

WAFWA 2023 Summer Meeting Business Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2023 at 8:00am MT

Welcome and Presidents Remarks (Jennifer Psyllakis)

Thank you to the staff of New Mexico and Delaney. Dir Lowe, WAFWA, staff team.

Reflecting on this meeting, we have discussed corridors, connectivity, and permeability and how these apply in ecological, social, and movement sense. These meetings progress us together in our connections with one another and how we exchange information. During this meeting, we have questioned “How does this connect to that group?”, “How can we help?”, “How can we accelerate?”. Zach challenged us to be purposeful and work with intention and focus. We will hear report outs from across WAFWA, and I encourage us to think about “How do those report outs connect?” and “How will it carry forward the mission?” Plenary speakers received small pottery pieces as thank you items from New Mexico Game and Fish.

Roll call (Zach Lowe)

The following people and members provide confirmation of participation for record: Ben Mulligan (Proxy, AK), Ty Gray (AZ), Jennifer Psyllakis (BC), Jeff Davis (CO), Jim Fredericks (ID), Brad Loveless (KS), Tim McCoy (NE), Michael Sloane (NM), Alan Jenne (NV), J.D. Strong (OK), Curt Melcher (OR), Clayton Wolf (Proxy, TX), J. Shirley (UT), Nathan Pamplin (Proxy, WA), Brian Nesvik (WY). Quorum noted.

Executive Directors Report (Zach Lowe)

This report out aligns with the State of the Organization report distributed in the [State of WAFWA](#) booklet. Recent successes of WAFWA include:

1. Addressing priorities set forth by WAFWA Executive Committee and Executive Director and discussed with the Board at the Winter Meeting in January.
 - Improving workflow through summer/winter meeting cycle: With change of meeting structure and work flow, the Summer Meeting gather all people the output from this meeting produces workflow for a strategic Executive Leadership meeting in a few months. This will allow us to work to launch strategies. Sets up “Team WAFWA” to work while members invest in other efforts.
 - Initiative, committee, and working group governance: In the last year, we have had several “happy little marriages” between committees. Human Dimensions and R3 are an example of committees working together. We have worked to clarify governance and committee structure. It is still fluid how they report out through annual meetings and leadership at this time. Through conversations this week WAFWA leadership recognizes that we can provide additional guidance in advance of future meeting to help direct workflow before, during, and after our annual meetings.
 - Succession and leadership planning: This is based on inclusivity. All of our members and their teams at various levels are able to have the conversation that they want to have within WAFWA in addition to those the elevate needed strategic actions.
 - Maintaining state and federal partnerships. Work through the “us against them” mentality that naturally happens. WAFWA maintains our commitment to build better relationships and

open lines of communication and we appreciate our federal partners that engage and show up, it matters.

2. Accounting software: accountability for where your money is. "If you always able to count your pennies and nickels, you won't need to worry about your dollars." WAFWA is on an improved trajectory for long-term sustainability.

The emerging challenge WAFWA faces is capacity: human capacity in WAFWA staff team. Strategic approach to work with leadership to address capacity and how WAFWA can bring solutions to member limitations. WAFWA should be lean, mean and nimble. Continuing to progress toward that, but one of our functions is to do the things that our member agencies cannot, this requires resources not just grit.

State of WAFWA, business meeting minutes, and other items will be pulled together and distributed as proceedings of the meeting. If there is someone missing from the room, anybody's report can be included as after-action report and included as appropriate in this document.

The agenda of the Business Meeting is structured to capture the business operation outputs of WAFWA made possible during this meeting. Anything with financial requests/obligations has/will also be focused and addressed specifically through the Executive Committee report. The substance of the business meeting includes actions or information requested by WAFWA leadership or elevated through committees while in session. We don't need to vote if it isn't something that needs to be adopted by the board or is not required through by-laws. Some items are simply report outs from these requests and commitments towards future votes, action items, meetings and deadlines.

Executive Committee Report

Awareness: By-law updates and edits for approval in Nov/Dec (Zach Lowe) Edits included changing specific month for meetings. If board voted for changes. Or typos or updating language. Trust but verify. Forward: Will vote for changes into action at exec leadership meetings.

Report: Summary of Finance and Operations: (Zach Lowe and J.D. Strong) Zach – J.D. and Zach have been looking back through financial system to review what/how leadership wants to see. 1) Surplus cashflow. Membership dues were recorded when received rather than to cover the year forward that they were intended to cover. We've been able to pay forward so that we will now be recording dues within the year they occur. This adjustment is strategic and financially responsible, but it will be noted as a finding in the audit as audits are intended to note 2) Intentional naming structure so clear transparent naming structure in financial system 3) Our bottom line has improved from two years ago 4) Retaining savings and working toward improved cost recovery policies and a Federal indirect cost analysis. Goal to have a cash reserve to maintain a year or year and a half of operational needs. 5) Species Restoration Fund 501(c)4 that manages funds for CCAA. Separating this arm of WAFWA as a standalone audit and audit report. Will be done in the year ahead. Audit is publicly available on the website – view note K. Finances are boring, but important. Directors, chairs – reporting or awareness aspect that you're looking for let Zach know. Stacie will help make that happen. J.D. – refreshing to have a boring finance report.

Report: Support for the use and distribution of the Benefits of WAFWA Document (Zach Lowe)

Discussion about document requested by several states. Front page is "what's a WAFWA" will be a cleaner, designed version. Back page is good for internal reference and awareness. We will divide into two documents. One-page "glossy" and two-page word document will be distributed.

Report: Continuation of a Western Elk Policy Summit (as prescribed by leadership) (Zach Lowe)

WAFWA partnered with RMEF for the Western Elk Summit held in February 2023. Focused on change in western elk management and how it has diverged from mule deer. There have been two previous elk summits. Social issues related to elk management are sensitive. We found WAFWA members desire to have this conversation but are sensitive to how much is collated and put out and inadvertently used to create a “report card” where agency management policies could be pitted against one another. We decided to continue this every 2-3 years. Leadership-lead based on policy issues and create a direct link with committees, work groups, and workshop. Work to not have efforts compete with one another.

Vote: Adoption of the Nomination Committee Procedures including session revisions (Jennifer Psyllakis). Nomination committee is established in the bylaws. Consistency and guidance from Director Melcher to ensure that we have consistency and continuity with nominations procedures. These procedures were provided in advance of the meeting for review. It was discussed and decided that Nomination Committee does not need to be responsible for reviewing the WAFWA meetings. Jennifer Psyllakis motion to approve procedure document with noted edits. Tim McCoy moved. Ty Gray Seconded. Vote passed.

Vote: Adoption of Horse & Burro Resolution for WAFWA (Ty Gray). Resolution provided in advance of the meeting. If approved will be shared with AFWA. Motion to approve minutes. J.D. Strong moved. Brian Nesvik seconded. Vote passed.

Vote: To create a 3-year pilot for members to voluntarily support WAFWA Minority Student program. (Brad Loveless) Emphasizing that the vote is to make it available for voluntary member agency participation. It will be approximately a \$1500 per year opt-in to participate. Motion to approve program. Ty Gray moved. Clayton Wolf seconded. Vote passed.

Forward: Building budget reporting, evaluation of future event risk (minimizing exposure of organization), streamlined program auditing update, and updated staffing. (Jen Psyllakis) Forward: These efforts will be addressed during Executive Leadership meeting in Nov.

Resolution from Director Gray (Ty Gray) Resolution of gratitude to New Mexico. Motion to approve resolution. J.D. Strong moved. Brad Loveless seconded. Vote passed.

[Nominations Committee Report \(Curt Melcher\)](#)

The nominations committee consists of Curt Melcher, Brad Loveless, and Kevin Robling and works with consultation with President Jennifer Psyllakis. Began discussions almost a year ago and discussed in Winter Meeting. Bring forward nominations of Brian Nesvik as President and Ty Gray as Vice President.

[Designation of New Officers \(Curt Melcher\)](#)

Motion for designating Brian Nesvik as President and Ty Gray as Vice President. Brad Loveless moved. Tim McCoy seconded. Vote passed.

[Commissioners Committee Update](#)

No representative present. Will report out in post-meeting summary.

Initiative Strategic Update

Western Grasslands Initiative (Bill Van Pelt and Tim McCoy) (Bill Van Pelt) We had Monarch report through Habitat Committee and reported out ESAIWG in Nongame and Endangered Fish & Wildlife Committee. Will be running standardized surveys for 2 prairie dog species in the lower 48 states – white-tailed prairie dog and Gunnison’s prairie dog. The last aerial survey was in 2022. Working on two manuscripts, one focusing on grassland birds and “home on the range” targeting map for conservation of grasslands (associated with black-tailed prairie dogs). Last year, we expanded of monarchs working group to include native insect pollinator and working on strategic plan (reporting in Habitat Committee below). Gunnison’s prairie dog conservation plan was approved in 2007, triggers for results of survey efforts. Hit a trigger with last survey effort bringing action through Habitat Committee.

(Tim McCoy) The mission of the Western Grassland Initiative is to serve as the primary contributor to the implementation of conservation and management actions, through partnerships and cooperative efforts, resulting in improved species status, grassland habitats, and recreational opportunities for grassland dependent species across North America. Collaborations include...partners sharing united voice...increased funding to accomplish strategic needs. This group started as a prairie dog plan. Looking forward, we need a strategic plan for grasslands initiative. In next year, we will start working on update.

Sagebrush Conservation Initiative (Angi Bruce, San Stiver) (Angi Bruce) The Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) is outlining what future work looks like: 1. working together with policy and process to effectively/efficiently deliver conservation on ground. 2 shared networking and learning 3. Work on one shared voice for states and feds 4. evaluating data needs 5. working w/ sage initiatives already out there.

(San Stiver) Sage grouse group turned into the Sagebrush Initiative in 2016. Sage grouse conservation strategic plan 2006. USGS NRCS and sage states have partnered to dedicate \$2 billion toward sagebrush ecosystem. Met in 2016 and developed two-part strategy. Part A was to identify conservation challenges across system (completed in 2020). Part B examines what are we doing about conservation issues? This part is written and undergoing review process. It includes: 1. what do we need to do to address the threats. 2. Users guide to get the strategies into action and 3. Sagebrush conservation design tool (that was published Sept 2022).

(Zach Lowe) Making good on a number of grants. Before any of the reports come out. It will go out to states to provide a unified message on sagebrush about 30 days before they see report. Want to include what our partners have to say as it was vetted via EOC.

Wild Sheep Initiative (Daryl Lutz)

Capture and handling guidelines hopefully ready for approval by Executive Leadership meeting, but may be summer. Completed the South American Camelid brief. Have now held two Test and Remove workshops (in 2021 and 2023) with 100-200 people in attendance at each. Domestic sheep in wild sheep habitat – being used by BLM to establish guidelines for separating domestic/wild sheep. Looking forward, the group will be working on recalculating 4a distances. WSWG is looking to increase ability to do more work in wilderness, capture of wild sheep (test/remove). The group has produced annual status report from each state/province.

Western Native Trout Initiative (Jim Fredericks)

WNTI was both established as a WAFWA initiative and became Fish Habitat Program in 2008. Strategic needs and challenges include seeking reauthorization for the National Fish Habitat Program and going through revisioning process. Strategic challenge facing WNTI is that coordinator, Therese, is stepping down in December. We hope to have a new coordinator by November. Funding has been approved for a two-year “runway” to get started. Therese will stay on part time to wrap up some efforts.

WAFWA Committees – Actionable Business

Vote: Updates and Documents Approval – Motion to approve documents (listed below) J.D. Strong Moved. Brad Loveless seconded. Vote passed.

- Mule Deer Working Group Committee
 - Fact Sheet 42 Technology and Mule Deer Hunting
 - Fact Sheet 43 Economic Value and Contributions of Mule Deer
 - Fact Sheet 44 Hunters’ Role in Managing CWD
- Wild Sheep Initiative
 - Brief on South American Camelid Disease Risk to Wild Sheep
 - Pneumonia and Bighorn Sheep: Test and Remove Fact Sheet
- Wildlife Migration and Movement Committee
 - Corridors Fact Sheet
 - Private Lands Fact Sheet

Mule Deer Working Group Technical Committee (Jim Heffelfinger) – Required to report workshop update. The 2023 Deer & Elk Workshop had 185 participants. Next workshop in 2025 in either Alaska or British Columbia ([summary letter here](#)). New book titled “Ecology and Management of Black-tailed and Mule Deer of North America.” All royalties for book will feed back to the MDWG Committee.

Wild Sheep Initiative (Daryl Lutz) The Wild Sheep Foundation would like to publish fact sheets and annual reports on website. It was decided that annual reports can be updated on the website annually without repeat approval.

Wildlife Movement and Migration Committee (Orrin Duvuvuei) – no additional comment.

Deputies Committee (Mike Scott) – Developing their statement of purpose which will be submitted to the Executive Committee. There are four workshops under deputies help coordinate workshops. They ask the Executive Committee to give them direction on what else they would like the group to do.

Fisheries Committee (Jim Fredericks) – (formerly Inland and Marine Fisheries Committee) WNTI and Fish chiefs report here. Internally voted to hire replacement for Therese and voted to renew YY male. YY male working group established. Discussed the two other WAFWA-area Fish Habitat Partnerships: Desert and Great Plains. ZEL – ACTION: WAFWA ED to draft a renewed contract, replicating current agreement, updating processes to current WAFWA business operations. To be reviewed by Ex Com and shared back to participating states for continued voluntary participation). Will be approved by Ex Com and full board if deemed appropriate due to changes.

Nongame and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species Committee (Jen Newmark) – The group discussed funding and funding concerns. State and tribal wildlife grants to be likely cut. Collaboration across states

for other types of funding. The Endangered Species Act Informational Working Group is an important resource and will continue to work with service to work on issues. If you have ESA issues, collaborate with this group. Comment by Nate Pamplin – state wildlife grants (SWG) are the backbone of Nongame/ESA support – RAWA is important but also support SWG.

Habitat Committee (Tim McCoy) – 30+ participants in the room. Western Monarch and Native Insect Pollinator Working Group has a new Monarch Work Plan. Motion to approve the work plan. J.D. Strong moved. Brad Loveless seconded. Vote passed The prairie dog rangewide survey has hit the predetermined threshold to request the timeline to move up from the planned 2028 to a 2025 run. Motion to approve the updated timeline. J.D. Strong moved. Brad seconded. Vote passed. Tim recommended a survey of committee members and to understand what they want and that meet the goals of Board members.

Human Dimensions Committee (Zach Lowe) – Group is a great example of what “new” can look like. They meet often and use virtual space for a monthly update. They have established a working group for white paper development. Forward: They will bring the goals of this white paper to the Executive Leadership meeting for approval. (Sidebar: Director Strong asked, does this white paper working group need a vote? Zach indicated No (clarification, it will get full leadership evaluation at the next board meeting once they have the framework developed for consideration.)

Climate and Adaptation Committee (Davia Palmeri) – US Fish & Wildlife Service talked about how to do conservation introductions in non-historic range. Previously, this group helped host the wildfire symposium. Would like to know what the Board would like to see from this group.

R3 Committee (Scott Lavin) – Moving the WAFWA R3 Symposium to adjoin future Summer Meetings.

Wildlife Health Committee (Anne Justice-Allen) – Forward: Regional Wildlife Coordinator position will be discussed and two documents will be ready for approval at the Executive Leadership Meeting in Nov.

Tribal and Indigenous Working Group (Jen Psyllakis) – Thanks to Curt Melcher. 45 individuals were in the room. We had a broad discussion with broad potential to do well. We need a defined purpose. Forward: We need to bring to the Executive Leadership Meeting how the association can engage with tribal/indigenous groups. This would not be state-prescriptive.

Federal Partners (Zach Lowe) – Thank you for participating in the meeting. They are not on the business meeting agenda this year because we have had great conversations throughout the week. Welcome to NASA for attending and working with our new Geospatial Technical Committee.

[Welcome to Washington \(Nate Pamplin\)](#)

Nate gave an overview of next Summer Annual Meeting in Skamania, WA June 1-8, 2024. Then played the [welcome video](#).

[Closing comments and Adjourn \(Jen Psyllakis\)](#)

Thank you to New Mexico and thank you to the Board. We have addressed the “challenge of being ready” and “getting better together.” Passed to new President Brian Nesvik who thanked Jen Psyllakis for her work as President. Brian is ready to give more time to the organization and is ready to drive the hot rod we’ve been working so diligently to build. Meeting adjourned.