

# The AFWA Strategist

Update for Members and Partners of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Winter 2021

## 2020-2021 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee

The membership of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies elected Sara Parker Pauley, Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, as its new president during its 110th Annual Meeting. **The 2020-2021 AFWA Officers & Executive Committee**

### Officers:

President: Sara Parker Pauley (MO)

Vice President: Tony Wasley (NV)

Secretary/Treasurer: Dan Eichinger (MI)

Past President: Vacant

### Executive Committee:

Chair: Curt Melcher (OR)

Vice Chair: Colleen Callahan (IL)

### Members:

Jim Douglas (NE) Carter Smith (TX)

Rick Jacobson (CT) Eric Sutton (FL)

Brad Loveless (KS) Chuck Sykes (AL)

### Ex Officio Voting Members:

Canada: Travis Ripley (AB)

Midwest: Amanda Wuestefeld (IN)

Northeast: Mark Tisa (MA)

Southeast: Paul Johansen (VW)

Western: J.D. Strong (OK)

**Executive Committee Work:** The Executive Committee met virtually in December during which time it acted on end-of-year budget decisions, discussed and agreed to a set of legislative priorities for the next Congress, including its continuing support for federal assistance match relief, and offered guidance regarding operational planning after a considerable time of discussion with our planning consultant. There were two basic planning options, develop metrics, or dashboards, to tell the story of conservation delivery by states, provinces, and territories or focus on metrics related to the Association's work. The Executive Committee opted for the later and a process is unfolding to report out on that work by the Annual Meeting in September. More recently, the Executive Committee supported the Association adding its name to a conservation community letter of support for the nomination of Representative Deb Haaland (NM) to serve as Secretary of the U. S. Department of the Interior.

When the Executive Committee convenes during the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, it will consider office lease options (in light of the pandemic's impact on real estate markets in DC), whether or not the Association should take over the Bear Wise campaign (presently managed by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), among other agenda topics. The Executive Committee will meet in open session during the afternoons of March 10 and 11 – please drop by and listen in!

## Legislative Updates & Administrative Policies

**What's in the House COVID-19 Relief Package?** -- The House passed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 pandemic relief **package** through the budget reconciliation process as a pathway to enactment that avoids a Senate filibuster, and it included the following funding for the USFWS: \$20 million for inspections, interdictions, and activities related to wildlife trafficking; \$30 million to care for captive species listed under the Endangered Species Act, the care of rescued and confiscated wildlife, as well as the care of federal trust species in facilities experiencing lost revenues because of the pandemic; and \$45 million for research to strengthen early detection and rapid response to wildlife disease outbreaks before they become pandemics. It also provides \$10 million to the FWS "... to carry out the provisions of section 42(a) of title 18, United States Code, and the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3371–3378) to identify and designate wildlife species, or larger taxonomic groups of species, as injurious under such provisions if they transmit a pathogen that could potentially pose a risk to human health and develop regulations to develop a process to make emergency listings for injurious species."

**Senate Brokers Power Sharing Agreement, Committee Memberships Finalized** -- On February 3, the Senate unanimously adopted an organizing resolution structured on the previous 2001 agreement from when the Senate last had a 50-50 split. Committee membership is even, and should a measure receive a tie vote in Committee, the majority or minority leader may make a motion to discharge the legislation for a vote in the full Senate.

**Reauthorization of Highway Transportation Bill Gearing Up** -- On February 24, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held its first hearing on reauthorization of the federal highway transportation bill, which expires on September 30, 2021. A panel of bipartisan witnesses focused on transportation infrastructure upgrades, aging infrastructure projects in rural and urban America that are need of repair and would create jobs, the need for dedicated and consistent funding to meet states' long-term transportation planning needs, improve infrastructure resiliency, and the need to streamline the current 7-year Environmental Impact Statement, including through the One Federal Decision process, to more fully inform projects before construction contracts are let to save time and money. Chairman Tom Carper indicated he expects the Senate to report a bill out of committee by Memorial Day, and House T&I staff have indicated they expect to move their bill as soon as April.

**House Committee Examines Climate Change Impacts to Agriculture and Forestry** -- On February 25, the House Committee on Agriculture hosted a full committee hearing on "*Climate Change and the U.S. Agriculture and Forestry Sectors.*" Details of the hearing can be found [here](#).

**CRP Signup Extension** - On February 5, 2021, USDA **announced** that it is indefinitely extending the general CRP signup 56 period, which had previously been announced as ending February 12, 2021. FSA will "evaluate ways to increase enrollment" and will implement "planned improvements to the program" that will "get this neglected program back on track." An FSA **notice** notifies county offices that producers will have the opportunity to resubmit or modify existing offers. AFWA and our partners have met with USDA leadership to provide recommendations on how to boost enrollment.

**Northern Bobwhite WLFW Projects** – On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, NRCS put out a **bulletin** that established a deadline of for NRCS state offices to opt in to Working Lands For Wildlife state-based Northern bobwhite projects, and in response to AFWA's and partners' requests, NRCS will make efforts to better support and coordinate these state-based projects. To this end, NRCS held partner meetings on February 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss conservation needs and project implementation.

Save the date...

**11th AFWA Annual Meeting**Omni Providence Hotel  
Providence, Rhode Island  
September 12-15, 2021

## Recovering America's Wildlife Act Update

We are excited to be nearing reintroduction of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act in the 117th Congress. Our House sponsors are finalizing the legislative text and looking for the earliest opportunity to introduce their bill and advance it quickly through the committee process. We are actively pursuing Senate champions and are optimistic that we will have a Senate version of the bill shortly to rally support for as well. Thank you to those of you that helped to gather signers on the coalition letter of support for the House bill that has been circulating for the last few weeks. The response has been overwhelmingly positive with over 350 organizations and businesses signed on. We look forward to working with you all to advance the bill in this Congress. Together we have the opportunity to see enactment of this historic wildlife conservation funding legislation in this Congress. So let's pull out all the stops and get it across the finish line! We have fact sheets, outreach and education materials and sample web/social media content available for use, so please don't hesitate to reach out with requests or questions to Sean Saville, Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife Campaign Manager at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org) and [ournatureusa.com](http://ournatureusa.com) for more information. Thank you all for your support.

## Strategic Plan

AFWA's new strategic plan took effect at the Virtual Annual Meeting in September 2020 where it was unanimously approved at the Business Meeting. You can view the detailed plan on the [AFWA Website](#).

In 2021 the focus will be on implementing and operationalizing the new plan. Beginning shortly after the North American, three teams of AFWA Directors, Staff and Subject Matter Experts will work with a strategic planning consultant to develop strategies and metrics for implementing Goals 1, 2 and 4 of the plan.

The metrics developed by these teams will be presented at the 2021 AFWA Annual Meeting in September in the form of a provisional dashboard that will be used to keep AFWA members informed of progress made toward implementing the Strategic Plan.

## Designing a Future for Conservation Workshop

AFWA, the FWS and the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs hosted a virtual Designing a Future for Conservation workshop in mid-February. The workshop was facilitated by Patrick Whitney and Andre Nogueira of the Harvard School of Public Health using a design-thinking methodology. Sara Parker Pauley, Tony Wasley, Mark Tisa, Preston Cole and Ron Regan participated with others from the conservation, design, public health, business and philanthropic communities. Six facilitated small groups used a whole view model to design conservation's competition to inspire innovations that could help fish and wildlife agencies collaborate with broader constituencies and thrive under rapid demographic and social change. A final report with recommendations will be sent to AFWA in late March.

## International Updates

### AFWA Position Paper: Wildlife Conservation, Consumption, and Use in a Post-COVID-19 World

The global pandemic has had unprecedented social and economic impacts across the globe. However, the virus's suspected links with a Chinese 'wet market' has led to calls to ban wet markets and restrict or end the trade, use, and consumption of wildlife internationally and in the U.S. Congress. Therefore, we believe that having a position and policy recommendations around this issue to use at the regional, national and international level is important. The AFWA position paper titled *Wildlife Conservation, Consumption, and Use in a Post-COVID-19 World* was adopted at the 2020 AFWA Business meeting on September 15, 2020 and is available [here](#). Since that time, the position paper has been highly useful in dialogues with NGO partners, USFWS, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and IUCN.

### International Relations Committee Updates

At the March 9<sup>th</sup> International Relations Committee meeting, attendees will discuss a draft document titled "Background Information and Recommendation Regarding State and Provincial Restrictions on the Importation of Wildlife Lawfully Harvested Abroad." The Committee will consider whether to finalize the document and identify next steps if any. We will also discuss the Edinburgh Declaration, which sets out the aspirations and commitments of the subnational constituency of the Convention on Biological Diversity in delivering for nature over the coming decades and implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework. The Committee will decide whether to recommend AFWA sign the document or not.

## Legal Updates

**2020 Resolutions:** On September 15 at the virtual Annual Meeting, the Association adopted three [resolutions](#):

1. Support for the Open Fields Doctrine in Inspections and Investigations by State Conservation Officers
2. Support for Prioritization of State Fish and Wildlife Agency Private Land Technical Assistance Efforts
3. Celebrating a Successful Virtual Annual Meeting and Acknowledging a Year of Unprecedented Challenges and Adaptation

**Legal Strategy Advisory Council ("Think Tank"):** Last year the Think Tank developed a three-year work plan based on the Association's new Strategic Plan. The Think Tank, composed of state attorneys, works to identify emerging and future challenges for state agencies across all issue areas and is more engaged than ever with AFWA's committees and non-governmental partners.

**Open Fields Doctrine working group:** To implement AFWA's first 2020 resolution, the Law Enforcement Committee, Legal Committee, and NACLEC established a working group to develop non-prescriptive best management practices for judicious use of the open fields doctrine. The working group's goals are to preserve conservation officers' ability to deter and observe violations of wildlife laws, and to communicate the importance of open fields search authority, which several state legislatures are interested in narrowing.