



Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

2019-2024 Strategic Plan

Continuing the Nearly 100-Year Legacy of Advocacy for Scientific Fish and Wildlife Management and Cooperative Conservation in the West

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Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
2700 W. Airport Way
Boise, ID 83705
www.wafwa.org

WHY WAFWA MATTERS

“To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”



— Theodore Roosevelt

“The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant, "What good is it?" ... who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.”



— Aldo Leopold

Building on a Strong Past to Create a Stronger Future

The goal of wildlife conservation is to ensure that fish and wildlife will be around to benefit future generations while, at the same time, recognize the economic, recreational, and cultural importance of these resources for people today. Many government agencies and non-governmental organizations dedicated to conservation share this dream—sustainable fish and wildlife contributing to the fabric of our communities in the West.

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has been around since 1922 helping make this dream a reality. This strategic plan is our effort to support the people who are working together for that shared purpose—conservation that makes our communities in the West good places to live and work.

In the 1920s game commissions throughout the West were just beginning to assume responsibilities for the management of game and fish resources. In 1922 visionary managers from western game departments met in Salt Lake City and formed the Western Association of State Game Commissioners—the precursor of today’s Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. They formed to advocate for state management authority and to foster regional cooperation. After nearly 100 years, that leadership work by WAFWA continues.

Using cooperation and coordination as its main tools, WAFWA created significant accomplishments in its first fifty years addressing the many complex challenges of managing western wildlife resources. In its second fifty years WAFWA established a reputation for innovation, leadership, and a ‘can do’ approach to getting the job done.

But, what about the next fifty years? The need for WAFWA’s work remains important as the West moves into the future facing new challenges from continued human population growth and all the changes that come with that trend. While challenges exist, that future brings opportunity as well. Beginning with this strategic plan WAFWA is aligning its priorities to meet changing needs.

Why have a strategic plan? Because standing still is not a winning strategy. An adaptive organization leans into the future and figures out what to do next in response to change. What’s dangerous is to not adapt. A better course is to influence the direction of change in your favor and be nimble when you must respond. This strategic plan is one tool for influencing change and being adaptive.

But the direction of any organization needs to be guided by a sense of purpose and implemented under a set of values. Here we present WAFWA’s mission, vision, core values, and goals to provide that direction. As part of WAFWA’s annual operations we

will turn to our members, committees, and working groups to propose projects to help achieve the goals presented here and, thereby, accomplish WAFWA's mission.

Our aspirations for this plan are to:

- Set direction and priorities so people know what they should be working on, and what they should be working on first;
- Get everyone on the same page to ensure that leadership and the various programs and projects of WAFWA and the personnel associated with them are moving forward, together;
- Simplify decision-making so it is easy to say "yes" to work that has the most value for WAFWA's mission and there is no trouble saying "no" to work that does not fit; and
- Communicate WAFWA's message so internal and external stakeholders are clear about what WAFWA believes is the positive way forward.

Our Mission

(Why do we exist?)

**Advancing Collaborative, Proactive, Science-Based
Fish and Wildlife Conservation and Management
Across the West**

*Outstanding organizations have one thing in
common: An absolute sense of mission.*

Our Core Values

(What ideals guide our decisions and actions?)

Core values are like a compass; a reliable tool that can point in the right direction when you're trying to figure out which way to go. There are many roads open to the members of an organization. But which choice should represent the organization's aspirations? Core values are a kind of organizational moral compass. They describe the worth an organization wants to bring to its community and its commitment on how its members should conduct themselves. Core values do not drive the functioning of the organization; they drive the people in the organization. They are part of 'organizational culture' - the alignment of the diverse parts of an organization.



The following core values are a guide for all of us in WAFWA on how we conduct ourselves and do business with the people we work with and when we implement actions to accomplish our mission.

WAFWA Core Values



Leadership: Inspire and support innovative conservation leadership by member agencies.



Integrity: Use the highest professional and ethical standards.



Teamwork: Develop and maintain collaborations and partnerships.



Excellence: Set high standards, share information, develop best management practices, encourage learning, and lead with science-based solutions.



Support: Advocate for members' management authority and the tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.



Respect: Embrace diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.



Accountability: Operate in a fiscally responsible manner, ensure operations are aligned to mission and values, and that results benefit members.

If an organization genuinely wants to make a social contribution, it should start with who they are, not what they do.

Our Goals and Strategies

(What would we like to do?)

What is a goal? Goals tell you which direction to head during the life of the strategic plan. You cannot afford to do everything. In setting goals, you are making choices between priorities. Goals represent the broad categories of work that you judge are the best places to spend time, money, and goodwill. To be effective, a goal needs to answer—What will you do? This is a destination statement; it defines the desired future condition you want. A goal prescribes the behavior or kinds of activities you will perform, usually expressed as strategies. Each goal statement identifies ‘what’ you want to accomplish without getting into the ‘how’.



What is a strategy? Strategies are the first implementation step in a strategic plan. They define the kinds of work that should be done to achieve a goal. Strategies are not projects (on-the-ground work). They define the kinds of projects that are worth funding. Strategies specify the deployment of resources. Strategies address the question, “How will we achieve this goal?”

WAFWA’s 2019-2024 Goals and Strategies

Goal 1. Advocate for the authorities and jurisdictional responsibilities of member agencies.

Strategies:

- a. Support coordinated legal representation and policy advocacy on issues that cross WAFWA jurisdictional boundaries
- b. Advocate to Congress and federal agencies for WAFWA member states’ authorities

Successful organizations maintain a positive attitude and stay focused on the next steps they need to take to get them closer to their dreams.

- c. Promote the tenets of the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation while respecting each member's choice and use of a conservation model
- d. Identify and share legal and policy resources with members, e.g., sample rule language for conservation authority
- e. Advocate creation of wildlife habitat values and funding in other government programs affecting WAFWA's mission (e.g., the Farm Bill)

Goal 2. Support multi-jurisdictional and landscape-scale fish and wildlife conservation and research initiatives.

Strategies:

- a. Facilitate wildlife management coordination, standards, and best practices across WAFWA jurisdictional boundaries
- b. Facilitate research and stock assessment activities and standards across WAFWA jurisdictional boundaries
- c. Facilitate rapid response capability of members to important emerging issues
- d. Facilitate programs and projects that address the highest priority resource challenges as agreed to by WAFWA leadership

Goal 3. Ensure the financial sustainability of WAFWA.

Strategies:

- a. Develop diverse revenue streams to reduce WAFWA reliance on state wildlife agency funding
- b. Engage funders in providing ongoing maintenance and operations support after conservation actions are taken
- c. Consider costs of initiatives and activities more rigorously into WAFWA priority setting and business strategies
- d. Protect WAFWA's proprietary interests in intellectual property, technology, and products
- e. Facilitate partnerships with other managers and with conservation stakeholders

Goal 4. Optimize operational effectiveness.

Strategies:

- a. Improve WAFWA governance and work team operations (e.g., assess the need to continue work teams and possibly establish new work teams; review the roster of work teams, their structure, and functions)
- b. Increase communications, coordination, and interactions among WAFWA work teams
- c. Maintain effective coordination, communication, reporting, and archiving of work team outputs
- d. Maintain an effective WAFWA workforce and WAFWA staff's technology capacity
- e. Maintain sound cost accounting, business operations, policies, and procedures for WAFWA operations and support of work teams
- f. Offer support services to members and customers (e.g., administration, business development, grants management, and project management)

Goal 5. Advance information and technology development, sharing, and management.

Strategies:

- a. Facilitate development of technology supports to meet needs that cross WAFWA jurisdictional boundaries
- b. Facilitate combining member resources to complete high priority IT-related projects and initiatives
- c. Facilitate development of data acquisition, management, coordination, and sharing to meet needs that cross WAFWA jurisdictional boundaries
- d. Facilitate expansion of data and information use and sharing with international partners
- e. Facilitate WAFWA information and data use by outside entities to meet WAFWA's mission

Goal 6. Promote leadership development, diversity, and inclusiveness in the Western fish and wildlife management community and WAFWA operations.

Strategies:

- a. Facilitate leadership training focused on WAFWA agencies
- b. Recruit legal expertise involvement into WAFWA work team efforts (e.g., attorneys, law students, presence at legal conferences)

- c. Increase Native American wildlife manager and organization leadership involvement in WAFWA
- d. Facilitate broader stakeholder and partnership involvement in WAFWA
- e. More directly use social science and human dimensions to increase stakeholder engagement and partnership in wildlife conservation
- f. Establish best practices for promoting diversity in WAFWA members' workforces

Goal 7. Facilitate effective partnerships and communication among members and with a broader community.

Strategies:

- a. Improve orientation for new WAFWA leadership appointees on WAFWA operations and managerial effectiveness in those positions
- b. Improve the network cohesiveness and collaborations among legislative leads of member agencies
- c. Increase awareness of WAFWA and its mission by agency employees who are not well informed about WAFWA
- d. Increase marketing awareness of WAFWA generally and marketing of wildlife conservation values in the West
- e. Improve participation in WAFWA meetings, especially work team member participation in the summer meeting
- f. Coordinate multi-jurisdictional and regional message development and delivery to stakeholders