



**MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**  
**R3 & RELEVANCY TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP**

**Meeting Time and Place – January 29-31, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD**  
**Director Liaison – Kevin Robling, SD**

**Attendance – Keith Warnke – R3 and Relevancy Coordinator, Megan Wisecup (virtual) – IA, Jeff Rawlinson – NE, Shala Larson – SD, Rachel Allis – IA, Tanna Wagner – KS, Lou Cornicelli – Southwick, Emily Iehl – WI, Bob Nack – WI, Cayla Bendel – ND, Eric Edwards – MO, Brandon Maahs – SD, Julia Plugge – NE, Michael Addison – NE NWTF, Aaron Herschberger – NE, Matt Harlow – DJCase, Jamie Cook – IA, Jae Ellison – IHEA, Todd Grischke – MI, James Burnham – USFWS, Jen Davis – MI NWTF, Banndon Castellano – IN, Jeff Ledermann – MN, Tyler Stirat, Caroline Nelson, Taniya Bethke – CAHSS, Jenn Domenech, Benji Kohn – MN, Amy Bousman – KS, Jessica Hoey – MO, Hannah – Sporting Lead Free, Ann Forstchen – WMI, Mark Humpert - AFWA.**

**Executive Summary** – The MAFWA R3 and Relevancy working group hosted a symposium on relevancy on the afternoon of January 29. We heard seven speakers address what relevancy is, the skills and competencies needed to implement relevancy practices, pathways to starting relevancy efforts, statewide relevancy efforts, discussions of individual examples in states, metrics to evaluate success, and paradigms for change.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, January 30 and 31, our regular annual R3 and Relevancy Technical Working Group meeting was conducted. There were talks on Sustainability, Ethics, and Holistic Hunter Education, updates from the Council and many partners, research updates, the upcoming national R3 plan report, the upcoming national R3 symposium in Mobile AL, a briefing on our joint ammunition and tackle outreach effort with the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, and recent developments in R3 metrics and definitions. (Please see attached agenda.)

The major work was to open discussions on our mission and strategic planning effort. We reviewed our Organizational Guidelines and metrics, debated possible mission statements along

with objectives metrics, and coordinated Midwest R3 efforts. Chair Megan Wisecup appointed the strategic planning sub-committee assigned to ensure the group's strategy for the future and fulfilling our responsibilities to directors.

During our formal business meeting, the chair and vice chair expressed an interest in continuing their roles. The group membership voted to reappoint Megan Wisecup as Chair and Jeff Rawlinson as Vice-Chair.

**Director Action Items** –The working group discussed changes to the Organizational Guidelines, including amending the mission and making a couple of administrative clarifications about group membership and voting. When the sub-committee has finished its work, we will bring this action item to the directors.

**Director Information Items** – The **ammunition/tackle lead working group**, including the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, is making great progress. Industry, stakeholders, agency staff, and the Health Committee reps are all supportive of the plan to develop and implement voluntary BMPs and an information and education campaign. The voluntary BMPs are, in part, a means of working together to avoid future regulatory action. The group has held several Zoom meetings and conference calls over the past nine months and is closing in on a start-up BMPs document and work plan that incorporates input from the R3 and Relevancy TWC, the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, ammunition and tackle industries, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the American Sportfishing Association, additional partner groups, the North American Non-Lead Partnership, IHEA, WMI, and the USFWS. Upon completion of this first stage, we intend to propose a special session for the NA meeting next March to discuss accomplishments and a path forward. We envision applying for a MSCG to conduct work that will continue the evolution and implementation of the BMPs in the future.

Our **Multi-State Conservation Grants** from last year are progressing well; several reports are being drafted. We received funding for three grants this year: Investigating R3 possibilities in state parks, a survey of citizen awareness of their fish and wildlife agencies in the Midwest (replicating what was done in SEAFWA last year), and shooting sports diversity outreach – phase two, Southwick Associates will be our contractor on the first two listed and DJ Case and Associates has agreed to contract on the shooting sports phase two as they are the contractor on phase one. The TWC is in the process of writing four grant applications (approved by Ex Comm) to conduct additive projects in 2025.

### **MAFWA R3 and Relevancy Coordinator Accomplishments:**

In the first ten months of the position, the R3 and Relevancy Coordinator has several notable accomplishments, including:

- Led the ammunition and tackle working group in efforts to mitigate the secondary toxicity of lead from hunting and fishing.
- Leading and coordinating several Multi-State Conservation Grants including:
  - Hunter Access Project with Max MaGraw
  - Next Steps for LearnHunting.org

- Organizational Structure for R3 programs – lead investigator
  - Coordinated and wrote grants for 2024 Multi-State Conservation Grant program. 2024 grants approved:
    - State parks R3 opportunities
    - MAFWA agency awareness and relevancy to the general public
    - Shooting sports diversity phase II for MAFWA states
- Coordinating the logistics, topics, and minutes for bi-monthly MAFWA R3 and Relevancy meetings
- Coordinating and facilitating the logistics, topics, and minutes for annual R3 and Relevancy meeting in Sioux Falls, SD
- Coordinate and facilitate MAFWA R3 communications
- Presented the 2023 annual MAFWA R3 and Relevancy Working Group report to MAFWA directors in Green Bay, WI (June 2023)
- Establishing monthly one-on-one calls with agency and partner R3 coordinators (as desired) to improve communication and coordination.
- Established the review process for the MAFWA R3 and Relevancy Technical Working Group Organizational Guidelines update.
- Establishing and leading the strategic planning, organizational guidelines, and mission statement sub-committee to focus on broadening the constituencies we serve.
- Provide leadership and technical assistance to Midwest state Directors, R3 Coordinators, and Partners regarding R3-related issues, needs, and opportunities. I helped onboard several new R3 coordinators around the region.
- Stay up to date on relevant R3 research, publications, and other findings, then disseminate this information to member states and provinces.
- Coordinate and collaborate with the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, the SEAFWA R3 Coordinator, and the other R3 committees around the US.
- Provide technical assistance and leadership at the direction of the MAFWA group chair and vice chair.
- Develop multi-state and regional grant projects that provide tools and resources to help member states and provinces further their R3 and relevancy priority initiatives. Collaborate and share information with other fish and wildlife agencies and national organization committees, including the other three regional R3 committees, on regional and national R3 and relevancy efforts and planning.
- Attended and participated in many national and regional conferences and meetings, including Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, RBFF marketing conference, North American, Region 3 (USFWS) Hunter Ed meeting, National R3 symposium, MAFWA Directors annual meeting, WAFWA (possibly), IHEA national conference (if assigned), CAHSS national planning efforts, Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation Committee (AFWA), Angling and Boater Participation Committee (AFWA), Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference, Fish and Wildlife Health, Equity Opportunity and Diversity, Private Lands, Lead working group, etc.
- I completed and submitted the R3 and Relevancy Tech Group report and state and partner updates report.

**Time and Place of Next Meeting** - Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, January 2025 in St. Louis, Missouri.

## **Appendix 1: Meeting Agenda and Minutes, January 29-31, 2024. Sioux Falls SD**

### **MAFWA R3 and Relevancy Annual meeting Jan 29-31, 2024. Sioux Falls, SD Meeting Agenda and Minutes**

Meeting Location: [Denny Sanford Premier Center](#)

We had a very successful two-day meeting plus our relevancy symposium, agenda below. During the business meeting, the group reappointed Megan Wisecup as chair and Jeff Rawlinson as vice-chair without opposition. Attendance was around 30 with ten states, several partner groups, and students represented.

#### **Monday January 29. Symposium: Pursuing Relevancy: Examples of How to Get Started, Determine Paths Forward, Evaluate, and Adapt**

Fish and wildlife conservation is rapidly changing, characterized by increasingly stressed agency resources to address complex conservation challenges. Changes include increased numbers and diversity of stakeholders with varied values toward fish and wildlife, generally declining participation rates in “traditional” uses (hunting, angling, and trapping), and increasing numbers of people who are disconnected from the natural world. These changes necessitate a shift in many agencies as they adapt to changing societal conditions (AFWA and WMI 2019). Agency, partner, and stakeholder efforts to interpret and implement the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap (AFWA and WMI 2019) (Roadmap) have varied across Midwest states. The roadmap provides descriptions of categories and barriers to relevancy and an outline for agencies and stakeholders to refer to when making decisions regarding allocation of limited resources and selecting priorities for focus. This outline is not a blueprint or a prescription; instead, it identifies potential paths available to agencies and stakeholders to identify barriers and select strategies and actions that are attainable. This symposium invites relevancy theorists and practitioners to present examples of how to initiate relevancy efforts, approaches, and actionable items that can be evaluated and adapted moving forward. Presenters will provide evaluation and adaptation experiences and hypotheses for advancing toward maintaining/regaining relevancy with Midwest hunters and anglers and with the population in the Midwest. The symposium will consist of agency and partner personnel providing information on efforts around the Midwest, barriers to relevancy, how they are being addressed, and the need to improve efforts.

- Symposium Jan 29, 1:40-5:00 pm
  - 1:40-2:05 –The Past, Present, and Future of the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap. Mark Humpert, Conservation Initiatives Director, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Jason Sumners, Deputy Director, Missouri Department of Conservation
  - In 2016, the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources recommended that a working group be convened to examine the impact

of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation and make recommendations on how programs and agencies can evolve to engage and serve broader constituencies. This recommendation led to the development of a diverse team led by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the Wildlife Management Institute that produced the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap in 2019. This presentation will provide an overview of the history and content of the roadmap and highlight relevant case studies in Missouri and several other states. Work will be highlighted that shows how states are attempting meaningful transformation to address changing social, political, and natural resource challenges by engaging new customers and constituents to align the mission of state fish and wildlife agencies with the interests of more diverse communities. This work requires new capacities and changes to existing mental models so the expectations of broader audiences can be met. The presenters will seek feedback on what is needed to support future efforts to increase fish and wildlife relevancy. The presenters will provide insight into how efforts on landscape conservation and One Health (i.e., the integration of human, environmental, and animal health to improve quality of life) have the potential to increase the relevancy of fish and wildlife to broader constituencies.

- 2:05-2:30 –Key Competencies to Implement the Relevancy Roadmap. Ann Forstchen, Wildlife Management Institute; Tovar Cerulli and Maria Estrada, Metropolitan Group, Inc.; Matt Dunfee, Wildlife Management Institute; Elizabeth Mabee, Indiana Department of Natural Resources; Rob Sassor, Metropolitan Group
- State conservation agencies recognize the need to adapt their internal culture, practices,, and capacity to better meet the conservation needs, interests, and concerns of a rapidly changing society. Our project team, with extensive knowledge working in and with state and federal agencies on agency transformation and conservation relevancy, has identified key competencies for staff to implement the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap fully. With over 50 people from state and federal conservation agencies, we are creating a national coalition of expert practitioners (Relevancy Coaches) to learn from and support each other to understand better and engage with broader constituencies. Through 9 intensive training webinars and an in-person workshop, this team of coaches has developed advanced skills in relationship and partnership building that can empower others and their agency. Project leads used the Relevancy Community of Practice website as a communication platform and to archive the training, relevancy-related information, customizable materials (e.g., assessment tools, worksheets, guidance documents), and other resources (e.g., journal articles, websites, books, videos) presented to the Relevancy Coaches. Customizable materials are now available to help all organizations: 1) articulate what relevancy means in their context, and 2) assess why and with whom a conservation agency wants to learn about and build mutually beneficial relationships to improve awareness, connection with, and support for nature. Course content includes topics such as Why Relevancy and Why Now; the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap; Wildlife Governance Principles; Communicating for Relevancy; Understanding Different Worldviews; Change

Management; Stakeholder Mapping; Relationship Building; Psychological Safety; and Power Dynamics. And notably, we included information on how to get started. This session will highlight the key findings, recommendations, and most useful tools now available to all those who wish to lead their agency in engaging and serving broader constituencies.

- 2:30-2:55 –Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance. Ann Forstchen, Wildlife Management Institute; Cynthia Jacobson, Innovative Outcomes; Mark Duda, Responsive Management; Christian Smith, Wildlife Management Institute; Daniel Decker, Cornell University
- State agencies are recognizing the rapidly changing social demographics and their impacts on how agencies deliver conservation benefits. They are working understand and serve the needs, interests, and concerns of all people in their state. They recognize that changes in their practices, programs, and services - and sometimes structure - are necessary to fulfill their Public Trust responsibilities. Building on national efforts to increase awareness, value, and support for conservation, we developed a phased process to help internal relevancy teams identify underserved constituencies, why they wanted to learn more about them, and how ready they were as an agency to engage in this work. Our project team, comprised of conservation social scientists and subject matter experts who have worked in and with state wildlife agencies, helped them gather insight and data about their selected population segments of interest and develop goals, objectives, actions, and indicators of success for those actions. The resulting outcomes focused on external actions necessary to understand, engage, and serve their selected constituencies while continuing to serve their existing constituencies. They also identified and prioritized internal actions to help them address agency culture and capacity barriers to effectively work with and serve broader constituencies. Data gathering included both qualitative and quantitative insight and data. The resulting project products provide information and insight to inform specific near-term implementation efforts. This work builds on the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap (AFWA and WMI 2019) and provides relevancy practitioners guidance on pathways to initiate relevancy efforts.
- 3:00-3:20 – Break
- 3:20-3:45 – A Place for All of Us: How Conservation Relevancy Can Open Pathways to the Outdoors. Jessica Hoey, Missouri Department of Conservation
- General Overview:  
Missouri’s population, like many other states throughout the U.S., is becoming increasingly diverse, often with fewer opportunities to connect with nature due to urban sprawl, lack of transportation and/or green spaces, an ever-growing number of day-to-day tasks related to modern life, and a dwindling level of traditional ecological knowledge.

What can conservation organizations do to encourage or facilitate connections to the outdoors, particularly for people who may encounter barriers to enjoying nature? What is our responsibility as a conservation community to provide equitable opportunities in the outdoors? How does the concept of conservation relevancy

help us to pass along traditional ecological knowledge to current and future generations?

In this session, I will provide an overview of the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) recent conservation relevancy efforts – how we got started with our efforts and where we are headed – and then offer participants an opportunity to dialogue about critical concepts related to our region's collective efforts to share the outdoors with everyone.

Key Messages:

- It is critical for conservation organizations that want to maintain and/or expand their reach among stakeholders to create spaces where all are welcome.

-This stakeholder expansion can be done through focused relevancy initiatives, some of which may be led by a collaborative group of partners.

Examples of Discussion Questions:

- What does conservation relevancy mean to you and/or your organization? Why is relevancy important/not important?

- What is our responsibility as a conservation community to provide equitable opportunities in the outdoors?

- What can conservation organizations do to encourage or facilitate connections to the outdoors, particularly for folks who may encounter barriers to enjoying nature?

- How do we as a conservation community continue to serve hunters and anglers while also becoming relevant to new audiences?

- 3:45-4:05 – Translation of MN's fishing and hunting regulations - lessons learned. Jeff Ledermann, MN DNR Fish and Wildlife Outreach, R3 Program.
- People who speak Hmong, Karen, Somali, or Spanish can now access Minnesota's hunting and fishing regulations in their language. Starting in 2021, The DNR translated the Minnesota Fishing and Hunting and Trapping Regulations booklets, the deer permit area map, and the Minnesota Waterfowl Hunting Regulations booklets into the four languages, other than English, that are most commonly spoken in Minnesota households. The translated booklets are available in digital format on the DNR website and print at locations where they are likely to be in demand, including some DNR offices, license vendors, and Minnesota state parks. This is the first time that most of these documents have been translated into additional languages, and most likely the first-time fishing and hunting regulations have been translated into Karen anywhere in the United States. 20,000 copies of the various documents have been produced annually for the past three years, and the documents have been accessed on our website thousands of times. We will discuss the process and resources it took for a state agency to translate and distribute these documents, the trials and tribulations, and lessons learned.

- 4:05- 4:25 – Non-Linear Approaches to Developing Wholesome Relationships with Diverse Communities in Northeast Kansas. Amy Bousman, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.
- When looking to bridge gaps and offer support, programs, and resources to historically underserved, diverse populations, the path to implementation should be crafted with unconventional sensitivity and care. Identifying roadblocks such as language barriers, socio-economic limitations, cultural perspectives, and stereotypes based on negative experiences with state officials, as well as identifying the needs of the community, developing relationships, building trust, and practicing a patient willingness to integrate the practitioner into the community are all vital to effectively educate, recruit and retain Midwest BIPOC communities in the outdoors. In this symposium, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Education Specialist Amy Bousman will detail her experiences working with refugee and Indigenous groups in northeast Kansas, common challenges encountered, tips for creating out-of-the-box programs tailored to diverse groups, and how her learning curve has informed the current work that she does with these communities.
- 4:25-4:45 - No Child Left Inside: Building Partnerships to Activate Youth. Amber Kastner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Now in its fifth year, the No Child Left Inside grant program highlights the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource’s efforts to increase statewide youth participation in hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. A focus on children with limited opportunities and the formation of relationships with schools, nonprofits, and local agencies has resulted in targeted activities that directly address barriers for audiences, both rural and urban. In this session, we’ll explore the ups and downs of building these partnerships, provide tips on review and evaluation, and discuss strategies for working with community groups facing new resource needs and reduced capacity for youth activation.

**Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>- Annual MAFWA R3 and Relevancy Technical Working Group Meeting**

- 9:00 am: Welcome/Agenda repair
- 9:30 am: Further relevancy discussion
  - Review symposium and panel from Monday
  - The case for continuing virtual R3 programming. Benji Kohn, MN DNR; Jeff Ledermann, MN DNR; Kraig Kiger, MN DNR; Cassandra Hawkenson, MN DNR; Amber Kastner, MN DNR
  - Sustainability, Ethics & Holistic Hunter ED: Accessing Counter-Culture Recruits. Amy Bousman, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
  - Lengthy discussion of relevancy and how this committee works to sustain it within the fish and wildlife profession.
- 1030 am: Break
- 10:45 am: Three relevant talks at the Midwest meeting that the group attended.
- 11:45 am: National Plan Update. Taniya Bethke, CAHSS, Phil Seng & Matt Harlow, DJ Case
- 12:00 pm: Lunch (On your own)
- 1:30 pm: Partner updates
  - CAHSS, IHEA, NWTF, PF, Southwick, DJ Case, others- 10-15 min each



- New introductions: Jen Davis – NWTM MI, Brandon Maahs – SD, Michael Addison – NE NWTF,
- 2:30 pm: Ammunition and Tackle Working Group Update – Keith Warnke
- 2:45 pm: Range Study Update – Demand and Location Evaluation – Southwick rep.
- 3:00 pm: Extended learning networks. – Jae Ellison, IHEA
- 3:30 pm: MSCGP updates – 1 hr
  - Hunter Access Project – Lou Cornicelli
  - Next Steps for LearnHunting.org – Jae Ellison, IHEA
  - Organizational Structure for R3 programs – Keith Warnke
  - Current grant applications
    - State parks R3
    - MAFWA agency relevancy – SA
    - Shooting sports diversity phase II
- 4:30 pm: Adjourn for Social
- 5:00 pm: R3 Social

**Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>**

- 9:00 am: Review and Update Organizational Guidelines and Set Regional Priorities – 1.5 hr
  - Choose a focus for the region for the next MSCG application period.
  - Extensive discussion on the mission and objectives of the working group
  - Sub-committee volunteers were Tanna – KS, Shala – SD, Eric – MO, and Jamie - IA
- 10:30 am: Discussion: Jeff Rawlinson
  - WAFWA draft definitions
  - Regional reporting statistics standards
- 11:00 am: Committee Brainstorm for National Symposium – 45 min
  - How can Midwest R3 & Relevancy group inform symposium?
  - What are our needs/what do we want to see?
- 11:30 am: Formal committee business meeting and MAFWA Chair/Vice Chair Discussion
- 12:00 pm: Adjourn

**Appendix 2: State and Partner Annual R3 and Relevancy Reports**

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<p><b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b></p>	<p><b>Illinois Department of Natural Resources</b> Phil Borsdorf Hunter Heritage Program Manager      phil.borsdorf@illinois.gov</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b> Outreach Efforts (FY23) - Illinois Learn to Hunt Program Highlights (targets new/novice adult hunters):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 16 In-Person Learn to Hunt Workshops (469 attendees)</li> <li>2) Produced 19 podcasts (6,155 listens)</li> <li>3) 13 How-To Webinars (1,969 views)</li> <li>4) 53,366 new views of program videos on YouTube (2,791 watch hours)</li> <li>5) Developed 28 infographics to inform/educate IL hunters (ex: season/lottery reminders)</li> <li>6) Reached 225,660 individuals via Facebook, and 561,937 impressions (not unique users)</li> <li>7) Research Presentations at symposia/conferences: 7 oral; 1 poster</li> </ol> <p>Lessons Learned: In FY23, virtual education/outreach efforts were increased to provide additional learning opportunities. While these efforts do not take the place of "in person" experiences, they provide relevant supplementary information and additional opportunities to those unable to attend in-person workshops.</p> <p>IDNR Hunter Heritage Program Staff:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Conducted "Importance of Hunting and Conservation" public seminars (x4)</li> <li>2) The Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations (2023-2024) was translated to Spanish and Polish and provided in digital format on the IDNR website.</li> <li>3) Staff continue to contribute to and assist with the development and maintenance of IDNR online platforms such as HuntIllinois.org, WildlifeIllinois.org, and WhitetailedDeer.org.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b> Mentored Hunt Opportunities (FY23) - Illinois Learn to Hunt (LtH) Program Highlights (targets new/novice adult hunters):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 84 1-on-1 mentored hunts were conducted by Illinois Learn to Hunt staff.</li> </ol> <p>Lessons Learned: Through LtH survey work, staff understand that a lack of confidence in new hunters' skills and knowledge can act as constraints. Mentored hunts help build confidence by directly teaching knowledge and skills thereby alleviating the aforementioned constraint.</p> <p>Challenges: 1) A lack of experienced and/or willing mentors compromises the scalability of 1-on-1 Mentored Hunts via this program. 2) A lack of land access and opportunity complicate and constrain Mentored Hunt opportunities.</p>	
<p><b>Other efforts:</b> Hunt Camp (FY23): Illinois Learn to Hunt Program Staff, with the help of numerous conservation partners, hosted an event in the Chicagoland region focused on restoring community and social equity to hunting. This event took a unique approach to the banquet model that conservation organizations have implemented for decades. Instead of raffles, auctions, and games where participants have the opportunity to win items, drawings at Hunt Camp were primarily allocated for the winning of mentored hunting experiences. In Hunt Camp's first year, there were 85 attendees.</p> <p>Kickapoo State Recreation Area: IDNR, with the assistance of IL LtH staff, implemented a mentored</p>	

deer archery hunt program geared towards expanding opportunity for new adult and youth hunter opportunity. This opportunity at Kickapoo SRA hosts a total of 15 new/novice hunters each year. This model will be expanded to other state sites in the future.

<b>State:</b>	<b>Indiana DNR</b>
<b>R3 Lead:</b>	Cindy Stites Wildlife Recreation Program Supervisor <a href="mailto:cstites@dnr.in.gov">cstites@dnr.in.gov</a>
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b> A new team was hired, including a R3 Fishing Coordinator, an R3 Hunting/Rec. Shooting/Trapping Coordinator, and an R3 Community Engagement Specialist	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b> The new R3 team combined with other Fish & Wildlife staff, was assisted by DJ Case to develop a new R3 Strategic plan. The plan is in the review process right now and we hope to have it completed a few months after the beginning of the year.	
<b>Other efforts:</b> The R3 Fishing Coordinator was the co-lead on a successful fishing license campaign for 2023 and worked on the development of a fishing license campaign focusing on women anglers, for 2024.	

<b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Iowa Department of Natural Resources</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Megan Wisecup      Education, Outreach, and Marketing Section Supervisor  Megan.Wisecup@dnr.iowa.gov</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b>  2023 Spring Fishing Digital/Social Campaign Effort (Marketing Effort)</p> <p><b>Campaign Overview:</b>  The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR) was looking to deploy a springtime fishing digital ad campaign to help spark online sales of new angler licenses.</p> <p>Iowa DNR was open to increasing participation among all audience categories (women and men of all ages) but also wanted to focus on women, especially moms who tend to make plans for the family. The campaign ran from April through June 1, 2023.</p> <p><b>Campaign Strategy:</b>  MGH recommended running digital ads that leverage customer data to reach a qualified audience. This included Meta ads (Facebook and Instagram ads), Google Display Network (GDN) ads and Snapchat ads (allowed us to reach the youngest demographic best). We could use existing customer data to create lookalike audiences and limit the ads being served to anyone who already held a license in Iowa.</p> <p>The target audience for this campaign consisted of Iowa residents aged 18-64 who did not have an Iowa fishing license, plus 17-month lapsed IA fishing license holders</p> <p><b>Campaign Results:</b>  The campaign performed extremely well, with Meta producing the strongest return of the three channels. While Meta ads did see a higher frequency, we didn't want to shift too much of the budget away from the channel as it continued to produce strong returns through the end of the campaign.</p> <p>The GDN ads also performed really well. Though the returns were lower than Meta's, they were very much in line with the returns we see in similar licensing campaigns that run regularly throughout the year. GDN typically takes a few weeks to ramp up and optimize, which we saw with lower returns in April but the campaign really started to take off in May, and by the end of the campaign, the returns were continuing to increase week over week.</p> <p>As mentioned above, Snapchat was included in this campaign as a way to reach the youngest audience we were targeting and like the other two channels, we saw a lot of success. The campaign launched later in April than the other campaigns and used the rest of the month to ramp up, really hitting its stride in May.</p> <p>Total Spend: \$33,282.12 (\$27,989.12 - Ad Buys/\$5,293 - MGH Fees)</p> <p>Total Revenue (Meta, Snapchat, &amp; Google Display Network): \$160,499*  *Please keep in mind that this includes both view-through and click-attribution revenue. So, a user could have seen a social ad or clicked on a social ad but was also served a GDN ad and then converted. Because of this, there may be some duplicate revenue across channels.</p>	

**R3 Deep Dive:**

We asked Brandt to assess where those who converted fell on the adoption model.

Recruitment: 2 Customers (Brand new, never purchased an Iowa fishing license before)

Retention: 14 Customers (Purchased last year but hadn't purchased yet this year)

Reactivation: 440 Customers (Purchased previously but did not hold a license last year nor had they purchased this year)

**Significant R3 Effort #2:**

**Community Fishing Program (Access Effort)**

In 2023, through the Community Fishing Program, the Iowa DNR was able to work with 11 partnering cities and counties to stock newly built, newly acquired, or renovated public fisheries, totaling 38.1 acres of new public access to our database. The Iowa DNR assists partners across the state each year to enhance or increase public access within or near the city limits of Iowa's communities. Additionally, with the help of the Vegetation Management Biologist, the Iowa DNR worked with communities on plans to manage or eliminate overabundant and/or invasive plants to improve shoreline angler access on many ponds.

Looking ahead to 2024, the Community Fishing Program has already been working with partners on 15 new public fisheries within nine communities, totaling 39.6 new acres of fishable public access.

Since 2016, the Iowa DNR has assisted 32 partners with 81 waterbodies through the Community Fishing Program, totaling 237.8 acres of new or improved public fishing access within or near the city limits. None of which are owned by the DNR. All of these locations are marketed on our website at [www.iowadnr.gov/fishlocal](http://www.iowadnr.gov/fishlocal).

Lastly, through a research project with our Small Impoundments Research Team, we are learning more about the fish populations in our community ponds, the anglers that use these ponds, and how much angler pressure select locations receive in the Des Moines metro. Preliminary results suggest our ponds provide ample fish to be caught and that a large percentage of the usage in our community fisheries is by anglers less than 16 years of age. Additionally, our community fisheries receive very high usage compared to our rural fisheries, however, fish harvest is near zero in our urban areas.

**Other efforts:**

**Joint Research Team Meeting & Outcomes (Agency Culture/Collaboration Effort)**

Through meetings, it was realized that staff across the conservation & recreation division, as well as communications staff, were doing amazing research, but they needed to be made aware of what others were doing. Fisheries staff function in a fisheries world thinking about aquatic biomes, wildlife staff function in a wildlife world thinking about land & wildlife, and communications/R3 staff function in both worlds while thinking about people and their motivations.

In 2023, research staff from all sections sat down and discussed the need to host a joint meeting. The hope was to highlight victories and challenges across the department and identify areas where all groups could work together. The meeting was held in July with roughly 50 people in attendance. The meeting was a success, and the need for research to be shared across the bureaus was identified. Since the meeting, wildlife and fisheries research has been a spotlight section for Iowa Department of Education monthly emails sent to all science teachers in Iowa. Additionally, a monthly lunch and learning opportunity was created to showcase current projects and ones coming up on the horizon and create a space for collaboration. A commitment by all was made to host an in-person meeting every other year to continue the discussion, collaboration, and information

sharing.

## Walleye Challenge

Researchers with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Angler's Atlas conducted smartphone app-based virtual walleye fishing tournaments as a citizen science endeavor to compare angler catches with fisheries surveys. Statewide tournaments were conducted in June of 2022 and 2023, and the overlap between survey data and angler catches provided promising results. The study provides information on fishing pressure, catch rates across multiple water bodies, and walleye population size structure. Angler identities and their specific catch locations remain anonymous, so secret spots stay secret!

In 2022, 70 anglers caught fish from 41 different water bodies during the course of 551 different fishing trips. A total of 2074 walleye and sauger catches were reported during 1795 hours of fishing, for a catch rate of 1.4 fish/hr. In 2023, 88 anglers caught fish from 75 water bodies during the course of 732 fishing trips. A total of 2782 catches were recorded during 2596 hours of fishing, for a catch rate of 1.1 fish/hr. Across the two years, Big Creek Lake, Brushy Creek Lake, Clear Lake, Rathbun Lake and Spirit Lake have been popular with anglers and provided high catch rates. Additional anglers fished a variety of Mississippi River pools in 2023, increasing the data reported from that excellent walleye fishery.

In 2023, more effort was put into planning. Staff interacted directly with bait shops, sporting goods stores and at events to increase partnerships and support for the initiative. We were able to increase the number of and size of prizes (totally over \$14,000 in value) along with obtain localized prizes in specific areas where we wanted to see an increase in data provided. Engagement Initiatives: Weekly Fishing Report Email reached 80,000 recipients and yielded 841 clicks; Direct Email (GovDelivery) reached 135,000 recipients total, had 55,000 opens, and 1,000 clicks; Iowa DNR Social Media (Facebook, Twitter) had 51,000 impressions, 2,000 engagements, and 1,000 clicks; Iowa Walleye Challenge Facebook - 505 followers; Podcasts; Location Specific Emails (Sent by Brandt) reached 108,723 recipients total across the state with information customized to local fishing locations and local prizes being awarded. Individuals in 19 different locations were targeted, and open rates and click-through rates were tracked for each email sent.

## ACI - YouTube Pre-Roll Ad Pilot (MSCG)

Iowa was selected to participate in the Association for Conservation Information's 2023 MSCG, serving YouTube pre-roll ads to millennials interested in learning to hunt. Idaho, Tennessee, and Maryland also participated. 15-second and 30-second ads ran between November 2 - December 2, 2023. This effort is currently being evaluated and results will be shared with the community this spring.

## Aquatic Invasive Species Digital Ad Campaign

This was an awareness campaign to help protect Iowa's waters by promoting the Clean. Drain. Dry. national initiative. The digital campaign ran with the assistance of Brandt/MGH from June 19 to September 14, 2023. While purchases were not the goal of the campaign, we did see a large number attributed to the campaign effort.

Results:

Campaign Spend: \$10,360

Impressions: 6,021,868

Reach: 234,168 Clicks: 6,457

Post Reactions: 707 Post Comments: 89

Post Shares: 65

License Purchases: 3,929 Revenue: \$225,253 ROAS: 21.74
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<b>State:</b>	<b>Kansas Department of Wildlife &amp; Parks</b>
<b>R3 Lead:</b>	Tanna Wagner      R3 Coordinator   tanna.wagner@ks.gov

**Significant R3 Effort #1:**  
Digital Marketing Hunting & Fishing to Hispanic/Spanish-speaking audiences: KDWP was fortunate to receive two grants this year, one from ACI, and one from RBFF, which helped to fund our efforts to market to Hispanic hunters and anglers for nearly the entire year. Digital ads ran in both English and Spanish. We accomplished our goals to sell hunting and fishing licenses and increase traffic to online translated pages/resources (up over 800%YOY). We were surprised that ROAS was lower on the fishing ads than on the hunting ads. The increased traffic to informational pages but relatively low conversion rate to license purchases suggests that there may still be barriers for online license purchasing for this group, or that more relationship building needs to occur. This effort gave KDWP a great baseline to use in continuing outreach and targeted marketing to Hispanic audiences.

**Significant R3 Effort #2:**  
Standard R3 Evaluation Surveys: KDWP has drafted and experimented with standard R3 event surveys with the guidance of our Human Dimensions Specialist, and has so far utilized them in 5+ programs to better standardize R3 event evaluation and track participant progress on the ORAM from the perspective of technical skills and social identity.

**Other efforts:**  
R3 Action Plan: Kansas is in the final stages of completing our first ever KS R3 Action Plan. This plan has been informed by staff throughout the agency as well as national partners.  
  
Partnership with Kansas Fur Harvester's Association: KDWP developed a partnership with the Kansas Fur harvesters Association to increase recruitment, retention, and reactivation of trappers and fur harvesters, and increase our network of fur harvesting mentors.  
  
Mini-BOW Events: KDWP has worked to increase the frequency and reach of our mini-Becoming an Outdoorswoman Events. These small scale events are designed to offer more advanced "Next Step" opportunities and connect BOW alumni to other outdoor partners across the state.

<b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<b>Kentucky</b> Rachel Crume, R3 Branch Manager, <a href="mailto:rachel.crume@ky.gov">rachel.crume@ky.gov</a>
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1: Kentucky State Fair</b>	
<p>At the Kentucky State Fair, the KDFWR's R3 Branch showcased a Fish Filleting Demo on the Farm to Table Cooking Stage. The hour-long program, led by the Field to Fork Coordinator and a Cooperative Extension Agent from the University of Kentucky, featured a bluegill filleting demonstration and an Oven Fried Fish recipe demo, with samples available to viewers. Approximately 50 attendees participated, with additional passersby stopping in during the fair. The event also included a booth manned by KDFWR's Marketing Division, where R3 programs were highlighted. This outreach opportunity allowed the agency to engage with a large audience of over 599,000 fair attendees, and plans are underway to host another program in 2024.</p>	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2: Kentucky Cooperative Extension Agent Training</b>	
<p>Our team provided training to empower 36 new Kentucky Cooperative Extension Agents. These sessions focused on equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively host Cook Wild KY, Field to Fork, and Hook and Cook programs within their respective counties. Building on our ongoing efforts, this initiative marks a significant milestone as it brings the total number of trained Cooperative Extension Agents in Kentucky to an impressive 181 since 2020. Through these collaborative endeavors, we aim to expand our reach and impact across the state, fostering a culture of outdoor engagement and culinary statewide.</p>	
<b>Other R3 Efforts of Interest</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched Annual Statewide Hunter Education Day – 756 certifications</li> <li>• NASP State Tournament – 8,226 bullseye shooters, 2,328 3D shooters</li> <li>• Opening of HQ Archery Range</li> <li>• Launch of Range Map created and available on the website</li> <li>• Small game processing demo at Elk Fest</li> </ul>	
<b>Barriers to R3 Efforts</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited funding poses challenges for R3 staff and programs.</li> <li>• Our staff are tasked with managing multiple programs simultaneously, stretching resources thin.</li> <li>• Priority initiatives requiring extensive collaboration or regulatory adjustments face significant delays due to bureaucratic obstacles and administrative inefficiencies.</li> <li>• Convenient access to obtain license and customer data.</li> </ul>	



<p><b>State:</b></p> <p><b>R3 Lead:</b></p>	<p><b>State of Michigan</b></p> <p>Todd Grischke      R3 Coordinator    grischket@michigan.gov</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>Like many states, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has limited capacity for R3 staffing and programming. To help address this, the MDNR has partnered with Pheasants Forever (PF) and National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) for the past several years through formal Cooperative Agreements (CA). Utilizing and passing-through federal (P.R.) grant dollars received by the state each year, these CAs have allowed the MDNR to greatly expand partnerships, outreach activities, and R3 programming in the state. This fall, both CAs reached the end of their respective terms. PF, NWTF and MDNR all recognized the importance of the CAs and strong partnerships and agreed to sign three-year extensions. As a result, the agreements will now be in place through September 2026 and provide funding for hiring of an R3/Outreach staff person for each respective organization, development of Learn to Shoot/Learn to Hunt programs throughout the state, and outreach and education programs focusing on recruitment of new hunters and shooters.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b></p> <p>The MDNR opened two new public shooting ranges, one in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (Marquette County) and the other in southern Michigan (Barry County). The ranges provide multiple shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, archery and shotgun. Both ranges meet National Rifle Association and Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.</p> <p>Also, in 2023 MDNR staff began planning and design work for a state-of-the-art shooting range on a parcel of land near St. Helen, MI (Roscommon County). The range will include target shooting opportunities for pistol, shotgun, sporting clays and a 500yd rifle range. Development and construction are expected to continue throughout 2024.</p>	
<p><b>Other Efforts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Belle Isle Archery Range/Park: During the fall of 2023 MDNR staff met with a vendor to explore the development of an archery range on Belle Isle. Located in downtown Detroit, Belle Isle has for decades been a destination for residents and visitors to the City of Detroit for family gatherings, picnics, walking, sailing, soccer, etc. Discussions are underway to develop an archery range and walkthrough 3D archery course on an existing parcel dedicated to outdoor sports/activities.</li> <li>-Hunter Education: More than 14,600 students successfully completed the Hunter Safety Certification course in 2023.</li> <li>-Archery Certification: 145 NASP Basic Archery Instructors and 14 USA Archery Level 1 instructors certified in 2023</li> <li>-MDNR released the (ilearntohunt) online Hunter Education portal to the public during the summer of 2023.</li> </ul>	

<b>State:</b>  <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minnesota DNR</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jeff Ledermann     R3 Program Supervisor jeff.ledermann@state.mn.us</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>MN DNR Fish and Wildlife R3 Outreach program continues to host our Minnesota Outdoor Skills and Stewardship series (MOSSS) of timely weekly webinars to help participants get outside. We have now completed 144 webinars since spring of 2021 and have over 8,000 subscribers to the program. Weekly participation during the last year has averaged 100 live viewers with similar numbers watching the recordings shortly after the programs.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b></p> <p>We continue to coordinate translation and provide 20,000 printed copies of the MN fishing and hunting regulations in Hmong, Karen, Somali and Spanish and online. We saw a tremendous increase of 205% in downloads of these documents from our website in 2023 compared to the previous year, with total downloads of the four translated versions of all four documents (fishing, waterfowl, hunting and trapping book, deer map) nearing one million for the year. Total downloads of the translated fishing regulations topped 550,000, significantly topping the number of English downloads.</p>	
<p><b>Other efforts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2023 Minnesota Legislature appropriated an additional \$1 million/year for the next two years for the No Child Left Inside (NCLI) grant program and made the program part of the DNR's base budget going forward at \$500,000 year. FAW Outreach coordinates the program, which provides funding to organizations delivering environmental education and outdoor recreation for youth. We prioritize funding to participants with limited opportunities and for programs that support youth fishing and hunting. Forty percent of awarded projects in 2023 included a fishing component and 22% included a hunting or shooting component. The last two completed phases of NCLI reached almost 15,000 youth and garnered over a half million in match from participating organizations. The 2024 grant round, which just closed, again received many more requests than funding available.</li> <li>• We kicked off another season of our Learn to Hunt Deer program in fall of 2023 with four different hunt locations across Minnesota. We have also organized several special deer hunts at multiple locations for 215 youth hunters.</li> <li>• The MN Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) program hosted a Spring Workshop in April of 2023. This was the first additional workshop BOW has added to the normal schedule of Fall and Winter Workshops since before 2005. It filled in a few days with 83 women participating. BOW hosted an archery turkey hunt in May of 2023 for 10 women and 10 mentors.</li> <li>• We continue to host the MN R3 Council and they are working to finalize Minnesota's R3 State Plan, which is being prepped for public comment. We are working to hire a full time R3 partnership coordinator and expect them to start in early 2024.</li> <li>• FAW staff again coordinated and staffed DNR exhibits at the Minnesota State Fair, including 12 days of staffing the information booth, 84 fish pond presentations that reached an estimated 25,000 people, a live MOSSS program from the DNR exhibits, a live Fish Pond cam, three stage presentations, and 10,000 Fishes of MN posters distributed.</li> <li>• In May 2023, we engaged with women across Minnesota and encouraged them to try fishing with our virtual Minnesota Moms Fishing Challenge. We co-hosted this challenge with the Student Anglers Organization, which provided participation prizes and helped with promotion. 2,400 moms joined the challenge Facebook group, 1,200 fish were submitted, and participants were from over 70 Minnesota zip codes.</li> <li>• Throughout the fall, winter, and spring hunting seasons (2022-2023), we encouraged existing</li> </ul>	

hunters to take someone new hunting by partnering with Pheasants Forever to augment their Hunter Mentor Challenge in Minnesota. 108 Minnesota hunters took the online pledge to take someone new hunting using our special DNR link on the Pheasants Forever website. This partnership is in place for the 2023-2024 hunting seasons, as well.

<b>State:</b>	<b>Missouri Department of Conservation</b>
<b>R3 Lead:</b>	Eric Edwards      Hunter & Angler Marketing Specialist <a href="mailto:eric.edwards@mdc.mo.gov">eric.edwards@mdc.mo.gov</a>

**Significant R3 Effort #1:**  
 Code Complexity Project: The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) hired Lambert to conduct a comprehensive study of how Missourians understand the Missouri Wildlife Code, including how the regulations are presented in the 2022 Fall Deer & Turkey booklet.

The purpose of the study was to determine barriers to recruitment of resident hunters, and if the regulations for hunting and managed hunts are easy to understand, how residents are obtaining regulations, what could be provided to make the regulations easier to understand, and their perceptions of the Deer & Turkey booklet.

**Significant R3 Effort #2:**  
 Missouri R3 Plan Revision: The original Missouri R3 Plan was created in 2018. The latest revision, which was completed in early 2023 is much more strategic in our actions. This revised plan was the effort of our multi-branch R3 working group. The focus of this plan is to set attainable numbers for each recruitment, retention, and reactivation section of R3. Our R3 sub-working groups of programs, communications, data, barriers, partners, and mentoring then set the strategies and tactics to attain our desired measurable outcomes.

**Other efforts:**

- Currently out for bid is a R3 programs inventory and evaluation. This project will better help us to understand if our educational efforts are meeting goals of R3 as well as help inform decisions on future development and delivery of educational programs.
- Our marketing campaigns are increasing in productivity. This year our campaigns grew in size with 1,362,363 campaign members. Attribution for our marketed campaigns for the year are \$1.2m and our lift is 11.69%.

**State:**

## Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

**R3 Lead:**

Jeff Rawlinson

Education Manager

jeff.rawlinson@nebraska.gov

### Significant R3 Effort #1:

#### Customer Data Acquisition

One of the key objectives in the first year of Nebraska's new R3 plan was to better understand our agency's customers. Surveys and studies from multiple divisions were implemented, including a shooting range study, reworked pre and post course hunter education surveys, and a state park visitor study.

#### •Shooting range study

o Hunters, anglers, and parkgoers all indicated they are shooting sports participants. About 85% indicated they have an intermediate to advanced level of shooting experience.

o Respondents indicated that if a range was closer to them they would shoot more (~65%), introduce more people to shooting (~55%), and would practice more often for hunting (~50%).

o The most needed ranges are centerfire rifle, pistol, and long-range (>200 yards).

#### •Hunter Education surveys

o Approximately 84% of hunter education students enroll in the course to meet legal hunting requirements in Nebraska or another state. The other 16% enroll to learn more about hunting, participate in a 4-H program, participate in a trap shooting or other shooting sports program, or other reasons.

o Most students (88%) are interested in hunting deer. Other game animals students are primarily interested in pursuing are turkey (42%), upland birds (35%), and waterfowl (27%).

o Students indicate the most need for advanced hunter education on animal care after harvest (field dressing, processing, etc.), shooting skills, and using game calls and scents.

o The large majority of students obtain information on classes through word of mouth (family, friends, etc.) and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website.

#### •State park visitor surveys

o Wildlife viewing is a popular activity throughout Nebraska state parks and recreation areas, with 58% of parkgoers visiting parks for that purpose.

o Around 7% of parkgoers stated that they or someone in their group had a disability that made it difficult to access or participate in parks activities and services.

### Significant R3 Effort #2:

#### Access Improvements

Several improvements were made providing increased access opportunities in areas across Nebraska within the past year. These improvements will benefit a wide variety of outdoor recreationists, with improvements made to several state parks and state recreation areas, a record enrollment of acres in the Open Fields and Waters program, and the opening of the Kearney Outdoor Education Complex in central Nebraska.

#### •Open Fields and Waters program updates

o Payment rates to landowners were increased around 50% to help incentivize increased land enrollments in the program.

o Access through the program was expanded by around 10,000 acres. This brings the total amount

of publicly accessible lands in the Open Fields and Waters program to over 388,000 acres.  
o NGPC's Wildlife division has added an Access Program Manager who will focus exclusively on improving and implementing access programs around the state.

•Access improvements at state parks and state recreation areas

- o Boat ramp repairs and boat dock additions have been made at several state recreation areas to help improve boating and fishing access opportunities.
- o Kayak ramps additions have been made at key state recreation areas that are nearby population centers as kayak usage has grown.
- o Sportfish Restoration Grants are being utilized to build new, easier to access boat ramps at two SRAs in western Nebraska.

•Opening of the Kearney Outdoor Education Complex

- o The Kearney Outdoor Education Complex (KOEC) was acquired by NGPC in July of 2023, and officially opened in August of 2023. Approximately 550 guests have visited the complex since it has been opened.
- o KOEC offers access to several shooting sports opportunities, including trap and skeet fields, a 100-yard rifle/pistol range, and future plans to add an archery course and 5 stand shotgun station.
- o The acquisition of KOEC has helped bring increased access to shooting sports opportunities to central Nebraska, where NGPC parks and facilities offering shooting sports opportunities are relatively scarce

**Other efforts:**

-New permit system

o 2023 was the first full year of using Nebraska's new permit system. The system brought with it new features to help make license purchasing more convenient for our hunters, anglers, and parkgoers. Auto-renewal is available for certain permits, and permit packages have recently been introduced.

-Shooting sports coordinator

o Nebraska has been developing a position to assist in the coordination and management of shooting ranges and shooting sports programs throughout the state in 2023. That position was recently hired, and the new Shooting Sports Coordinator will be a crucial piece in helping to move the shooting spots segment of the Nebraska R3 Plan forward.

-Hunter Education instructor certification update.

o Starting in 2023, Nebraska hunter education instructors can utilize the LearnHunting.org platform to maintain their hunter education certification. Regulation updates allow for hunter education instructors to maintain their certification with 20 hours of mentoring, within 24 consecutive months, in any NGPC approved mentoring program, including LearnHunting.org. These changes were made to help encourage more mentoring opportunities among Nebraska's dedicated and knowledgeable hunter education volunteers.

<b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	North Dakota Game and Fish Department Cayla Bendel R3 Coordinator                      cbendel@nd.gov
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b> Brought back "ND Fish Challenge" in May of 2023, this year offering last year's inaugural "Classic Challenge" and a new "Sportfish Challenge" participation and interest has grown from last year, 63 people completed at least one of the challenges and 379 unique anglers submitted at least one fish. A total of \$9,883 was spent on marketing the challenge and Google analytics attributed 10,676 licenses sales to the campaign. We're still working on implementing the tracking that will divulge what license they purchased, but at the lowest value of a resident, annual fishing license that equates to over \$200k in license sales. We know that many of these likely already planned to purchase a license but even if a small percentage were converted, the campaign was successful. The challenge has also been great for getting anglers to diversify their efforts and for building our photo assets	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b> University of North Dakota Fisheries R3 project to wrap up in spring of 2024, the graduate student has completed 2/3 chapters. The student is utilizing the NDGFD resident fishing licensing database (2009-2019) and longstanding angler surveys to complete the project. He was able to identify three unique North Dakota angler typologies according to license purchase history (frequency, timing and duration) using sequence analysis – 1) Millennials (68.1% of anglers) – characterized by a 2:1 male:female gender ratio, infrequent purchasing and most commonly purchasing a standard annual fishing license, 2) Baby boomers type I (22.9% of anglers) – characterized by a 3:1 male:female gender ratio, intermediate purchasing frequency and purchases, annual, married and combination fishing licenses, and 3) Baby boomers type II (9% of anglers) – characterized by almost exclusively males, and frequent and very consistent purchasing of the resident combination licenses (fishing and small game). In chapter two, he compared the behavior of these angler typologies (e.g. boat vs shore, effort fished (days), etc.) but minimal significant differences between the typologies, suggesting that despite their license purchasing differing, North Dakota anglers are pretty homogenous - while in some ways this is disappointing, it is new information nevertheless and some of the demographic differences will be useful in marketing efforts.	
<b>Other Efforts:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted emails promoting fishing opportunities and resources to all registered boaters without current fishing licenses and lapsed anglers as well as more localized emails and geo-targeted ads promoting timely fisheries (e.g. local community pond stocked with trout), lapsed small game hunters and lapsed furbearer hunters emails</li> <li>• Partnered with Pheasants Forever on Take The Pledge mentorship campaign</li> <li>• Continued partnership with USA Clay Target League to register athletes in our licensing database</li> <li>• Initiated "Take Someone New Ice Fishing" promotion in 2023, winner gets a pop-up ice house, in 2023, 72 people participated, launching again for 2024</li> <li>• Quarterly partner newsletters</li> <li>• Quarterly video recipe features</li> <li>• Bi-monthly NDO podcast</li> </ul>	

<b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<b>Ohio Department of Natural Resources</b> Jordan Phillips Outdoor Skills, R3 Program Administrator      Jordan.phillips@dnr.ohio.gov
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>Ohio has continued to show their support in R3 with the hiring of a new R3 Program Administrator, Jordan Phillips. This position will be working hand in hand with the states Hunter Education, Aquatic Education, and Marketing Coordinators to identify new product outreach programming and create more brand awareness.</p> <p>A launch of new audience fishing recruitment is underway in three of Ohio's major metropolitan areas (Toledo, Cleveland, and Columbus). Tracking of participants in conjunction with marketing strategies through a RBFF grant will help to better prepare staffing and program needs in underserved communities. These programs will utilize staff and our volunteer base from the "First Cast" programming.</p> <p>Hunter Education is offering new options for Ohioans to become certified. We will now have two online options, through our Hunter Education portal, with the newest addition being offered as a more engaging experience with avatars and tracking through the curriculum course.</p>	

<b>State:</b>	<b>South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks</b>
<b>R3 Lead:</b>	Shala Larson R3 and Relevancy Manager shala.larson@state.sd.us

**Significant R3 Effort #1:**

South Dakota’s Game, Fish and Parks (SD GFP) Wildlife education team as well as the Parks education team applied and was awarded a grant from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation this past year. Currently both Parks and Wildlife education teams as well as an outside production team are working together to create a Virtual Reality Elk Habitat video. This video will be used to educate school aged children and individuals interested in learning the basics of elk habitat in the Black Hills. The goal of the project was to teach individuals about elk habitat and how to identify elk habitat. As the project developed SD GFP took the opportunity to highlight careers within our agency and NGO’s such as Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation what each do for elk and elk habitat. Teachers will be able to use the interactive video to highlight elk, habitats, natural resources, careers etc. with their students. Others can use the video as an introductory tool to elk habitat, signs of elk and how elk use the different Black Hills habitats throughout the year. This information may be beneficial for new elk hunters. Currently there are no KPI’s as this interactive video is still in the developing stage. We are also in discussion on how to follow up the video with resources RMEF and SD GFP can offer. Some of those resources include educational trunks educators can check out to supplement their lessons and Learn to Hunt programs individuals can voluntarily sign up for through SD GFP.

**Significant R3 Effort #2:**

The South Game, Fish and Parks (SD GFP) finalized a new and updated Aquatic Invasive Species Curriculum in December 2023. This curriculum was a joint effort between SD GFP, South Dakota State University, and South Dakota State University Extension 4H. The curriculum includes 5 lessons ranging from 35-75 minutes in length and targeted at Middle School aged students. The curriculum is built so that teachers can utilize each lesson as a standalone or can utilize them as a series that builds upon itself. The goal of these lessons are to raise awareness of aquatic invasive species specific to South Dakota, what management is being done to slow the spread, and what actions they can do as students. Lessons are built to correlate with South Dakota Educational Standards as well as mirror Next Generation Science Standards. Lessons also work across the curriculum to incorporate more than science standards. There are no KPI’s to note, because the curriculum has just been completed, but a select group of teachers were gathered to review the curriculum prior to going live and their feedback was incorporated prior to the final editions.

**Other Efforts:**

Name: Managing the Fishing Lapse in South Dakota

Description:  
 With the national trend of angler decline after the 2020 surge of outdoor users, Game, Fish and Parks teamed up with DJ Case and Associates to create, implement, and analyze a survey that would be sent out to lapsed anglers who lapsed anywhere from 2018-2020. The goal of the survey was to better understand why these folks were lapsing and see if there’s anything we as an agency could be doing to better retain these anglers. Responses in the survey indicated that aside from a lack of free time, the second most common barrier of respondents was preferring other leisure activities. Close



behind were lack of knowledge and having no one to go fishing with. These findings show us that the top barriers are out of our control, however, we also need to continue to invest time in highlighting our aquatic access points for shore fishing, outdoor programming, and encouraging social support for anglers. Amenities respondents preferred the most were bathrooms, shaded areas, and fish cleaning stations. Luckily, these amenities can be found right in our state parks which further supported our already existing efforts of cross promotion. Additionally, we surveyed lapsed anglers most preferred form of shoreline access to help our aquatic habitat staff better understand preferred access points from users. Surprisingly, out of the four options of 1. a landing where a vehicle can park right next to the water, 2. A cattail clearing, 3. rip rap, and 4. a fishing pier, our lapsed users indicated that they preferred rip rap shoreline (or rocky shoreline.) This was likely because rocky shoreline is the natural habitat of walleye, which was the most sought-after species by 70% of respondents.

<b>State:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources</b></p> <p>Bob Nack   R3 Team Supervisor   robert.nack@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>In 2023, the WI DNR Hunter R3 program facilitated 88 Learn to Hunt programs for deer, pheasant, waterfowl, turkeys, and bear. A highlight for this year was reviewing and rebooting the Learn to Hunt Bear program, which involved coordination with multiple stakeholders and resulted in additional interest and capacity for the program. In addition to Learn to Hunt programs, the R3 Team also works with partners to conduct outdoor educational skills events including shooting, scouting, processing, and cooking workshops. After the success of four pilot Deer Processing workshops in 2022, staff expanded offerings to 9 locations throughout the SC, NE, and WC regions in 2023. We coordinated with a variety of partners to make these programs successful, including experienced volunteers to lead the workshops (both avid home-processors and professionals), local farmers with damage permits to supply deer, and staff from DNR Parks, Wildlife, and external non-profit organizations for host facilities and logistical support. The Hunter R3 program will have the opportunity to continue expanding program offerings with the addition of four new Hunter R3 Coordinator staff in 2023, made possible through partnerships with Pheasants Forever, the National Deer Association, Raised at Full Draw, and Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b></p> <p>The WI DNR Angler R3 staff kicked off the year in partnership with City of Madison Parks and co-hosted an ice fishing clinic for Free Fishing Weekend. Staff continued with an adult Learn to Ice Fish for Dinner class in February, then picked up the adult education model with a trout fishing class in spring and again on the St. Louis Estuary by Lake Superior. Four Fishing in the Neighborhood interns (FiN'terns) were key to introducing fishing skills to 1883 people at 52 summer clinics in diverse neighborhoods, largely in Milwaukee and Madison. Partners played an essential role by informing residents of these fishing opportunities through their organizational channels. Another 2162 individuals were served by DNR staff, schoolteachers, recreation program leaders, and other community members at fishing clinics around the state. We returned our focus to Angler Education Instructor Training and Certification to rebuild our instructor corps and trained 47 people at 4 workshops.</p>	
<p><b>Other Efforts:</b></p> <p>The WI DNR placed additional focus on the shooting sports program by hiring three Assistant Outdoor Skills Trainers to help provide safe, quality shooting experiences at our more popular public shooting ranges. These staff along with range volunteers are responsible for keeping the facilities clean and ensuring customers are following range safety rules. In addition, the DNR added a new permanent position as the Shooting Range Program Specialist. Also in the shooting sports area, there continues to be increasing interest in archery education programs, with over 550 schools participating in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) and an increasing number of archers participating in Scholastic 3D Archery.</p>	

<b>Partner:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<b>IHEA-USA</b> Alex Baer    abaer@ihea-usa.org
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b> Launched LearnHunting.org, a National Mentoring and Educator Continuing Education Platform. In its first year, there are over 760 instructors, 425 students, 14 online courses, 542 hours of additional learning, and 110 mentored experiences	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b> Hunters Connect videos created on Firearm Safety and Hunting How-to's. Hosts and content features a variety of demographics from all regions of the country. These are then available at no cost for State Agency and partner use. They are also included in the Council's R3 Clearinghouse and, when relevant, within LearnHunting.org.	
<b>Other Efforts:</b> Assisted with the CAHSS TAG team to put together the new R3 National Plan.  We completed a partnership with the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society (NAFWS) with IHEA-WORLD. They are the newest members of IHEA-WORLD and as such, are offering hunter education using the IHEA standards to over 200 tribal nations. This marks one of the largest partnerships in R3 in the last year, and one we're very excited about.	

<b>Partner:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<b>Southwick Associates, Inc.</b> Rob Southwick, President    rob@southwickassociates.com
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b> Development of methods that allow states to identify where target shooting demand is the greatest, where new ranges are most needed.	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b> Several major surveys have been conducted, with results available this Spring, covering why 35-44 year olds increased their license sales in recent years while other age groups declined, public opinions and perceptions of state wildlife agencies, updating the stages of hunters' growth and personal evolution, recruiting non-resident hunters, hunters' crowding perceptions and impacts on the decision to continue hunting, retaining hunters who live with little or no social support, supporting RAWA efforts and much more.	

<b>Partner:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p><b>DJ Case &amp; Associates</b></p> <p>Phil Seng    President    phil@djcase.com</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>CAHSS National Hunting and Shooting Sports R3 Practitioner's Guide - We are working with the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports and a host of partners (including many MAFWA reps) to develop an approachable, "living," online resource for hunting and shooting sports R3 practitioners. The Guide will help practitioners with all aspects of R3, including planning, hiring, marketing, programming, partnering, evaluation and more. The guide is currently scheduled to be available for public testing by the 2024 R3 Symposium.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b></p> <p>Journey Map for Four Personas of New Adult Hunters - Working with the Wildlife Management Institute and Southwick Associates, we just wrapped up the second of three phases of a project to develop personas for new adult hunters and then explore their journeys into hunting. This phase looked at the journey from the interest stage to ultimately aging out for each of the four personas (self-sufficients, family firsts, recreationists and locavores) and makes recommendations about how the R3 community can communicate with and support them through their lifelong hunting journeys.</p>	
<p><b>Other Efforts:</b></p> <p>LearnHunting.org Online Advertising Pilots - Working with IHEA-USA to test various media and media strategies to drive potential hunters to LearnHunting.org for mentorship.</p> <p>YouTube Online Advertising Pilots (Phase 1) - Working with ACI to test YouTube and a variety of media outlets to drive potential hunters to a website as well as measuring what sort of content the website visitors are most attracted to.</p> <p>Testing New Adult Hunter Messages - Working with WMI to test several campaign concepts of messages designed to either attract new hunters to the activity or attract new hunters to classes/content to improve their hunting knowledge and skills.</p> <p>R3 Photo Bank - Working with ACI, CAHSS and RBFF to better organize the creative resources in the R3 Clearinghouse, as well as adding new images and video through a nationwide hunting &amp; shooting sports photoshoot, soliciting photos from industry and adding RBFF images to the clearinghouse.</p> <p>Shooting Sports DEI (Phase 1) - Working with MAFWA on research to determine why high school students do and don't participate in shooting sports teams. This information will be used in Phase 2 to develop a toolkit for coaches to attract more and more diverse students to these activities.</p> <p>R3 Planning - in collaboration with RBFF and WMI, we worked with Iowa, New Jersey, Kansas, Nebraska, and Indiana to develop or redevelop statewide R3 Plans.</p> <p>Missouri Outdoor Skills Lessons - Working with Missouri Department of Conservation to develop outdoor skills lessons for Missourians, many of which have direct hunting and fishing R3 implications.</p>	

Black Hunter Project - Working with WMI and researchers from Baylor, Clemson, and Penn State Universities to better understand the unique experiences of black hunters in order to make R3 programs more accessible and inclusive. We gathered data from focus groups and a multi-state online survey.

R3 Capacity - Working with Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and Southwick Associates to assess the perceived impacts of crowding on public lands and competition for limited draw tags on hunting participation. We conducted focus group in the four AFWA regions and results of a national online survey are pending.

35-45 year old audience - Many states observed an increase in fishing and hunting license sales between the years 2016-2021 among 35-45-year-old customers. We have been working with Back Country Hunters and Anglers Association and Southwick Associates to identify influences on this trend and harness them to sustain those increases.

Social Support for Hunters - Adults who complete a hunter education course fit three categories. 1) Those that buy a hunting license and become hunters; 2) those that buy a license and then drop out; and 3) those that never buy a license. We are working with IHEA-USA and Southwick Associates to interview all three types to identify opportunities to provide additional support to encourage more hunter education graduates to adopt hunting after completing a hunter education course.

<b>Partner:</b>	<b>Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever</b>
<b>R3 Lead:</b>	
	Ashley Chance      Hunting Heritage Program Manager <a href="mailto:achance@quailforever.org">achance@quailforever.org</a>
<b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b>	
We launched a new, free course on how to hunt upland birds and have had more than 1,600 people register and participate in the self-led course. We have also created an open-source social media toolkit for anyone interested in sharing the resource with their community. It is housed on the R3 clearing house within partner collections.	
<b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b>	
We have expanded our Hunter Mentor Pledge program and reached an all-time high across four years for submissions nationwide.	
<b>Other Efforts:</b>	
In FY 2023 we hosted 276 Learn to Hunt events with over 2,600 adult participants and 1,700 youth participants. We hosted more than 150 Learn to Shoot events with more than 3,800 adult participants and 3,300 youth participants.	

<b>Partner:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Michigan NWTF</b></p> <p>Jen Davis    Hunting and Shooting R3 Coordinator - MI    jdavis@nwtf.net</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b></p> <p>The Helen &amp; Jean Glassen Foundation Intern, and their research findings. The growth of support for this position through internal funding. The research suggested a strong lack of metrics and consistency with our many partners and others in the R3 space in our state. It also uncovered the eagerness of our partners to improve the collection of metrics, as well as the breadth and diversity of organizations that connect in a variety of ways with R3 efforts.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b></p> <p>The expansion of the Hunters of Color partnership on Belle Isle in Detroit. We were able to increase the depth of the experience, offering a hunting 101 course, hunter education, and a mentored hunt. The increase in volunteer involvement and partnership was a big win, increasing our collective bandwidth. Lessons learned related to low turnout and roadblocks related to mentors and land access hindered facilitation of the mentored hunt.</p>	
<p><b>Other Efforts:</b></p> <p>Michigan United Conservation Clubs Youth Camp invited NWTF representatives to give educational talks to campers.</p> <p>Volunteer leadership engagement, we have been fostering a stronger sense of ownership among volunteers. Facilitating more events, in broader reaches of the state.</p> <p>Inclusion in the USFWS and DNR joint meeting, expanding our awareness and connection the the broader R3 landscape.</p> <p>Partnership with Farm Bill Biologist, Logan Banning from Gratiot County Conservation District has opened up a growth opportunity in a sector that touches R3 in an unexpected, but critical way.</p> <p>Patterning Days, at a state range combined with cookouts facilitated by local chapter. This increases the community-building nature of these events expanding reach and retention opportunities.</p>	

<b>Partner:</b> <b>R3 Lead:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recreational Boating &amp; Fishing Foundation</b></p> <p>Stephanie Hussey   Senior Director, Government Engagement      shussey@rbff.org</p>
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #1:</b>  RBFF's 2023 State R3 Program Grants supported 10 programs in 9 states, which included focus on female anglers and paddlers, Hispanic community, digital marketing and text messaging, and boater reactivation. The results of many of the grant programs will be presented at RBFF's State Marketing Workshop on February 26-28, 2024, and the 2024 grants will be awarded in February 2024.</p>	
<p><b>Significant R3 Effort #2:</b>  The George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund provides grant funds for state agencies to match and sub grant to local organizations to support programs to introduce Hispanic families to fishing and boating. The 2023 program supported 16 grantee programs in 8 states, and the 2024 grants will be announced in February 2024.</p>	
<p><b>Other Efforts:</b>  Catherine Rose Grimes joined the RBFF team as State Program Manager on January 9, 2024. Catherine Rose recently moved to the DC area from Los Angeles, CA, where she worked for a number of non-profit organizations managing outreach efforts, educational programs and partnerships with diverse stakeholders. She will be working closely with Stephanie Hussey in developing and implementing state R3 programs, and is looking forward to working with the MAFWA states.</p>	