR) – Honored to be Secretary of Wisconsin DNR. Take pride in our state and being birthplace to John Muir and Aldo Leopold, Wisconsin conservation roots run deep. Enjoy world class fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation. We have chosen this year's conference theme, collaborating for success in the Midwest, to highlight and showcase the impact strong partnerships can have on our health and on our resources. Our most successful restoration projects range from improving water quality, near and dear to all of us, to rebuilding waterfowl habitat, and much more. Our staff will share and discuss some of these local success stories this week. Understanding how we can work together and find ways to expand our conservation goals and impacts. Our conference agenda aims to find collaborative opportunities to restore ecosystems, capitalize on citizen science to monitor our fish and wildlife, understand how we can collectively strengthen our CWD management toolbox, share our experiences as we learn more about PFOS and how that impacts our environment and build on each other's customer engagement and relevancy effort. Thank you for joining us here at the 89th Annual Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies directors meeting and welcome to Wisconsin.

Casey Krueger, WI Chief Warden on behalf of AMFGLEO – Every three years AMFGLEO meets jointly with you. Proud of honor guard from Wisconsin, hats off to them. They have been called out too many times for fallen officers this year, thank them for what they do. From conversations in the hallway on how today is different than years ago, look at social media, the increased stress on our resources, AI, staffing budgets and everything else is changing all the time. That is why gatherings like this are so important, a place to share information and steal good ideas from others. We thought Wisconsin was isolated in our issues, but we are not, share same challenges and concerns as other states; so great to feel camaraderie. The agenda is outstanding, and we have great presenters, but we want to give you a taste of Wisconsin too. One of the breakout sessions over at Lambeau is going to have one of our 11 Native American tribes with us, Oneida Nation, who has also arranged for one of the excursions. Have partnership to combat nonpoint pollution and restoration projects as part of wetlands and stream restoration. Other excursions include canoe or kayak out to Cat Island in Green Bay. Excited to bring all of us together, have conversations and learn from each other. Conferences are important networking piece to protect natural resource and our public. Thanks for coming.

Diane Brusoe, WI Fish, Wildlife and Parks Administrator – Great agenda and happy to have you here. Themes will relate to everyone in the room, especially relevancy and PFAs conversations. Acknowledge that Green Bay is homeland of Menominee tribe, Ho-Chunk Nation and the Oneida Nation. Originally a 10-million-acre land base for Menominee tribe who refused to move to Minnesota in 1854, treaty reserved 235,000 acres. The beginning of Ho-Chunk Nation begins on red banks on Green Bay under 1832 treaty federal government tried to remove them from Wisconsin. In 1822, Oneida arrived after losing ancestral land in New York. In 1838 treaty they reserved 65,430 acres in Brown and Outagamie counties for the Oneida. They share our history of colonization and forms our shared future of collaboration and innovation. We respect inherent sovereignty. Those three tribes live in harmony on this land.

Tehassi Hill, Oneida Nation Chair (second term) – Welcome to northeast Wisconsin. Oneida is current resident, came from upstate New York 200 years ago. It was Michigan Territory when we moved here. Oneida Reservation is just west of here, 65,400 acres. We have been managing our natural resources and wildlife for some time and take pride in work we have done to restore the land and the environment. As we continue to do that work and acquire land, we figure out best use for property, whether agriculture, which what most of the reservation is and past use was detrimental to wetlands. We are doing assessments to figure out best use, agriculture, restoration, housing, or other development. A lot of laws in place for figuring out buffers and things like that to make sure our water is clean. Take pride in conservation stewardship. We have a great partnership with many agencies, state, federal partners, Wisconsin DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as private partnerships like Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever. We have had a great working relationship with many organizations. We look to our environments to have a safe, habitable place for families to recreate and live for quality of life and greater community. We feel everything is connected through the watershed and land use. Welcome to Wisconsin.

Diane – Some different meetings going on for AMFGLEO, some of those in a separate place and some together.

Justine Hasz, Bureau Director for fisheries management – Here to introduce five presenters as I am part of the planning team as well. With some of the partner groups that work on Green Bay, we will show and highlight that working together, we can really accomplish

amazing things. Background on them. Brie Kupsky is the Green Bay program coordinator at the Wisconsin DNR, she coordinates planning, restoration and research projects in the Green Bay estuary and watershed. A big part of her role is working with partners, collaborating with them to basically restore the largest freshwater estuary in the world. Unfortunately, Patrick Kennedy could not be here, but have a recorded presentation from him. He is a project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and provides oversight of aquatic ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, and navigation projects for the Chicago district. Our next presentation will be from Betsy Galbraith. She is the deputy field supervisor for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office, which is based in Green Bay. She works on in various programs, including natural resources, damage assessment and restoration cases, the coastal program and endangered species listing and recovery. Our next presenter will be Brian Glenzinski. He is responsible for delivery of the unlimited conservation program in the Great Lakes Initiative, which is a Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin with a focus on priority areas delivering a diverse range of conservation services from technical review and consultation on complex wetland projects, upland and wetland management and enhancement, construction management and implementation along with state and region-wide conservation planning for wetlands and waterfowl. And to wrap out this session, we will have Emily Tyner. Emily is the director of freshwater strategy at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, which she has held since 2020. In this role, Emily is the state lead on the designation of a new national estuarine research reserve for the Bay of Green Bay. Upon designation, the Bay of Green Bay will join Lake Superior in representing Wisconsin in the National Reserve System. I hope you enjoy the program that we put forward.

Collaborating to Restore Green Bay Ecosystem – Success in the Midwest

Brie Kupsky, WI DNR Green Bay Program Coordinator (Exhibit 2) – Start talking about resources in this area and why they are worth protecting and restoring. Green Bay is largest freshwater estuary and offers unique and diverse habitat for thousands of fish and wildlife species. There is an ancient cultural and spiritual connection of these lands to several of our First Nation communities in Wisconsin. The Green Bay watershed is large, 16,500 square miles with 11,000 square miles of those in Wisconsin. About 20% of Wisconsin's population lives within the watershed, so what we do on the land impacts Green Bay and Lake Michigan, where over 10 million people obtain their drinking water. Ag accounts for 23% of land use and is big business, \$105 million, half through dairy, which is about 10% of total ag revenue. Recreation is another economic driver. The Green Bay sport fishery, Lake Winnebago, lake sturgeon fishery and Wolf River recreation alone generate about \$900 million in annual economic activity and provide thousands of jobs for our region. So, as an agency and in collaboration with partners, natural resource management in the watershed and in Green Bay need to balance a lot of environmental, social, and economic considerations and interests. Brown County is one of the fastest growing, in terms of population, in the state. Seeing development and suburban sprawl, ag operation, and significant nonpoint source pollution. The pollution comes out of one main pipe on the lower Fox River, the way the watershed drains, about 2/3 of total phosphorus load comes from Green Bay and the other 1/3 goes to Lake Michigan. In addition, contemporary challenges we face is we have a long legacy of natural resource exploitation in this area. With highest concentration of paper mills per river mile, led to pollution in Fox River. This happened before the Clean Water Act and had profound effects on fish and wildlife and caused deformities, reproductive issues, consumption advisories, etc. The lower Fox River was designated as a superfund alternative site from severe sediment contamination and the Fox River Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council was formed. Since 2002, they have recovered millions of dollars to implement restoration projects and compensate. We have issues we have overcome, one great example through partnership, Lower Fox River PCB clean up, they successfully remediated 8.2 million

cubic yards of contaminated sediment in an 11-year period, it cost \$1 billion and had over 140 workers on site for 10 years. Key partners helped with the cleanup. Another example is restoration of Cat Island chain, a series of natural sandbar islands, protecting the bay and coastal wetland, about 1,400 acres. In 1970s, had prolonged high-water levels and series of storms that obliterated the islands. With them gone the wetland complex was gone, a 90% reduction. Over 30 years, the partners in the region called for restoration. The big reason this moved forward was under Obama Administration, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative got in flux funding and that was able to leverage the funding needed to begin rebuilding this series of sandbar islands. In 2013, wave break was constructed and sediment from the Green Bay navigation channel is being placed in cells to replace this 250-acre habitat. It will take 20-30 years to rebuild all the habitat but already seeing success of nesting piping plovers, which are endangered and seeing pelicans and cormorants as well as several breeding birds. One of best places to see migratory shorebirds stopover in the state. Ten years after restoration of Cat Island chain, seeing cumulative impacts, and stressors reduced and having wave break that helps with wind and wave energy. There are more barriers to recovery in that system, like water quality and invasive species such as phragmites. Working together with many partners in the region. To implement active restoration, they are seeding native wild rice, planting wild celery, implementing pilot projects to accelerate and jumpstart that coastal wetland complex. There are many key partners important to this restoration. As far as water quality, we haven't really touched on that, but it is all hands on-deck effort. Some things we do with counties, municipalities, farmers, private landowners, etc. Do things like implementing cover system and not allowing ground to be bare for long periods of time. To lower tillage operations. Some newer field practices, like two-state ditches for agricultural runoff to slow and trap water sediments and reduce phosphorus, doing floodplain reconnection, stream bank restoration and wetland restorations. Working on a total maximum daily load implementation plan and developing a partner group called the Keepers of the Fox Initiative, working on how we will implement it, fund it and monitor it. Doing this throughout the Great Lakes. One of the reasons it works so well is it is a shared vision and appreciation of freshwater estuary.

Patrick Kennedy, IL, USACE Project Manager (*recorded presentation – could not be present*) (Exhibit 3) – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago district. Talking about large collaborative effort to used dredged sediment in lower Green Bay Fox River and reviewing habitat restoration projects. Chicago district is one of 45 districts in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana Ohio, 31,500 square miles. Work covers four key civil works missions, flood risk management, navigation of 21 harbors, aquatic ecosystem restoration missions. Maintaining navigation means dredging over 200 million cubic yards of sediment annually from federally constructed and maintained harbors to provide safe passage, including 5 million cubic yard a year in Great Lakes. Dredge sediment provides great opportunities for economic, environmental, and aesthetic beneficial uses. Like creating fish and wildlife habitat, human recreational areas like parks and other commercial or industrial uses. Of 85% of dredged sediments, 35% are used for environmental, economic and social benefits, with a goal of 70% by 2030. Several categories of beneficial uses including water and upland uses, including habitat development, beach nourishment, parks and recreation, cultivation, like agricultural amendments and manufactured topsoil construction, industrial and commercial uses, and multi-purpose uses. Historically, USACE preferred water used such as habitat development and beach nourishment as well as natural shoreline. Upland uses are considered for clean fine-grained sediment, which is less suitable for beach nourishment and include general habitat creation and agricultural uses. There are several things to consider when deciding how to use dredged sediment, including contamination status, technical feasibility, environmental acceptability and cost benefit, as well as potential legal constraints. There are several physical functions like water storage, sediment

retention, energy dissipation, habitat development, and biogeochemical cycle. As well as engineering benefits like elevation maintenance, dewatering, shoreline stabilization, navigation, maintenance, water quality improvements, storm surge reduction, and landscape evolution to beneficial use of dredged sediment. And the main two, we're going to talk about today are habitat development and beach nourishment. Fox River watershed is 6,300 square miles, 10% of Wisconsin. This area suffered from land use practices including nonpoint and point sources, industrial discharges from pulp and paper mills, agricultural runoff and urban storm and wastewater discharge. There are several existing beneficial use impairments, including degradation of fish and wildlife populations, loss of habitat, degradation of phytoplankton, zooplankton and benthos populations, eutrophication and undesirable algae, and beach closings, among others. With projects forthcoming they mainly address fish and wildlife populations and habitat. The Army Corps of Engineers was tasked to conduct pre-design investigations for these projects included in the draft management action list for the AOC. This list was developed by the WDR in partnership with the EPA and AOC stakeholders over several years. The investigations have focused on evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of proposed aquatic habitats, coastal resiliency measures and or other restoration features. We were chosen as the appropriate federal project partner to complete these investigations because of our technical expertise, knowledge of the lower Green Bay Fox River and to provide the nexus in beneficial use of clean dredged materials from nearby federal navigation projects. Three design projects, developed in partnerships. First, below pier dam at southern end involving large riverine wetland complex and include promoting reproduction and recruitment of lake sturgeon. Our objective was to restore grasslands and riverine submergent, emergent and hardwood swamp wetlands that would have previously been present in the area. Success in achieving restoration goals could be measured by increased coverage of native plants and increased species, richness of insects, fishes and marsh birds. Several design criteria were developed for the project. Including hydrogen morphology that would address the depths and elevations of the area, flood pulse, and inundation, sea frequency hydrologic connectivity, and substrate morphologies to achieve diversity in wetland types. Hydraulics were also considered to achieve target water velocity as associated with river and wetland types, substrates and growing mediums. Fish spawning and nursery requirements were also considered when investigating wetland plant species. To establish these wetlands, we're going to need about 76,600 cubic yards of dredged sediment. The next project is Longtail Point, 138-acre narrow sand spit peninsula three miles into Lower Green Bay, managed by Wisconsin. This area contains coastal emergent marsh and small patches of hardwood swamp and meadow. Because of its location, it is subject to Lake Michigan coastal dynamics and can largely be submerged when water levels are really high, like they have been in recent years, or dry and sandy in low years. With erosion of shoreline changes happened which resulted in presence of invasive species like phragmites, depredation of recruiting plants, and invasive aquatic species like muscles. Using dredged sand to build up dune crest heights and beach widths. The objective was to sustain and restore the lack of stream spit geomorphic feature that supports diverse coastal wetlands and aquatic habitats. The target location is an approximately 1,200-acre area of the existing and former breadth. And like to Pier Dam, coverage and richness of native plants and organisms used to measure restoration success. Size and habitat diversity of the area is very important, specifically about 200 acres of coastal habitat targeted for restoration, including emergent marsh and high energy coastal areas, shrub car, hardwood, swamp forest and Great Lakes habitat. Another important criteria was hydrogen morphology as appropriate. Depth and elevations will need to be established for resiliency and habitat restoration efforts, further appropriate substrates and growing mediums, and maintaining appropriate hydraulics to support these habitats while moderating wave climates and substrate mobility will further need to be established. Main goal is to build up beach with dredged sand, 192,400 cubic yards, which is more difficult to find as it is in demand in the area. Several coordination considerations,

including funding, for dredging and restoration, whether project schedules align, characteristics of sediment and if they meet objectives chemical and physical standards, transport of material, truck or barge, and then look at distance and cost of project. Need to consider how it will be dredged and placed, ease of access to placement sites and distribution after it is in place. Costs may vary per site. Ongoing project, currently looking at several harbors.

Betsy Galbraith, WI, USFWS, Fox River NRDA Coordinator (Exhibit 4) – I'm going to talk about a foundational piece, natural resource damage assessment and restoration (NRDA), that has been active since late 1990s in the area. It's a tale of art and science and litigation and participation by a lot of citizens who wanted restoration of natural resources and it affected cultural resources in the area. Green Bay was one of the hardest working rivers in the country with lots of paper mills. We have the nutrient loading issues, PCB's cause problems, reproductive issues in our fish and wildlife, tumors in our fish. We have had fish consumption and wildlife consumption advisories since the 1970s, so not safe to eat quite yet. We hope that will happen in the future. Businesses supported families in the area. Also, wastewater treatment plants and other trucking companies, handlers and disposers of the PCB's. NRDA is under Superfund and legislation authorizes inertia process. There was a lot of foundational science that went on in the late 1990s, early 2000s, that looked at effect of PCB's and other contaminants on fish and wildlife in the area. Scientists went out and tried to figure out what was going on. Legislation set this up in case-by-case and it would be tried in court. Key restoration set up for lower Green Bay and Fox River. Trustees set out restoration plans in 2003 and 2016 and spelled out what we were going to restore and what categories, recreation fisheries, public use wetlands, land acquisition, hatcheries and a variety of projects. Trustees are tribes, states and federal agencies, Oneida Nation, Menominee Tribe, Wisconsin DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Department of Interior decide on projects. There is also a technical team that's very hands on out in the field reviewing project 6 and determining which projects we need to fund per our restoration plan. Over time, beginning in early 2000s, able to reach settlements with paper companies that provided funds for restoration project, money kept going into one pot over the past couple decades and 20 years of funds amounted to \$90 million and we had a one-to-one match from, Great Lakes Restoration initiative dollars, DU, NAWCA, state funds, private foundation and wherever you could bring it in to spread money farther and do more. Lower Green Bay was priority area and we spent \$52 million so far. Focusing on many projects, fund a lot of wetland restoration, dike systems, AOC projects, boat and kayak launches, underserved communities putting out small fishing piers, Cat Island and piping plovers and other endangered species and wild rice efforts. We have a lot of partners, we pool resources, time and funds. Resources on websites and easy to find. We have a lot of land acquisitions as well, over 10,000 acres preserved and working with land trusts and others. Wide variety of projects and work throughout the area.

Brian Glenzinski, WI, DU Manager of Conservation Programs (Exhibit 5) – No better example of collaboration than Green Bay, for ecological restoration. A huge player is Wisconsin DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and funding from Lake Michigan and a lot of partners. Green Bay holds 70% of coastal wetlands left on Lake Michigan, you saw loss of 90% in lower Green Bay area and 50-70% wetland loss, depending on where on Green Bay. This is where coastal wetlands are. Our efforts are focused on protection, but really the restoration opportunities for coastal wetlands in Lake Michigan is right here. All these programs come together to create a synergy to really look at landscape-level restoration approach to Green Bay. NAACA funds were submitted in July, another \$3 million proposal for Green Bay, Marquette Phase Two, wrapping that up and going to phase three. For River NRDA funds were designated non-federal so that was huge for us to be able to leverage those funds in the Bay and the watershed. DU has adopted some of the Great Lakes coastal wetland monitoring sites and

provides us long term data to evaluate the effect of our restoration areas. We're focused on delivering conservation and what that looks like. A lot of infrastructure work, we gave 90% to 50% loss of wetlands there, every acre needs to crank, and the way to do that is through infrastructure and increasing management tools for our partners and help our water quality issues. Area of problem is City of Green Bay, direct correlation in crime hot spot to great recreation hot spots. Apparent after our restoration activity, so it's a really great example of the societal benefits of some of the work we're doing. Water management with a pump station, and back to ecological side, there has been a lot of pipe restoration, focused on waterfowl but helps northern pike restoration as well. Example of resilient system, drought or not, we can use pump station to pump water to those pike spawning marshes each year, can produce \$20,000 in ecological services and pike stocking each year. Another redesign phase, a great lesson that you are never really done, tweaking, repairing, managing, and restoring them all the time. Blew out in high water but in redesign it was easier to remove flood waters. Some of the vegetation management occurring since 2011, started aggressive approach to reduce phragmites, sprayed herbicide over 3,000 acres early on, then DU came in and did a follow-up treatment in 2014 and 2016. Then had high water levels in Lake Michigan which helped with control. Now have current model to focus on priority wetlands and do more intensive management and control and keyed in on costal marshes and native plants. Another challenge, keeping free of invasives, Asian or European frog out there as well as wild rice restoration in the Bay. Some areas need more work on water quality so need to try it again. Fisheries work going on with northern pike, wild rice beds for pike, spawning marsh work, and long-term implications of getting Green Bay back. Benefits beyond just the restoration on the ground is partnerships, we get together annually to throw out wild rice and have a school program now where kids are doing it. Growing by leaps and bounds with no advertising, up to 25 schools. Land protection, all stitches together when you decide to do some work. Pull acquisitions together, no land for sale in this area that we aren't focused on them, purchased 113 acres in Village of Howard, right next to nature area, so starting to piece together some nice blocks of habitat. Machine is cranking well. Our partnership gives us immediate feedback loop on restoration efforts in the area and shows habitat on the ground. Have expertise working at policy level to ensure we have these programs in place, and we can leverage local opportunities into grants to secure funding. It's a balancing act between putting habitat on the ground and planning for future restoration activities. We've figured out how to keep activities on the ground while bigger planning efforts are going on, a good mix of both.

Emily Tyner, WI, UW-Green Bay Director of Freshwater Strategy (Exhibit 6) – State lead on bringing natural estuarine research reserve (NERR) to the area. Tremendous success in the area. History in response to work on Green Bay, the delisting of Menomonee River was area of concern and interest from citizens that wanted an area to celebrate, educate, research value of water, group of citizens from Door County approached the University who was interested, explored and settled on NERR. If you're not familiar with this, these are federal, state partnerships focused on research and education around waters, estuaries and coastlines. A phrase of the reserve system and it is a system across the U.S. It is locally relevant, nationally significant, that each reserve is there to help address local ecosystem challenges for us that will be things like impacts of climate change and fluctuating water levels on coastal erosion, harmful algal blooms, habitat issues, shoreline erosion and controls with that. By tapping into a national network of other reserves around the country, we can bring that expertise to bear. We can draw attention, research entities, and funding to our region around this. The system is, I think about 40 years old. They have these reserves all across the U.S. It's a program, a state and federal program. The federal partner is Noah, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Green Bay Reserve will be the third in the Great Lakes, the second in Wisconsin. There's a reserve on old Woman Creek in Ohio, and there's one in Lake Superior for

Wisconsin. Goal for Green Bay Reserve will be to represent the entire Lake Michigan ecosystem. NOAA won't start the process in the region until key strong partners have been identified for the state agency, in this case, the University. The four pillars are research, education, stewardship, and training. They're there to help address coastal management issues, increase public awareness, understanding of estuaries and coasts and education is huge, so connecting K through 12 school districts, young people, retirees to your water resources and getting students out on the water to help build those classroom connections to the water. Help teachers incorporate water and water science into their classroom and be a platform for organizing coordination, education, and stewardship. We've had this great legacy of restoration work, and it will continue. Goal we have for this Green Bay Reserve is to celebrate our holistic connections to water. There's cultural, tribal, and First Nations connections to water; there's an art and storytelling element, spiritual, and recreational connections. This is a program that's really built on science. It brings staff, training dollars and money for program and connections to NOAA research programs. Finished step two in six-step program, usually a four-to-six-year designation. We settled on system of sites to tell restoration story. All 32 reserves across the U.S. were asked by NOAA to think about what defines you, and what you can bring research education-wise for the whole system, we wanted it restoration story here. We picked sites in northern Green Bay, more pristine than lower Green Bay, with a lot of restoration going on and areas in Sturgeon Bay and some smaller watershed in Dore County. Partnership program, University owns very little land, land owning partners will own about 37,000 acres and it not regulatory, so nothing changes with hunting, fishing, bird watching or commercial or recreation boat traffic. The Reserve is the management umbrella. Wisconsin DNR has 81% of the land but there are ten other landholding partners. An effort of collaboration to work with these different entities to think about what the reserve does and how we work together towards land management goals. Focusing on long term research and partners are there to serve the region, northeast Wisconsin and Lake Michigan, work with all entities, nonprofits, businesses and folks outside those boundaries toward educational programming and research, stewardship and training initiatives. The next step is writing our management plan and doing an environmental impact statement. The process of creating this management plan is to inform the work of the Reserve, so you we take a deliberative process towards public input and support towards that. We have a great partnership to build on. When the designation is complete, the four players I mentioned, our research, education, stewardship, and training will become part of NOAA's long term monitoring program around coastal estuaries. That means conducting a suite of water quality vegetation sediment surveys and it joins us in a national data set that is the pulse of estuaries across the U.S. We will have access to graduate training programs, fellowship opportunities, and education. We will invite teachers from across the U.S., focusing on our region, to come for a one-week immersive course on training and they can take that water quality hands on learning and take it back to their classroom. There will be some built infrastructure, one is Lake Superior National Estuary and Research Reserve, they have a visitor center. We want front door for people from the region to come in, not just 38,000 acres but where to go birding and fishing and recreation. We are looking to work with public/private partners as well as DNR and Tourism and make it a hub for water recreation and student learning. Invite you to come visit and also visit other Reserves across the country. Hoping to be designated in 2025 and up and running with programming later that year.

Federal Partners Session

Ollie – Proud of our partners and their willingness to come address the Midwest Directors.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chuck Traxler, Region 3 Acting Director – (Deputy Director). I am also representing Matt Hogan, Region 6 and Mike Edgar, Region 4, who couldn't be here. Probably be replaced this fall, have three vacant positions to be filled at this time. Working with partners and work we all do is for our benefit, and we can all take credit and learn from these things. Great to see partnerships going on. I am going to talk about the Great Lakes. You have heard of GLRI, an amazing program, without it much of what you have seen wouldn't have happened. It has helped us restore habitat for fish and wildlife, but also water quality recreational opportunities. I am so glad that that we all collectively have access to it. Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, thanks to Kendra for becoming a Commissioner on that commission. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission helps us control sea lamprey, among other things, in the Great Lakes, which is incredibly important for our lake sturgeon efforts, lake trout fishery and other fisheries. They work with the United States and Canada. Last week in DC, I was talking to senators from Minnesota, Missouri and Michigan about endangered species and working with tribes is best way to manage collective resources. I have been working with wolves my entire career and have been seeing them go on and off the ESA listing. For the most part they are covered under the Endangered Species Act. They going to do a full review of the lower 48 states to make a determination on if they should be protected under the Endangered Species Act. Hope to do that by February 24. Also, last week in DC there was a monarch summit put on by Senator Merkley from Oregon, the second one that brought together experts from across the country talking about monarchs and other pollinators. Senator Merkley provided USFWS with some funding for a stand-up center for pollinator conservation, not a bricks and mortar facility but a virtual facility. Nichole Alt is the first director of Pollinator Center, not a regulatory facility, just for sharing information. Encourage you to engage with the Pollinator Center to work together and leverage resources and information. On December 22, we designated it as warranted but precluded, which meant we believe the scientific data showed that it would meet the criteria of either threatened or endangered, however we weren't able to work on it because of lawsuit, we have until September 2024 to come up with a draft rule. We are looking forward to talking to states, tribes, NGOs and academia to make decision by then. If it were listed as threatened or endangered, could have significant impact across most of the lower 48 states, coming up with ways to address that. Monarchs aren't the only challenges out there; bees and bats are having significant challenges as well. Make sure we set the stage right to work together, like Northern long-eared bat, to address significant landscape level challenges. We did do a rule on bats and we're still looking for comments, thoughts, and ideas before we finalize some of the Section 7 Section 10 rules. The Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) is an incredible opportunity that highlights regional collaboration. The Inflation Reduction Act came up recently, USFWS in the Midwest region got three IRA projects that covers most of the MAFWA states. Northern forest prairie pothole region and Middle Mississippi and Illinois River got \$60 million, a chunk of that goes to states and in the process of determining how that is going to be spent and what it will look like. That is the federal side is for National Wildlife refuges, the state side is for WMA's. Each one has given point of contact, decide on where to spend. There is bipartisan infrastructure law for the Service and much of that has gone to fish passage projects. We hit quite a few states and are looking forward to continuing that. It provides some great funding to get some big projects done that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to get to. Thanks for having me here and working with staff from regions 4 and 6. We are open partners, we don't always do things right and sometimes we have to do things quickly and fix it afterwards, but willing to do that.

Ollie – Thank you, a great partner and sponsor for our Association. All our federal partners are great sponsors. Next update is U.S. Forest Service, recently engaged them heavily with the Midwest Landscape Initiative.

U.S. Forest Service

Steve Kuennen, Region 9, Renewal Resources Director – In the past always had conflict on my agenda so I was unable to attend. Thank you for Carl's involvement with the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI), it has spurred a different conversation in our team, and we brought representatives from MLI to our regional leadership team meeting, which is combined with Eastern leadership team and included our research. It included our state, private and tribal forestry and the National Forest system, so a great opportunity to highlight and showcase some of the work. Thanks for the seat at the table. The focus of our agency has been on the bipartisan infrastructure law and the Inflation Reduction Act to the tune of about \$10 billion infused into the National Forest system. State and private forestry and our research group, there basically four focus areas. 1) is the wildfire crisis strategy, a 10-year priority crisis that we have for wildfire, and we just sent about a billion and a half dollars out west just in the last several months to focus on 21 landscapes expanding work on landscapes and reducing the risk. 2) The second area is expanding, work with partnerships, partly with MLI and our work with the states. The focus of the Forest Service has primarily been state forestry, and emphasis has been to expand that to state Fish and Wildlife agencies. We participate in the Midwest, the north, and the northeast. 3) We work with underserved populations, working with tribes with multiple projects across the Great Lakes. There are two other national efforts we are undertaking, first is Plan revisions. We will make sure you are involved or at least understand the process. Primarily with state forests and foresters but would like to expand to state fish and wildlife directors. There was an executive order by the President to catalog and categorize by mapping all of our mature and old growth stands. Not as big of deal in east, but big in west and has implications potentially on different folks that do work on the landscape. Locally, big part of focus is work with partners, taken on bat consultation across the eastern U.S. with the USFWS. The idea is rather than constantly being in 7A2, which is always consulting, we want to do a conservation strategy around four bat species, two of them are already listed. We have been working with the USFWS for the past 2 ½ to 3 years on this. There has been a small core team of folks between the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in Regions 3, 4 and 5, which has been focused on developing a conservation strategy and expedited consultation process. Getting back to bigger picture of working with partners and also at-risk work, working on continuing that process and looking at what's next. We are in the process of finishing an 7A1 conservation strategy around rusty patch bumble bees in Virginia and West Virginia. Trying to get in front of these things rather than responding to listings, conservation instead of reacting and should lead to more work with partners. We have been working on Keystone agreements across the region, working with Trout Unlimited, Ruffed Grouse Society and The Nature Conservancy to develop broader initiatives. With the infusion bill and IRA funds we've been trying to put money into places we can add capacity and get conservation work. Working with GLRI for a number of years. Another aspect is Wild Harvest Initiative, how healthy resilient ecosystems, like food, provide sustenance and provide for the people; the idea is people connected to the ecosystem and concept of One Health. We are in the process of updating our regional force, or sensitive species list, an update done every five years. Working with tribal communities to change the dynamic around how we engage our publics around the work we do. My Assistant Director, Karl Malcolm, and Tracy Garzia, our regional wildlife program manager are here with me today.

Ollie - Hard to keep up with that. Region Nine of the Forest Service regions goes from Missouri to Maine. Next, we have a great relationship with USDA's Wildlife Service (APHIS). They do a lot of work in our states. They are having personnel changes as well and Keith Wehner recently moved from West to East Region.

USDA/APHIS-Wildlife Services

Keith Wehner, Western Region Director – John Steuber, our assistant regional director in the west is also here. Thank you for opportunity to talk today. Able to come last summer and gave presentation from western region perspective, today I'm talking from eastern perspective. In this role for two months, came from east originally five years ago. Leadership changes, 60% are retirement changes in the next five years, so bear with us as we try to fill positions. Nine topics to go over, so bear with me. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), continue to work on those 5-10 years, everything from invasive species control to beaver management, to whitetail management, to cormorant, focusing on damage when things get too populated, and action is needed to reduce those numbers. Continue to work with rare nesting birds, like larks, burro protection, tern protection, T&E species and the latest one is native turtles. Had conversation on GLRI and we are working on 2025 budgets, if projects you know of or want us involved in, let us know. Working with EPA to lay that out for the future. Next, is feral swine program. There are a number of states here that have them. This program has new leadership, Dana Cole came over from Vet Services to replace Dale Nolte. Our big focus the last six months has been Farm Bill renewal, trying to tie up before it expires September 30. A lot of cooperators and collaborators on that and talking to legislators and they think change from pilot projects and opening to additional states, so funds ratio may change. Half would go to NRCS and half to wildlife services, expect more funding for operational control and we hope that goes through. Feral swine in general important topic for all the states and we have great collaborative efforts in Missouri. We couldn't do what we do without state help, working in Texas on eradication, a stronghold and will probably be the last we can eradicate from, an ongoing battle. More funding will help. If you don't get pig funding right now and you find that you have feral swine, please give your state director a call, or me directly, we do save some funding back so we can respond quickly before an issue. We had an opportunity to purchase airplanes and helicopters from DoD expanding our aerial gunning program across the U.S. We purchased six of the MD530s that were slated for Afghanistan and have also hired and purchased a couple of airplanes, creating a hub in North Dakota for feral swine surveillance. Also have hubs in Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee, and Kentucky that can send out helicopters wherever needed. We are continuing with nonlethal initiative, doing for four years now, and are going to get funding from Congress to do nonlethal work and we can't use lethal work. In Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin working on wolf management and working on nonlethal techniques. Beauty of program is we are trying new tools we have never used before, like pepper ball launchers, only used in one state in the west and now in new areas. Another new device is set up next to trash can, has a motion detector and it has popping sound like an electric fence that freaks out bears. Trying to do as a program where they work and where they don't; trying every tool we can get our hands on. Actively trying to get research done where we don't have to kill the animal. Will let you know what we find out about what works and doesn't work. Recently finished CWD symposium in Denver, finalizing numbers, probably host another in 3-5 years and possibly more frequent. Feedback said it was detail oriented on the laboratory side and lacked management solutions. The debt ceiling has impacted the American rescue plan and so Wildlife Services had access to \$300 million. We were not able to use it all, so through negotiation, was swiped away and taken back into the Treasury. We still plan to finish work we started and were able to obligate several different cooperative agreements and will still finish the whitetail/mule deer SARS sampling protocols and zoo sampling. Thanks for participation in that, we should finish in next year or so. Three relatively new topics. Doing wild bird sampling for high path avian influenza, Missouri and Iowa came up with brainchild from the last outbreak on how to provide better service to poultry facilities and trying to keep wild birds and wild mammals out of the barns. Not simple at all, even with bio-security awareness, it is quite often ignored and overlooked. Have a pilot project in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, they received special emergency funding

through CCC emergency funding on high path AI. We are beginning to hire 60 staff to do individual assessments of every poultry barn in those four states, provide recommendations, photographs and look for ways that wildlife can get access to those barns. High path AI, about 75% of positives is not coming from lateral transfer, but being dragged in by somebody on their shoes, not from wildlife directly. This is a 1- to 3-year project and industry folks want to expand it to the other 37 states before we have even done an assessment. You may hear something about that in near future, looking for advice and guidance. Needing assistance. One of the goals is assessments and identify where risks are and remove them if we can. Secondly, we would like to sample as many animals (birds and mammals) as we can. The big questions have yet to be answered and we think sampling can inform or answer them. We may ask for assistance, some producers pushing back on sampling, make ask for help. Next, is black vultures, seeing encroachment as they move north from the Gulf. In representation with Tennessee and Florida recently introduced the Vulture Relief Act into the House. As soon as it was introduced Farm Bureau and a number of states asked Wildlife Services to be available to do something. That Act allows for more permitting, similar to hunting, but that may not be the ultimate answer. Farm Bureau asking for rewrite of that Vulture Relief Act to provide funding to Wildlife Services so we can actively manage them. With high path AI having impact in local areas on black vultures, we agree this is a space for us to do this scientifically and not make a bad situation worse. Four states have lost thousands of black vultures. We just need to manage growth. Last, I have a program just completed in Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay nutria eradication program. We used 6-15 dogs to detect, eradicated from those areas and reduced number of dogs we have. Those dogs are a valuable asset for all kinds of things. I want to plant a seed with you, we have used dogs around the country on different projects, a valuable tool, and if you think there is an opportunity to use them call us. We know they work well with feral swine and nutria. Building capacity working with wind farms, using them to see if they can detect birds underneath the turbines easier than humans can. We have done some black-footed ferret surveillance trying to figure out where they are. We even can find red boa constrictors and small world pogonia plants, which are endangered. It is fascinating what these dogs can do and we would like to make them available if you need to use them. The dogs get excited when you send them out, they bark and dance, when they find sign of pogonia, so they dance and tromp all over the area, they are going to kill the plant. So, we did 3-4 weeks of training to teach the dog to sit with its nose on the plant. Fascinating that a dog can be trained on different scents. If needed it just starts with a phone call. We value the relationships we have with our state agencies, with the Forest Service, and with the Fish and Wildlife Service. *Natalie* – What breed of dog? *Keith*– Mostly mutts, go around to a various kennels, the Humane Society, etc. and look for specific dog with right demeanor. We use detector dogs on Guam and Hawaiian Islands for brown tree snakes, those are mostly smaller breeds. These are larger breed dogs; most are black lab mix or something similar that responds well to training.

Ollie – Thanks for the partnership, we appreciate it. Next speaker is JC Nelson, USGS is a new sponsor of ours.

U.S. Geological Survey

JC Nelson, Science Coordinator USGS – First update, unlike USFWS, we have a new director in the Mid-Continent region, which spans Ohio to Montana, Canadian border to Ohio and Missouri Rivers, Jennifer Lacy is new regional director. Her office is in St. Paul, close to the USFWS Region 3 office and the travel hub for the Midwest. Hope to have more constant presence on things like this meeting. Get to know more of you and give you a point of contact. Last week, Jen and I went to Wisconsin for a release of maple leaf mussels, the second time this has been done. It was a great collaboration between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

Minnesota DNR, Wisconsin DNR and USGS partners. It was the only project some of the researchers worked on for the last 4-5 years. Reach out if you have opportunities that you would like us to attend. Continue to work on science priorities in USGS and with partners. They range from water quality, PFAs, pollinators, CWD, deep water fishes and native mussels, all over the board. All fall within our wheelhouse as far as science support. A few highlights. We are close to break on invasive species; invasive carbon, invasive mussels top the priority list as far as research, it is all about deterrent and lethal control. Looking at different cases of sound carbon dioxide and anemia. With bill and funding that came in from other federal partners and states we are looking at early detection and rapid response tools. This includes the port of entry tool used by USFWS at LaGuardia and Los Angeles to detect zebra mussels coming in. A few years ago, there were moss balls which was a direct result of that tool kit for early detection. Moving to Great Lakes, not be able to do as much without GLRI, in additional strong relationship with Great Lakes Fish Commission, who are active supporters of ours, with Lake Erie management plans and things like that. We have ongoing research, but Lake Superior cisco abundance, higher than last 45 years, double from previous high in 1985. Heard about stocking efforts on the lakes, great for Cisco. Heard from partners on CWD, high pathogenic avian influence, white-nose and WSFR database which is moving towards national wildlife disease. We received some ARPA funding to take it to the next level and make it a much more sustainable and usable database. We have two people who will present tomorrow, Brian Richards and Dan Walsh who will talk on wildlife disease. Doing native species work on pollinators, migratory birds, mussels, grassland species including bison and bats, and our bat database that we maintain. All of them have gained internal and external support. Work on large Rivers, Iowa and Missouri and now Mississippi is getting a lot of attention. Held Mississippi River forum where we acted as host in our FY22 Congressional appropriations, it was held in February, and we had 500 attendees. It was a virtual forum and we had 37 speakers from different agencies. The report will be out in November or December. Looking at restoring habitat, water quality, invasive species, navigation, and resilience to natural events. Again, we couldn't do it without partners, without science centers, climate adaptation science centers and cooperative research units. We have our 42nd and 43rd CRUs being established at Michigan State University and Purdue University, getting more USCS science out to the schools and to partners. Thanks for allowing us to be here.

Ollie – Olivia LeDee, USGS has been engaged in the MLI for us. Caroline Murphy, The Wildlife Society is sponsoring the break. She does a lot of work for us and the Society in Washington DC.

Refreshment Break sponsored by The Wildlife Society (Caroline Murphy)

State Hot Topics Session (Exhibit 7)

Diane Brusoe, Wisconsin, facilitator - Stick to 5-minute range, we will go around the table.

Natalie Finnie, Illinois – Acting Director as of January. Thought about recent challenges, which are daily. We have made some excellent progress on a lot of challenges since I was appointed. Our challenge is communication. I have been deputy director since August 2021 and there is no real communication at our level. Assistant Director John Rogner has been there since 2019 and he is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. All the challenges that come at us every day and if we don't get that piece of the cornerstone right, we feel like nothing else works. We have done that well. We have added two deputy directors. From the beginning I have said we need to talk daily and be more intentional in doing that, so on Monday, Wednesday and Friday we have hour long meetings, with Monday and Friday being virtual because we are in different parts of the state. On Wednesdays we are together in Springfield, and we get a lot of work done and the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. When challenges come up there is not one of us on the team

that can't help if somebody comes to us with an issue, we all have some working knowledge of what is going on. We are being effective and have extended those meetings to other administrative offices. On Wednesdays we also meet with legal, HR and fiscal as standard meetings. Organization is setting us up for success.

Brad Loveless, Kansas – We are looking at under-served groups within our state by going out and talking to communities. We reached out to three Hispanic communities around the state, three different towns and sat down to visit with them. Asked them what barriers were to them participating in outdoor activities like fishing, hunting, or using wildlife areas. Overwhelming response was concern about breaking the law because they were not confident in reading our fishing, hunting or licensing manuals. That caused them to not participate. So, a couple years ago we started translating our manuals to Spanish. We started with hunting regulations and fishing regulations, then our walk-in hunting guides and have expanded from there. Now we are working on signage and on our website, so it is bilingual. Response has been remarkable, in a good way but some not so great. They feel welcome and invited. Appreciate that. They felt like we talked about relevancy all the time and feel part of the club and they make suggestions and criticisms of the agency that we value. Moving ahead. We have a \$100 million budget and when I was in front of the Senate committee a year ago, one legislator pointed out that \$15,000 we budgeted for changes in publications for translation, she wanted to know why we were spending that. She said we didn't need it. We stated we wanted to be inviting and inclusive to that community and we had met with them. This emphasizes the need and informs our decision to do that. We have to defend that. They are in this country and need to speak our language is some people's stand, but we feel we need to talk to them.

Brian Clark – Kentucky – We have had some similar experiences from stakeholders. We have had to say we want immigrants who come to learn and speak English, but also to engage, participate and care about what we do. I want to share a brief anecdote on chronic wasting disease (CWD). Doing monitoring and testing, last year especially. I cleared this with Wisconsin folks who partnered with us in this response to handling this hot-button issue. Fortunate in a sense, spotlight on our agency. As a state that is CWD-free, or at least no detections for over 25 years. Some states avoid testing and that has not been proactive. We have tested over 30,000 deer, mainly hunter harvest but road kills and deer submitted to processors and taxidermists over the last 25 years, over 30,000 deer tested and no positives. We had an interesting case last fall, the biggest hot button issue last year. A taxidermist contacted us about receiving a deer that was illegally imported, the hunter maintained he did not know the regulations prohibited him from bringing it in. He had an uncleaned head and cape and came from a CWD positive state. The hunter was a native of Wisconsin and brought the buck back to Kentucky. The taxidermist took in the frozen package, then later realized it was uncleaned and an illegal transportation case. He reached out to law enforcement division. They did an investigation, brought in a biologist, collected tissue, investigated with hunter, who was cooperative, cited him for illegal transportation, which in Kentucky is in criminal code, so also have civil penalty for bringing in the disease unknowingly. They offered the hunter an opportunity to pay for internal costs under civil penalty for investigation, testing and follow up on the case and he refused to do that. Meanwhile, staff reached out to Wisconsin and the hot-button aspect of how we handle this deer that is CWD positive. Do we test it internally or send to another state? It was contained and frozen so no fear of it being on the landscape. We developed a rapport with Wisconsin and developed protocol for transporting that tissue back to be tested in Wisconsin and it was positive. It was our first detection, in a sense. Hats off to our staff for working together with folks in the taxidermy and processing industry and keeping lines of communication open. Wonderful collaboration of partners to handle and maintain status of being CWD-free. We decided to use

the opportunity to positively communicate that surveillance works. That working together with folks in the industry, law enforcement, wildlife staff and collaborating with other states to monitor laws aimed at protecting the resources works. Hats off to our partners and friends in Wisconsin and all the teams. Our pucker factor was about nine for us. We have prided ourselves on being CWD-free. We had a case about seven miles south of our border in Tennessee and we have taken a lot of heat for having active surveillance zone there with tight restrictions and hunters have pressured us about resuming feeding there. This case was positive for us, thankful for that. We know it is probably just a matter of time.

Diane - Our first CWD positive was in a facility that had a taxidermist shop in the middle of the pen where they were bringing deer in from other states. So that probably would have happened there had you not caught it. *Brian* – We are prosecuting this person to pay back what was spent. Thankfully not on the landscape and our cleanup and response costs were minimal. As the first case of using that law, we want to set a precedent for that, so hoping for a positive outcome in court on that prosecution.

Shannon Lott, Michigan – I call this session wicked problems. Acting director in month seven, thought it would be two or three. We have several things going on. We have Camp Grayling, an encampment or cantonment of the military in the middle of Michigan. They approached us about a year ago wanting to have 140,000 acres they lease from us to do military training, and want 162,000 acres more, more than doubling their size. That is assessable river land, the Holy Grail, which sent people crazy. It has been a rough year. Came out with a decision a month ago to not lease that land to them. Our law changed since the 1950s when that original lease was done and we are no longer able to lease land like that, which helped me with the decision. We decided to do a land use permit to allow them to train on certain days, allow cyber training. With the war in the Ukraine, they are worried about use of frequencies, 90% have been detected, but 10% left where they can have troops speak to each other without being detected. They have big drones, about the size of your car, and the troops try to communicate. The reason they want to use Michigan is because of the cover type. There are other military camps in western and southwestern states in the country. If they used the wrong frequency on the ground their drone dropped tennis balls on the, saying they were dead and they couldn't use that frequency. It is important for national security and military safety. Trying to explain that to our stakeholders they were frustrated with this kind of work going on in some areas. We told them we were trying to help keep our troops safe. Working with another cabinet member on what they needed. We have been hammered publicly for this. This also led to PFAs issues because of their military work with planes and all kinds of firefighting. We just had a huge fire that leads to another hot topic, biggest fire in the country, saved city of Grayling thanks to resources from South Dakota and another state. This was crucial. We are also having recruitment and retention issues, which many of you are also having. All of you have probably had a call from Ontario asking for help on their fire. The problem with our fire was it was close to I-75, we pulled water from lake in the center of Camp Grayling to save the city but had to close the highway. We pulled 200,000 gallons out of the lake, now under fire for using the water. We took that water and spread it over a 3,000-acre fire, so it was minimal but in people's minds they think this is compound that doesn't break down. We worked with the Forest Service on this as well, thanks to them for that help. You have read about the Great Lakes consent decree in our tribal work as well, with five federally recognized tribes and I am trying to run that. Tribal communication and relationships are a big thing.

Dave Olfelt, Minnesota – I chose to talk about our recently published wolf plan put out last December, last one was early 2000, wolves have been on and off the endangered list. People asked about creating a wolf season, not a question we want to answer. We created a durable plan

that can provide guidance on wolf management, regardless of their status. Not going to talk about what is in the plan but talk about how we keep the plan moving because worked on it for three years. We had a good team working on it. Started with social science we did with the University of Minnesota to understand people's attitudes about wolves. That led to creation of technical team of university, agency scientists and tribal scientists, people who pulled together an advisory team that made up some of the constituent groups that care about wolves, producers and deer hunters and animal advocates and broad public engagement. They had in-person and online opportunities, happened during the pandemic, so used online tools to hold town hall type meetings. We got good response. An important theme. We worked with tribal nations in 2001 on some of the early work but did not incorporate tribal perspectives. Tribal biologists are now on the technical team and part of the advisory group. Some chose to be ad hoc members of that. Used formal consultation procedures with tribes. Some of the lessons learned are to engage and listen. Wolves are a hot-button issue, so listen and be careful of language used. Engagement with tribes, we had formal staff level engagements which are critically important. Our Lieutenant Governor is a tribal member and ensuring tribal voices are heard and listened to was important. Stay connected to organized groups through advisory group. Stay connected to executive leadership. Through the process we met with Governor's office many times and they gained an understanding of the depth of our engagement, the science involved, and we came out with a recommendation for the plan. We kept our focus broad, so it wasn't about a hunt, but about breadth of wolf management. There is a framework for establishing a season and what consideration to talk about, if and when, it is delisted. Language is critically important, worked hard at scrubbing triggering words. We had early tests of durability, last legislative session the House passed a bill preventing the Commissioners from ever holding a hunt, removed authority from us and plan, in part. House leadership backed down when in negotiations with House and Senate coming together and that came off the table. The other challenge is strong partnership with a statewide deer group, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. Over the past 10-15 years they have sponsored the Governor's deer season opening event. That was an important way to highlight the importance. About a month ago, they came out and said because of our Governor's stance (what they perceived) on wolf management, this plan, they were pulling out Governor's event.

Diane – Commend your state's efforts to put together your wolf management plan.

Pete Hildreth, Iowa – Our conservation and recreation division has five major bureaus, fish, wildlife, law enforcement, parks, forests and preserves and our lands and waters bureau. We have approximately 131 certified peace officers, 86 in our law enforcement, 35 are park rangers. We have three basic job classes in our parks, park rangers, park managers and park technicians; those park rangers are 40% of the work force in the parks. In 2022 legislative session, there was a proposed bill to merge all our law enforcement staff under one bureau, it did not pass. Going into 2023 session, our director Kalya Lyon decided to be proactive, we would rather drive the bus than be told what to do. We put together a law enforcement strategic alignment team to put together proposal of efficiencies that would come out of alignment and what it would look like. One effort at the beginning was to learn from other states with similar models or programs as us. We reached out to Nebraska, Indiana and Colorado and had zoom meeting and asked questions to see what their structure looked like. Moved forward with strategic alignment team meetings to get a product of efficiencies and what we could propose would look like. Got through the legislative session with no bill to align. Now my director wants a proposal of different options and suggestions of what we would do moving forward. We have a Department of Public Safety, similar to state troopers and that idea is being thrown out there too. They want conversations of efficiencies in those two bureaus and what would be the impact if combined under one bureau either under DNR or under DPS. If you are having similar conversation in your state, I can be a

great resource. No conclusion of what I am going to propose to them. As far as efficiency, we identified, we have same training needs, same equipment, and supervised by non-law enforcement supervisors. In Law Enforcement Bureau, all those conservation officers all the supervisors are peace officers. We heard some of those pros to being under LE supervisor, pros when investigations happen, listening to all those things. We have a tough decision to make.

Amanda Wuestefeld, Indiana – One of the most game changing things we had invested in in decades, maybe in my career, which is going to change the way we manage wildlife species, at least in Indiana, and I think it could have impact across the country. In 2016, we started getting pressure from our deer hunters about how they didn't feel we were managing our deer herd appropriately. It escalated and ended up in Governor's office with legislators. We had a very vocal deer hunter that was doing video feeds from graveyards, and he was getting tons of traction. He was sensationalizing the whole thing and caused some real headaches. At that point we decided we needed to change the way we thought about managing deer and moved towards a governance model of wildlife management. We were looking at social science as well as biological science, all manageable and affordable. Joe Caudell, deer biologist, did a tremendous job of connecting with the public. He created himself a ton of trust within our deer community, but we were always lacking the biological piece. We spent decades studying deer on the landscape. As we have said for years, and textbooks tell us, we don't count animals; we can't tell you how many animals are on the landscape. We started working with Purdue University and started developing a system to establish a model that would help us come up with deer abundance. It was an expensive process. It had a lot of variables in the model, but the data was coming in and the model looked good. It was being trusted by our hunters and kept going up among the hunting group. Today you can go to our website and look at data county by county and deer abundance information is out there. Still subject to errors. Joe handed me some pretty impressive notes once we started investing into the model. It looked at density and cover, distance to wetlands and other factors all a quarter of an acre scale. It was expensive and we didn't know how we were going to do it for the whole state. We continued having conversations with Purdue and they were able to figure out that we could pair infrared images with normal video, red, green and blue video across the same quarter mile landscape. We were doing drone or plane flights and comparing side by side. Instead of having all the research with field techs in the field, we could have a couple technicians sitting in a cubical monitoring the video. That data was incredibly accurate. They think we can use it for all kinds of species, see not just deer, but coyotes, turkey and squirrels on the ground. Saw maps out of video flights. We have interesting spaces where we have ag-based land and only habitat is in ditches and fence rows. Some landowners say no deer and others have a lot of deer and asking for depredation permits, tons of conflict and looking to harvest and other things and nothing was helping us make this decision. Ag space is virtually void of deer and see corridors that have highest densities. It makes sense and is easy to show the constituents and that is why we need a county quota of "x" number of deer a person can take. It is changing how we establish those quotas. I think the process is going to escalate the trust with this group of hunters. A couple months ago Joe started sharing to key groups because we are interested in changing some legislation around deer seasons, which is always controversial. We started running herd with folks we had problems with and then our commission, who are deer hunters. Nobody said why or no, they approved. We are moving for adoption of game changing regulation on how we are managing deer in the state, something we could not have done 4-5 years ago. This investment, which has taken 7-8 years to figure out, initially cost us several million dollars. But to do that continued research is something we will be able to afford into the future. Flying those drones is much more economical than other data collecting forms. We will be happy to share this with you. As we learn how well it works, I will be fascinated to get information on coyotes, turkey and squirrels. I am excited to see what the

biological data looks like that can help inform our decisions on seasons. This is a different twist, game changing on how we are doing research. *Brian* – Is data statewide? *Amanda* – We are 2/3 done, will finish last 1/3 this year. So much faster, now that we have established model that can be replicated. It's not like you have 10-year-old data, but we will be able to update it every couple of years.

Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri – Our Supreme Court decision. The department was put in a difficult position of having to sue our state legislature several years ago for usurping Commission's constitutional authority, we went the trial court level. It took 20 months after our oral arguments for our Supreme Court to rule. They ruled in our favor, 4 to 3. "These constitutional provisions unambiguously require the Commission to fulfill the enumerated purposes grant the Commission power to expend and use these funds, purchase land, etc." and "These provisions do not, however, leave any room for the General Assembly to interfere with the Conservation Commission's performance of its constitutional purposes." Getting and keeping our house in order is my theme. Internal communication is the focus of 95% of our jobs, they are reactionary to the hottest issues of any given day. We have tried to focus on our own house, maintaining public trust, and to be efficient with finite funds we have. We had a group of 20 staff, representing every branch in our agency, spending 10 months designing 21st century conservation agency. What we would require, and skill set capacity needed. For last 4-5 years we have been in process of implementing that road map. It started with knowing what our priorities are, how they aligned to our budget and work plans. Spent lot of time on governance, establishing clear programs, collaborative cross disciplinary working groups that defined programs, measures of success and assuring accountability to those efforts. We added report outs on the progress to align outcomes and our strategic plan to our goals. It ultimately led to reorganization of the agency three years ago. That added capacity, a new relevancy branch, new focus on community conservation, recreation and added capacity to business side. We needed the business of conservation to have support functions that had capacity to do what we were asking them to do. The second thing is culture. A lot of this was focusing on how we talked about change and stress. We've got generational differences and add to that wildlife value differences. Over 75% of our staff are traditionalists and not like the society we were serving. That also creates stress and change. Culture establishing clear values and behaviors, align performance objectives and hold each other accountable. We have added inclusion and diversity training and counsel. Focusing on employment engagement strategy which meant all our leadership went to through change management training. Last is compensation. We do a quarterly poll survey, which every state agency in Missouri does. We ask a series of questions of our staff, the same every six months, on how we are doing in key categories. The lowest score we got was related to compensation, five years ago. Its numbers are better. We enacted a new compensation plan about four years ago that has three parts, market adjustments, years of service of 10-years of pay and performance pay. That performance pay piece is important. We all know it is hard to recruit. We started with a full evaluation of every job class, doing market assessment on that. Then every three years every job class gets a new review just to make sure it is competitive. Our number one priority is if revenue allows, we do that market adjustment, number two, of years of service pay, then performance pay. It was a tough sell. Folks were used to it not mattering how they perform, they all got paid the same. We found, three years in, that the retention rate is higher for highest performers. They want us to do an evaluation to make sure that the top 10% to 20% across all job classes, wasn't just highest paid getting those performance increases. It was equitable across all job classes. Our research found highest performers were staying at mean high of 90% retention rate of those considered exceptional or highly successful performers. Not an easy move to make, but successful tool. *Amanda* – Can you share the poll survey? I don't think ours asked about salary. *Sara* – It asked about both financial, monetary, and

nonmonetary incentives. I will share the questions. *Brian* – You have a different structure constitutionally than most states. You have freedom to promulgate your own system as an agency compared to other state agencies. Structure or organization? *Sara* – We believe the constitutional provision is very clear on that in Article 4, Section 42. It says our commission sets salaries. To the survey, sometimes our Governor needs to be refreshed on that provision. Sometimes it works in our favor. The Commission last year was given a significant market adjustment. We do have the ability, per constitution provision, to establish our own compensation plan.

Tim McCoy, Nebraska – We do not have flexibility Sara talked about. We did a whole new strategic plan, with leadership team, sorting and refocusing agency in a more structured manner, previous was operational. Went all the way down to key tactics and on the ground things we were going to do. We went through higher level planning process looking at longer term goals for the agency. We engaged Commissioners in beginning, did work and brought back the plan, they wanted more in there. Fortunately, we have one commissioner who runs a community foundation in Omaha who has done a lot of strategic planning, and she was an asset at explaining that and reminding where they are supposed to be and not where they want to go. Ended up with a new plan providing sustainable conservation and recreation opportunities, developing and investing in our people, and engaging in building realm and relevancy with the public. Those are the three main pillars. We developed background underneath and went through key actions we need to undertake each year. For the first year, we broke those down into quarterly goals we could track it. Commissioners are excited about the ability to see progress. We have key performance indicators and use a dashboard to update those things. We will measure every other year, once a year or two times a year, not sure yet. Some things we measure will require us to do survey work annually, with public and internally. Did first survey of entire permanent staff, last done in 1990s, fear of doing that but did not have problems like in the past. It has been good for commissioners to go through and see the process. Asking themselves questions and will be interesting as we move forward, fear is they will forget and want to go backwards. Had legislative challenge, they were trying to push our capacity to produce fish. The demands are higher, and we have aging fish hatcheries, newest was opened in 1980s, have five over 60 years old with no major upgrades. Started doing some of that with existing authority and asked for additional capital authority and got rebuffed. Not because of fish stocking, but one legislator thought we should be paying for wildlife damage for deer, elk and antelope. We will probably have to have a special interim study done. That same legislator convinced appropriations committee to do things they don't usually do. They added specific language to our authority for what we can spend our game cash on and would make that an allowable use for game tag money. They did add a clause that said, as long as it was in compliance with federal funding guidelines through WSFR. A huge concern.

Scott Peterson for Jeb Williams, North Dakota – My hot topic is how we manage for CWD. Legislature meets every other year on odd numbered years. It is not difficult to find a hot topic. Touch on HB 1151, if successful would have changed big game hunting over baiting. It removed the department's authority to ban big game hunting over bait. As part of our CWD management strategy we banned hunting big game over bait in any unit where CWD was detected and within 25 miles of that unit. We do that through a Governor's proclamation for CWD. There was an effort in 2007 to ban baiting statewide, not successful. In 2009, first CWD case detected in southwest North Dakota. The culture of hunting big game over bait is deeply entrenched in certain circles. So, HB 1151 was introduced in January and became the most contentious bill, it was the most hotly debated bills in the session. The bill passed the House with wide support but failed in Senate. We based our position on science behind CWD and that was quickly dismissed

by most, if not all of them. During House and Senate debates, it was about baiting and CWD never came up. We are currently working on drafting next proclamation for the Governor's signature. It is going to be tricky. We are trying to make enough concessions without compromising science behind CWD in an effort to keep it from resurfacing in 2025 legislative session. Whether or not it is successful we will know in a few years.

Kendra Wecker, Ohio – Our challenge is how we expand our applicant pool, fits into DEI R3 and everything we have going on now. As we extend opportunities, people used to have to have a degree in fish and wildlife management or criminal justice, now want to expand to physical sciences and other degrees. A lot of people coming in don't have traditional hunting, fishing, or trapping background. So, how do we help them adjust to customers they are going to meet in the field. They are great people who have interest in the outdoors, but it might be hiking, kayaking, or birding but have no hunting or fishing knowledge. We partnered with Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, Taniya Bethke and she helped with our agenda and developing our program for how we want to work with new cadets. We had 11 wildlife officer cadets, half had hunting, fishing, and trapping experience and half had none. We focused on external outreach efforts for R3 and internal looking at our own staff. Took new officers offsite to two locations and two different experiences. One session took them into casual environment where they could bond as a team outside of traditional formal training atmosphere. New and older staff, taught them to butcher deer and cook it, how to hunt, set up a blind, turkey hunting. We incorporated experienced hunters and trappers and some newer staff so they could communicate on millennial level. We taught them to butcher a deer and cooked it afterwards, so the whole process of setting up a blind, as well as setting up a goose hunting and turkey hunting scenarios. It was an extensive one-week camp. After two-day introduction it was a mix of classroom and outdoor experiences, we make it fun. They got their hands dirty and learned the language they would be using in the field. Then we did an evaluation afterwards. One quote, from a former police officer was, "it was one of the most forward-thinking trainings I have ever been to in 13 years of law enforcement. The ability to help someone with zero outdoor experience understand and appreciate what outdoorsmen and women contribute to conservation is going to specifically be helpful for me and my county. But also seeing the importance in having your new officers trained from the ground up is encouraging to me. The two suggestions I have are minor, slower or more detailed butchering breakdown of the legs would help me personally. We can all use that deeper history of PR and DJ will also help me. Understanding that history helps me, and I think the details are interesting and important in speaking." It was an extensive agenda. I have copies I would share if you wanted to look at this kind of program for your own staff. It is definitely going to be an ingrained part of our culture to make our staff more confident, give them tools they need to better prepare them to be in the field as wildlife officers/conservation officers/game wardens. They went through a number of scenarios that were helpful to them and they got to use equipment to practice. They got to fail, learn and improve. That is what is important, to invest in our staff.

Scott Simpson for Kevin Robling, South Dakota – A couple things to bring up. First, is reason Kevin is not here. He is in western SD with county commission to finalize the permitting for a shooting range we are trying to establish. It will take place on 400-acres, you will be able to shoot 1300 yards over 140 shooting days, Olympic style trap opportunities, cowboy action shooting, and three-gun shooting. We are hoping this will be an asset as well a driver for folks to come to SD and take part in shooting activities. We hope to break ground later this summer and hope to be completed by next year. It is a big project and is going to be expensive. We are still figuring out some of the funding strategies. We are pushing hard to make it a reality and excited to have it up and running. The second item is habitat and access. We believe in the idea that if

you build it, they will come. One strategy is to cure our R3 issues, if we have places for people to recreate and a healthy game and fish population and they are successful when they come, or at least have some opportunities, we will solve R3. We have designated resources for that. Just like other Midwest states, SD is 80% private land. We have put an additional eight private lands biologists on our staff over the last year and that brings us to 12 staff meeting landowners where they are at. They are beating down doors to make sure landowners are aware of conservation programs out there, through SD, NRCS or wherever. We are being successful and having an impact. We are seeing more grass go in, managed grazing, fencing and water projects. All of those are adding to habitat inventory and we believe it will have an impact. It is the slow game and long play but committed to ways to make them work. The third item is budget issues. In the last couple years there has been some things change from budgetary standpoint. We have seen significant increases in wage scale, 6% increase for all staff and targeted market adjustments for conservation officers, up to 20%. We were about running 25% vacancy rate in conservation officers, a blessing but came with fiscal weight. Last legislative session we saw 7% increase for all state employees with another targeted market increase. With 80% of our staff in game, fish and parks that was quite an impact for this fiscal year. Going into 2024, we are going to see \$5.6 million increase in wages. We are a small state and that doesn't come from general funds. It is a great problem to have, not disappointed to pay folks more money because we were lagging. But we will have to tighten our belt. We went from 20 vacancies to four. Things looking good. At the same time, we had a tough winter in SD, and we are cutting deer licenses because of expect population impacts, which will lead to reduced license sales.

Diane Brusoe, Wisconsin – Glad to know we are not the only ones dealing with all these problems. We have wolf issues, having October meeting in advance of February decision. Have CWD, fish, aging infrastructure, limited resources and budgeting issues. At the same time doing strategic and relevancy work and climate positive actions all rolled into one. Always something new. Sleep easier knowing none of you are sleeping either.

AWARDS LUNCH

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Comments by Chris Willard

Kendra Wecker, Ohio, Awards Committee Chair – Presented awards to:
Wildlife Biologist of the Year – Bob Ford, Ohio and Joe DeBold, Missouri
Fisheries Biologist of the Year – Keith Koupal, Nebraska
Spirit of the Shack – Dr. William (Bill) Jensen, North Dakota
Excellence in Conservation – Ohio Division of Wildlife, H2Ohio Program
Sagamore Award – Colleen Callahan, Illinois
Past President's Award – Colleen Callahan, Illinois

President's Award goes to Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (presented by MAFWA President Amanda Wuestefeld)

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year – Bryan Lockman, Wisconsin (presented by Casey Krueger, AMFGLEO President)

Afternoon session 1:30 pm

Federally Listed Species – Bats and Pollinators

Owen Boyle, Wisconsin Species Management Section Manager – Heather is our new coordinator.

Heather Kaarakka, Wisconsin DNR, Bat HCP Coordinator (Exhibit 8) – Discuss bats and white-nosed syndrome in Wisconsin. WI has eight species of bats, four migrate to warmer climates over the winter, four hibernate and go underground in caves and mines, September to April. Those four are susceptible to white-nosed syndrome. Some bats use artificial structures like barns, bridges and bat houses, like little brown and big brown bats. All use forests, either for foraging, roosting, commuting, and migrating. You are aware that white-nosed syndrome is a fungal disease in hibernating bats. It affects them in winter while they are in torpor. The fungus grows on them, but the mechanism of mortality is poorly understood. We suspect the fungus is invasive and deteriorates the wings and skin and it ends up waking them up and every time they wake up, they burn through crucial fat reserves that it needs to survive the whole winter. White-nose syndrome infected bats wake up more easily and frequently and some are flying around looking for food and water. Wings are more than just for flights, deterioration from infection can affect water balance and thermal regulation and where we find it there are usually piles of dead bats, declining populations from 60% to almost 100%. Not all species are affected equally, little brown and tricolored bats are hit hard, 70% to 90% declines and have recently been listed to endangered status. Wisconsin DNR put together a study to find where the bats were before the disease arrived. They did traditional underground surveys and trained citizen scientists and volunteers to conduct acoustic surveys. We were also able to locate and survey more than 70 hibernation sites. There is a little disconnect between winter populations and what is on the summer landscape. That is where citizen-based monitoring came in. The Wisconsin Bat program has helped collect data for over a decade and like birds, bats can be identified by their echolocation calls. We use detectors to geolocate when and where bats are recorded and put them on a map. Bat responders count the bats as they emerge from roost sites. These survey methods tell us abundance across the state. Thanks to data collected, we have a good idea of where bat populations were before white-nosed arrived. Since 2010, we visit 50-60 sites each winter and were able to detect when the first incidence occurred in any given area, which occurred in 2014 in a mine in southwest WI. By 2016, all hibernation sites were infected. The way the syndrome works is the second and third year is when we see the mortality. So, at first site, by 2016, there were barely any left. This trend was reflected in summer as well. Conducted emergence counts on bat houses, populations bottomed out within a couple of years; those were conducted by landowner volunteers. By 2019, we barely had any little brown bats and rarely recorded any northern long-eared bats. There are 200 or more acoustic surveys completed each year. So, now that it is here how do we protect bats from it. In summer roost monitoring project, saw huge declines in little brown bat colonies and landowners took that to heart. They had seen them for several years, seen them dying, identifying, and were able to find some persisting and growing roosts, so able to identify where there were surviving bats. At Terminal National Wildlife Refuge, bats went from 1,600 to 300 bats. It has been slowly growing, and now over 1,000, so coming back in some places. We are working to protect roosts where they are sustaining or growing and providing new and improved habitat, so they don't disappear. Another way to protect is through Lakes States Forest Management Bat Habitat Conservation Plan. In 2016, the northern long-eared bat was listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened with a 4D rule and timber harvest was identified as a potential source. This is one of the rare species that rely almost exclusively on forest habitat to survive in the summer. We couldn't reasonably cease all timber harvest or forestry operations and knowing that white-nose syndrome that they would potentially be federally listed. In 2014, Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin started working together to develop a habitat conservation plan for bats that would accompany an incidental take permit for timber harvest and some other activities. In order to develop an

effective plan, we needed to know what types of trees the bats were using, how frequently they switched roosts, and what type of forests they were using for roosting and foraging. Spent many seasons tagging and tracking bats to roost trees. Came up with a state plan to protect bats, main conservation measure is protecting forest habitat around hibernacula and known roost trees and follow retention guidelines during timber harvest. Plug citizen-based monitoring, integral for understanding impacts of white-nose syndrome. It has limitations, as rare species were often missed and there was an error rate that is hard to account for. But over years we could identify populations trends. Bats are not the only species in Wisconsin that have benefited from citizen-based monitoring.

Owen Boyle (Exhibit 9) – Data collection and monitoring baseline data is so critical. Switching gears to bumble bees and talk about the Wisconsin Bumblebee Brigade, B3. They are a statewide photography-based participatory, or citizen-based, science project. We have our staff who are experts in terrestrial insects, and they put on three to four trainings around the state each spring and teach people to take photos of bees. It is not as easy as it sounds. We have a website where they can upload the photos and staff vets the photos and identify the species. The mission is to improve understanding of species distribution and status and engage the public in conservation of WI bumblebees. We have been building support for bat conservation and that has helped this tremendously. We have 20 species of bumblebees in WI. One federally endangered, eight in decline and at risk of extirpation, which are species of greatest conservation need, and three in our wildlife action plan. We have another category in Wisconsin called species of greatest *information* need, those we don't have enough information on to determine if they are species of greatest conservation need or no and we need to prioritize them for data collect. Those are hard to detect. Like bat monitoring program, we started from scratch and 2018 was the first year. We had no idea if public would be interested or not but learned quickly that they are extremely interested. We got too much data for a while and already had 100 volunteers with 1,000 observations over 600 surveys at 200 sites in 57 of our 72 counties. Fast forward to 2021, numbers going up, and over 200 volunteers, and we have found 19 of 20 bumblebees with 4,000 observations. This year we will be over 5,000 observations, 1,000 surveys over 600 sites in 67 of 72 counties. We are not targeting, or telling people where to go, they go where they want to find bumblebees. Data is important. American bumblebee has been petitioned for federal listing, and had three observations in three counties, with B3 have had 57 sightings in 20 counties. Even during pandemic, we put together video training during that time, so now we have that as well as four in-person trainings. Rare species being considered, one, a Fernald's cuckoo, had four sightings in one town, now 45 records in 14 counties, so more widespread in Northwoods than we knew about. The success story speaks to the power of CBM science to help augment our own efforts at data collection. When people get invested and start being interested, they become passionate about conservation of these, sometimes not so obvious, species. With bat example, we had initial response and knew white-nose syndrome was coming, started CBM and data came flowing in. We established a baseline, so now we know what recovery targets can look like. When federally listed, like long-eared bat, you can't cut a tree without a permit, so we have gone the route of the habitat conservation plan. Another approach, Section 10 permit, under the federal Endangered Species Act, heard about national CCA (candidate conservation agreement) with assurances for monarch butterfly. Probably the largest, covering the most land, section 10 permit ever approved. That is for energy and transportation lands, and they set some land aside to manage for monarchs and they get take coverage on the rest of their lands. We are going down same route with rusty patch bumblebee and five other species of bumblebees, all 48 states in continental U.S., six bumblebee species all together. They are already in trouble; native pollinators are all in trouble. American bumblebee already listed and others coming that will be potentially listed. New species listings can be costly to us, we do work on the ground. But not

only to us, the public as well as industry. We are interested in producing a habitat conservation plan for lower 48 states to cover energy and transportation lands, we don't manage those but do regulate. Huge opportunities already started, 10s of thousands of acres coming in the form of solar farms, developers lease land and will pay a farmer for 30 years to take ground out of production. I would challenge you to come up with another source of 10s of thousands of acres of new pollinator habitat that will be available for 30 years. It is unprecedented and an unbelievable opportunity. Want to draw bumble bees, and after 30 years can't turn land back with an endangered species on it so we are removing regulatory hurdle by doing this national agreement that will allow people to plant pollinator habitat with no regulatory burden. Wisconsin took the lead on Section 6 ESA funding, where only states can apply, and got a grant for development of national agreement. The University of Illinois at Chicago, who holds the permit for monarchs, is leading this and will hold this permit as well. They will hold and administer for it for the entire duration of the permit. We can't keep doing section 10 permits where you have to hire critical staff positions to fund, so having partners in the private sector step up and administer these permits is critical. There will be asks coming to your agencies, actually have asked your staff already. We held a committee meeting last month and will be providing regulatory insurance for federal Endangered Species Act, but what about state list, wrote into this grant to figure that out too. All different states with different rules, different state by state, convene team of agency reps to dive into that and figure out what we can do for our states in the Midwest to prove the same regulatory certainty, sort of safe harbor agreement. More to come. With specter of federal listing looming, we laid out how important it is to have baseline data, where species are before listing occurs. Statewide action plans (SWAPs) and give heads up on what species could be listed. Not always obvious or apparent. Have list through MLI which will give us another early warning. You are tracking at state level, but now looking at regional level. There are several species the Service is considering right now that have core healthy populations in the Midwest. Made case for filling critical data gaps and increased our own bench strength and expertise. Amongst our own staff, permitted or limited term, or long-term contractors in some cases and supplement with CBM programs to supplement what you can do to strengthen your own benchmark. I have two terrestrial insect specialists, but there are only so many sites you can hit each summer, so the power of volunteers is essential. The Citizen Science Association of the United States just changed their name to the Association for the Advancement of Participatory Science. There are issues with the term citizen, it's loaded, doesn't work for everyone and can be exclusionary. There are only so many things we know and what we can say about rare or declining species, but we can take proactive action to preclude the listing. With monarchs we went into high gear, 1.6 billion stems of milkweed on the ground, but we did not preclude listing. Interesting example, we took the best available science, milkweed loss, but it turned out that no matter how much milkweed you put out there that climate change is also impacting this species. Listing is still warranted. Throw money down on the table and hope it works, do a lot of good even if don't preclude listing, doing a lot of things on the landscape. In eight years, we spend \$7 million on the Lakes states, bad HCP, and we can't keep doing that species by species. We have to find other ways, whether proactive, or trying to work at regional level or spotting troubled species and intervening. Hopefully we find new and fresh ideas out there. The Wildlife Diversity Committee is looking at that. And if Recovering America's Wildlife Act ever passes that will really help us preclude listings in the future. Data and monitoring are critical.

Kendra – Admired your program here, you did great on diversity work. With your volunteers and bumblebee observers are you talking to them about RAWA? *Owen* – Yes, each CBM has a coordinator. We have email lists as well as newsletters and things like that and last year we worked RAWA into a lot of those. We walk a fine line; we can't advocate for active legislation but had coalition of organizations outside our organization. Volunteers interested in engaging.

Brian – How did you go about communicating the opportunity for participatory science? It varies

by program, so statewide or where? *Owen* – Give talks at nature centers and library; talk about bumblebees and how they can get involved. By planting native plants in their yard or whatever. Talks and news releases. *Brian* – Standard outreach with training or virtual video? *Owen* – We do three to four in person trainings each spring and during pandemic offered webinar training, which can be viewed at any time. Good dual approach.

Shannon – You got 4,000 or so photos, do you look at every picture and identify? *Owen* – Yes. We have a team of three people and get superstar volunteers who help with identifications. Snapshot Wisconsin is another citizen-based science program. They have robots to identify photos and we are trying that. There is somewhere, Iowa or Kansas, that has a university trying to AI identify bumblebees.

Wisconsin's Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) Programs

Bob Nack, Wisconsin DNR, R3, Team Supervisor (Exhibit 10) – Quick history of R3 in Wisconsin, started in 2021, Keith Warnke was in this position before me. The program was gaining popularity across the country, brought staff on and then Covid hit. Keith took another job and then program basically shut down because no in-person programs. Position was vacant for a year and half, then I was hired. In-person programming guidelines were coming back into play, it took a while to get things rolling again. Tell you some of the things we have accomplished and thinking about. The team is myself, Emily Lehl, our hunting and shooting sports coordinator; Theresa Stabo, angling R3 coordinator; two assistants and Quinn Herman and Cal Sinclair. We have partner positions as program is gaining popularity, John Montevallo, PF and Peggy Farrell is Becoming an Outdoors Woman director. Those two are not employees but meet with us, really a good relationship. We just got approved to advertise a shooting range manager position, putting shoulder behind that. Mostly recreational shooters use the range, and we have 11 public shooting ranges. We are putting infrastructure and staffing behind them to make sure to provide safe, quality shooting experiences. We have a Conservation Congress committee dedicated to it. The rest of the team is outdoor skills trainers who support R3, mostly safety programs and volunteer instructors. They work with other programs and with hunter education staff. The new hunter education program administrator is Mike Webber who just started in March. We also have an archery education program as well and NASP is part of that. We have supper camps and things of that nature that want to borrow archery equipment, so Craig Richardson and Greg Krasinski were hired. All of those people are dedicated to our three main programs. Program updates, working on staffing and building capacity, request for bids out to add more partners positions, planning on four more positions from other organizations. A lot of programs around Madison and Milwaukee area because that is where staff is located. Hope to get some in other parts of the state. Ending hiring process for assistant outdoor skills trainers, hired two for shooting ranges, to keep them clean and coordinate volunteers. To bear hunt in Wisconsin sometimes you wait 7-8 years for a tag, so don't need more interest but need to work with first time bear hunters, and that there are other things there to hunt in northern Wisconsin. We have willing dedicated sportsmen and women that were interested in reviewing the learn to hunt bear program. Shooting ranges, we 11 public ranges, mostly supported through volunteer efforts and that is a challenge because they come and go and are not paid. We had some staff out there looking at capital improvements in those ranges. Looking at what we got and make improvements before looking at new range development. Surprised with popularity of fish mobile and interns, not adult focused but popular in urban areas, have four interns who move these around and introducing people to fishing. The social science folks have a lot of interest in this program and looking at measuring success. Looking at hunter education graduates to see if they are buying licenses and interviewing range users as a starting point. Tackling access issue, some focus group and survey work, talk with landowners and ask what incentive is to allow hunting on their property. Things in progress, event planning and what types of things we want to do, possibly one-day events on learning. We

did butcher a deer, went over great and were very popular. One on one learning to hunt didn't go as well, also tried learning to hunt rabbits with beagles, with mixed success. Learning to cook wild game was not as well received. Emily working on shotgun fit and use, particularly for women; learning to hunt with dogs we hope will be an enjoyable one. Another area of interest is beginning wing shooting, we have trailers that were used for advanced wing shooting workshops, it had a lot of interest but when it came to putting on programs it was not popular, and interest waned. We have stocked trailers for shooting programs, so we are doing a reset and looking at beginner program, looking at graduates of hunter education, we teach them how to handle a gun but not how to shoot the gun, get people hitting sporting clays. Academics Afield program is engaging college age students in hunting, trapping and shooting, they have the curriculum. It is more popular in southern states, so we are just talking with universities to see if any interest. Focusing our direction on specific spots. Learnhunting.org is trying to get the word out, it is a matchmaking online program. They have a program to hook up beginners and mentors, it is IHEA program. Some of the programs we do have 10-12 people at a time and programs don't need to be tied to DNR. Wisconsin R3 newsletter has been on my to-do list, working on this so hope coming soon. We have a DNR three advisory committee, getting our house in order internally. It is not just DNR programs, but wildlife, fisheries, parks, game wardens and getting interest internally, getting everybody together to talk about some initiatives we want to do. Arizona had a working group for stakeholders, called outdoors skills network now. We want to bring folks together with external stakeholders. We have a great state with a lot of support for hunting, fishing, and trapping, want to bring them together, as well as businesses, industry and nonprofits and have a unified conversation, maybe a statewide R3 symposium.

Kayla Sasse, Wisconsin, Outdoor Skills Trainer – Breakdown of my position, 75% deal with volunteer safety instructors, train and certify them, other 25% is R3 programs. I reached out this year to our state park educator at Peninsula State Park. Those educators get seasonal staff in the summer, and I saw as opportunity to build R3 capacity. So, I thought about outsourcing to those who have the compacity to do more public programs about consumptive topics. They are really good at non-consumptive topics like flora and fauna ID, nature hikes, etc. She is not well versed, and her staff aren't either on hunting, fishing, or trapping, but she said they were on board. Since some people come into the agency now that don't do those things it was a real opportunity to mentor from within. I teach her, she teaches her staff, and they are teaching the public, and it is growing exponentially. The model I set up starts with informal programs, something easy. They are good at what they do, are educators and know how to interact with the public. You can't teach that, they are already good at that, teaching is another thing to pass on. Started with learn to fish event after Memorial Day. They get a lot of visitors, but how do you get them in a program, so we set up on a pier, people came, and I was teaching them how to tie hooks on their line, put a worm on and how to cast, it was really fun. The next one we did was a boating safety welcome center, teaching about life jackets, PFDs and safety on the water. We set that up on a busy beach area. The next one coming is an archery in the park event, easing into harder program, keeping it simple, a drop in event at the nature center, show them that they can do it. We taught the educators how to set it up. We provide the equipment, so they don't have to plan, just drop off the equipment and they run with it. We have an archery trailer we can drop off. This summer planning a women's learn to hunt with crossbows program, can't run it by myself, will need volunteers and hunting mentors if possible. It falls more on me and where we feed them and where they can stay and that type of thing. They don't have to pay for it, I pay for it, take money out of equation and it brings the volunteers in. Make sure you set expectations, so they know you need help. The last one will be to learn to butcher a deer, a stand-alone program, not doing the hunting part. I will provide instructor to butcher the deer, just need a place and people. These educators are helping get the R3 word out. It is good integration using hunting as

conservation in a state park because most people think of state parks as non-consumptive uses, but they have areas open to hunting too so want to show that. They have different rules you have to follow, but open for hosting a learning event. Starting those conversations and getting the public engaged and using parks in a more consumptive manner.

Bob – Doing a great job and there is a lot of interest and excitement there. We shared a flight to national symposium, she put that in writing, and I shared it, so hopefully will spark more interest. Mentioned the fish mobile, is kind of like a bookmobile but the kids are checking out fishing rods and it is a great way for community involvement. Fish groups love coming here, just show up and show the kids how to fish. Most people understand R3 is mostly focused on adults and return on investment, they are the ones with money and can make their own decisions. We do focus on adults as well but hard to say no to youth stuff. Building capacity will go a long way. And help us do more adult-focused programming. We do learn to shoot events for adults; rabbits and small game hunts, deer and turkey are big time, but get people focused on small game, and get more exposure to the outdoors. We did a learn to ice fish, mostly college age students involved but again a way to build capacity.

Brian – Grapple in Kentucky with reaching enough people to actually make a difference. We are losing thousands of participants every year. How do we get them involved in the pipeline. This is new participants mostly. The most effective to date have been reactivation and keeping people from lapsing. Have you had success with replicating your program with partners or making them more scalable to service more people each year?

Bob – Some success with that. Prior to Covid, Keith was having training events, bringing people in to train them on how to put on a program together. There is some of that going on, so a good thing. Talking about if that is the model or take them by the hand and coordinate an event with them as a partner and let them take it alone next year, maybe they just need a push. As well as marketing and other things going on.

Refreshment Break – sponsored by DJ Case and Associates

AFWA Report

Ron Regan, AFWA Executive Director – Here today with the president of the Association, Curt Melcher from Oregon. I will have him speak first and I will follow behind him. He is consummate professional and a man who listens well, prefers few words, and enjoys people who have practiced and developed the art of brevity in thinking through decisions. He has been 38 years with Oregon, a fish squeezer, was first deputy and now director for nine years. He is a great president, and we are grateful for his leadership. He is good about pinpointing the problem and saying what needs to be done.

Curt Melcher, Oregon Director, AFWA President – I believe brevity is the soul of wit. I've had a great career and I count my blessings every day, I talk about things important to me, personally and professionally. Great listening to directors round table, when you become a director, you start engaging across the region or nation and you see how much we have in common. We deal with the same issues, sometimes on different scale or different political backdrop, but nonetheless similar. Thanks for letting me serve as your president, I have been counting the days until I can hand it off to the next president. My plan was to set the bar low for travel for future presidents, so they didn't feel like they had to go everywhere all the time. For me, having a new governor I need to focus my attention at home. On AFWA, while I didn't go to every regional Association meeting or industry opportunity meetings, I did engage. I physically talk to Ron weekly and daily electronically. I am going to make a pitch for your involvement, not only in regional Association but in national Association as well. We rely on director members to drive the Association and to achieve our mission. When you become a director, realize you are

the person on the island and have no peers at the agency, peers are across the borders. AFWA works hard on behalf of all states. Shout out to Kurt Thiede in his role as our governmental affairs director, his tireless efforts keep us informed and engaged. Big issues we are dealing with at federal level, working with USFWS on several issues, the Endangered Species Act, issues relating to the use of lead at federal refuges. Topics are complex and controversial and national. Because of the importance of our relationship with federal Fish and Wildlife Service, trying to lead and have those discussions with dignity and respect. Because our relationship is too valuable to jeopardize. However, we hope they understand our position as well. BLM has a number of initiatives under way, and we are engaging there as well. The conservation planning policy and recreational policy, and Kurt is leading the charge on that. There are a number of issues we are working on, like landscape conservation, not yet embraced in the west. We are having conversations, relationships and discussions with federal agencies, great benefit for F&W resources we have. We are doing work on CWD, as well as work on pollinators and monarch butterflies. Continuing to engage on federal investment piece, with new federal spending as it relates to fish passage and wildlife crossings. Shout out to Brad Loveless, director from Kansas, who serves on the landscape conservation joint task force; I am one of the co-chairs with Martha Williams from the USFWS. We have four agency directors, and he is from the Midwest. Important work that is bearing some fruit. Provided regional specific priorities for funding under America the Beautiful award grants, which the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is reviewing now. One of my initiatives, is tribal relations. I appreciated hearing from Oneida Nation chairman this morning. We have tribes that span full spectrum, tribes that have treaty reserved hunting and fishing rights to those with no hunting and fishing rights. We will be working a lot with them. From my perspective, in the next century they are critical to our success. They bring additional political leverage, but are also traditionalists, they believe in utilizing fish and wildlife for consumptive purposes, not just intrinsic value, but value as food. I think there is important synergy there. The Association is not going to dictate to individual states on how you work with tribes. Our Association is trying to figure out a way for long-term engagement with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and I did attend that meeting in April, Kurt went as well. Sara Parker Pauley started that, and she stayed longer than 18 months, Our One Health work continues and has nexus in tribal health and relevancy. Hope to see you in Calgary in September. Reference earlier that said you had to be a certain age to stump the band on Johnny Carson and Doc Severson would take someone from the audience and ask them to name a song and the band would play it.

Ron Regan – One of first WAFWA meetings I saw Kurt when he first became the director, in executive session or business meeting and it involved spending money. I admired him, because he raised his hand and reigned them in and said, let's talk about this, that set the marker for that meeting. Appreciated his integrity and willingness to go against the grain of the room. Thanks for hospitality. Glad to be here. Not only is Kurt Thiede here but Dean Smith is also here, he is on a call right now for me. We have two new folks at AFWA, so fully staffed right now. Dr. Bradley Wilkinson is working on his postdoc at Duke University, he is our bird conservation program manager and National Bird Conservation Initiative staff. I hope you meet him in Calgary. Also, he works in Mark Humbert's shop. Kurt rounded out his team with Ali Schwab, she is taking over portfolios Devin had, who had to leave for health issues. She deals with fisheries and aquatic resources. Enjoy seeing new people coming on, younger people help keep you fresh, challenge your assumptions and make you look forward a little bit. RAWA, not much to share, overall mood is positive. Came out of last Congress with a lot of goodwill. I think there are probably people like Mr. Schumer who have remorse for not getting the job done. Bill in Senate and looks like bill from last Congress. Key takeaways, we need 10 republican co-sponsors and are up to eight, two other hopefuls but not on bill yet, when that happens long list

of democrats willing to come in on bill; don't want it to look like Democratic bill. Lost Roy Blunt, Sara cultivated relationship with him in last Congress, he has been backfilled by Tom Tillis, a republican from North Carolina, totally impressed by his genuine nature and understanding of RAWA, hope for good things in Senate. House flipped early on, Mr. Westerman from Arkansas said he liked RAWA, but didn't like the price tag. The fact that we haven't figured out how to pay for it and didn't like mandatory spending. He asked his staff to draft a House bill by end of June. He and Mrs. Dingell looking at House RAWA bill. Wait to see it happen, then it will be two different bills, which probably won't look alike, and will have to work on managing them through two houses. Different this year is a core group of CEOs and leaders that pushed RAWA in the last Congress or two, now embracing bigger community of industry CEOs and groups that are outdoor industry, landowners side of the world, oil and gas, and many of those folks involved in the Blue-Ribbon Panel. Given the complexity of managing this bill through the House, it makes good tactical sense to bring some of them back and look for ways to encourage stronger support. Good news, just taking time. Hopefully goodwill will help us get through this. Acknowledge Sara, she has been the tip of the spear, from director standpoint, on all things RAWA. She is faithfully on calls on Friday mornings, representing your interests in good faith. I hope you all will come to Calgary. Up on Prince Edward Island a couple weeks ago and the president of chair of the Canadian Wildlife Directors committee, Brad Porters, made a strong appeal for Canadian directors to be in Calgary. To help get them there we will hold their fall meeting at front end of our annual meeting. We have not been to Canada in 38 years, since 1988, had courage through leadership of a number of people, time to talk about fish and wildlife resources and not knowing any boundaries. We need to demonstrate that and not worry about the money. I assume people will attend and show up in Calgary. We will have an invitation-only for directors on Saturday evening to meet counterparts in Canada. Have a full day of meetings, First Nation property meeting in the morning and blessed by elders and talk about things on reservation land. Retreat in the afternoon with FWS and have two plenaries on Monday morning, one about First Nations, reconciliation and work that is going on in Canada like management of fish and wildlife resources. Day two will be about Endangered Species Act, 50th Anniversary, in Canada called SARA, Species at Risk Act. Martha Williams will be the keynote speaker on the ESA side and a legal scholar, law professor Justina Ray will do keynote for SARA, then have panel. If you have not made hotel reservations, Cindy has a few rooms left. Airfares are not too bad, DC round trip to Calgary about \$600. Back to Wisconsin in 2024, annual meeting will be in Madison. Hot off the press this morning, ESAs work, FWS wants to host session for state directors only or your proxies, July 18, 3:00 to 4:30 on rulemaking regarding ESA, then drop off that call and have a call among the stateside family for another hour to see your reaction and what kind of position we should take.

Diane – Thank you Ron and Kurt for coming to Green Bay.

DIRECTOR & AMFGLEO GROUP PHOTOS

SPECIAL EXCURSIONS

Oneida Nation Tour
Lambeau Field Classic and Green Tour

Dinner at Lambeau Field Legends Club Room, sponsored by Ducks Unlimited and Canadian NAWMP Partners

Remarks by Jamie Rader and Stephen Carlyle

Hospitality Room 8:30 pm, sponsored by Airgun Sporting Association
Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Breakfast 7:00 sponsored by National Wild Turkey Federation
Remarks by *Clayton Lenk*

Meeting start 8:00 am

Casey Krueger, WI Chief Warden on behalf of AMFGLEO – Bob Stroess is part of our investigation team and has taken us out of the stone age in a lot of areas in law enforcement. Everything from charter and commercial fishing to aquatic invasive species and has worked with other states to help them with their aquatic invasive species. He is a wealth of information.

Illegal Trade of Aquatic Species

Robert Stroess, Lt. Wisconsin DNR, Administrator, Commercial Fish and Aquatic Species in Trade Enforcement Program (Exhibit 11) – I am going to talk about my role in the agency and aquatic species in trade industries. We are a crossover state with provincial borders. Talk about successes, learning moments and interagency work to make these cases successful. Sometimes we work in a vacuum and are doing a disservice to our staff, agency and the public because all of these topics cross borders constantly. Oversee law enforcement (LE) efforts on commercial fishing industry, wholesale fish dealers, live fish hauling, bait dealers, invasive trade in pet industry and live food industry, like nursery plants and water gardens. The charter fish guiding industries are housed in our Investigations Bureau. The rest of it is managing the program and having interagency interactions. I spend a lot of time working within DNR programs, specifically fisheries management and invasive species. Cross coordination is important, need to stop working in silos, which is inefficient. Commercial fishing is primary industry in Wisconsin, on Lake Michigan, Mississippi River and inland waterways. They harvest millions of pounds of fish every year and wholesale fish dealers buy and sell those products, large scale food distribution companies. As game wardens we never thought about this side of the business. Then there are the small-time buyers and sellers that do live fish transport and stocking, mainly live hauling from Midwest commercial fishers, destined for processing facilities up and down the Mississippi River, through other states and end up in specialty markets. Each one has \$10,000 to \$20,000 pounds of fish at a time. My part of the job was recognizing and being aware these products are traded and available in specialty grocery stores, fish markets and ethnic grocery stores, places we are seeing live products in the stores for consumption. These fish are destined to be released through ceremonial practices, or used at pets, which is another industry. Live food for invasive species is huge, a lot more here than we can handle. So, things like snakehead fish or self-cloning, marbled crayfish or any other live paddle fish could be used for pets. It's all available and doesn't get much attention from most of us, so, being aware of that existence can totally change your viewpoint. Whatever invasive species or species of concern you may have in your state or province is available when they want it. Charter fishing and guiding is more traditional industry, and more field staff are focused on that, it is more regulated commercialization. Industries everywhere, all connected. Lot more than two guys meeting in the woods exchanging game, we have to connect buyers and industry and shipping companies, they share brokers, staff, etc. One big industry with connections in a lot of states. We need to assure we are accounting for all their licenses and where and what other state/province they are operating, need to work together across borders more. Case studies, prior to 2018 little communication in commercial food industry, only AIS work done by our conservation officers and looked at trailers, bait buckets, movement of water, etc. That is not trade enforcement, which

doesn't address large scale movement, more to invasive species enforcement. Got two complaints from public. One was bighead and silver carp being sold in grocery store and one was red swamp crayfish in a pet store. So invasive species and trade enforcement worked together on case, Operation Crusty Crab. In 2019, someone reported red swamp crayfish in a Milwaukee pet store, they looked and found the species online for \$15, listed as an orange lobster. Contacted their supplier in Illinois and determined it was a red swamp crayfish, officer took it and gave it to invasive species person. He did his job. That is not where we are today, only a couple years later, there was confusion on whether or not it was a red swamp crayfish and it was. Invasive species department working with the distributor to get information and educate them on what cannot be shipped to Wisconsin. I am representative on Great Lakes Fishery LE committee, so now have connections with other states. Michigan had some cases too, got everybody talking, called counterpart in Illinois as well and he explained what law was and went to distributor, who had 4,500 products and 76 were prohibited in Wisconsin and 25 of those were crayfish, lot going on there. Met with management staff to find where things got shipped in Wisconsin in two-year period, only about 810 at that point. Met with invasive species staff, most time our LE doesn't involve other divisions, we did training, and got invasive crayfish species for identification and sent out pairs of biologists and AIS staff out to look at the places to see if they still had those species. Maybe if communicating better across programs this would not have happened. We found five more wholesale suppliers shipping to Wisconsin. Some of these places have been visited by invasive species staff and they knew they couldn't have them, two of stores had crayfish seized in the past. Some had complaints called on them. Had we known in advance we would have had better communication. We found 95 more. The distributor we talked to continued to ship to Wisconsin after meeting with him. How many stores knew what they should be doing, but we were not writing tickets or making arrests, so doing nothing to fix the problem. Another problem was the revolving door of staff. Two staff knew where the records were kept, because there was no centralized system, went back and found past contacts and logs from visiting stores including a letter to one distributor. Confident in invasive species LE now, in the past they didn't realize they should document those things for an investigation down the road if we need to prosecute later. Charged main suppliers and few other wholesale suppliers. Going on everywhere. We should have been looking into this better and educating our staff. You need a point of contact for invasive species and aquatic species trade in your agency. Break down silos, on any regulatory program needs get LE involved. Educate them, then seeing repeating cycle, need enforcement to follow up. It's not going to fix 10% of bad actors out there but will fix 90% of the good actors that made a mistake. First big issue in 2009, 10-inch red crayfish crawling out of 22-acre pond, public called in, they were crawling into people's yards. It turned out the school system released them; it took four years and \$800,000 to eradicate them and filled in the pond to get rid of them. Michigan is dealing with 80-100 places like this. The second issue was Asian carp, connects some of the same industries, got complaint about big head and silver carp for sale in grocery store. They had live fish tanks. We made covert buys over the course of several months, wholesale fish dealer making deliveries, wanted to know where they were coming from, tracker on licensed vehicle, he had fish farm, make deliveries in Chicago and Wisconsin. We prohibit invasive carp, so we did surveillance and worked with Illinois to do surveillance and had contact with him in Madison. He had only 13 fish with him but receipts for the day, paperwork didn't track, and he couldn't account for it all, had 1,800 pound of Asian carp and could only account for about 1,000 pounds. We served a search warrant, and he gave us records, don't know where fish went. Trying to connect the dots, from receipts, gas receipts, etc. and information from his phone. Learn from your mistakes. He was charged with eight crimes, 14 citations, convicted on 19 charges. Third case, Louisiana Crawfish Company, and live invasive species for food. In January 2020, GLFC and LE committee decided to do outreach campaign to industries that supply red swamp crayfish. Our goal was to educate them that they were illegal in many

jurisdictions, who to contact and did follow up to see if compliant. Planned to do trial run on this species. We sent letters to distributors and worked with Illinois DNR, they ordered crayfish and got it. Later, Wisconsin visited some of the distributors looking for invasives. Out of nine visited in one day, three were selling red swamp crayfish from the LA company. We processed those crayfish and there were hundreds and were able to show they are alive here. We got a lot of records from one of those places, LA company continued to ship for a year and half after the visit. Wasn't listed that they couldn't ship to certain states, spoke to president of the company and she agreed to list on their site they can't ship live to Wisconsin and suggest frozen product instead of live. Stopped shipping to customers they provided but made covert purchases online, no problem ordering them. There is so many of these issues going on. Our department of Justice charged them with 15 crimes, convicted on 10 with significant penalty, sent message to industry. Some of tools and training on invasive species. First, we focus on forensic auditing of records. In 1980s and 1990s, had commercialization poaching of yellow perch that had poorly regulated sport harvest. Our records are important, without that it wouldn't work. Required to have detailed records. Analysis is what it comes down to. In the last 10 years, cases found 178,000 pounds of illegal fish. Unless you are dealing with ocean-based issues, most of you don't have that many in a year. Every audit done has about 20,000 pounds of illegal fish identified. We have staff checking fishing licenses or checking commercial nets. We start audits start with inventory, like checkbook ledger, know what starting and ending point is of inventory. Once a year we do deep dive on records, enter data and look at records. Done a three-hour training to a bunch of states in the past. We got funding and started with aquatic invasive species organisms and trade work group, focused on different industries. Missing the boat if focusing in one place, staff needs to be aware of intermixed industries. The grant allowed us to get some training for a handful of people, so we got four field wardens for one month a year. They focus on connecting the dots and can be responsive to issues that come up. They spend two to three months a year on this. Encourage you to use funds for specialized staff don't spread it on entire staff, assign to specific people, a core group of folks that can do something and be knowledgeable about a topic. I have done cheat sheets, to some extent, that provided summary of agencies, laws, etc., related to those industries. Most of our work is fish and game enforcement, not boating, or environmental cases or things like that. We work on traditional fish and game. Consider adjusting some staffing time that have more conservation consequences. My viewpoint is different now.

Shannon – The red swamp crayfish you were talking about in Michigan. When we found the original spot, near Lansing, it took three years and a permit from the Environmental Quality department to treat those. They spread from one pond to three ponds and into the river. It was hard to get the permit and I had to personally request it just to use a chemical that Wisconsin and Minnesota used.

Unknown Audience comment – In Illinois has different exemptions because they have a pet exemption for a lot of species, as opposed to here where it is just prohibited.

Justine – We joke about PFAs being our new swear word. The first part of the presentation will be a recorded presentation by Dr. Sarah Balgooyen. Then we will have a conversation around the table about lessons learned, challenges and how to deal with this chemical in the environment.

Forever Chemicals: What you to need to know about PFAS

Dr. Sarah Balgooyen, video presentation – Five basics of PFAS and how they got into the environment. There is a polymer called PTFE, Teflon, Scotchgarde, Gore-Tex, which were accidentally synthesized in 1938 by DuPont, while trying to make new fluorinated refrigerants. A scientist found white solid in the bottom of their canisters that could not be dissolved or eradicated by typical chemicals like acid or solvents. They brought it to the attention of the Manhattan project in WWII. They made seals and gaskets for manufacturer of weapons grade

uranium. After war material became declassified and DuPont started making into consumer products, like non-stick pan Teflon pans; 3M also had Scotchgard. Both products use same compounds. Now PFAs used for many more things. PFAS is an acronym for poly fluorinated alkyl substances, a large class of over 6,000 different synthetic chemicals and their shared characteristics. We can split PFAS into two different subcategories, polymer and non-polymer. Polymers are solids, like Teflon, non-polymer that are water soluble or mobile and can dissolve in water and can move around the environment. These compounds can repel oil and water to making coatings for cookware, clothing, furniture, cosmetics and food packaging. These compounds are stable, don't have natural degradation, one of strongest bonds in nature and referred to as forever chemicals. They are hard to break down in the environment. These compounds are associated with health effects and risk of certain cancers, hormone interference, affected immune system and increased cholesterol. There are so many other chemicals that have not been tested. Some are harmful at low level, nanograms per liter or part per trillion or one drop in Olympic swimming pool, concentrations. One that gets into the environment is triple F or aqueous foams, like military grade firefighting foams, which have been manufactured since the 1960s. So, military sites, airports and oil refineries are places commonly deployed and are largest contamination sites and have high ground water contamination and gets into water wells. Other ways they get into environment, products, and their disposal at wastewater treatment plants or landfills. It doesn't degrade and goes directly into the environment. Industry has indirect releases into the environment as well, putting extra burden on waste infrastructure. It ends up everywhere and in everybody. So, 99% of humans have PFAS in their blood from what we are eating and drinking; well water contaminations, eating fish, soil or dust, food grown in PFAS, food packaging and consumer products. Eating fish is a major pathway, bioaccumulates in fish, body bad at excreting so builds up over time, as well as in humans. Number one compound in animals. In a community here in Wisconsin they have contamination in their drinking water and there is class action lawsuit of \$17.5 million due to damages to human health and property. Another fish consumption advisory out for rainbow smelt. Not just specific to Green Bay, but across the Great Lakes. Costs to communities with contamination, high legal and health care costs, as well as drinking water facilities who may have to shut down wells or install filters and wastewater treatment plants that won't be able to sell biosolids as fertilizer because of high nutrients and might have to treat hazardous waste at some point. Also, fish consumption advisory could affect tourism as a lot of people flock to Great Lakes for smelt run each year. In Canada, these compounds are better regulated federally, but it is not very protective. They are aiming to make regulations stricter. No restrictions in U.S., no federal regulation yet. Proposed drinking water regulation in some states and a lot of things in the works. Reach out if you have questions.

Justine – Drinking water is big proponent on this, poses challenges when we find hot spots, found in drinking water. Not only did we test fish for contaminants, but we also tested deer. Prior to that Michigan was the only place to test deer. There is not a lot known about how it travels. This is a different way to talk about bioaccumulation. I think of it as the smelt has it, something eats the smelt, and it goes through the chain that way. The challenges are, where the chemical is in the environment and finding hot spots. There is a huge financial cost to this testing. Not sure how many states doing testing. In Wisconsin, it is around \$600 per fish to test. The other component, the same lab is testing drinking water that is testing the fish, so water takes priority, and it could take up to 18 months to get test results back. Communicating, a lot of fear out there about this chemical. There have been PFAS consumption advisories on portions of the Mississippi River for a decade but becoming more well known now. It really is everywhere, not new but fear about this now. Challenge all are facing, two Great Lakes and have consortium to have conversations about PFAS and setting consumption advisories and guidelines but nothing regulatory on what is safe or unsafe. Talk and learn from each other on what you are doing.

Dave Olfelt, Minnesota – I am interested in how advisories are set because the Department of Natural Resources doesn't have a role in setting advisories, our health department does that. It seems there is fragmented communication. How is it moving in the environment that you are finding hot spots in? We know where applications were present, like airports, but don't know downstream impacts. There is a lot we don't know so what do we tell the public?

Justine – A challenge we all face. In Wisconsin, DNR releases consumption advisories, but Department of Human Services reviews all the information, and we have an environmental toxicologist in the fisheries program. It is DHS who says they agree and what the advisory should be on how many meals per week, etc. They are joint press releases. Different in different states. Build relationships between agencies, between programs. Not just military installations but look at companies making firefighting foam and test it on the ground. Military has been testing for years and there is a known source. Another component of our agency is before we release information, source going into river system or lake that is causing this in fish, we need to do work before press release, very complicated. Normally every two years update our fish consumption advisories for PCB and mercury. We get test results, etc. Do all states test PFAS in fish, are you aware? I assume press is about the drinking water. People are figuring out it can spread to other things.

Shannon Lott, Michigan – We test, with some funding from Health and Human Services, but get nervous when they want to test everything, like deer or fish. We test waterfowl but they are migratory, and you don't know where they picked it up. They want us to test our soil, don't know where they are going on this, translocation piece, how it travels through the air and that sort of thing. At some point, asked for cost, it is expensive, early samples were \$1,200 apiece. Found deer near a military base that were positive, had a press release and posted signs near those areas to not eat the deer. It gets dicey when two agencies are trying to figure it out the cause. We don't want to scare people so they never hunt again.

Justine – We have large Hispanic populations who do a lot of fishing, so need to make sure message to them is in language they need it. We are nervous about press release fatigue as we are now putting out these announcements on a regular basis when we get test results. We want to be sure people are conscious about what they are consuming and able to make the right decision. We put signage up at the shore fishing sites, in multiple languages.

Warnings from Health and Human Services.

Pete Hildreth, Iowa – It is in two divisions in Iowa as well, conservation and recreation and environmental services divisions within DNR. Since 2020 our ESD side have had weekly talks on water quality talking about PFAS. In February this year some articles went out about other states testing and finding PFAS in fish, and they sent me an email to be on the committee, up to this point I was not involved in those conversations. Iowa is not testing, getting information from other states. What I am hearing is the leaders are within the Great Lakes system, so maybe that will add some perspective. New topic for conservation and recreation.

Kendra Wecker, Ohio – Fisheries team has done a great job of keeping this on the table with Department of Health who puts out the advisories. Have a good connection but that changes with administration changes. They can help with messaging but scary to people when it comes out of the Department of Health. Encourage you to get your fisheries people or other communicators out there working with them to massage the language and help where possible. Just starting that in Ohio.

Justine – Talk about positivity of PFAS. We had systems we tested four years ago and retested, and levels have gone down below fish consumption issues. These are rivers and streams with no long-term source going into the water. Trying to deal with how we accommodate that which is changing quickly in some systems, which is different than mercury and PCB's which stay in the system a long time. Minnesota also has a system where they had higher levels in a river system

that are going down. That is different than how we have done consumption advisories in the past. When we got smelt results back from Lake Superior and Lake Michigan; it is a small fish and you would expect lake trout that lives in the lake for 20-30 years and eating all kinds of other fish to be high in this chemical, but they were clean, but smelt were high. Trying to explain that to people, that it doesn't affect all fish the same. A lot of education for all of us to work with customers.

David McFarland, wildlife research program leader, Wisconsin DNR – Next item is to focus on concept of One Health. Increased interest in zoonotic diseases last several years, zoonotic disease interest increased. There has been a lot of great work happening in the MAFWA Wildlife Health Committee and AFWA released a white paper this fall. Moving from focus on single zoonotic disease to more of an ecosystem approach, a paradigm shift. We have Lindsey Long and Sara Parker Pauley and we were supposed to have Brian Richards, but he is unable to be here. Lindsey will step up and take on his role.

One Health: Shifting the Paradigm toward an Ecosystem Approach

Lindsey Long, Veterinarian Wisconsin DNR, Fish and Wildlife Health Committee Chair (Exhibit 12) – How to discuss how we might shift the One Health discussion from one disease to ecosystem approach. Shift paradigm, redemption arc. One Health in the 21st century was promoted through wildlife conservation agencies, and it developed into reconnecting people to the ecosystem, it was called the Manhattan Initiative. There was a group of people, including Brian Richards, at the table who wanted to talk about how to look at wildlife health, not just wildlife disease and not human disease, but broader understanding of health and how they interact together. There is traditional ecological knowledge we can discuss, even in early medical colleges. The whole idea of one medicine and one health was brought up. Brought back after we lost connect in societies to the ecosystems and through paradigm of conservation medicine. When people think of conservation they don't think of public health, just wildlife. The One Health initiative came from the need to look at all of us together, people are part of conservation effort. It drew in environmental parameters that people like soil specialists, hydrologists and others to consider. In early days conservation medicine looked all over environment health overarching with Venn diagrams. In 2004, when initiative started, the Venn diagrams were all over the place where there is intersection and that is where we were worried about, but the reality is not just intersection but all encompassing. It started with the idea that we could work together to find ways to limit the expression of disease. What happened was the idea was grabbed and ran with by some great people, mostly veterinarians, and the American Veterinary Medical Association. They got a commission together and involved medical doctors, but they lost the ecological health component of it. They started to focus on single disease, one animal or one individual. Not what the trigger was for the disease, they lost ways to prevent health issues. We have emerging infectious diseases on the rise from zoonotic origins, 71.8% starting in wildlife, easy to vilify wildlife and see them as disease agent rather than something that needs saving. If we looked at human pathogens in general, 58% are zoonotic, 177 are characterized as emerging or reemerging and zoonotic are twice as likely to be in this category. People can see wildlife in this paradigm, as something that needs to be controlled rather than actually initiate a health concept. Also, shift in paradigm because of SARs Covid. How to respond to diseases went out the window because we couldn't keep things out of our border. Trying to identify a disease we can respond to and do it quickly, this paradigm didn't work for that. Instead of limiting wildlife health, for first time got invited to the table at national and state levels, so we were able to cooperatively work with CDC, USDA, USFWS, USGS and public health and our animal health partners. We were talking on weekly basis and were in the know and providing feedback. Looking at how to help control and reduce risk in people, wildlife and domestic animals. For the

first time federal agencies saw us as a partner and we moved forward with One Health back to what it was supposed to be, incorporating all of these ecosystems into it. There is a new paradigm coming into play from our One Health partners and they see this as larger scale where we need to communicate. We need to coordinate, get society involved and need people who understand the environment, people who understand humans and we need ecosystems so we can have a healthy lifestyle and healthy planet that can support us. We can minimize risk of future infectious diseases. So, we are returning to the beginning. Shifting back to ecosystem health, looking at factors that are involved in disease, not individual disease but roles that build resiliency in populations, humans, wildlife, domestic animals, and the ecosystem. We can support ecosystem health to sustain healthy populations. Incorporating these ideas, working with public health to maintain healthy populations. Reduce stress, give them space, reduce problems they might have like lack of food or overpopulation in certain area, reduce all things that might incorporate precursor for reduced health or disease. We are seeing change in perspective from One Health partners and growing discussion on North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. A lot of our conservation efforts rely on hunter income, however in perpetuity this will not keep us afloat. Important for discussion on wildlife resources is to expand the concept to only wildlife but the land ethic from Aldo Leopold and everything within that. Maintains that population, the ecosystem, the animals that aren't harvested, the harvest of animals, all those things are important part of the public trust. Combining that, new paradigm that describes what conservation is, what health is, whole land ethic and existence of an ecological coexistence reflects conviction of individual responsibility for health of the land and capacity of the land. We have a definition we can use, a definition of conservation and a way to speak to people so they understand where it comes from. AFWA working on this too, Shane Mahoney created a white paper approved by AFWA that describes what we look like if we do not take action to support ecological health, basically what it is like now, so people remember what it was like before we had cohesive One Health approach. People interested in health and have availability and opportunity with funds available right now. Now is the time to integrate some partner agencies to move forward to support the ecosystem health and get on board at nationwide level. AFWA has direct responsibility and play a critical role in monitoring and helping prevent disease in wild animals as one of the cores and extending AFWA's leadership into One Health space in appropriate and necessary expansion of expertise and influence to achieve optimal outcomes for wildlife conservation. That isn't just the fish and wildlife health committee, we have soil scientists, ecologists and hydrologists and all those things helping to have healthy ecosystem. Converging at national level, we, as wildlife agencies fit into the paradigm of One Health and can work together. We have the white paper, AFWA's director resolution and the have President's Task Force, session at the North American and AFWA meetings, regarding the future of the North American model and AFWA's Wildlife and Fish Health Initiative. The second wildlife health forum, sponsored by USFWS, is happening in July, and every state should have had a request to send a representative. Had a recent workshop on future of surveillance and wildlife health, the start of conservation and health community of practice, who is working on toolkit for states and regions and USFWS grant positions for regional wildlife health coordinators. Our new coordinator, Tricia Fry, is here. This isn't something new to MAFWA, we have engaged regional group and add in engaged health committee. Looking at where we could be more involved with directors, focus and integrate in our own states and at national level, and where we go from here.

Sara Parker Pauley, Director, Missouri Department of Conservation – MAFWA fish and wildlife health committee, not sure another region has as active as a committee as we do. Lindsey and team are awesome. I will follow up on the President Task Force. Thank you for leadership President Melcher. There are subcommittees right now working to finalize

recommendations that will go back to the AFWA Executive Committee and then the annual meeting. Goal is achieving optimal health outcomes and recognizing the interconnections between people and animals, and their shared environment. Not only get a seat at the table in reactive mode of a disease of the day or whatever wildlife disease issue but become the problem solvers. We are part of the solution, an important transition. All you have to do is watch the news, on human health side, lets focus on mental health, not just new diagnostic tools, on the rise, what is going on. There has been some fascinating research just out about making connection between what is going on in metabolic function of our cells and mental health. We are beginning to peel away the layers that something is amiss. We need a more thriving, flourishing environment to exist. A topic of relevance, human existence. Health is basic human concern and nature is that bridge. We are all in the nature business. Sometimes colleagues say we are getting out of our lane. Flourishing healthy lands, waters and wildlife is the connection to human existence.

Brad – Right in the middle.

Tim – Ties with relevancy work we are all doing. All coming together.

Sara – Get hands slapped by some, but if it is the answer to relevancy issues, timing issues. If we don't take advantage of them now, shame on me as a state director. This is relevancy, not just talk about disease but be there for the answer. For biodiversity, for thriving ecosystem, etc. We have to be part of the collective conversation as well as part of the problem solving. In Missouri, still in timeline, babies starting to crawl. Lorisa Smith and Dr. Sherri Russell are in the fray and exciting things are happening. No one was asking us to the party, so we sent out invitations to other state agencies. Now meet on quarterly basis with Department of Health, DNR, Environmental Agency, Health and Senior Services, Department of Mental Health, elementary and secondary education, and higher education. Now, we are couple years into it, at minimum sharing information with each other, before only if there was a crisis. Mental health is coming into discussions for the first time so exchanging information on that. Goal is, because of relationships, to be able to solve problems together, not there yet but redesigning and reframing as a state. Getting there. Big news is federal stimulus dollars building a One Health lab on banks of Missouri River, a year into that and dollars came down, but we were not on the list, not invited to the party. I called the director at Health and Senior Services, and they were over to our office in a week with the head of the lab, saying, they didn't know why they didn't think about us. We are part of the design now and part of design team and we will have lab space there, an individual space as well as collective space to brainstorm together. Public we serve, in survey 90% said wildlife and outdoors was important to their own health. They know. We survey every quarter, and this statistic doesn't go down. One other thing we are doing is partnering with pediatricians and physicians, hosting nature and health seminars targeting them. We hold those at one of our nature centers and agenda includes what One Health is, suicide prevention and intervention, neurodiversity of nature and how to get people into the outdoors. We do guide nature hikes with them, physicians not necessarily outdoorsy, so get physicians healthy, so get them into nature, zoonotic exposure, and these sessions have been great additions to portfolio. Have K-12 curriculum in vast majority of school districts in Missouri. We weave topics and messages into that as well. Part of reorganization and restructuring that happened three years ago and we continue to evolve. We have a conservation health section within science branch, still focused on zoonotic disease but broadly leads these One Health concepts as well. It is a revisitation of the land ethic, of Aldo Leopold, about time. This is the bridge between conservation and nature health, which includes zoonotic disease and ecosystem health. To ensure we are defining what success looks like related to biodiversity related to ecosystem health. Now this interconnection is with human health, an integration and promotion of the two. Not a new idea. Looking at partnerships differently, community conservation capacity, looking at programing with One Health lens as well. Piloting a variety of things, especially in urban

underserved communities to nature and building program around health with medical communities. Connecting people to nature wherever they are. Converting parking lots to green spaces in the green schoolyard program. Worked with University of Missouri to regenerative ag center, now looking at soil health and making connections with soil health and regenerative practices with human health. Early in discussions with Missouri University medical school, on pilot looking at youth benefits of bringing them to green spaces and how it affects the physiology of mental health in these young people. A lot of efforts going on, early in process, amazing connections being made. Research is pouring in to prove what we anecdotally knew, and the answer is there. We have responsibility to take care of nature but to ensure public understands the value and importance of it as well.

Amanda – First started AFWA conversation when Shane published his white paper. In Indiana, we went through reorganization and so much of that I would love to see integrated into our strategic plan, like relevancy road maps. This is the thing that will make us relevant. Working with Shane and going through strategic planning with him, training process with staff on building a bridge with One Health to make connections and frame different. The way we lead in Indiana is to put things on peoples to do list through daily performance and make sure it rolls into strategic plan. Visionary document focuses on what we need to do to be better. Think One Health framework starting this fall and using that as umbrella of guiding principles. Values we created last time those won't change but need to change the way we see connection of work to value of human beings. One example, we don't think about cool things we do and how that helps human beings. I took staff on a field day, my favorite species are mussels, so I had nongame aquatic biologist take me out and took legislature liaison out as well, the perfect example to show how our work impacts human health and healthy environments. So, went to degraded stream in east-central Indiana, which was muddy because it had just rained, looked like creamy coffee. We got in river, searched for mussels, found some unique species but not a lot of common ones. We moved from that to town to see water treatment facility, a tremendous partner in endangered species of mussels propagating mussels for us and reintroducing them into the river. It makes sense. What cleans water? Mussels do, and my job is to produce clean water for the public. Not sure how long it will take to show the impact of that to the public. Building two building, one to propagate and one to educate on how important these mussels are to intact ecosystems. Then can look at baby mussels that will be put back in the river, to clarify the water we use. That is what I want my staff to be doing. Not all my staff get it yet but hope strategic plan process will help them understand. That allows us to connect with public directly for education and outreach opportunities when they don't have to convince them their work is impacting humans directly.

Lindsey – One of the things I would like to discuss is regional organization, we all have individuals in our agencies that are specialists and work together to create toolkits or workshops for agencies that need help.

Pete – Every state agency different, you have departments of conservation and DNRs and they have to be collaborative. Our communications under our director are much bigger than just fish and wildlife, things like air and water quality.

Sara – It has to be collaborative. Depending on whether multi-agency or whatever, those pieces of environmental health need to be there, however you construct human health. We are adding education for obvious reasons, even higher education, but mental health has been a fantastic partner. Everybody has organizational structures, you may need to be the one to invite, don't wait.

Natalie – As a nurse practitioner, thank you for what you are doing. In Illinois previous director and John Rogner have brought this idea up but we haven't branded it as One Health but moving in that direction. I want to talk offline about K-12 curriculum so we can have a meeting with our State Board of Education to see how we can embed this to use in our state parks and natural areas. Not sure kids are getting exposed to outdoors one field trip at a time. Mental health

problems and the trauma kids are experiencing with abusive neglect at home, etc. One Health is not new, but is intuitive, natural, and hopefully will happen organically, but we need to make it intentional.

Sara – Love that word, intentional. Need people with your background in this field. In our discussions with pediatricians and physicians we are going immediately to nature-based prescriptions. We realized we needed to go back to square one, get physicians in nature and share science with them. Get them outdoors.

Natalie – Not a natural buy-in necessarily from physicians, but they need to be reminded. I have been learning about herbicide drift and all that and we are worried about what is happening to trees. But what about human impacts, I can't just talk about the trees, we have to remind everyone that it is our entire health environment.

Lindsey – In wildlife health, easy to feel jaded and that they are going to forget us again. The point of being intentional, remaining at the table, and inviting them to your table, since they are not inviting you. Can't let off the gas, be incorporated. This is your opportunity.

Sara – Our departments of elementary and secondary education are overwhelmed; they are focused on curriculum standards and everything else. But when we come to the table as problem solvers, that is where curriculum meets their standards. Ask them if aware of nature-based solutions to mental health issues and be to the point of intentionally being solution identifiers and problem solvers.

Pete – As leadership changes, that can change what initiatives are. To build capacity, do you have somebody specifically, like a One Health coordinator to carry the load?

Sara – I've worked in state government long enough to know if the idea was the director's you can say, so long to the idea once they leave. We have an interagency One Health team across branches, Dr. Sherri Russell leads that Conservation Health Section. That interconnectivity and collaborative nature internally is step one in finding those influencers in your agency. Talk about it as directors but it has to be other people carrying the ball.

Lindsey – But those people may not be fish and wildlife, they may be soil scientists, people in agency carrying the torch on communications, relevancy and wildlife health, multiple branches. This year at U.S. Animal Health Association meeting, which is usually state veterinarians and they put proposals to USDA. There is a concerted effort for wildlife agencies to attend. One doctor presented on One Health, focused more on wildlife conservation agencies, ecological agencies at the table. I heard USDA Veterinary services person say we have to stop blaming wild birds for avian influenza. A big step in looking at things from more collaborative level and recognizing domestic animals are part of that too. Another signal that people are ready to start talking about this in collaborative ways to reduce the risk of disease events occurring from ecosystem health approach.

Bryan Richards, Emerging Disease Coordinator, USGS National Wildlife Health Center
(unable to attend - Lindsey presented for him)

Refreshment Break sponsored by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Customer Engagement and Relevancy Roundtable

Diane Brusoe, Wisconsin Fish, Wildlife and Parks Administrator – Carry over conservation to One Health. Our former administrator Keith Warnke came back completely energized from conversations about AFWA's relevancy road map. I had just come on as his deputy and with my background in natural resources planning, strategic planning and problem solving it was my kind of thing. So, we grappled with it. What does relevancy mean. Thinking about it as important enough to keep talking about. Still needed to have other conversations and figure out how we could make this fit on day-to-day basis, plan to plan, and get house in order.

Started in 2020, we set aside time to incorporate it and what it means for our division. We have had programs, already have strategic plan, how does that fit into the division. We have six programs and grappled with that for a year. Looking at mental health and not everybody deals with change in the same way, so we did some staff engagements, so it starts to align. Addressing concerns, perfect information to help remain relevant. Took framework, over three years, come up with focus, an umbrella concept, dealing with and engagement with staff and stakeholders and keeping house in order. Thought about relevancy, diversity, equity and inclusion, goals that are inner-focused and our division is very external-focused. So, we decided to focus efforts on addressing relevancy road map governing principles and came up with our own which are similar but tweaked along the way. Want this not top down, want buy-in from staff, see themselves in it. Get it built in the way we do our business. As leadership team felt good with what we were coming up with and goal was to convince staff we were not starting over. Felt solid on it, shared with entire staff, 600 full-time staff. At this point, proud of team who are serving as sponsors, have three internal staff, sponsor, program directors and co-sponsor and directors are involved in three goals. But team is made up of all staff, across the board in each of the six programs. Let them run with it, and proud of work they are doing. It is not me spreading the word but them. They have their house in order again, we want to be the division where people want to work, remain relevant, care about the culture, and want people to feel heard. There are some brilliant thinkers, and they are shining on work they have been doing with relevance. We will carry on the work. Roundtable conversation, follow up of previous conversation of thinking of bigger picture, not just prices, remaining relevant.

Shannon – Have exact same teams, feel we did something right. These are nested within the department, and our current governor had created a couple teams that cabinet members sit on. I am on a team called social determinants of health is One Health, they just didn't want it called the environmental justice team. First meeting was strange, everyone staring at each other, and Health and Human Services was leading the conversation and going around asking what we could provide to the conversation, and they skipped over me. We have all the outdoors health and our statewide comprehensive outdoor management plan (SCORP), associated with schools and learning. So, I said they could use the data to help people understand why they need to be outside, not just hunting, fishing, or going to a park. This environmental justice team is more about providing health in underserved communities and green space and that sort of thing. DNR provided parks in Detroit and those kinds of things. It is coming together. All of the agencies together and having meetings as well. We need more program people like Diane said, that are doing the operational work, so then changes in administration don't wipe it out. So, I'm trying to figure out different ways that we could operationalize these things to make sure that they don't go away.

Sara – Perfect point, we have been working on operationalizing and making it part of expectations. Beginning with planning, but relevancy plan we have in place has met recommendations and are pouring through that operationalizing, either through values or behaviors through competent core competencies related to performance. That is one aspect of it. The relevancy plan, through work objectives, through governance. So, either through competencies or how they are evaluated, with performance pay, more important to take performance evaluations seriously. Work planning through specific program objectives, which only becomes real when part of expectation of their job of performance. We can't overestimate, it is critically important to operationalize teams, especially on new initiatives.

Dave – We've been working to try to operationalize things in Minnesota. Had a unique opportunity to hire a bunch of senior-level managers, who are all good biologists, but we hired for those qualities we are seeing there. Another important piece is connecting day-to-day activities, regional through section operations to those strategic objectives. Not there yet, significant effort and takes time and space. Here is what we need and here is how to connect.

Amanda – We started to do a comprehensive look at our job description and found we were very specific in type of job and then would hire somebody and need to tweak job in a year or two and they say that was not of their job description, but we needed them to be more adaptable. Looking at how to write those job descriptions that look for competencies and skill sets as opposed to tagging things to a job title now. Next level managers are probably where the new employees are doing okay. Still have heartburn over that. When we interview, we talk about where we are today not where we will be in a few years because this is an adaptive process and the needs on the landscape are changing. Getting my management team comfortable with that is the challenge. New employees are the easy part. I guess we need to teach staff to be adaptable.

Kendra – Same thing, looking at job descriptions and what we are looking for. Then we segue into interview questions as well. That has been hard for staff to accept. We know how much knowledge they have but want to know how they are going to handle difficult situations. So, asking situational behavioral questions, which has been good for us. Still getting arguments from staff but asked them if happy with the candidate they got and they usually are, so it is working. We are getting candidates and staff who can handle a situation, know how to treat peers, the public, how they view themselves in the agency and their role.

Amanda – We talk about the culture and what we want it to be like within the agency. The thing that has changed culture the fastest is how we conduct interviews and types of people we hire, because it is the people that make up the culture, so that piece is imperative.

Sara – Mindset over skillset. Right frame of mind.

Brad – Had early conversations about hiring the most well-rounded employees. Our folks in law enforcement had a scoring mechanism, a lot of stuff that they would artificially weigh, convinced objective. I suggested they add some other criteria about leadership and things like that, they hated it. It was like a security blanket for them. I was told by a person with legal background, who has done litigation around hiring laws that we could set up initial criteria, or something scalable and once everybody achieved that threshold you could put criteria for a second round. Items that are more subjective that have to do with leadership, dealing with conflict, being a team player, etc. Instead of just hiring people who can get the job done you can hire leaders and great people to help the culture adapt in the future. That is legal as long as you have first tier that everyone can achieve. How many would say efforts to change hiring practices are led by human resources?

Sara – It is the overall process. It is one thing to change questions, changing the panels, which are now diverse is change. Even on law enforcement panels, there is law enforcement on there but other branches on panels as well. HR still making sure we are keeping with the process. But characteristics of individuals we are looking for is different than a decade ago.

Brad – LE didn't use to be diverse, they would have 8 to 10 people on a panel, they have a class of law enforcement that all apply, when they achieve appropriate threshold, they go to interviews and the whole team is interviewing them. I asked a candidate afterward if they were intimidated and they were. Not one-on-one, a whole team so can't have a conversation with a few people, so it is counterproductive. Taking time to work away from that, idea of changing that is intimidating to them.

Natalie – We currently have central management services that takes care of comprehensive employment plan. They set all the hiring rules. We have bottlenecks there and we are working on overhauling our HR internally. We need to make sure we are not pointing fingers and saying all the problems are with CMS because they are not. I would rather have a well-rounded candidate too, rather have someone with work ethic and who treats people fairly and knows how to deal with others. Other skills, depending on what the job is, are less important to me, people can learn on the job. Basically, we found the process had these pre-qualified questions that were watered down and generic. We would have 60 candidates for a spot that had high education level and we couldn't interview who we wanted to, had to interview all or a random selection. So, you may

get six people and lose a lot of qualified people. We didn't have the right questions up front because there was fear on back side due to the laws that you couldn't ask the same question that was on pre-qualifier. But that is not exactly true, you could change it up. We are learning to do things better. We can have subject matter experts, but we only have one for the entire agency, and we need to establish others in each department to help with front end questions. Having well-rounded candidates is one issue but relevancy is another. We tried to do it at Illinois DNR. To make sure we were relevant with our General Assembly. We have 2/3 of our legislators in the city, urban, who think DNR is only fishing, hunting, and state park people, but we have much more than that like water allocation, open space land acquisition grants, similar to land and water conservation district funding. We have done a campaign to get in front of those legislators, not just one at a time, ongoing campaign to be in their districts to talk to them about what DNR does and why we are relevant to them. We need them to be our champion. Other thing we have done is come up with a new slogan, everyone belongs in nature to be an intentional about making sure people know that they all have a place in nature., that has been successful. And with recruitment we have intentionally tried to get diverse candidates and have a team working on that. So, a few wins.

Diane – Took long time to get internal buy in, now external buy in is difficult. Finding relevancy external without ruffling feathers. It is working internally, more staff that want to be part of these teams. We have application process to be on the teams on two-year rotating basis. We want to keep them small, so they stay manageable. We are exposing more people to it and now need to convey externally. Any thoughts, on finding relevancy with stakeholders?

Dave – Governor has made a keystone of his administration, making Minnesota the best place to raise a family. Part of our job is being relevant by connecting to that vision. That has been working for last four years. Last year we had a roundtable of stakeholders, which is traditional. The governor spoke, as well a fishing guide. The governor was able to connect what we do to what fish guiding does and fishing organization. That is how it connects to your work. There is an industry of these kinds of things connecting it to research about kids who get outside. Identify those objectives leadership has and connect them to what you want. The Governor is a terrific speaker and advocate for us, talks about DNR when talking about education and health when he talks about economy.

Shannon – Wildlife Council going well in Michigan. The other state using that is Colorado. That is a \$1 pull off from your base license in the state. We have seen movement in areas targeted to urban areas where people aren't exposed to the outdoors, hunting or fishing. We hear from people who say they pay our salary, but they don't unless they buy a license. So, teaching that and it has been successful. Spoke last week, and where they boost the needle is women's group and in the Detroit area. On commissions or boards, we continually run into problem, we think we are relevant, but public doesn't know who DNR is, who commission is or how we set regulations. That is how you move the needle in this business, on policy and not on quotas. But they think their relevancy is high. Do any of you have a manual or anything you give your commissions on what their role is?

Sara – Our commissioners take a day-long training where they introduced to the organization, history, policies, bylaws, etc. We now take them through wildlife values as well. It is different for us because of sales tax. We have had to accommodate broader audiences because of sales tax. They are paying the way for community conservation. We continually have to remind our traditional constituents that it is no one left behind. Including new audiences. We have extensive training because their memories are short. We even started doing pre-commission workshops and go back to topics like relevancy and data we get from the people and whether we are spending dollars wisely. Continually reminding them why issues like relevancy are important and we are not leaving traditional constituents behind.

Pete – Give shoutout to Bill Moritz and WMI, they have commissioner training, and you should talk to them about that training.

Brian – Applewood has also published a training manual that you could tailor it to your agency.

Tim – Bill was working with WMI and Applewood it is available for everybody. We have our own version specific to Nebraska, we have parks, so a little different. We do half day training and bring them into the office and have conversations about the issues of being a commissioner and public record laws. Why they should use game and parks email and not personal and some of that type of thing. Broad introduction to all divisions in for 15-30 minutes to talk to them and introduce what they do in their division, so they get better understanding. It might be hunting, fishing, parks, biking, canoeing, or what they see from their passion as a user. We went through this journey; interesting issues of legislation have popped up and had to pulled back and including in relevancy. We have internal and external relevancy to protect our staff and agency. Some staff upset that we were taking the short road and the wrong road, easier but we had honest conversation about my concerns about protecting our staff who do this sort of work. We have focused on talking about this work. We did a DI survey and had some interesting reactions in terms of field staff thinking we were trying to use this for some sort of Hunt for Red October to drum people out. We spent time sharing information with field staff before we did the survey. We front-loaded the survey and that it was not identifying anyone doing anything wrong. Our goal is to get better every day, or to suck less every day. Glass half full but great progress. We had 75% participation rate in employees on this first survey. Overall positive, refreshed by it, felt we had a lot of interest in the agency and people felt they were getting information they needed and taking advantage of opportunities.

Kendra – Like Shannon, we identified our council, but they didn't understand their role, so we are developing packet for new council members coming on. Dr. Mami Parker said, in initiating an effort to have black and brown faces on the council and commissioner members who are able to communicate and show support for each other. Everybody needs support, no matter what group you are in. I can share my packet with Shannon.

Diane – Some of the work on R3 is merging our worlds as well as state parks, which are not traditional places you hunt. We have people to educate that might not otherwise have exposure to these activities. Not everybody grew up the way we did. They are using our park property to camp or fish. We take our fish mobile to state fairs, it is popular, and kids love it. You have whole audience, and you think you are remaining relevant, so share with people not seeing same exposure. Doing work in wildlife areas as well, trying to let people in to go hiking and other non-consumptive users. We have programs where we talk about what their fears are, going into the wild, having those conversations. The goal is to get people outdoors. It is good for carrying on traditions, a win-win.

Sara – How do these R3 teams work together or collaborate? What aspects of commonality?

Diane – The groups meet individually on monthly basis. Then all the teams meet together as well. As leadership team, we meet monthly, and each team reports on what they have been doing and try to identify low hanging fruit, easy wins, so we can celebrate success. The conversations take time and we come together in one place.

Lunch 12:00 sponsored by Gordon-Darby

Remarks by Mitch Strobl

Meeting starts at 1:00 pm

MAFWA COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ollie Torgerson, MAFWA Executive Secretary, Facilitator – Committee reports are an important part of the program, we have 13 active committees, with a three-year life cycle and they are extended if functioning properly. Each one has a director liaison connected to them for assistance and coordination and a connect back to the Board of Directors. Our committees do much work for the Midwest Association and your state should have a representative on each. These reports go fast, but it does not diminish from the importance of their work. You should have a booklet containing all the full reports. Wisconsin requested a change in order from those in the program. First, we will hear from joint committee on private lands, public lands, wildlife diversity and MLI. They had a meeting last month. Owen Boyles will present that report and stay and do the Wildlife Diversity report after that.

(All reports in this section are part of committee report book – Exhibit 13).

Joint Private Lands, Public Lands, Wildlife Diversity and MLI Technical Committee

Report – *Owen Boyle, WI DNR* – Got together chairs from Wisconsin on these committees. Private lands and public lands already meet together, and we asked if we could include wildlife diversity and work more collaboratively and asked the new MLI committee to meet as well. With goal of thinking big on landscape scale conservation and moving the needle, and secondary goal of better positioning for federal money opportunities out there right now to make us more competitive. We met May 9-11 at Wisconsin Dells, 80 folks from the committees attended. We had two main days, first day focused on key issues, like tribal engagement and examples of large landscape scale projects that were successes and challenges. Day two we spent in working session where we brainstormed projects around large landscape scale initiatives that are priority for MAFWA, for directors and for our states. With idea to set us up for grant proposals. There are a number of deliverables from the meeting that are listed in the report that was provided by MLI staff, about 80 project ideas. We narrowed that down to 10 large scale projects, mussel restoration and approaches, centering around private lands training strike teams for functional forests to build landowner capacity. Same with grassland side. Idea of establishing new state programs to mimic federal programs. Things like rebooting the Civilian Grassland Conservation Corps, a number of pollinator project ideas. One of the popular ideas was to try bolster supply chain for native seed. We know we need more grassland, not more native planning in the Midwest, and one limitation is amount and price of seed available. We are starting to run with that. I hope you will be hearing from your staff on those.

Ollie – Greg Link, ND is director/liaison. Owen Boyles is the chair.

Wildlife Diversity – *Owen Boyle, WI DNR* – We had 11 of 13 states represented. Director action items from Wildlife Diversity that directly came out of our discussions on large landscape scale collaborations and conservation initiatives. First, proposing directors find a way to fund a grant administrator or fiscal agent for some big multistate grant proposals. It can be hard for states to step up and take responsibility for other states. Other is less tangible, asking you to provide more support, by removing barriers for staff and help us do more like we did last month. Everybody came out energized and excited. We have awesome ideas now, working across barriers and borders, and anything you can do to help your staff do more of that would be appreciated.

Ollie – Jeb Williams, ND is the director/liaison. Haley Frater is the chair.

Private Lands – *Haley Frater, WI DNR* – We held a joint meeting in May at Wisconsin Dells. We had 20 representatives from 11 of the 13 MAFWA states in attendance, 12 reported as South

Dakota was unable to attend in person but provided a report. Our next meeting is planned in Illinois. Larger conversation on what is making us successful, things we are struggling on and future goals. Two major themes emerged. One was recruitment and the other was retention. We are struggling getting enough job applicants for jobs and struggling to retain staff. Three action items. The first is a job board, Iowa did research and we aren't getting applicant pools. One thing they found was in a lot of cases most applicants were looking at DNR job boards, and jobs on the traditional sites we used to use are too big and we are lost in the shuffle. Our recommendation is to pursue an idea of a regional job board, for internal and contract positions. Once we get those individuals, we noticed skillsets are not what we want, and we need to do training. Looking at developing a grant proposal for MAFWA training center, working off AFWA's conservation on private lands group framework, only regional scale. Where we could send our employees to a training hub to get trained. Learn machinery on implementation as well as interpersonal skills to be successful in private lands management. That was second proposal and would empower us to develop a proposal to fund project like that. Third, shortage of wetland engineers and technicians, came up in private lands meeting as well as in joint meeting as well. There are not have enough and they don't stay long. One potential issue is salary, so proposing charging and empowering our local conservation organizations and partners to not only hire more but pay them salaries that will retain them. Three proposals: regional job board; training center hub; and work with conservation partners to encourage more wetland engineers/technicians. *Ollie* – Three proposals and if action item, need a motion and a second, and Amanda will have to take command as president. Four committees met at once, so jointly formed and they have action items too. Can we get through public lands report then have action items all at once? Most efficient way is to wait.

Ollie – Third leg of four-committee report. Pete Hildreth, IA is the director/liaison. Chair is Anne Reis, WI.

Public Lands – *Anne Reis, WI DNR* – Similar overlapping action items with private lands group, including wetland engineers. Also staffing and recruitment issues, for building pipeline of students, interns, new staff through jobs board and training curriculum. We talked about potentially working with various educational institutions, including technical college to create conservation contractor degrees, which is critical need in the field. Third action item related to relevancy. Public views are changing, tracking over past decades, and we want to start getting more research pilot projects and ground data collection related to expanding constituent base and following relevancy roadmap that AFWA created. We are looking for director's support and funding for relevancy projects across the states and to find current user focus groups. We have a wide variety of constituents that we need to start working with. We have details on the funding requirement for the relevancy funding project.

Sara – If there is a funding request, what sort of money are you looking for, related to relevancy? With our R3 coordinator, how are we designing our relevancy discussions together? What is logistics around related discussions that the President is having on potential strategic planning?

Amanda – During executive committee mtg, we had a discussion, because it does seem like no shortage of good ideas coming from committees and directors. There is constant pressure of where we need to be investing and how we should be supporting all the work. We seem to be lacking strategy and how we make these decisions. Instead of being strategic we move forward on one-off scenarios. There are costs associated with every decision and how do we afford that into the future. So, directors need to take time to plan and think, and come up with strategy because hard to say yes until we understand what our capacity is. That is a call to action, and we are going to have a discussion at the business meeting. Need more absorbed discussion. I wrote down job board idea, engineering, grant manager and relevancy were the four things.

Sara – Level of specificity, funding, how much and how many projects we are talking about and things of that nature.

Anne – I couldn't hear her comments.

Pete – As liaison, my person let me know that there is an action item tied to jobs board idea. I told him we had a brief discussion about it at last executive committee meeting and there are some questions on capacity, priorities being strategic, and who could look into it. What we have on MAFWA website, is a link to states and their jobs, it doesn't include contractors or part time jobs. So, there is an opportunity for one-stop-shop for the region. Nick and Anne are willing to look into it more. If we agree it is a priority, they will have access to resources, within private and public lands working groups and they would volunteer to help bring forth ideas. They take recruitment and retention very seriously.

Ollie – You could ask them to flesh out and bring back more complete recommendation with cost estimates.

Sara – The smaller group you have in mind for strategic planning, don't want to ask them to do more work until we have identified that it is a priority. We want them to flesh things out more.

Ollie – Not yet is what you are saying?

Amanda – I don't disagree. It is premature to send folks on lot of effort when don't know what we can afford, and our strategies are going to look like. There are a couple of pieces to research, like how we get existing information on our website for jobs. It is a decision of putting full-time and part-time jobs on there now, or contracts.

Tim – We link to state agency job boards and those only list permanent jobs.

Amanda – May be growth opportunities that don't cost us anything, so maybe some work that can be done. We have months ahead to build the strategic plan before we are ready to make any decisions. Have a request for more information and details, so then we can make a decision.

Ollie - Jason Sumners, MO is director/liaison.

Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (PP - Exhibit 14) – *Taylor Finger, Game bird biologist, WI DNR* – Met with Southeast Deer and Wild Turkey group in Kansas, hosted by Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, at Rock Springs 4-H Ranch. Met March 15-18. The first day we had all the groups meet together. We sat down and covered different perspectives between Southeast and Midwest. We had a couple presentations on R3 and how it differs in our regions. Then Kansas outlined how they manage deer and turkey, then discussed regions. On second day we split up into deer and turkey groups. Deer group talked about change theory and CWD carried into the entire meeting. Talked about how people communicate about it, do surveillance, management, and research. What was coming up, CWD and disparities. What deer numbers are, hunters out there and opportunities. Have a lot of hunting communities that may not agree with us in terms of we think is out there versus what they believe is out there. In turkey meeting had summary from each state. Talked about populations, information we have, research and conservation efforts and what we are doing in our states. Turkey numbers aren't doing very well in a lot of areas in the country. We were able to communicate turkey numbers compared to Southeast and glimpses into the future. Talks centered around declining habitats and need for research, as important now as since restoration. In business meeting, talked about NWTF holding the funds for each state for these meetings and nobody had issues with that. State reports were submitted to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where we have a website, we pay for, where you can go and get them. Next meeting is in Medora, ND, Rough Rider Hotel conference center. They scheduled it to coincide with sharp tail and pheasant hunt. There are no director items. One information item, we have a joint meeting with the Southeast region periodically. That offers more collaborative efforts for information, ideas, and research. Also, able to bounce ideas off each other.

Ollie – Tim McCoy, NE is the director/liaison. Chair is Matt Peek, KS.

Midwest Furbearer Committee – *Shawn Rossler, WI DNR* – As Taylor reported, we also met at Rock Springs Ranch, a nice location. Matt and other Kansas staff made us feel welcome. Great opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues in the Midwest. There were 31 individuals from 11 states, and we had 17 presentations ranging from muskrats to trail cameras. Just the right amount of time for collaboration in an informal setting. Next meeting in Kentucky and Laura Palmer is already working on that, it will be joint meeting with Northeast and Southeast groups. No action items. Information items include, asking for continued support of Bear Wise program, heard update and continue to see benefits on that, especially in states where bears are beginning to recolonize. Asking for continued support of best management practices (BMPs) for trapping. That is a research program on commercially available traps going on since 1990s. Bryant White is AFWA's lead on that. They have developed a wildlife monograph, so now all the research is peer reviewed and available for other people to view. On spotted skunk ESA review, we should hear back in September, which could impact regulated trapping methods moving forward. We included large carnivore status in your packets at directors' request. Predator control remains hot topic, depending on if you support or are against it, we want to encourage directors to use best information available on decisions made on predator control. May be recruiting new people into fur harvesting world, those more into providing a service, so encourage your support and continued offering of trapper/fur harvester education courses moving forward to prevent any kinds of issues from them doing something intentionally wrong. Last, is related to wildlife testimony. Some states have had legal issues and agency staff or specialists in those states are not able to provide testimony. Maybe MAFWA or NGO could organize an opportunity from outside states to provide testimony that is well rounded.

Sara – You mention predator control. I am curious if MAFWA states have trapping competitions, if they are legal or not? We have well-meaning turkey hunters who want to reduce predator populations through competitions, not fitting our cause. You eluded you stay within best practices related to predator control, but there is a push and pull, especially with turkey populations, heading that way. Did trapping competitions come into your discussions?

Shawn – We discussed organized hunts, not necessarily trapping, but hunting as well. We have talking points in each state specific to them. We don't have anything all-encompassing, but on our radar, focused on following rules and regulations. Not illegal and some support that, whether turkey or waterfowl hunters. Larger conversation going on there, current topic and will increase.

Sara – It is just the posting to social media that does not help.

Shawn – We have pamphlets on best practices for posting to social media, what to present and what not to present.

Brad – In Kansas, amazed at what people will post, like pictures of coyotes lined up. No backlash yet but coming. One comment, dealing with same thing we are, drumbeat of you have to control predators. No money in trapping and so not harvested like they used to be. A couple of commission meetings ago, we had Matt Peek, our furbearer biologist, our small game biologist who does pheasant and quail, Jeff Prendergast and our turkey biologist, Kent Fricke, do a tag team on the science behind predator management, on a small scale versus a statewide approach. It was very effective, and you might want to consider it. Folks are always taking shots at us, and this was an attempt to offer history and economics around management. If you are interested in information, we would be glad to share our data.

Ollie – Shawn mentioned the need for testimony. Many years ago, when I worked in Missouri, we were involved in an active river otter restoration program and were successful in starting a river otter trapping season. We got hauled into federal court by animal rights people. I had to go to St. Louis and testify on validity of our trapping season, what helped us was the USFWS sent John Organ who testified on our behalf as well. We ended up winning. The importance of expert testimony is critical.

Ollie – Newest committee, Dan Eichinger, MI helped establish this committee a few years ago, now Diane Brusoe has stepped up as the director/liaison.

Climate Change (PP - Exhibit 15) – *Tara Bergeson, WI DNR* – Our committee met six times virtually, hope to have as many in next year, probably virtual as well but would be nice if we could get together in person. Committee members are active with great ideas. One information item, the Climate Change committee partnered with the Wildlife Diversity committee to develop a competitive state wildlife grant application to assess climate vulnerability and adaptive capacity of 538 Midwest species of greatest conservation need. Results not announced yet. We have one action item, not asking for money. It is a resolution asking for support for training opportunities. Our training plan is, every person in all fish and wildlife agencies in the Midwest struggle to manage their trust resources in a changing climate, so not easy managing natural resources these days. We put something into action, beyond sharing updates, to ensure management actions are cost effective and sustainable going forward. Over the last few years tools have been developed for managers to make their work climate smart. Agency staff may not be aware of all these tools, or how to implement them in ways that is relevant to their work every day. The climate committee wants to better support managers for on the ground conservation and management. So, we plan to offer two trainings (Exhibit 16). The first training will link broadscale threats, like climate change, into workplans for your agency and will be virtual. We will be the lead for the workshop with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS). The training will introduce two decision support tools to help staff incorporate climate adaptation into everyday work. The second training will support planning efforts on RAD framework, virtual or in-person, and would be held at state scale or multi-state scale, led by MAFWA Climate Committee members. All training will be between 2-4 hours in length and will be a mix of presentations, discussion and conversation. Goal is to provide staff with tools that can support them in their on the ground management and hope to make them more comfortable using and implementing these tools. We are asking for your support by encouraging staff to attend. The future will be a challenge no matter what we do. We can choose as agencies to respond wisely and strategically by training entire MAFWA region.

Brad – Do you have staff identified from MAFWA states already?

Tara – Yes, our committee members. Chris has put together a slide deck already for state-specific training, so it would be the same basic training for all states, modified for individual state if needed.

Brad – So, it won't come through us to be a bottleneck, it will go directly to the people you want to talk to and where it needs be?

Sara – We will pass this resolution tomorrow. Just to clarify, would both trainings be on one day or two different times?

Tara – Haven't gone that far. If in person, both on same day to be efficient, but if virtually probably different days. No more than half day per training.

Ollie – No funding request?

Tara – No.

Tim – Who will be responsible for doing the training?

Tara – Regional training would be climate committee in collaboration with NIACS who do a lot of trainings. State specific trainings would be done by climate committee members.

Scott Peterson – When will this be available?

Tara – Next year, 2024.

Ollie – In terms of process, resolutions go through committees, are presented to board 30 days in advance of meeting, so it went on to the Resolutions Committee and they reviewed it. They will be voted on in tomorrow's annual business meeting. There were two resolutions, one was modified. Sara will present tomorrow.

Ollie – MAFWA President is director/liaison. Carolyn Caldwell has been our faithful CITES rep since 2003. She was unable to be here as she got stuck in an airport and went back home. Her report is the in the backup materials.

CITES – *Carolyn Caldwell, CITES Rep* couldn't come, trapped in an airport. Her report is in the book. She appreciates your support of continuing to represent us on the international scene.

Ollie – MAFWA President is director/liaison. Chair is Alan Leary, MO.

Feral Swine – *Eric Lobner, WI DNR* – We held a joint meeting with CFA Wild Hog working group at the National Wild Pig Task Force meeting in Logan Utah on April 20, 2023. We had five people in attendance, probably because that is the farthest west that it has been held and some members couldn't travel. Next meeting will be spring 2024, during the International Wild Pig Conference in Nashville Tennessee. No action items. Six charges they are tasked with working on. The first is to develop management plans for feral swine based on sound scientific and proven methods. Slowed temporarily due to Africa's feral swine working group is discussing the feasibility of a national plan, rather than regional plans. Charges 2-6 are being accomplished through continued networking among committee representatives, attendance at International Wild Pig Conference and at NWP TF National. Most states are participating in partnerships or agreements with USDA APHIS Wildlife Services as part of the national feral swine damage management program, funded under 2014 and 2018 farm bills.

Ollie – Newest committee. Brian Clark, KY is director/liaison. Adam Landen, MN is chair.

Conservation Social Science and Human Dimensions (CSS/HD) – *Brian Clark, KY Wildlife* – Shout out to Adam. The committee met quarterly and have 13 of 16 states and provinces represented and have met three times since establishment. They have amassed a distribution list of 60 different stakeholders in the region and are communicating regularly. They organized a symposium at the Midwest conference in February and working on work plan of projects for next year. No action items. They do have a concern relating to on multistate grants, the timeline for proposing and then developing them is not conducive to human dimensions projects. Typically, multiyear projects, whether long-term participation study or some other kind of graduate student funded project. No action to enhance or address that concern, maybe a resolution later, maybe beyond MAFWA to AFWA. Brought up in R3 program as well, because projects are focused on one-year increments that address larger scale issues. So, hard to get meaningful projects.

Ollie – Is that a national grants committee issue? Keith, are you going to bring up in R3?

Ron – It has come up and could be.

Keith – Not a proposal.

Brian – R3 committee, or ranking group, that submits or ranks a project proposal under modernization has been a major concern. Typically, the only multiyear grants are awarded for the Council or for our RBFF. No official action at this time, but we might see something brought forward. Perhaps next year we could communicate to National Grants Committee through a letter from the committee to directors to the board here.

Ollie – Kevin Robling represents MAFWA on the National Grants Committee and is the director/liaison for the R3 committee. I understand the concern in terms of project funding.

Ollie – This committee is the oldest committee in MAFWA and has been in force since 1944; Broader geography than MAFWA. This committee is meeting with us this year, they meet with us once every three years. Shannon Lott, MI is the director/liaison.

Law Enforcement (Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO)) – *Casey Kruger, WI DNR* – Highlight a couple of things. Our association is old,

started in 1944 in Lincoln, Nebraska and we have 23 member agencies from Canada and U.S. We have meetings every year. Have been discussing personnel matters and incredible stuff over the last few days. Learning what each state is going through. Our group focuses on field personnel and trying to assist law enforcement, wildlife enforcement and facilitate international and interstate investigations. Building relationships across state lines. Meet with MAFWA every third year and we appreciate interacting with you. These meetings are beneficial for member agencies, and we have become the lead group in field officer training. Proud of facilitating training and growing of LE officers across the U.S. We developed the wildlife forensic field manual, now fifth addition of that manual is complete. Pushed Bob Thompson to new heights and asked him to stop taking checks, taking credit cards and Venmo now. Along with that, knowing who our new employees are and what they want, no interest in paper, they want to build and read on smart phones, etc., and we have two manuals we are putting into e-books right now. Each year we publish an annual report and there are a multitude of things we hit on, like training, funding, staffing, major conservation, law enforcement trends, unique cross boundary of cooperative enforcement efforts, new innovations in conservation law enforcement, state regional and national issues, legislation, and legal challenges. Kind of our report card to demonstrate externally and internally what we are doing on the landscape. The report this year is 45 pages long. We work collaboratively with many state agencies, federal agencies and other law enforcement and judicial entities throughout the year. Here in Wisconsin, proud of collaboration with hazardous waste and asbestos program staff, department of justice criminal investigation and some settlements with individuals that were dismantling batteries illegally. Everything is built on the foundation of good environment. Chasing folks with limited size fish doesn't matter as much as chasing after folks that are polluting our water and land, it is important to sustain everything that builds off that. Our wardens also worked collaboratively with Minnesota and Illinois on a group of serial violators involved in catching and keeping fish over bag by illegal snagging methods of whitefish, in that case 29 citations, 91 whitefish seized and 24 years of revocation on licenses. We use the collaborative approach with other states and spread our resources and work together. Partners we have had and maintain with local tribes and other agencies, honoring the oath to protect the resources and help protect off-reservation treaty rights as well. We have seen successes through fostering these relationships through education and training and looking for ways to interact with participants and pool resources.

Ollie – You mentioned your leadership on a forensic manual and training program, but another thing this group did was they formed interstate wildlife compact, so if you lose your hunting and fishing privileges in one state, you lose them in other states.

Ollie – Sara Parker Pauley, MO is director/liaison. Lindsey Long, WI DNR is chair.

Fish and Wildlife Health (PP - Exhibit 16) – ***Lindsey Long, WI DNR*** – We met in April in Deadwood, South Dakota, combined meeting of video conference and in-person. We had eight state and provincial wildlife agencies present in person and eight attended virtually. We plan on doing the same next year but trying to get everybody together in Ohio. We had a good line up of speakers, in addition to state reports and discussions we had a multitude of presentations focusing on how managing efforts can affect wildlife disease, and ongoing research efforts in Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. No action items but we have some big information items. Welcome Dr. Tricia Fry as our new Midwest Fish and Wildlife iHealth Coordinator. She is going to work collaboratively with Sonja Christensen, AFWA and two regional coordinators. The Western coordinator was hired as well. These positions are funded through a grant from the USFWS and we have three years of funding, and we are looking to expand abilities as a committee and as individuals in working with Tricia to expand capacity. Possibly creating new ways to interact with other committees and ourselves. We brought up future of wildlife health and the impacts of collectively leveraging concurrent interest in One Health Initiative and

following up on presentation from earlier today. Engage staff we have on how MAFWA can utilize the committee and members to collectively transition from primary focus on wildlife disease to wildlife health, from traditional focus on single species to ecosystem level health and consideration that the committee can assist in this paradigm shift towards healthy systems. We have specialists outside the committee who represent other things like soil health, water health and all of those things that can be collectively utilized within programs. We want to make sure we aren't removed from the conversation because we are on the committee. I will also give an update on non-lead partnership as well. We will not present at executive committee meeting this year. We now have three regional coordinator positions and our Midwest wildlife health coordinator. We are going to be moving forward as a team this summer.

Ollie – Kevin Robling, SD is the director/liaison. Megan Wisecup, Iowa DNR is chair of committee. Keith Warnke is the R3 and Relevancy Coordinator, who started in April, and was our past MAFWA President.

R3 and Relevancy (PP – Exhibit 18) – ***Keith Warnke, R3 and Relevancy Coordinator*** – We had a meeting in Overland Park, Kansas at Midwest Fish and Wildlife conference in February. Over 50 people attended, representing about 12 states, there is a vacancy in Minnesota right now. Project results, research reported in annual report. I want to highlight learnhunting.org, working with IHEA, it is match making group online for hunters and mentors. We had four multistate conservation grant proposals, recruiting females and ethnically diverse youth; exploring our three opportunities in state parks, a huge opportunity; the public's perceived importance of relevance in state fish and wildlife agencies; and reducing churn among female anglers. Our next meeting is in Sioux Falls, SD in January 2024. I work for all of you and Megan and Jeff, the chairs of the committee. There has been a huge call for data from the states on license sales data. I may call you all to get data from you at some point. AFWA approves those projects when grants are written and it could be Southwick, DJ Case, or me. The challenge we have is how to get approval from the directors, down to actually receiving the data. My job is to help you all put together a system to get to these data timelier, so projects are funded. It was brought up earlier about one-year funding projects and how we can get data more fluidly so projects can be funded. How do we best utilize state resources to do it. Not a director's item, but I am putting together a group of technology officers, and we are going to try and solve this problem to try and get past those barriers and hurdles we have.

Lou Cornicelli, Southwick Associates– We do a lot of multistate conservation grant projects and have talked to most of you or your staff. They have been harassed by me over the last six months. We decided to take a different track, because so many multistate grant projects, we started recruiting states for data early in the process. Thanks to the Midwest because you have really stepped up. We are going to have about 23 states in multistate conservation grant projects this year, and they will have an opportunity to ask states questions and they will have an opportunity to answer questions at state level that you might not be able to fund otherwise. We are doing one with SEAFWA now, a small value study which is how the public perceives their fish and wildlife agency, and this builds off of that. There will be a base survey and the states will have an opportunity to ask questions if they have an interest. For example, Virginia wants to know about standup paddleboarders, so they 3-4 questions on that; and Missouri and Kentucky are participating in SEAFWA project, so won't be participating here unless they have additional questions they want to ask. Keith will consolidate those requests. We can work through all that.

Ollie – Sara Parker Pauley, MO is director/liaison. Dr. Jason Sumners, MO is committee chair.

Ad Hoc on Chronic Wasting Disease (PP - Exhibit 19) – ***Scott Hull, WI DNR*** – Stepping in for Jason, I am an Ad Hoc committee member. Three things we are working on and true to its form, the Ad Hoc committee did not have a formal meeting. We had ad hoc conversations when

everyone else meets virtually and through the deer and wild turkey committee. We just met at the CWD conference in Denver as well, lots of things going on. We helped hire the MAFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator. Second, is the interstate regional CWD collaboration for management and research, which we will talk about in little more in depth in the next presentation. Third is the social science aspect of CWD. We are happy to have federal partners engaged with us on this, from USGS and USFWS. They are helping us understand the barriers to adoption of best management practices by our hunters in the field. They have launched a variety of things to get information on hunters and BMPs using social science data. No formal action items. We do have a couple informal asks when Dan comes on.

Ollie – Give presenters a round of applause (*applause*).

Interstate Collaboration to Improve Management of CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease)

Scott Hull, WI DNR (PP - Exhibit 20) – Brad Richards originally was going to be in charge of this but couldn't be here today. We are excited to talk about opportunities for interstate regional collaboration on CWD, something we have talked about for years. The Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) put together in 2020 and talking about this for years. Directives are to work across state borders on CWD if we want to make any headway. Not new topic, we have struggled for 20 years on how to do that. There is no deer flyway or deer joint venture, and Dan is going to talk about the North American CWD research consortium. A specific objective will be to look at opportunities and design opportunities for regional collaboration on CWD. If you are working on CWD, you are talking to Dan Walsh, the current Co-op Unit Director in Montana and longtime research scientist with the National Wildlife Health Center in Wisconsin, or Brian Richards, the outgoing chair of the consortium. To make it more complicated he is coming to us live from Poland. He will talk about objective four, adaptive management for CWD and finish out with informal asks.

Dan Walsh, MT Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit (PP – see Exhibit 19) – Thanks for opportunity. Thanks for opportunity to present this initiative and what we are trying to do with regional adaptive management project for CWD. Dave MacFarland, Bryan Richards and Scott Hull have been instrumental in helping me move the initiative forward. The spatial footprint for CWD has changed in North America and intensity has changed as well, in spite of decades of research and management directed at trying to stop the growth and spread of the disease. We have made progress and increased our understanding of the epidemiology and potential impacts. But we have fallen down on our ability to evaluate management actions, so limited to insular research and management with little coordination across jurisdictions that may influence the trajectory. The overall impact of this lack of coordination is lack of unified approach in our evaluations of what we have been doing and has slowed our learning and what is effective for CWD, and we continue to have high uncertainty of what actions and decisions we should make. So, in 2019, we initiated a multistate research project that was funded by USDA NIFA, called the North American interdisciplinary CWD research consortium (NC1209). Our membership consists of 65 researchers, managers from state, provincial and federal agencies, and academic institutions. They have a broad breadth of expertise, from prion biologists to landscape ecologists. All are looking at different ways to manage and control this disease. The purpose of the consortium is to facilitate research nationally and to accelerate and improve the quality of research and management. At our national scoping meeting we identified five key objectives 1) disease transmission and pathogenesis; 2) development of large-scale research facilities; 3) improving diagnostic tests for CWD; 4) evaluate management strategies across state borders; and 5) enhanced coordination, understanding and collaboration around communication of social science. In May, just before the CWD symposium in Denver, we added two additional sub-

objectives under Objective One. Starting to focus on zoonotic potential of CWD and putting effort towards understanding environmental transmission and potential of indirect transmission through mechanism. That is the broad overview of the CWD research consortium purpose and areas of focus. Discussion on Objective Four, with leads from Scott, Dave and myself and a subcommittee of state and federal agency scientists and university professors, working on that topic. Brought up as major research focus, obviously have disease and neither the disease, nor the hosts respect political boundaries. Lack of communication and coordination of CWD management has made it difficult to assess effectiveness of historical management actions we have taken. There is no good example of unified efforts across jurisdictions. It points to need for adaptive management and need to accelerate and hopefully move the needle. Working on it since 2020 and our progress has been slow. We were able to hire a CWD coordinator, Jess Kroner in February thanks to USDA Wildlife Services. great representation from Midwest states as well as federal agencies and others. Her job is to move objectives forward. We have been designing the regional strategies and adaptive management for CWD in the Midwest. Have broad range of folks involved, from deer managers from states, federal agencies and scientists from SCWDS as well as University of Alberta and Michigan State University. It is important that this is a state-led grassroots effort. Our role is to coordinate scientists and facilitate the effort from your agencies. Our goal is 1) to apply adaptive management jointly, across the Midwest, limit geographic extent of CWD through development of more effective and publicly acceptable management tools that reduce disease intensity; 2) slow the rate of geographic spread from areas where CWD is still in early phase of establishment, making likelihood of management actions higher. A structured decision-making process, in a nutshell, a formal process allowing us to deal with these complex wildlife management decisions. The beauty of this is we can integrate science and human values into our decision making and incorporate multiple objectives, to maximize our returns across multiple objectives. It allows us to incorporate uncertainty, risk tolerance into decision-making process. Outcome is resulting decisions that are transparent, inclusive, replicable and defensible. We can show the public how we came up with decisions and why. Doing this to build the structure around the idea of this regional adaptive management strategy for CWD. We start defining the problem, concluding our efforts in fetal stages. Working with agency personnel, slow going, but important to not skip this because it lays down the foundation. We all have common understanding of what it is we are trying, to tackle what our metrics of success are and the alternatives to solve the problem. Nearing completion of that. We began to define objectives of what we were hoping to accomplish; identifying the alternatives and various portfolios of actions and ultimately analyze various consequences, evaluate tradeoffs of portfolios and implement a decision. Regional adaptive management portfolio, determine the process, whether epidemiological or demographic experiment, it may be human behavior, and how we influence that to achieve something like deer density reduction. We are going to implement adaptive framework and keys to this approach are rigorous monitoring, monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of actions, which is what we have been lacking. We can set up treatments and controls that point to bullet points, which is complicated with different legislative authorities, different agencies involved. Instead of making that an impediment let's make it a strength and start to focus on what we can do in this jurisdiction that we can't do in the next and leverage our adaptive management experiments. The other key thing we have to account for is lag effects. It is evident the actions today are not going to bear fruit tomorrow but maybe years down the road. Think about that in terms of how long we wait before we evaluate the effectiveness of our actions. How we communicate with stakeholders and that they have clear expectations of results. Because of adaptive management process, we will reevaluate alternatives and adapt what we are doing on the ground, so ancillary benefits. There are some things that are emergent from this process, increased communication among agencies, better situational awareness of what each other are doing and unified CWD messaging across states, standardization of data collection,

ancillary emergent benefits around deer management populations across state boundaries, you can compare apples to apples, and accelerate the effectiveness of CWD management actions. Acquaint yourself with the Consortium, which is designed to bring together researchers and management to facilitate rapid, multidisciplinary applied CWD research and also make you aware as agency leads, that this is scientific place you can come to ask questions and address stakeholders groups. I can't guarantee success, all I can do is provide opportunities. This is sorely needed, with growing intensity and spatial footprint of CWD. Agency personnel resources are being exhausted and we are not moving the needle and we want to make a difference. Approaching the problem differently, from a new perspective. We are not just selling information sharing, but joint action. When we try to do these large-scale collaborations, it ends up being information sharing and that is all we can achieve, but we are hoping to go beyond that to achieve goals on CWD. The long-term sustainable success for CWD is going to require coordinating efforts across jurisdictional boundaries through joint adaptive management so we can fully leverage the resources and knowledge agencies have and support rapid response under this problem of high uncertainty.

Scott – We have been talking about interstate collaboration for 20 years and we finally have a vehicle that we can use to make it happen. We have wonderful collaboration right now for most states through Consortium and Ad Hoc committee through the deer and turkey community. We want that to continue and are asking you to continue to allow staff to collaborate. We are putting together a late summer or fall meeting to work on this. Virtual up until now. I believe there is funding available to offset travel costs.

Dan – Yes, through Michigan State and Sonja Christensen as faculty super.

Scott – Details in next few weeks to get staff together for a couple of days. Making some progress on adaptive management experiment and what it will look like in Midwest. Looking for additional guidance from you as this unfolds and your perspective of what worked in your states and how to navigate the politics of this. We are not going to dictate to you on the other end, it is voluntary. Not every state will or can play, some states are doing things more aggressively than others and learn from that. Engage as this unfolds and develops to get your perspective. We just ask for continued collaboration and guidance as this unfolds. In a year from now, hopefully be coming back with some specific details of what we propose.

Shannon – I like the communication strategy piece. I wondered if you talked about regulatory strategies. Hunters that go to other states to hunt and come back with deer from another state and not in that state's regulation. Have you talked about a way to make that smoother?

Scott – We have had those conversations as part of ad hoc CWD committee and as part of group Kelley Myers put together in 2020. It was one of the number one recommendation, to streamline regulations when it comes to carcass transport. Barring that, at least communicate more effectively about that. That is happening and underway but not specifically part of Consortium yet, but loosely tied to it.

Shannon – We had a guy who brought a mule deer back last season and dumped it on the side of the road, when he found out he couldn't have it. This kind of thing happens, and it is negative.

Bryan Richards, WI DNR (not able to attend)

Jason Sumners, MO DOC (not able to attend)

Refreshment Break sponsored by Tyler Technologies

Two-part presentation, start with Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) and followed by Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Research Association (MICRA).

Collaborating to Restore Ecosystems: More opportunities in the Midwest

Lorisa Smith, MO Dept of Conservation, MLI Landscape Conservation Liaison (PP – Exhibit 21) – Interesting coming to this meeting, started stepping into this role a year ago when Ed Boggess retired. It has been a tremendous year of growing and learning. Cover overview of what MLI is. It belongs to all of us and is a success because of us. Then I will turn it over to Kate. We are a collaborative of partners engaged in conservation and management of the Fish and Wildlife in the Midwest. We function as a forum to identify shared landscape-scale priorities and develop effective conservation solutions. So, we can enjoy a thriving landscape of healthy lands and waters supporting wildlife, fish and plants enhanced by us who live, work and recreate here in our region. Words you will continue to hear today are collaboration, shared priorities, co-development, which are all intentional words, and I want those words to resonate with you. Resonate in work we do, and products we develop together, a joint process from beginning to end. MLI started in 2017 to continue discussion of regional forum, launched by MAFWA and USFWS leadership in 2018, and development in AFWA resolution in 2019. We set the stage and framework for the governance and structure and working together and not rushing out of the gate with action but developing relationships and building trust. Last year in South Dakota, we actually became an official standing committee of MAFWA, which solidified that partnership of states in the MAFWA region and USFWS. The 2019 resolution directs the work of MLI and sets the stage for a framework that includes specific objectives and measures that help us address co-identified conservation priorities we are striving to achieve. It is a coordinated and collaborative effort that is voluntary centered around conservation actions and investments in the Midwest. We want willing participants and want everyone to feel invited and engaged. Our MLI's structure, is supported by staff of six, who work closely with the steering committee, which includes several directors here and leadership through USFWS and USGS Cooperative Research Units. You will also see intent to be partners in our efforts. Steering committee is co-chaired by Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri and Craig Czarnecki, USFWS; and the Technical Committee is co-chaired as well by Brad Potter, USFWS and Katie Fullin, Iowa DNR. We also have the ability to add additional Ad Hoc teams as necessary. A lot of work happens through your staff and our teams and collaboration, and communication is provided is a platform that MLI provides to do active talking and dealing with challenges and barriers that many of us face. It makes sense, when working on the same problem, to tackle it together. The portfolio of work is growing, and we can empower staff to make take actions that will help us address challenges we all face. We are working on regional species of greatest conservation need, Midwest conservation blueprint, cooperative funding opportunities, SWAPS and landscapes. We can leverage each of these tools together to find ways to use them in conjunction with one another. It really is to make sure we have healthy lands and waters for wildlife resources we are entrusted to take care of. So, we have a place for the people that are also an important part of the ecosystem.

Kate Parsons, USFWS, MLI User Support and Engagement Coordinator – Talk about a couple products developed over last few years through MLI. This program is member-directed by your staff who shaped this work. When we started working in Ohio in 2015, I joined the wildlife diversity committee, these are my people. I knew we needed to work together to conserve species and we struggled to create a regional species of greatest conservation need list. Along comes the MLI and I see the value of having capacity to help us organize and have extra lift to keep things going between meetings. The first product was out of the Midwest was the regional species of greatest conservation need, we worked with 120 experts within MAFWA. We expanded what the Northeast and Southeast had created for our region. We included taxa other regions did not, thousands of species were evaluated, 340 were chosen as our regional species of greatest conservation need. We have a version of the database online. We know species declining in the region and what we are responsible for. We know what species are on the national listing work plan and how we can work in advance of listings with the USFWS and USGS to get

relevant research and monitoring to be better understand species status, where priorities align with joint ventures and what states I need to work with. Interesting and wonderful things came out of this process, with those 120 people working together across the region we are going after competitive state wildlife grants. They work hard and have added capacity. They have a huge spotted turtle project, and we were able to provide information to USFWS that is relevant to the listing and have monitoring in place. Had good buy-in from some taxa groups, who didn't have an organizing body like we have had on mammals or birds, some of the invertebrate groups had their first opportunity to work together on a broader scale. Midwest Amphibian and Partners for Reptile Conservation host an entire conference based on regional species of greatest conservation need and are looking forward to working across state boundaries. The Midwest SWAPS and landscapes team have been together a year now, they reached out to Midwest Wildlife Diversity Committee and State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators, who reached out to MLI staff to help facilitate some conversations. We have put so much time and effort into this for the last 20 years, how do we roll those up and show how we can work better across our region, across the nation. A few things have come out of these discussions, a tool to collate and compare SWAPS across regions, specific ways we look at species and habitats within our states. The states are on board, but they want better alignment and to be able to work together. So, we are taking species of greatest conservation need and creating a dashboard so we can look across the region. Look how well we are doing at conserving a particular taxon and in the future, we hope to align SWAPS through different lexicons of threats and actions, on a broader scale for state wildlife action plans. Most states are updating their state wildlife action plans, so it may take a little time to roll dashboard up to regional level. More to come from this group. Take time to get alignment at regional level. When RSGCN came out it was lightbulb moment for partners to better understand that we as a region are trying to do this collaborative that is MLI. We have an opportunity, with unveiling of Midwest conservation blueprint this summer, to have a place on the map for the Midwest and have spatial depiction. Of the three goals Lorisa shared, people, habitat and species goals, there are 22 indicators that are spatially explicit included in this model. It does not mean everyone will align their priorities to look like this map, but it gives an opportunity to work together and gives a lens across our region. There are about 50 individuals, your staff, NGOs, universities, federal agencies shaped this blueprint to be what it is. We had a couple months of comment period and had 200 comments, Rachel Carlberg and Alex Wright are cranking through that information, developing a new iteration of the blueprint that will be available this summer and would love your perspective on who the partners are that we haven't reached yet. Make it relevant to people and different initiatives in your states to make it the most useful tool it can be for our region. In 2022 the America the Beautiful, proposal process came out. It was a short turn around, but MLI staff was able to help states facilitate a meeting on shared priorities. We had a lot of proposals from the Midwest, but we were unsuccessful and had a lot of white space in the Midwest. We appreciate Lorisa's efforts to tackle that. She looked at who got funding and why and how we can do better. In 2023, we worked with the joint task force of the steering and technical committees of MLI to help create three priorities, grassland, aquatic, and woodland systems. MLI staff then reached out to facilitate a discussion with the states. We had a little more time and a lot of interest in grasslands, so we submitted pre-proposals from five states, impacting more than 100,000 acres of grassland, for \$15 million and it made it through stage one. It was time consuming, but an opportunity to work together. The power of having conversation and shared outcomes made this one of the best collaborative projects in the country. We will make all of this assessable in a portal that will be coming out, with the Midwest conservation blueprint and other relevant tools we need to make decisions, online at the end of the summer. Again, looking for suggestions on what you think is relevant. We will be working with staff in work groups to populate it to be a useful tool for the region. This is an offer to engage with MLI, we want to operate with transparency and trust so welcome you to attend meetings or contact Lorisa

or I. Staff can attend, but don't have to join, can just come and join in the discussion. This is mostly virtual meetings. Please reach out to us or put us in touch with your staff.

Justine – Wrap up today with another collaborative conversation. Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) is a 30-year partnership of over 28 states who have jurisdiction over fish management in the Mississippi River basin.

Brad Parsons, MN, MICRA President and Minnesota Fisheries Section Manager – Partnership of 28 states and federal agencies brought together to deal with interjurisdictional fishing issues across state boundaries. Fish move around, they don't care about boundaries, they move from the Missouri River basin into the upper Mississippi River basin. We have had a great partnership for years and gotten a lot of work done. It has been underfunded, we get states dues, \$1,500 for last 30 years, not a lot of money to work on and I think we recently voted to increase that to \$3,000. Minnesota invests a lot of money on river work, but some other states may not be so fortunate and may not have the opportunity. Our mission states we work basically on interjurisdictional fisheries issues. It has come to a head recently due to invasive carp situation, there is a lot more work needs to be done. We hoped to get formerly recognized fishery commission and when MICRA started that was the original plan. We have spoken to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and hope to mimic their structure but leave politics out of it. We want to continue with fish chiefs, or their equivalent, not looking for politically appointed individuals. We are looking for high level commitment from state and federal agencies. The USFWS provides Greg Conover as our coordinator, and we appreciate that. We also have USGS and TVA as a partner as well and want to expand our relationship to the Corps of Engineers. We are looking for long term stable funding so states can invest more, commit and not worry that funding is going to go away. MICRA was successful in last 10 years in increasing funding. We are up to \$36 million, part of that goes to USFWS, part to states for work, primarily on invasive carp. Some of you signed on to joint strategic plan for the Mississippi River basin. We need to reboot MICRA partnership and have folks sign on to be part of this moving forward, 26 out of 28 directors signed. I won't go through entire structure, but subbasins function similarly to each Great Lake, where you have multiple states or other agencies that work on them. This is entirely voluntary, and we want to operate on consensus, but that means sometimes we can't come to an agreement and need a formal process to figure that out. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission works on interjurisdictional fish management issues and invasive species, at that point, sea lamprey. MICRA has done a lot of great things over the decades, and we are looking to take this to the next level. We have draft legislation in DC, and we are seeking sponsors for legislation that would authorize this and 10-year appropriation, a substantial amount of money, and part of it would be allocated to states directly based on a formula and states would know they could be put horsepower into more river work. Then part of the money would be for collaborative projects spanning several states, with shared commitments to efforts. Thank USFWS for providing Greg to us, have a good partnership with USGS as well. MICRA is about the states, looking for increased emphasis on river work and getting money out to state so they can be part of solution and feel better about committing resources. Appreciate directors who did sign on to the joint strategic plan. Even though it is voluntary, and consensus based, it is not a light decision. Whether we get a Commission or not, the joint strategic plan was a huge step forward.

Greg - Wyoming and Montana have a small portion of the basin and have not signed yet but expect them to.

Brad Parsons – Also, one corner of basin in Georgia.

Ollie – In legislation process, is there a good chance you can lose the fish chiefs you want as commissioners? Usually that doesn't happen, and it becomes a political appointee.

Brad Parsons – Be careful what you wish for. I agree with that. We have done work in terms of language and hired a person savvy in those areas. Fisheries in general, particularly the invasive carp issue, is bipartisan. You are right, we are cognizant of what can happen in political process, and what can happen in states and federal government.

Ollie – I wish you luck. This fish commission idea has been successful with coastal states and can generate a lot of funds for good conservation work.

Brad Parsons – Ability to ramp up what states and federal partners have done, a lot we can do. Not just about invasive carp, but sturgeon, paddlefish, catfish and other things.

USFWS Leadership Session (invitation-only session for directors)

SPECIAL EXCURSIONS

Lambeau Field Classic and Green Tour

Dinner on your own

Hospitality Room 8:00 pm sponsored by Pheasants Forever

Minutes
MAFWA Annual Business Meeting
Wednesday, June 28, 2023
Lambeau Field
Legends Club Room
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Breakfast 7:00 (sponsored by Bass Pro Shops)

Meeting started at 8:00 am

MAFWA BUSINESS MEETING

Amanda Wuestefeld, IN DNR, MAFWA President – Officially called to order at 8:04 AM

Call to Order and Roll Call

Ollie – All states present. Proxies include Scott Peterson for Jeb Williams, North Dakota and Scott Simpson for Kevin Robling, South Dakota (*Proxies – Exhibit A*). No Canadian provincial members were present.

Agenda Review

Amanda – Missed – picked up after Treasurer’s report.
(*Agenda – Exhibit B*)

Approval of June 30, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Annual meeting minutes (*Exhibit C*). *Tim McCoy, Nebraska moved to accept minutes as printed, Brad Loveless, Kansas second. Approved.*

Treasurer’s Report

Roger Luebbert – Treasurer’s Report (*Exhibit D*). Passed out two reports, one is Treasurer’s report, and we will go over now and the second is the 2023 proposed budget which is the last agenda item of the day. I want to give thanks to Ollie, who works closely with me; Sara Parker Pauley, who signs all the checks; and Sharon Shafer, our new contract manager who is helping us stay on top of contracts; and project leaders I work with, on both federal and non-federal projects. This report summarizes all receipts and disbursements for the most recent completed fiscal year. MAFWA’s fiscal year is a calendar year, so this report shows all of 2022. On table of contents, first page is account balance summary, then a page for each. Page 1 is the MAFWA account balance summary, list of all our accounts and shows 2021 and 2022 balances at the end of each year and middle is the change for the year. The top account is operating, and conference account and you can see it decreased about \$3,075, so we had a deficit. The good news is we have a strong fund balance. At the end of 2022, \$166,000, strong enough to absorb the deficit. Major revenue items are receipts for annual directors meeting, membership dues

and federal indirect costs. Major expenditures are, disbursements for annual meeting, and executive secretary and treasurer pay and travel. The second account we have is our federal funded projects. We run about \$350,000 through this account but only have a balance of about \$10,000. The reason we are able to get by with such a small balance is that the USFWS is very fast at reimbursing us for expenses, so no need for large balance. Third is non-federal funded projects, which are special projects going on that do not involve federal funds. The biggest player is the national pheasant coordinator with an ending balance of \$202,000, all but about \$12,000 is designated for special purposes. Next is a small account that requires us to keep \$25 in it to be part of the Conservation Credit Union. Next is the MAFWA investment account, it has a 16.5% decrease. Our investment advisor told us the first half of 2022 was not good for investors, not only did stocks go down but bonds went down as well, which is rare. The decrease we see is typical of the open market. Investments Committee will talk more about this account later. Next is the other entity, our 501(c)(3), the Conservation Enhancement Fund (CEF). The first account is the checking account. What comes out of this account is the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. The balance will vary depending on when we make deposits for future conferences and when we get reimbursements of those deposits. The deficit is not a major concern. The share account had little activity. Next is the investment account where we saw a decrease for the same reason as the MAFWA investment account. Total MAFWA and CEF accounts total \$1.2 million but there are designations against that balance, and they show up on the individual pages. Flipping through these, they have line numbers along the left side for reference. The first account is on page 2, our **Operating /Conference Account**, major ones include: line 5, is conference receipts, line 7 is membership dues and line 10 in indirect costs from USFWS. Disbursements, line 21, conference disbursements, executive secretary and treasurer pay, lines 22-25, and smaller expenses like tax preparation fees, website maintenance, etc. Page 3 is, **Federally Funded Projects Account**, line 2 is major source of federal reimbursement, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and disbursements, lines 5-9 are the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) disbursements, and 10 and 11 are R3 projects. Page 4 is the **Non-Federal Funded Projects Account**, largest revenue source is contributions from the states for national pheasant coordinator on line 2, and on line 4, a Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation project, and line 5, Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow. Disbursements, line 10, Pheasants Forever for national pheasant coordinator, line 11, some Ohio projects, we closed those out, line 12, Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow and some smaller ones as well. Balance as I mentioned earlier, line 19, is \$202,100. There are designations against that balance listed on lines 20-24, \$189,000. Page 5 is the **Credit Union Share Account** had minimal activity, need to keep \$25 in this account to be a member of the credit union. Page 6 is the **Investment Account**, income items are interest, dividends, and capital gains; expenses are income reinvested and fees and charges. On line 9, had negative change in market value. Page 7 is the **Conservation Enhancement Fund (CEF) Checking account at Credit Union, 501(c)(3)**, on line 2 received funds from 2022 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference from Iowa. On disbursements side we made deposits for 2023 and 2024 conferences. Line 7, we had MAFWA administration fees that we transferred to our operating account on page 2. Bottom of page is **CEF Savings Account at Credit Union**, minimal activity, interest only. Page 8 is the **CEF Investment Account**, we had receipts for dividends.

Disbursements had some income reinvested and line 6 had negative change in market value. Bottom of page is **CEF Summary**, which shows balances in all the account shown as assets and designations of funds. Assets from previous page and have receivables of conference as well as 2024 conference in South Dakota. Total assets of \$105,000, designations are listed. The big one is line 21, state contributions to CEF, we had 11 states contribute \$5,000 each to provide funding for this entity. Line 24, the undesignated amount is \$5,400. *Amanda* – Thanks Roger for a wonderful job, appreciate your work.

Agenda Review

Amanda – I forgot to do agenda review. I want to add an agenda item towards the close of the meeting for discussion on strategic planning.

Audit Committee Report

Pete Hildreth, IA – On a semi-annual basis the audit committee selects a minimum of 10 receipts and 10 disbursements from the year-to-date list of receipts and disbursements from our bank accounts. The MAFWA treasurer provides support and documentation for the transactions. The year-to-date list of accounts were provided by Roger on January 12. As audit committee chair, I reviewed the report and selected and submitted a request to Roger on January 17. On January 18, Roger provided the supporting documentation. I reviewed the documents and there were no questions. On behalf of the audit committee and entire MAFWA team I want to say great work and thank you to Roger for the professional service as MAFWA Treasurer. ***Scott Peterson, North Dakota moved to accept report, Brad Loveless, Kansas second. Approved.***

Investments Committee Report

Brad Loveless, KS – Committee met with our financial advisor, Moneta, they gave us a report of our past performance and gave us confidence that they will be a great partner going forward. The change that came out of those discussions was discussed with the executive committee. That is a shift in investment policy from 30 percent fixed income and 70 percent risk-based/asset-based stocks versus less risky bonds. Switching that to 40/60, 40 percent fixed income and 60 percent stocks. The reason for that was we want to take advantage of bond market and expectation that interest rates will stay high. We feel we can get the returns we need and take less risk, a good move to make. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to shift to 60/40 split in investment policy, Tim McCoy, Nebraska second. Amanda*** – Appreciated information shared at executive committee meeting, it makes sense and was helpful. ***Approved. Brad*** – Discussed at executive committee, to put on everybody's radar, MAFWA traditionally careful with money, but this fund is being built up to be spent on MAFWA purposes, to further conservation goals. We are looking for worthwhile ongoing projects we can invest this money in. We have \$800,000 now and that will build over time. We are looking for signature projects we can do. Benefit of having those types of projects tied to investments is it will inform investments and strategies will change based on need to continue to fund those worthwhile projects.

Bylaws Committee Report

Sara Parker Pauley, MO (*Constitution and Bylaws with proposed changes - Exhibit E*) –

You have reviewed the changes, page 1, changed date, change 3, grammatical change, reality of changes in position, clarifying, if president separates, 1st vice president shall fulfill remaining time in office followed by their term, which means Amanda will be the president forever. *Amanda* – Happy to serve the role but witnessing all the work Diane had to do to make this work. Lot of work to host a meeting and work with president role as well. When those are in sync, that is a lot. I was wondering, history is president hosts, reason to keep that or can we stagger that so past president or upcoming president hosts. But is there a reason other than history to do that? Could we stagger it, so it spreads out the role, so either past president hosts or the upcoming president? That would spread out the role and take some burden off. *Sara* – Go through this then motion and discussion. Page 8, rather than change bylaws every time, no specific amount needed, page 11, tweaked terminology in committee structure and what they prefer to be called, and dates at end. Not substantive changes. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to approve the amendments as proposed, Tim McCoy, Nebraska second.*** Ollie – Never been any elections in this Association, formed in 1934 and founders decided to share the wealth of leadership and did by alphabet rotation of member states. Next year Illinois will be hosting, that means Natalie gets to be the president at the same time she gets to host the annual meeting that she is attending for the first time. The way it was set up to be equitable and fair, in a rotational basis. You can change if you wish to. *Amanda* – Don't suggest changing rotation, just wondering about staggering hosting and the chair position. If I had to do this role and hosting, that is a lot. *Diane* – I was glad you were in charge today. *Amanda* – I was glad you were in charge the rest of the conference. *Kendra* – I hosted and served both my first year, it was stressful, and I didn't enjoy the meeting as much. I would support that. Maybe we go with the schedule as it is now and whoever is next after Indiana and next conference is Illinois and go like that. Just a recommendation. *Amanda* - I shouldn't be in this role until 2025. *Ollie* – Correct. *Amanda* – So I wouldn't host until 2025. Are you suggesting after 2025 is when we should to stagger? *Kendra* – We could start it after this meeting. *Amanda* – Or in 2024, Natalie would host, and I would be president and I would just have two years as president. *Sara* – We have a motion on the floor, and you would need a proposed amendment. Do you have language? *Amanda* – No, I came with random thought in my head. *Kendra* – Would you be president next year and start in 2025? *Amanda* – Yes, but we will have to mention in this piece of it, the host would need to be captured in the bylaws and it isn't. We could adjust where we are at in the alphabet, but how we host the annual meeting is not captured. *Natalie* – Clean start in 2025. *Amanda* – Make sure bylaws reflect what we are discussing. *Pete* – Presidency would be year before the state hosts? *Amanda* – Make sure bylaws reflect what we are discussing. I'm not sure where you would add that in. *Pete* – You are saying the presidency would be the year before your state hosts? *Amanda* – Yes. That would make my presidency term next year and Iowa would be in presidency when I am hosting the meeting. Do we need to capture the hosting of the meeting in bylaws? *Tim* – Avoid it if you don't need to, if you do your flexibility goes way down. *Amanda* – Technically would we need a change, or do we all just need to agree that we adjust the alphabet game? *Kendra* – So, it is one off. *Sara* – I offer that we table the topic until after a break. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri, offered to amend motion of approval to table until later in the meeting. Brad Loveless, Kansas, second to table until after break.***

Approved. Sara – We will bring up the full motion when we come back to this vote after the break.

Resolutions Committee Report

Sara Parker Pauley, MO (Exhibit F) – Two resolutions for consideration, approved by executive committee and now come to full board. The first is support development of a Midwest conservation leadership program. This has been edited from printed materials. It has been edited to clarify what we are resolving to do. “NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies endorses an effort to establish a team consisting of employees of member states to perform a needs assessment of a regional leadership program, in cooperation with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency’s Management Assistance Team, National Conservation Leadership Institute staff, and/or US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center. The needs assessment will include identification and prioritization of the types of leadership skills that are needed for mid-level professionals in member agencies. The team will also provide examples of other existing programs that are similar in nature, including sample curriculum and cost for program implementation and maintenance.” All we are asking for is just a needs assessment be done which will include examples of other programs. We are not asking them to develop curriculum, not asking them to develop their own cost estimates. Just examples of existing programs. “BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, once the needs assessment and accompanying information is completed and submitted, the Board of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies will consider whether to move this initiative forward, and if so, will determine next steps.” It just clarifies the steps, first is needs assessment, bring that back to the full board and then they will make a decision at that point in time. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to approve resolution as amended by Executive Committee by full board, Natalie Fine, Illinois second.*** *Sara* – Revisions were to clarify; we don’t want this small group to do a lot of work until we have picture of cost and the need of it. Where we intend to go as we continue to add positions, at capacity and getting a better handle on priorities as an Association. Be more strategic in this, moving idea forward, leadership development, but not so far ahead we don’t have opportunities. *Diane* – These matches with what co-author had in mind, one on our team and Kate as well, this reflects that. *Amanda* – Good changes. ***Approved.***

Sara – Second resolution is on climate change. No changes were developed during executive committee discussion. We heard from committee chair on this yesterday. It is related to training. We had questions on the time it would take, and they said, no more than a day, maybe two sessions of 2-4 hours. It is straightforward on intent behind the training. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to approve, Shannon Lott, Michigan second. Approved.***

Awards Committee Report

Kendra Wecker, OH (MAFWA Award Winner Nominations – Exhibit G) – We had a nice awards luncheon, presented seven award categories to eight people or agencies. Encourage members to submit nominations for next year. We have a number of great staff and want to be sure we recognize them. Thanks to Sheila for assistance and other

committee members who reviewed the applications. *Amanda* – Thank you all for your work and Sheila as well.

Executive Secretary's Report

Ollie Torgerson (*PowerPoint - Exhibit H*) – Enjoyed time in Green Bay, and Packer's stadium. Lodge Kohler is a nice facility. Thank Wisconsin DNR for putting this on. Thank Delaney Event and Management, and Meg, there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Thank Diane for attending every planning meeting. Shout out to Rachel Colla, WI DNR who chaired the steering committee. Meg has been handling our conference for Delaney for a number of years. Visuals and sound have been good, and hotel is nice. Illinois is next up, I was told we will be meeting at Illinois Beach State Park, near Chicago on Lake Michigan, dates tentative. I have not signed facility contracts yet, when Natalie does Illinois spotlight at end of meeting will tell you more. You will not have to run the business meeting because Amanda will do that. We welcomed two new directors, Natalie and Diane. Farewell to Keith Warnke, Colleen Callahan and Dan Eichinger recently left and Shannon has filled in for him for acting director, await appointment there. Transitioned presidency from Colleen to Amanda. The first time in our history that we had three presidents in one year's time. Change in MLI from Ed Boggess, who served for six years, to Lorisa Smith. Thanks to Missouri for providing her, doing a wonderful job. Kelley Myers, left for six months on an assignment, she is back, and Kate Parsons filled in for her while she was gone. Claire Beck does so much for MLI. The MLI is on fire and taking care of nature side of One Health. Took five years to build it to where it is today and will take a similar amount of time to build One Health up to that level. It takes a lot of work to build programs. Proud of your leadership and leadership of the USFWS to build the MLI. Change here too, Charlie Wooley left, Chuck Traxler is acting director. Thank them for partnership. Proud to have Keith Warnke back as Midwest R3 and Relevancy Coordinator, back due to your commitment of funding for this position. Met Dr. Tricia Fry, the new Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator, a program thanks to funding from the America Rescue Act, we received national funding to support this position for three years, a nice addition to MAFWA. This all requires a lot of grant and contract work, thank you for authorization and funding to hire a contract manager, Sharon Schafer. She was our volunteer treasurer for six years before Roger, delighted to have her back. Constant changes we are dealing with all the time, constant influx. Thanks to sponsors who provide funding for what we are able to get done. Thank them if you get a chance. Started in early 2000s, steadily have gone up, then COVID hit and have come back, not to where we were, but back. It also messed up the Midwest Fish and Wildlife conference, which is struggling financially. I encourage you to send staff to 84th Midwest F&W conference in Sioux Falls at the end of January. The best fish and wildlife conference in the country, cutting edge research, perfect for professional development for staff. South Dakota is hosting for the first time, jumped into rotation of 11 states that host this. Conference started in 1935. In summary, MAFWA in good shape financially, committee structure is strong, relationships with federal partners are at all-time high, initiatives with MLI, pheasants, R3 and One Health moving along strongly. This is a testament to your leadership and leaders before you. We are a small organization, \$180,000 annual budget. A privilege and honor for me to serve you. We have a challenge, staff sustainability. You saw all the new opportunities coming before us,

committees doing a good job of giving us things to take on and fund. Personally thank these people, your staff that carry the load. First column are positions and annual cost and end point and source of the funding, total of capacity is \$670,000 on agency that runs on \$180,000 annual budget. That is testament of your leadership. How do we make sure we can maintain what we have before we take on further obligations. I sent a letter to the executive committee last month laying this out and suggesting need for a plan on how to go forward. Directors need to be engaged. Main thing that came out of executive committee was we need to focus on what our core strategic priorities based on what criteria. Should MAFWA be the organization that houses all of these positions and a process for evaluating them. Amanda added this at the end of new business to be discussed. Thank Brad and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for providing Sheila for all these years, and Dan too. Thank Sara and Missouri Department of Conservation for Lorisa; and Diane and Wisconsin DNR for housing me and providing computer services. These are huge contributions to the Midwest Association. Delaney will send an evaluation of this meeting, important to list what you would like on the program for next year, think about that and help them plan this meeting.

R3 & Relevancy Coordinator's Report

Keith Warnke, Coordinator – Welcome to Green Bay. I gave updates yesterday. We have a lot of new R3 coordinators and faces, Todd Grishke in Michigan, Michael Addison in Nebraska at NWTF partner coordinator, Asley Chance is Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever hunting heritage manager, John Motoviloff moved from NWTF to Pheasants Forever as hunting and shooting sports coordinator, and Marilyn Vetter was hired as the Pheasants Forever CEO. Information for you, data and research requests, data important and getting more important. My job is not calling you to get your staff to provide data, my job is to go around you to your people to get program in place to provide information to our partners, without having to call directors. I will report back to you quarterly on conference calls on progress we are making to get sort of programs in place so we can sit with technology and legal folks to make sure we have protocol in place where data flows mainline from your states into the programs that need it, and it remains protected. We are talking about PII data in some cases. All of the big corporations have a process to protect information. I want to put together a group of the state's technology and legal people to make sure we can make that happen. Be ready for reports on progress we make. That is power in hiring me because I am not going to want to come back and tell you they are not cooperating. We will be in a better place, the value will be tremendous and will only get better, data will make us stronger. The 2023 multistate grant I am working on, figure out perspective as R3 coordinator and director at one point, where disconnects are and what organizational structure would be best suited for R3 and incorporating that into our agencies. In my experience there was clearly a disconnect at some point, so need to put that back together. Give you confidence that your R3 coordinators are doing what they are supposed to be doing but don't need to approve projects, structures, and all they are doing every day. Organization structure and structured decision making are going to be a big part of that grant, which is also paying part of my salary and offsetting the cost to MAFWA states. On the job three months now.

Sara – Let's take a short break to revise bylaws.

Break

Bylaws – *Amanda* – Go back to bylaws committee and un-table the bylaws. *Ollie* – Need a motion to un-table. ***Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to un-table the motion made earlier, Natalie Fine, Illinois second. Approved. Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri made motion to amend standing motion by offering an amendment on page 3, related to officers, end last sentence under officers, section one.*** “If the President separates from a member agency (or is replaced by that agency), the First Vice-President shall fulfill the remaining term, followed by their regular term and the Second Vice-President shall fulfill the remaining term of the First Vice-President.” Period. Thereby deleting proposed language about synchrony (“and both shall remain in office until the host state rotation comes in synchrony.”). ***Tim McCoy, Nebraska second. Sara*** – Thanks Tim. We feel that by taking off that language of synchrony to get to your point of that being a requirement. We appreciate our colleague from Illinois who will be skipped as an officer. That makes the point that we don’t have to double up. Pete (Iowa) will be serving as president with Indiana hosts. *Ollie* – Pete will be president in 2024? *Sara* – 2025. *Amanda* – Pete will wield the gavel in 2025 and I will be hosting. ***Approved.***
Sara Parker Pauley, Missouri moved to incorporate that revision with all the other revisions discussed earlier, Brad Loveless, Kansas second. Approved. Amanda – appreciate the work on that.

OLD BUSINESS

Mid-America Monarch Strategy Approval

Lorisa Smith, MAFWA – You all have access to the document, Claire Beck did a tremendous job in leading the state team that updated the strategy document. They worked with Jen from the Monarch Joint Venture. We do have summaries and updated information from each of the states. This is not just MAFWA geography but also includes Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma. We recognize the work of the north core and the south core and how incredibly important that is. There is an action item to move this across the finish line so it can be approved and made available. We will work with Ollie to get it posted on the MAFWA website. ***Pete Hildreth, Iowa moved, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second. Lorisa*** – Clare is a rock star. Thanks for providing comments and reviewing the document making it a true collaboration, what MLI and MAFWA are all about. This is our document and meant to be a resource for all of us. ***Approved.***

National Wild Pheasant Plan Update

Scott Taylor, Executive Director – (PowerPoint – Exhibit I) Currently have 18 states participating in our funding partnership, including every MAFWA state with wild pheasant populations. Thank you for your support. MAFWA acts as our banker, and you invoice states each spring and Pheasants Forever holds the position and provides some cash as well. This is the funding model we have had since partnership began in 2016. We do have some non-MAFWA states as well, so I will be at WAFWA conference in a few weeks talking to them. Main point of work is nexus between science and policy and translating science published or that we need to generate new information and translate

into decisions we have to make as pheasant, grassland and budget managers. Tools currently in development deal with habitat planning, brood surveys analysis and translating that into better hunting forecasts and CRP policy tools. Habitat planning tools is highest priority, revised in 2021. We went through prioritization process and states indicated they wanted a web-based interactive tool, and we have a prototype up and running. There are a variety of tools on that site, like optimization tool, where you can pick a state, give it a budget, say 1.5 million acres, give it an objective and model and it spits out what it can do with those acres to meet that objective. For example, this particular routine was able to increase Iowa's pheasant population by 49% by rearranging acres on the landscape, that would increase CRP costs by 11% by moving acres from low-cost counties to higher cost counties. It also checks the database that USDA uses in its climate planner tool to estimate the amount of carbon sequestered by CRP, in this case no change. It also shows where it is putting them on the map and where they are going. You can zoom in within the tool to see those points and pick any one of those points on the grid and see what current level of CRP is and the population index. It shows where model thinks your optimum point is and where you get maximum pheasant response. Scenario planning idea is to better be able to predict implications of habitat change. I wouldn't trust this tool at this point, this is proof of concept model right now. It is in the literature, not made up from thin air, but we do need to do a lot of verification on the predictions it is making, so take with a grain of salt. Pheasants aren't states highest priority everywhere. So, we want to incorporate models for other grassland birds that are dependent on CRP. The state of the bird report identifies tipping point species that are well correlated with CRP on a national level. Others are working on grassland bird models and will be in communication with those folks and incorporate their model so we can have a multi-objective optimization tool that is more realistic and comprehensive. Seven of your states across the range collaborated on multistate study looking at environmental factors affecting brood counts, looking at weather conditions and other environmental factors that increase the propensity of broods to be visible on roadside counts. That study is completed, we have a model, and I am turning that model into tools that allow pheasant biologists to account for variations in those environmental factors and coming up with final determination if numbers up or down, which helps create better forecasts and better credibility among hunting public. Hope to be done by August brood counting period. In last few weeks, deep into Farm Bill deliberations, current USDA policy allows landowners to hay 100% of their CRP field after the primary nesting season under emergency drought conditions. We would like that not to happen. We are going to fight to have that changed but may need to give something up to get it back. There have been grumblings to be able to allow earlier haying and grazing into primary nesting season. During drought conditions we may be able to allow that without having to give much up, from production standpoint, so tradeoff between haying date and getting a portion of field back un-hayed in the process. Doing preliminary modeling to figure out where the cutoff date would be. If we allow two weeks earlier mowing, what would be the last date to come out ahead. Outside my wheelhouse, but this came up yesterday regarding training needs for private land biologists. I was at meeting in Wisconsin Dells and took part in that discussion. I talked to our Pheasant Forever folks, and they are interested in a concept partnership positions to address this training need. We have a successful farm bill biologist model with partnership positions in place, so why not apply

that to full time trainers to train those folks. Without getting ahead of the MAFWA-wide process and conversations you are having, if there are a few states that want to explore that model, PF is receptive to that conversation. If that intrigues you, let me or Drew Larson know.

Amanda – Dan Forster not with us, so no update on bowhunting equipment regulation review.

Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI)

Sara Parker Pauley, MO – Craig not here today. Heard Lorisa and Kate this week. Not going to duplicate their comments. If you are on the MLI steering committee look around and be proud of that and we are grateful for those willing to serve. As your chairperson I fail if a member state director does not know what MLI is, doesn't know how your state benefits from it, doesn't know if your staff are involved and doesn't feel updated on those efforts. I want to keep MLI front and center because this shared governance with USFWS is unique. I serve also on the SEAFWA version of this, SECAS. They did something different, with state directors not as involved with day-in and day-out governance and as a result new directors have no idea what SECAS was and its value. We spend a lot of time on making sure the shared governance structure is right. Part of that is to keep state directors updated. It is important you know what is going on and engaged and if issues and concerns we need to identify those opportunities you would like to see us move forward. Working and part of success is America the Beautiful challenge grants. Five of our states, working together on grasslands. A lot of amazing progress. Appreciate Craig. We have another update on MLI from Pete. *Pete* – Sara mentioned one of MLI's priorities is regional grassland conservation. She mentioned America the Beautiful challenge grant, in parallel to keep that going, Kelly Van Beek, with USFWS and Dr. Tyler Harms, with Iowa DNR, are working on the Midwest grassland roadmap. That planning team is looking to do a summit late winter or early spring and they want to get a team together to see what that roadmap initiative should look like at a regional scale. Champion that with directors, what that summit would look like and who goes to it. We recognize how busy directors are and Kelly and Tyler feel that we want mid-level staff at that meeting. We also heard an update from our public lands and private lands working groups and as a result of their recent meeting one of the priorities they identified was also regional grassland conservation. These two are in parallel and you have already identified these people as your representatives at that level, so plan to invite public and private land working groups to participate in Midwest grassland roadmap summit. My ask is, if you hear about that we would love your support as directors to send staff to that summit. *Sara* – Kelley, delighted to have you back with us in spirit of MLI.

Kelley Myers, FWS – (Exhibit J – handouts, annual report and blueprint) The Midwest Conservation Blueprint handout. My wonderful team was working on all of this while I was gone. So much said already. I want to start with gratitude for all of your support. If you have questions about MLI, talk to Sara, Lorisa, Kate or me but ask your teams because everyone of you have people involved. Thanks for allowing them to be involved and your encouragement. Coming together, jumping into the action and getting something on the ground. Thank Kate and Lorisa for keeping things going. Part of this

year was evaluating how different this approach is. It is different, but working, it has been tremendous. Thanks for Sara and Lorisa and Kate who has jumped it. Different year but incredible. It makes us think about what will happen next year. Look to future, full of hope and excitement because we do have ideas about involving more staff. Pete mentioned grassland roadmap, an exciting opportunity to learn from our friends to the West who have a central grasslands roadmap. To learn from some of our own experience, Northern long-eared bat and monarch planning. Find where we can do better and where we can engage differently and more broadly. We have new relationship with the Forest Service and happy to see Karl Malcomb part of our meetings and getting more engaged. We are also looking at other partnerships with EPA and Department of Defense, an exciting year for more groups to get involved. More drilling in on habitats and more connections with other regions and what is happening there. Thanks, Brad, for work on joint task force. Midwest is leading the way on landscape conservation and creating a lot of activity and action that people are looking to. Doing great things that are moving the nation. Making more connections to established entities. Heard about diversity meeting and joint meeting that happened this spring. It is not necessarily duplication to be at same event, we are all bringing different voices for needs, desires and outcomes, it is taking advantage and leveraging one another. We were excited when we got the request to help facilitate some of these project ideas and work going into the future on landscape level conservation. This is exactly what we were talking about in 2017 and 2018, it is exciting. Look within the Service, we have updates to refuge planning, more looks at landscape planning and holistic multi-partner planning. There is a memorandum that came out of White House council on environmental quality last spring that directs all the federal agencies to manage land bases better together. It specifically calls out regional collaboratives like MLI as places where these conversations can be happening. How we can be better sharing data and better planning together on this conservation estate. America the Beautiful challenge grants in five states this year and how can we make it 13 next year. Utilize some of the relationships we have with NFWF to say this important and not to look past the Midwest, we have important resources that need your help. Challenges in the future. Claire's contract ends at end of fiscal year 2024. I am not going to lobby for budgets, but I can tell you, FY 2023, it has been a challenge for us. Program has support, but this year we had a couple big, directed appropriations that took away from the whole. It meant a lot of our regions had less. Our region is okay but don't know what FY 2024 looks like yet because all of the wrangling going on in DC. There will be a conference report coming out soon and we will have a better idea. Looking at agreements and what we are trying to put funds into and what that will look like going forward. A big challenge for USFWS partners this year. Think about that but committed to continuing partnership and moving forward with Lorisa and what that looks like in the future. I joke that it is like Hotel California, once you come you can never leave. Once people come, they are enjoying the work. How can we continue to grow in right way, with budgets we have and resources available and unbelievable opportunities, like northern forests and work there and we are quietly supporting some of that work too. How can we be in those important places, with funds, in a way that is durable. Close with invitation to talk, this is ours, this is not the Service, not the states, not Kelley's or Kate's, this is ours. It is what we want it to be, been an excellent forum, we have taken on big challenges and small challenges. What do you want to see in next year or two and where do you want us to be?

Ask your teams, they are excited and have amazing ideas. I see this as an incredible opportunity to develop our next generation of leaders to think in this holistic state, multi-state, multifaceted way. Think about what you want us to be reporting on next year.

Craig Czarnecki, FWS (not present)

Ollie – The next two items have been dealt with.

Midwest Contract Manager Position

Ollie - You were updated on contract manager position; Sharon is on for two years.

Midwest Wildlife Health Coordinator

Ollie – Midwest Health Coordinator is on for three years.

Amanda – Move on to new business.

Refreshment Break (sponsored by ASPIRA) done earlier.

NEW BUSINESS

2024 Budget Approval

Roger Luebbert, Treasurer (Exhibit L) – The table of contents shows there are six pages. The first two pages are CY 2022, budget versus actual for historical information; next two are CY 2023 budget status. I will focus on last two pages, the proposed budget for 2024, starting January 1, 2024. This shows last year's budget versus actual. On page 3, current year budget versus actual, which isn't that meaningful as it is still early in the year. On line 7, membership dues, dues for 2023 are \$4,487.83 and will be sending invoices out next month. On page 4, line 37, receipts over disbursements, our budget is receipts will exceed disbursements by about \$1,455, essentially a break-even budget. Page 5 is proposed 2024 budget. The executive committee has seen this and voted to bring to full board. We have some historical information, calendar year 2021 actual, 2022 actual, 2023 budget and proposed 2024 budget. On the far right we have how we arrived at those numbers. For conference lines 1-5, we used 2023 conference budget amounts that Delaney put together for this conference, we think the best numbers for next year. Other numbers based on historical information. Line 7 is membership dues. For 2024, per bylaws based on consumer price index (CPI). We use the Midwest CPI and compare January 2022 to January 2023, which is 5.99%. So, if budget approved, dues for 2024 will be \$4,756.65. The proposed budget for receipts, line 17 for 2024 is \$190,809. Next page, disbursements, some lines are adjusted for inflation using same CPI, line 18, Delaney Coordinator Fees; 24, executive secretary pay; 26, treasurer pay; and 29, contract manager pay. Tax preparation fees used 2022 actual but adjusted for inflation. We have a proposed budget for \$1,176. Line 32, CPA audit in occur in 2024 but won't be paid until 2025. Total disbursements, \$190,910, which is \$101 over receipts, so essentially a break-even budget. ***Brad Loveless, Kansas moved to accept budget, Kendra Wecker, Ohio second. Approved.***

Amanda – Thanks Roger.

Amanda – That brings us to addition of conversation about making decisions on piece Ollie covered in his comments, so we continue to sustain what we decided is important and have a plan for how we would add new opportunities. Heard from our committees that there are opportunities there. I asked, during executive committee, for help from people to help come up with a framework on what it would take to build a strategic plan or strategic objectives, a framework for us to make decisions. We agreed a small team would be better than all of us. Pete (Iowa) agreed to help me (Indiana), and I asked Nebraska and Michigan to help as well. I would like to hear from all of you on how you see that coming together. I see it as framework or decision tool to work through to make the decisions on what we do move forward. We will have to identify priorities and process of how to make decisions moving forward. *Diane* – Makes sense, great projects brought up yesterday, but at what point do we say no and how do we prioritize. I am new coming in and there are no criteria to decide, important from my perspective. *Amanda* – The first step isn't for this small team to create that but come up with strategy to bring all of us together to create that. Not creating the process, just process to create the process. *Pete* – In that executive committee meeting we asked Ollie for some history of MAFWA and whether or not we had strategic plans in the past. *Ollie* – When I first started, Dan Zekor, Missouri Department of Conservation, assisted us in that for a couple of years to get that done and got this Association back on trac. We have not done any strategic planning since then. Instructed to contact Dan Zekor to see if he would be willing to help us in this process. He is a critical thinker and has a lot of experience. I know him personally and he told me he doesn't work for free anymore. I will contact him and see if he is willing to help assist. If not Pete and others identified some staff people that might be able to assist. *Pete* – I mentioned I was willing to explore that with someone in my department. *Ollie* – Not done any strategic planning since early 2000. This would be next step in our growth. *Amanda* – Once we get through this process that gives us the opportunity to make the right kinds of decisions on how we make pick projects to spend our dollars. Without that strategy I don't know how we are intentional about how we spend money. Making sure we continue to do things we agreed to do and able to make strategic decisions. *Ollie* – You have the power to appoint. *Amanda* – I will convene small team, not by September but maybe by next meeting to share. Maybe Ollie will have an update on whether we have a facilitator or not. *Ollie* – We dan convene this group too. The board only meets only once a year, but we can meet virtually as a board, we don't have to wait a whole year if there is something for you all to consider. President, via bylaws, has ability to call a meeting on short notice. We do have an executive committee meeting tentatively scheduled for August, may have something to kick around. The executive committee meets in Calgary during the AFWA conference. There is a big gap between September and March, the executive committee tends not to meet during that time, but that could change. Maybe we might have to have a few more meetings. Some of contracts coming up for conclusion, like how we will continue to fund Claire and things like that. *Kendra* – I think this is the right thing to do to prioritize what comes in, a plan on how to spend money. I also remember hearing that at one time there was a goal of \$1 million threshold and maybe spend above that. I don't think we are there but want to make sure that is still the direction we were going to try to maintain, or if that was up for

discussion. *Brad* – Way back when that was the thought. I would say we are not bound by that, if we determine a need, we can cap investment and spend interest wherever we want, we are flexible that way. *Amanda* – I will be in touch with our four-person team.

Closing Comments/President's Remarks

Amanda Wuestefeld, IN DNR – Thank Diane for work, wonderful time in Green Bay. Ollie asked if I would step in this role, I don't like pomp and circumstance or the attention, it makes me uncomfortable. I find it impressive how this organization does the work it does, in way we do it. We share duties, are collaborative and it doesn't matter who sits here the work is going to be good and do amazing things. I am happy to help however long I need to. I am thankful you allowed us to adjust the bylaws, so it is a shorter term for me. Ideas come as people change and move into new seats. Anytime you stay anywhere very long you run out of ideas. I will use my two years to influence with ideas I have. I appreciate the camaraderie of this group, leadership from all of you. As I sit in this chair I expect support from you, because I don't enjoy the focus. The focus should be on the work and people at home doing the work, that is what makes us successful. Appreciate the opportunity and look forward to upcoming conversations.

Illinois Spotlight (2024)

Natalie – Being new, this has been a wonderful experience and I enjoyed the conference. We are excited and honored to hold the next MAFWA conference. I will ask Assistant Secretary Rogner to come up. He has some slides. We are going to have democratic process vote and let you choose where to go next year. *John* – Happy to give this coming attraction update. We have a small core group working on this, Mike Wefer, chief of wildlife division and Mike McClelland, chief of fisheries division. We asked them to take pictures and notes and infiltrate and see how this meeting is run. Personally, slightly deflated, excited about our sites in Illinois and come here. After Ollie, I am the second Packer fan at this meeting and it does not get any better than this, fabulous. We will put on a good show. *Diane* – Rachel and our staff are here to help as well and Ollie and Meg too. *John* – Good advice already from your team. We had a couple of conversations that were very helpful. *Natalie* – Your team has been helpful and gone above and beyond. *John* – We came up with a set of possible candidate sites in Illinois. We had half a dozen, down to a couple of sites we want to pitch to you. One is in Peoria, the Pere Marquette Marriott hotel and the other is Illinois Beach State Park. I have stayed at both of these, both wonderful and good places to meet. Illinois Beach is right along the Illinois/Wisconsin state line and right on Lake Michigan and Peoria venue is right on the Illinois River. Contrasting sites, and we are going to ask you which you prefer by a show of hands. The Pere Marquette is on the Peoria River Front, vibrant place downtown and Peoria is about the same size as Green Bay from population standpoint. The hotel has been newly renovated, is close to airport, with group rate of \$174 a night. Meg is negotiating with the two places. There would be good opportunities downtown, as you step out of hotel there are pubs, restaurants and you can walk along the river front. Probably other things to do, probably involving invasive carp, like being on the river with flying carp, maybe even fishing. The other is Illinois Beach hotel, right on Lake Michigan. Very different from Peoria, one of our premier state parks and natural area, our only remaining coast with natural dune and swale and wonderful ecological communities.

All kinds of opportunities to hike, bird watch and things we all like to do. It is not as convenient to get to, equal distance from Chicago and Milwaukee airports. Group rate of \$109 a night and some other economic, fiscal considerations we have to work out. You decide, both are cool. Ask for vote. Peoria, (2 votes evident), Illinois Beach? A number of people with clear preference for Illinois Beach, the rest are okay with either. We have some numbers to crunch yet, so won't decide yet. We have things to think about like returning \$25,000 to MAFWA at end, so that is a consideration. Thanks for your input.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNS

Brad – Thank Wisconsin for great conference (applause). *Diane* – To the last of our team that are here, thank you. Thanks for coming. We are glad you enjoyed your time here. ***Tim McCoy, Nebraska moved to adjourn, Brad Loveless, Kansas second. Meeting adjourned at 10:13 pm.***



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The National Wild Turkey Federation is a 501 (c) (3) non-governmental organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage. The NWTf is grassroots, volunteer organization governed by a volunteer member board of directors. Its volunteers are organized in a state and local chapter system.

USDA Forest Service

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The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

USDA/ APHIS/Wildlife Services

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The mission of USDA AP HIS Wildlife Services (WS) is to provide Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist. WS conducts program delivery, research, and other activities through its Regional and State Offices, and its Field Stations, as well as through its National Programs.

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The Airgun Sporting Association is committed to working with state wildlife agencies to promote airgun hunting and recreational shooting across the country. The airgun 'industry' recognizes the important role of the state wildlife agencies in wildlife management, hunter and recreational shooter access, and hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation, and we look forward to working with the agencies to identify future partnership opportunities.

National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF)

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NSSF is the Firearm Industry Trade Association. Leading the way in advocating for the industry and its business and jobs, keeping guns out of the wrong hands, encouraging enjoyment of recreational shooting and hunting, and helping people better understand the industry's lawful products.

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Pheasants Forever's mission is to conserve pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public access, education, and conservation advocacy. Pheasants Forever's unique chapter model and our partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies has allowed us to impact more than 22 million acres since 1982.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

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Founded more than 39 years ago, fueled by hunters and a membership of more than 225,000 strong, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) has protected or enhanced nearly 8.6 million acres of wildlife habitat and opened or secured public access to 1.5 million acres. RMEF also works to fund and advocate for science-based resource management, and to ensure the future of America's hunting heritage.

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Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society (TWS) and our network of affiliated chapters and sections represent more than 15,000 professional wildlife biologists, managers, and educators dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. TWS' mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation.

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The Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO) was chartered February 1944 at Lincoln, Nebraska. There are currently 23 member agencies from Canada and the United States. The AMFGLEO meets every year taking turns in different states and provinces. The meetings have been beneficial to the member agencies. Over the years, the AMFGLEO has become the lead group among wildlife enforcement organizations in the development and maintenance of training for field officers that protects the resource and benefits the citizens of our states, provinces, and countries.

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The Mule Deer Foundation is the only national, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of mule deer, black-tailed deer, and their habitats.

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Thanks

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies would like to thank President Amanda Wuestefeld, MAFWA president, Indiana for running the meeting and Diane Brusoe, Division Administrator, Wisconsin and her staff for hosting a great conference;

Directors, Committee members, Federal partners and Association affiliates for their dedication to the natural resources;

Ollie Torgerson, Executive Secretary; Roger Luebbert, Treasurer; Sheila Kemmis, Recording Secretary; Lorisa Smith, MLI State Liaison; Claire Beck, MLI Technical Coordinator; Sharon Schafer, Contract Manager; Dr. Tricia Fry, Fish and Wildlife Health Coordinator; and Keith Warnke, R3 and Relevancy Coordinator; for all of their hard work throughout the year to make the Midwest a better Association; and

Sheila Kemmis, Recording Secretary, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for printing and providing these proceedings.

**Copies of these proceedings can be obtained from:
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