

## MAFWA PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP

Respectfully submitted by  
Mitch Hess/Mike Wefer, IL Department of Natural Resources

### **Meeting Time & Place**

Illinois hosted the joint meeting of the Private Lands, Public Lands, and Wildlife Diversity Working Groups in Peoria, IL May 14-16, 2024

### **Attendance**

In attendance were Brian Hickman (IA), Mike Wefer (IL), Dan Eckstein (IN), Dustin Mengarelli (KS), Wes Little (KY), Earl Flegler and Valerie Frawley (MI), Jamie Gangaware (MN), Matt Bowyer (MO), Kent Luttschwager (ND), Pat Molini (NE), Bob Ford (OH), and Anne Reis (WI). Illinois staff included Greg Fretueg, Maureen Hurd, Jared Trickey, Tim Kelley. South Dakota was not able to attend.

### **Executive Summary**

Attendees presented their state reports and there were robust discussions on multiple topics (listed below).

- Demands for additional and sometimes competing/conflicting uses on WMAs including renewable energy, e-bikes, hiking, biking, OHVs/UTVs, snowmobiles, high speed internet easements, and commercial and recreational antler shed and mushroom hunting.
- The legality of trail cams on public lands.
- Funding; mismatched funding types vs. operational needs
- Aging infrastructure
- Community-based conservation
- R3
- Gun ranges
- Staff hiring and recruitment challenges and opportunities.
- Management planning and prioritization
- Land acquisition
- Elk reintroduction and habitat efforts in the KY elk restoration zone, which is mostly reclaimed mine land full of invasive and undesirable species
- Grazing on public lands for habitat management
- Drones/Helicopter for herbicide treatment of exotics
- Wetland restoration
- Adapting land management activities around endangered species
- Chronic Wasting Disease's draw on staff time
- Impacts of inflation on purchasing needed equipment
- Non-resident hunters
- License vendors, data access/quality, and electronic harvest reporting on state areas

At the request of Ollie Torgerson, the group provided a quick review of the DOD MOU/Sikes Act agreement. The group was given 2-weeks to provide comments on this, as most were not prepared to

discuss. KY prompted the group to search out wordage that could limit management options in favor of natural methods only. KY could not find anything that prompted edits, and no additions were provided during the meeting.

The group recommends that we invite the USFWS Region 3 Office of Conservation Investment (formerly Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs) to next year's Public Lands Working Group meeting in Indiana.

On day two, the follow-up session included great discussion around neonics and ag policy in each state, as well as prescribed fire policy and effort.

### **Director Action Items**

The Public Lands Working Group has no Director Action Items to offer this year.