

# HWCC meeting transcript

December 17, 2024,

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**EA Ed Arnett (Guest) 0:03**  
To him, my first question.

**MC Michael Crowder 0:06**  
I can see Letterman, but I can also see Santa Claus. If you put a Red Hat on.  
Now, Doug.

**EA Ed Arnett (Guest) 0:11**  
Alright, Doug, I just quickly note.

**HD Hobbs, Doug 0:17**  
That's better than in the past when I got Andy \*\*\*\*. But so I guess I'll take Letterman's, specially in his later years.

**EA Ed Arnett (Guest) 0:22**  
OK.

**HD Hobbs, Doug 0:24**  
So I appreciate appreciate that, Ed.  
I'll take that as a compliment.

**EA Ed Arnett (Guest) 0:29**  
It was indoor massage.

**HD Hobbs, Doug 0:32**  
Umm.

**SR Sundaresan, Siva R** 0:33

Yeah. Do you wanna compete with Doug?

**EA Ed Arnett (Guest)** 0:38

No.

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 0:42

I mean, we've got a quorum here. I've been noting.

Roll. Those folks are coming on.

So I think I've got a good.

I think I've got the roll.

So John, if you want to kick it off, I guess I would turn it over to you.

We I was kind of waiting on Jason Summers, who's a new state director member, but I don't see Jason on yet. So.

But we can proceed, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman, if you'd like.

**JD John Devney** 1:13

Alright, perfect.

Thank you everybody for making time.

Know it's busy with the holidays and end of the year and God save anyone that's in Washington. Pork crumbs probably racking his brain trying to.

And Andrew and others that are in DC, Joe, I guess Hal Jols there now too, right?

So watching the last machinations of a continuing resolution or whatever we're passing here this week.

So thank you everybody for making the time.

Just wanted to continue the cadence of meetings with the Council.

We don't have a heavy slate before us today.

We will.

We will have brief subcommittee updates for those subcommittee chairman that wanna provide them.

Just talk a little bit about the correspondence recording.

Doug was kind enough to track the correspondence that's been sent to both DOI and USDA.

So we'll just take a chance to glance at that.  
And then.

**DF** **Dan Forster** 2:28  
Run.

**JD** **John Devney** 2:28  
Sort of invoking the chairman's prerogative.  
I wanna share like Cynthia Martinez is gonna share kind of an update on the status of the National Wildlife Refuge program and what the consequence of sort of diminished investment in the refuge system has got us. And I think it's one of those things that I think is.  
Often times.  
Slipped from our vision about what an incredible asset the refuge system is when a critically important role it plays.  
And I think it's time for all of us in the Community to sort of re center on the refuge system as a priority as we head into a new Congress and with the new administration.  
So that's just a brief summary of the agenda. Colin O'Mara is vice chair.  
Anything you'd like to offer?

**CO** **Collin O'Mara** 3:28  
Hey everybody sorry my I'm home.  
Actually, I couldn't take the machinations of the CR, the egg fight.  
Holding my one year old to have some sense of sanity right now, but I think John's exactly right, and I actually wonder if there's something that this Council could do in this way to send that signal on the refuges. There will be a big debate next year.  
Around the reauthorization of the Save our parks and Public Lands Act, which you know because of people on this Council and and others that that aren't, we're able to include the refuge system, albeit at a fairly low 5% of the total.  
Which you know isn't bad.  
I mean, it's brought hundreds of millions of dollars into the into the refuge system, but it's a fraction of what's what's needed.  
And so there's actually things that are, you know, very much in play that'll be priorities for the next administration that you know, making sure again, I don't want

the parks to get short shrift, but the place that folks hunt and fish are primarily, you know, the, the, the.

Refuges the natural national forests and the BLM lands, you know, not places that are controlled by their organic acts.

Organic acts so.

You know, food for thought is we're having the course of discussion today.

Maybe there's a lot of that comes out of the Council encouraging, you know, more investment in the in the place where folks hunting, fish, hunting, fish, starting with refuges.

**JD John Devney** 4:39

Thanks, Colin. With that, I think we'll move it over to Shiva just to give us some opening comments.

Thank you for joining us, Shiva.

**SR Sundaresan, Siva R** 4:49

Hey, thanks John. Thanks, Colin.

Thank you all very very much for having me today. I apologize.

Martha couldn't be here, but on behalf of Martha, me and I think all of our staff are really, deeply, truly grateful for the work of this Council and all of you in helping us get to some sensible place in many of our policy decisions over the last few.

Years, so really want to extend.

A sincere deep gratitude, and also personally over the last several months, my. Work here.

Many of you have become sort of friends and colleagues and trusted partners, so I really, really on a personal level also appreciate all that you have done, not just for the service, but for me.

So thank you very much and I really hope as both John and Colin said that this Council and your Council will continue to the leaders of the Fish and Wildlife Service over the next four years because we surely need it.

So thank you all and thank you for your continued work.

I know we have John.

Thanks to you sort of a refuge heavy update from the Fish and Wildlife Service today. Appreciate folks on that. But as you all know, we have other parts of the Fish and Wildlife Service too.

But today will be mostly about refuges.

I understand that Christians going to give you a little bit of an update on where we are with our sort of lead free voluntary pilots. And then Cynthia, you said John is going to talk to you about the status of the refuge system.

I will try to stay until 4:30, but I do have another call, so if this goes longer, I might have to sign off.

Couple of other small issues that I I do wanna let the folks here know.

I've called several of you, but I did not get to the entire list yet.

So I apologize, but for those of you that I haven't called tomorrow, the Fish and Wildlife Service is going to publish formal withdrawal of our Bida proposed regulations.

We had proposed this in January and tomorrow it's going to be in the reading room and then on Friday it will formally publish the Federal Register.

We just got a lot of comment on this. Over 50,000 comments on this. This is a fairly complicated issue.

We were trying to sort of.

Think through some complex issues and we really.

We we need, we have some more work to do.

So we're gonna go back, think about it and and then try to redo this again. Of course, in no way. In fact, does this diminish our commitment to refuges, to refuge purposes, to certain management of the refuge system and everything, John, that you're going to hear Cynthia talk.

About later and we will fall back to our existing bio policies as well.

So we'll it's it's part of sort of the organic act of the refuge.

So we are committed to it and so we will continue to sort of uphold our.

Obligations purposes and by the as well.

So I did wanna say that to all of you.

It is confidential.

It doesn't go out until tomorrow, so I would appreciate folks treating it as as such, but we're all close partners, so I'm comfortable sharing it in this forum.

The second thing I want to address before it comes up mostly related to lead and maybe Christine can talk a little bit more about this when it gives a presentation.

But there was an article about this in the newspaper and I think the article.

Was mostly accurate but kind of give a slightly different slant to it.

So in in West Virginia and Canaan Valley in the National Wildlife Refuge, it is one of

the seven places where we are doing this pilot program.  
But it was also a place where our decision not to institute.  
Lead free regulation had led to a lawsuit and so we settled that lawsuit and as part of that settlement, we committed to evaluating.  
The the the lead free pilot program.  
Now we're gonna evaluate the lead free pride program for all seven refuges where we did it mostly out of an interest driven of course by you all and our our our own selves of like hey, we're going to institute this pilot program.  
Let's take a look at what it's doing.  
How is it working and how we can improve it and grow it?  
So we are going to do that evaluation anyway.  
And so we we committed to doing that as part of this settlement and then the other thing we also committed to is to invite public comment.  
As part of our next 26 hunt fish rule, which we again do anyway.  
So I just wanted to sort of reinforce and hopefully install some confidence in you all that.  
The article might have seemed like somehow this was a dramatic or drastic shift in the way we were doing things.  
On that refuge and it really is not so. Just wanted to allay any potential concerns if there were so.  
Just addressing that head on.  
Those are the two sort of small issues really that I wanted to raise, but I think the biggest.  
Thing that I want to express is gratitude and appreciation for all your work and hope that we can continue to work with you all on this and.  
I will kick it back to you, Charney and Colin.

**JD** **John Devney** 9:48

Any comments or questions for Shiva while we have him here and we've got ample time for any questions for Shiva.

**KF** **Kathleen Falk** 10:00

Yeah. This is Kathleen Falk, ship.

Could you send that article out to the rest of us who may not have seen it?

**SR Sundaresan, Siva R** 10:08

I might ask Doug to do that. That's OK.

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 10:09

I I can send it.

You're referring to the E&E article Shiva.

**SR Sundaresan, Siva R** 10:13

That's right.

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 10:14

Yeah, I'll send it to the group.

**JD John Devney** 10:21

Anybody else? I'm trying to look for hands up. I'm not seeing.

Any.

Mr. crane.

**JC Jeff Crane** 10:29

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

No, I just wanted to say thanks Phillip for for all the work that you've done for being very accessible and willing to discuss.

Some of the more complicated, nuanced positions on things and so appreciate.

Your service to the service and to this pocket Council.

So thank you.

**JD John Devney** 11:01

Yeah, just to echo that, Shiva. Thanks.

Shiv and I've worked through a number of things on Council business.

And some energized conversations about topics over the last 10 months would be a characterization.

And Shiva just for myself.

I.

I number of us were very engaged in the Bida issue and I recognize.

There are lots of ways for you all to handle that, but appreciate your in Martha's engagement on that, and I appreciate a formal retraction because I think it, I think it sends a pretty clear signal.

So for me.

Thank you very much for again, as Jeff said, your accessibility, your willingness to talk through these issues and hopefully can build a good foundation based on the work that was accomplished.

Here over the last several years.

Anything else for Sheba before he puts himself? He turns his camera off and just listens to this thing for the next hour and 45 minutes.

Alright, thank you, Chevy.

We may call on you if we so you see or hear. If we have any questions, if that's OK.

**SR Sundareshan, Siva R** 12:27

I'm available and happy to answer any questions.

And again, thank you all so much. Really appreciate it.

Really appreciate the kind words and thank you and really all I was doing was leading sort of so many of the other folks here on the call that the staff were working really, really hard.

So I appreciate the appreciation and we'll convey to all the folks and the employees, the service 'cause, I know they they worked really hard on this tip. So thank you.

**JD John Devney** 12:52

Going back to you, Doug, did we have any folks register for the public comment?

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 12:59

No, we did not have any folks request public comment time.

**JD John Devney** 13:07

Is there anybody that's joined that might meet that criterion that would like a moment to offer public comment?

Not seeing or hearing any, Doug, I think Jason joined I think before we get into the balance of our agenda.

Maybe good to introduce Jason.



**HD Hobbs, Doug** 13:40

I'll let I'll let Jason introduce himself, but he's a relative. He's a brand new member to the Council.

In fact, he got his appointment letter on. I can't remember on Friday or Monday, but anyway.

Jason Summers, the director from.

Missouri Department of Conservation said Jason, if you want to introduce yourself real quick would be great.

**JS Jason Sumners** 14:02

Yeah. Yeah. Thanks for thanks for having me.

Happy to join this group.

There are some definitely some familiar faces and some of you that that I don't know.

But as was indicated, Jason Summers, I serve as the director of the Department of Conservation, relatively new appointment.

I joined the director role in in June of this past year, would have been heavily engaged in regional and national issues for the last several years and in multiple roles within the agency.

So happy to be here.

**JD John Devney** 14:32

Thanks for joining, Jason.

And give credit to where credit is due on Doug Hobbs being diligent and chasing Jason's appointment letter through the process. As many of us know, that can be a cumbersome.

A cumbersome undertaking.

So Doug, thank you for making sure that Jason could be here representing all of our good folks at state agencies around the country.

So thank you, Jason.

Thank you, Doug.

We're gonna move on to our subcommittee reports, and I think it's been a relatively modest amount of work going on within the subcommittees.

So I'm just going to kind of go through roll call on subcommittees. I don't think we had a great deal of work to do here.

And I'm delighted to say landoni, I'm calling on you last.

Lands land is landscaping far more attention to this Council than he deserves in the past.

So we're gonna. We're gonna make him go last today in the subcommittee reports.

So.

We'll start with private lands and Michael Crowder.

**MC Michael Crowder** 15:54

John, I can tell you, we we were going to meet after the farm bill was passed to try to decide what all we were going to do. And as everybody on this call knows, it's kind of a depressing day.

And we were not there.

So we didn't have a lot of work.

I did talk to several committee members and throughout the farm bill process and and.

We're gonna get an extension. We'll work on this again next year, so don't have a long report, but thank everybody on the on the Committee for everything that they did throughout the the past two years.

**JD John Devney** 16:29

Thank you, Michael. Joel Webster, public lands.

**JW Joel Webster** 16:35

Thanks, Mr. chairman.

The Public Lands Subcommittee has nothing to report today.

**JD John Devney** 16:42

Thank you, Joel. Hunting and wreck shooting for Mr. Crane.

**JC Jeff Crane** 16:47

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I also want to thank all the members of that particular Subcommittee for all the work we did generate quite a number of action items and letters throughout the course of the last several years on the Council.

So thank you for your work. At this time, we have nothing. No new business to report either, Mr. Chairman.

**JD John Devney** 17:12

Alright. Thank you, Jeff.  
Joel Peterson conservation funding.

**JP Joel Pedersen** 17:18

Sounds like I have a pretty similar report to the other ones.  
Thanks for the committee members that served on this committee, but we did not meet recently and have nothing to report.

**JD John Devney** 17:30

Perfect, Doug.  
I'm not seeing Doctor Tidball on the screen.  
Maybe I'm just being careless.  
Was Keith a regret?

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 17:43

Hmm.  
Looks like he is not on and it looks like he is a last minute unable to join.

**JD John Devney** 17:54

OK, perfect.  
So no report from the Public Engagement Subcommittee.  
Alright, land. Your turn.  
Wildlife Health Committee subcommittee.

**LT Land Tawney (Guest)** 18:05

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks again to all the subcommittee members and the working group folks that really work diligently on this lead issue that we're going to hear about in a minute.  
So I think that is the update is really going to be this update from Christian where I'm really looking forward to hearing how that goes and then we'll be getting the subcommittee together after the first of the year.  
So thank you, fellow subcommittee members, and we will talk after the first of the year.

**JD John Devney** 18:31

Thank you, land.

I'm expecting there's not a great deal of discussion on the non reports.

But I'll just open it up for all members of the Council to ask any questions and any of our subcommittee chairs before we move on.

Alright, not seeing any.

Thanks again to Doug Hobbs.

Doug sent emails to us over the course of the last couple of days.

I think Doug and I think the last one was as of this morning about the totality of the correspondence that the Council had with both DOI the bureaus and. USDA.

I rather than sort of read to you all, I expect everybody's had an opportunity to review that list.

I think this is an important thing and I think is Colin and Jeff Crane.

And many others, Joel Peterson and many others who have served on these councils in the past will recognize is these become oftentimes Evergreen issues that.

The you know this Council and future councils will take up, so I appreciate Doug tracking the correspondence.

In subsequent action, is there anything?

On Doug's spreadsheet.

That deserves sort of specific attention from the perspective of either the Subcommittee chairs or Individual Council members that they'd like to discuss.

**MC Michael Crowder** 20:33

This is Michael.

I don't know if you're gonna hit this at the end, but.

Are you or Doug at some point gonna talk about actions after the the New Year's before we break today?

**JD John Devney** 20:48

I will, since Doug is the foremost expert on FACA charters, I will let him.

I'm not gonna put Doug in a position to suggest what the path forward might be, but he could perhaps give us.

Perspective on what happens with the change in administration from his vantage

point is that appropriate?

Doug, I'm not exposing you to any risk at that, am I?

**HD** **Hobbs, Doug** 21:18

No, I'm happy to share sort of past occurrence.

You know what's happened in the past, and that might, you know, might be something similar happened.

So I I can share some of that. Happy to.

**JD** **John Devney** 21:30

Is it the well, the group we address that right now or should we address it at close?

Is there any strong opinion?

Before Doug gets squishy, gets nervous about it. Let's make him do it right now.

**HD** **Hobbs, Doug** 21:51

So again, this is sort of past practice on how incoming administrations have handled federal advisory committees and and practice has been slightly different depending on the administration though, and the background all that is that there's a charter in place.

It was signed and filed this year in 2014.

And.

For two years.

So the Charter in theory is, is is good through 2026?

And then memberships, of course.

All of you.

Are your memberships for three-year terms, and those memberships will expire and I believe September of 2025.

So, you know, beginning the income administration, all that is in place and and is active.

So.

What?

Yeah, the dfo. What I've experienced in the past, what has typically happened is that the yeah, new folks at interior Fish and Wildlife will. And in fact, there's already data calls that have been out for information about all the federal advisory committees that Fish and Wildlife Service Man.

And I'm assuming that has gone out across all of Doi.  
And you know, somebody's gonna collect all that and provide it to the landing team.  
And it timing could be different.  
I don't know when they'll get to the point of of kind of putting a freeze on activities.  
Typically is what what has happened.  
They'll just say no more. No meetings for for some time.  
And to the future and.  
They will, as I've experienced in the past.  
Sort through the filter through the information they've received on all the federal advisory committees, membership and charter. You know all the information that that describes what the objective of the committee is. And then.  
They make some decisions at some point about what?  
Will they want to reinitiate or or not reinitiate?  
And once that's happened, things have gone a little different.  
Different administrations.  
We've had some experiences where if they decide that they want to keep the the Council, you know there have been tweaks to the the name of the Council. So, for instance, this Council in the last administration was the honey was called the hunting and shooting Sports Conservation Council.  
So that name got tweaked in this administration.  
There, there could be tweaks to the Charter.  
That might include membership categories or.  
Objectives that the administration wants the the DOI would want the Council to to achieve things that they want. You know you all to address.  
So that's happened in the past.  
And then in some some occasions they will change membership that that they could be wholesale change, which would be starting all over from scratch.  
Or they could select to do that in a more, you know, selective manner.  
Again, it's been different and different.  
Administrations.  
And then, you know, once they kind of make those decisions and we'll go through a process of we have to reestablish the the group, you know that involves the establishing the Charter, the name.  
There's a lot of paperwork.  
We'll shuffle federal registers will.

Go notices will go out doing that.

And then of course, depending on what happens with membership, you know there would probably there probably will be a need to.

Dress that in some way as well, which will again involve some.

Noticing through the Federal Register. But that's.

I've experienced in in doing this over the years.

And I'd be happy to answer questions about any of that if you have any.

I mean, a number of you've been through it as well. So you've experienced it sort of first hand as well, so.

Yeah.

**JD** **John Devney** 26:18

Yeah.

**JC** **Jeff Crane** 26:19

Sir. So thank you, Doug, for that very diplomatic little tap dance around this thing.

My experience having been on each of the iterations is the new administration comes in.

**JD** **John Devney** 26:28

OK.

**JC** **Jeff Crane** 26:33

They want to put their own stamp on it.

They dissolve, effectively, dissolve the existing council.

Rename it.

Recharter it and repopulate it with people that they so choose.

So it's a little more direct on it.

So for those of you that might have hoped that.

This thing is gonna continue beyond January the 20th.

I'm I'm hate to be the guy that's doing pen prick in there, but experience from both sides with transitions on this stuff has been that that is not the case.

**JD** **John Devney** 27:11

Any other questions for Doug or our senior FACA Committee Council members that have served around the bend on this thing?

**MC Michael Crowder** 27:25

In your experience, how long does it take to get rolling again?  
Is that a year process?

**JC Jeff Crane** 27:32

It's not always a year.

It has been up to a year, but it's typically six months or so and I would guess by the time you get the people into the political people into Department of Interior Department of AG, they do choose to recharter it.

Then you got to get the secretary signatures into Doug's point.

They got to notice it in the Federal Register.

Call for for interested parties to to join the Council, then vet all of those and then announce it.

Oh, it's it's a solid six months or so before before that happens.

**JD John Devney** 28:15

The other questions for Doug or Jeff?

Alright, hearing none, Christian were way early in the agenda, but I think you've already joined us.

Are you in a position to share an up status update on the pilot project?

**MM Myers, Christian M** 28:36

Yep, I'm ready.

**JD John Devney** 28:39

All right.

Thanks Christian.

**MM Myers, Christian M** 28:43

All right. So, so as many of you may know, in 2022 the service began our deliberate and collaborative process to find the best way to address lead poisoning and wildlife. And then as part of that process, we requested recommendations from this Advisory



Council in December 2023. We got the hwcc recommendation that we pursue a voluntary approach based on Hunter, education and incentives.

So with that, during 2024, the service.

Hwcc, particularly the the lead subcommittee, statewide agencies and the North American Non led partnership, have all been working together to help us develop a pilot program to test lead free incentives.

A National Wildlife refuges to help address lead poisoning and wildlife.

So that's where the program we're giving an update on now.

So the overarching goal.

Is to develop a proven model for addressing the issue through voluntary incentives, something that the service can use and even other.

Land managers might be able to use as we previously presented to this Council, the key objectives in our 2024 iteration of this pilot program was developing and implementing the pilot program, which we have been able to do.

We've started implementation test variations among pilot sites.

We were able to have each one in a different state, some geographic distribution, some variety in which species.

Were targets of the eligible hunts and in the regulations that are already in place at each station. Some of that variation to test and see how.

Invariant those aspects.

Does it impact the uptake from hunters?

And then collect and evaluate data that's ongoing as we're continuing to implement and continuing to get requests for incentives and then compile lessons for our 2025 pilots, that's also ongoing for us as we continue to implement and then.

Once we have all the data, we'll be doing analysis to really draw out those lessons and and what the results show for us.

So then our pilot sites.

You know, we had a lot of help from.

AFA and state agencies in that in consulting with them and with members of this Council to pick the seven refuges that ultimately this year and continuing our hosting lead free pilots for fall 2024, which as you know with fall hunting season kind of extends a little.

Into early 25, some of them, but this first iteration we're calling fall 2024 for the pilots.

And then the selections for those sites were made with that input from Council

members and state wildlife agencies especially, but also internal considerations at all levels of service, right?

Like asking our regional folks and our folks at those particular references, you know what we're able to do with our capacity and then Doug's pulling up now a map that helps show.

So these are 7 sites and kind of where they are.

We have William L Finley, a refuge in Oregon.

Patoka River in Indiana, Trimpeleau O in Wisconsin.

Pocosin lakes in North Carolina, Wallkill River in New Jersey, Blackwater in Maryland and Canaan Valley in West Virginia.

That and that map also helps show you right how we have made an effort to get some geographic distribution to see, you know, in different parts of the country.

Are we seeing different reactions from hunters?

Different rates of uptake in otherwise the same pilot program, right?

Although there's some variation in a few of the sites, we're doing some additional education and outreach, but in terms of the actual incentive, what can you get back for? For a proof of purchase of lead free ammunition? It's.

Same across the board.

So yeah, this incentive program incentive we're offering.

Intended to help.

Hunters choose lead free ammunition to reduce the risk of unintentional poisoning, scavenging wildlife while also continuing to provide good opportunities for hunters.

So it's coming in the form of prepaid debit cards provided to the eligible hunters who provide us with a proof of purchase of lead free ammunition and provide it on a first come, first served basis. While our our funding last station to station.

Information about the pilot program. The pilot sites where hunters can submit their claim for the incentive.

**OE** **Oliver, Kevin E** 33:28  
Before.

**MM** **Myers, Christian M** 33:29

That's all available on a web page we've created at [fws.gov/initiative/lead](https://fws.gov/initiative/lead), free lead, dash free.

I can drop that in the chat, but that site has been live for a while now and then as of.

Late November.

18th it's had the actual portal for requesting.

The incentive has been up and running for hunters, but we've got kind of some of it for the sake of the information about our pilot program up sooner than that.

Yeah. So what the specifics of what does the incentive look like?

Hunters at those seven participating sites were hunting in those particular identified hunts.

And are able to try lead free ammunition at free or reduced cost when they get this incentive.

So what they need to do is provide some basic information and proof of purchase, and then they'll receive a prepaid debit card that's up to \$50 per box of lead free ammunition.

It's up to 50 because it's capped at 25 for shotgun or muzzleloader 50 for rifle, and then they're also limited to two boxes of ammunition.

Per eligible hunter, so maximum you could be getting, you know, two boxes of rifle ammunition, \$100 back to the hunter for for giving it a try to use lead free rifle ammunition. And then as I mentioned, they're on first come, first serve basis, we want to.

Make sure hunters add each refuge are receiving funding and that we get to as many hunters as possible.

But at some point, the funding available could run out.

We are not at a point yet where we're we're gonna exhaust the funding and have to turn hunters away, but we want it to be ahead of that in case it came up.

So as I mentioned a little bit at three of the refuges, Wallkill River, Blackwater and Canaan Valley specifically, we were able to collaborate with the North American non led partnership to host in conjunction with the pilots.

Hunter Information Education workshop.

On the use of lead free ammunition and those included some demonstration of lead free and leaded ammunition, the the performance.

And so that we believe.

Kind of enriches those three particular the the pilot for those three particular sites.

We weren't able logistically to do that at all.

Sites in this 2024 version of pilots, but it's something that we think is part of an ideal pilot.

And then in terms of valuation, our human dimensions personnel are going to be

evaluating feedback from our staff at each site to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the pilots, how we we implement them on the ground and those same personnel will also have a chance to EV.

Feedback from the eligible hunters, at least those who respond to a survey that we're going to distribute by e-mail.

After the hunts have closed, we have that worked up.

Approved by OMB.

It's just we're waiting to do it. Kind of the ideal time where hundreds have had a chance to do the hunt, to ask for the incentive, hopefully get it and kind of have a full sense of the feedback on how we did.

And then we're in evaluating all those different data points. We wanna see the impact of variations across the pilot like I mentioned of of location variation and existing regulation variation.

How might those have impacted?

Can we say they've impacted the the outcomes at each site?

And with the the insights we gained from that data evaluation, you know again probably with help from statewide agencies, the partnership.

This Council, we're gonna work to modify pilot designs for 2025 to improve them anywhere we can.

And the same for our our messaging around this incentive program and then select 2020 hopefully be able to select some 2025 pilot sites to to run it back again perhaps with these seven perhaps with some additional kind of depending on our our capacity to do.

That in 25 and what based on the insight seems best.

To keep developing this this model for voluntary incentive based approach.

And now kind of the core update, what have we been doing most recently?

And especially with the implementation.

Since about July, we've been working closely the North American non led partnership to to further develop from the design to actually the implementation and get the web-based portions of this up right. I mentioned we have that kind of landing page informational site but then off of that.

We had to.

Create the form for hunters to actually request and receive the rebates.

So that's been the bulk of what we've been working on kind of the the late summer and fall.

And then also we were working on, as I mentioned on this committee and subcommittee's getting that financial support together to provide the economic incentives and all that has come together at this point where we've actually been able to get requests in and are are very soon going.

To be sending out.

The first round of debit cards to actually reimburse hunters who've come to us and and given their proof of purchase.

So headquarter staff in doing that have been coordinating closely with our Staffs from the regional offices and the seven pilot sites and we've been able to have. Some of our web development folks as well, and folks from the partnership in on these kind of combined coordination calls have been very useful for getting feedback from the.

Field that helped us even improve on the initial form and vice versa.

We're able to get out communication materials to those folks in the field.

To to do to keep the implementation running smoothly as possible and do the best version of this. This first round of the pilots.

So as I mentioned, we got that form up and began accepting requests for economic incentives on November 18th, 2024.

But we are allowing folks.

To submit, you know, even if their purchase date is prior to that, if their purchase date is after we announced that we were launching this pilot, then they're eligible for those purchases to be to receive the incentive even if they purchased prior to that portal being open, right.

So that's why we're able to to get some folks requesting it on day one.

And today.

Doug, could you do the the next slide to date, there have been 74 economic incentive requests from hunters across all of our pilot site refuges for 20 fall 24. The the next slide.

I'm just saying the map.

**HD** **Hobbs, Doug** 41:07

Alright, I'm having some.

See if I can get this thing to.

All right.



**Myers, Christian M** 41:14

Yeah, we're gonna bring up a table to show kind of the how.

That's the 74 request so far. You know as of yesterday.

Breakdown by refuge.

But it's a decent distribution where we're we're having something at and most of our refuges, but it definitely is mostly we've had seen the most response at Blackwater.

Some of that is Blackwater has kind of one of the bigger honey programs of all of our private sites this.

Year and it's also we believe.

Them having one of the hosted, one of those workshops just kind of gets the word out more. Having that hunter education on top of.

Our basic advertising of this incentive program.

So you know, as you look at those, we wanna both recognize that these are encouraging results, right.

We we with the service with the help of this Council, put something on the ground in in an accelerated time frame.

Got to hunters got actual.

Requests in and incentives out to actually see what we can do with voluntary incentives.

So that's very encouraging.

And then also we wanted to note that you know from the beginning.

As mentioned previously in these Council meetings was that these initial 24 pilots just can't possibly reach as many hunters as we will be able to with continued pilots in future years.

You know any of these kind of voluntary incentive programs take some time to get the messaging out there to actually reach folks on the ground, so.

You know in the future with increased Hunter awareness established, proven processes for getting these incentives where hundreds have seen other hunters.

Actually receive an incentive when they stepped up to participate. We we think we'll see even more, but we're really encouraged by the fact that you know, we got this out about a month ago.

We've already seen 7400 skid back to us and it's going to still be available, so you know it's ongoing.

This is just as of yesterday.

We expect more hunters to participate before we close off the.

The opportunity for 2024 hunts.

So yeah, in closing.

Say that I really appreciate this opportunity to provide the Council with an update on behalf of the service, and I want to express appreciation from everyone at the service who worked on this project for the engagement and support we received from the Council, AFA state Agencies, North America.

Non led partnership the the subcommittee member specifically and you know just others generally in the conservation community.

So with that, I'm happy to answer any questions you have based on this update.

**JD John Devney** 44:09

Perfect.

I think I'll start with.

Land Kathleen, Simon and Ron, just in terms of your historic engagement on this topic, but land I saw your hand was up there and we'll start with you, my friend.

**LT Land Tawney (Guest)** 44:26

Yeah, I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

Christian, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I know you're not the only one on your team, but you've been leading this effort and you put put in tons of hours of killing effort. So thank you.

Seeing those numbers, I know that.

Like maybe some of them don't jump out at people, but it is a it's a start.

And I think that's what we all expected this to be was a start, you know, and talking to Chris Parish and I think you iterated this as well.

Christians, it takes, you know, a couple years for this word to get out.

And so super encouraging 74 people in like basically a month is super awesome.

And knowing that again like this, this would not have happened without you. All's like continued, like effort on this.

And so I appreciate you guys.

Just sticking to it.

So big.

Thank you for that.

I look forward to kind of hearing, you know, the ultimate results of this and hope that

that, you know, that the next administration understands the importance of this effort.

And continues to not only do this at the refuges that we talked about.

Especially in relation to Canaan, but also you know expands it to other refuges.

So thank you. And the work is very, very, very much appreciated.

**JD John Devney** 45:41

Kathleen, I saw you come off a mute there.

**KF Kathleen Falk** 45:45

Thanks, John, and thanks Christian too for the report.

I think it would be helpful to get feedback from our state agency partners on what they chose in each of the seven different areas to do for getting the word out so we can engage what they and we can do better next time around and helping spread the.

Word were their press advisories.

Did they meet with?

The hook and bullet clubs.

You know what efforts were made?

Which ones were most successful?

**JD John Devney** 46:20

Ron, I was gonna ask you a specific question and Kathleen beat me to it.

So, Ron, are you in a position to just give sort of a summary overview for math was in the state's perspective?

**RR Ron Regan** 46:32

Thanks, Mr. chairman.

So first of all, thanks to Shiva and the Fish and Wildlife Service team.

For.

Their adaptability.

In pivoting to these recommendations from the Council and once again thanks, let me put my phone on mute here.

And once again, thanks to land and the group.

Advanced.



Recommendations that led to the formal position of the Council.

I'll I'll have to say as I've probably said previously.

We were a bit apprehensive about where this discussion would go.

When it first surfaced a year or more ago?

But as Brian Nesvick indicated prior to his departure as a state director and from this Council, we landed in a very good place from a state perspective.

And and we do feel like the approach that's being piloted here is a good faith effort forward and and one that should be continued to be pursued.

Regarding Kathleen's question, and I guess your follow up, John, I I really don't have any data to share.

We can certainly work with the service to try to help mine some additional facts and figures from the perspective of of how a state agency may have leaned in for any given refuge within their state.

But I I I'm not Privy to any particular data at this point about what has worked, what is working or what might work better in the future.

But thanks to all.

**JD John Devney** 48:19

Thank you, Ron.

Simon, I know you've had a personal interest in this and played a pretty important role in the deliberation.

Anything you'd like to offer before I turn it over to other council members.

**SR SC Roosevelt** 48:32

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Nothing much to add to lots of things to go around.

You know, starting with with Shiva and Christian and and all the folks at Fish and Wildlife and for all the work that they put into it. And it was considerable, you know, to you and and to the Council for support for taking on an issue, which is it.

Has been and is, you know, a thorny one and a difficult one to navigate and and to land for his leadership on the subcommittee, and especially the working group and his leadership of that, a ton of work went into this on both sides, but.

You know it's it's we're seeing the beginnings now and I think we're all hopeful that that this is something that can be carried forward. But I think you know, I think it's been an important step forward both for the service and its approach and also for

our commun.

And and and the ways that that we can begin thinking about this.

Going forward, you know again both from you know from inside the department, but also for all of us in in the larger community.

So thanks to all and thanks, Mr. Chairman.

**JD John Devney** 49:39

Thank you, Simon.

Any other comments from council members for Shiva Christian land?

Folks that have played essential leadership role in this.

Joel Webster.

**JW Joel Webster** 50:02

Sure. I just wanna add.

My appreciation for everybody's worked on this land.

Christian Shiva, Simon.

I again just, you know, recognize the trickiness of this issue and how there was a lot to navigate here and appreciate the service willingness to work with this Council on a voluntary approach to encourage non LED ammunition.

'Cause it's. You know, we think it has the opportunity to be the most effective approach in the way that has also the most support.

So I'm hopeful that, you know, in the future if this continues, you know it can be rolled out earlier in the year. And so that so that hunters are able to be aware of it and be educated before they purchase their ammunition, which I think will help incre. The participation rate but just want to echo the thanks offered by others.

**JD John Devney** 50:55

Thank you, Joel.

Yeah, sure.

**SR Sundaresan, Siva R** 51:02

Hey. Thanks John. Thanks Sharon.

I just want to say hey, thank you so much for mentioning the service in several of our names, but lots and lots of people whose names were not mentioned and who are not here today also worked on this.

So I don't want people to think that it was just several people, you know, Ron, Afwa, Kurt and his team and and other people.

So I don't want to start going down the list and make people feel like if we didn't mention your name.

It didn't help.

But I do want folks to recognize and and and really.

Hope that they can do.

Is that in addition to sort of maybe this is served as an example of how on certain tough issues we actually can work together and come to some sort of collaborative solution and maybe we don't lose hope that, you know, even in otherwise difficult political circumstances, there are.

Issues in which we can find common ground, literally and metaphorically. If we really try to work together.

So I I hope we will do that more often than not.

Thanks a lot.

**JD** **John Devney** 52:00

And I'll just sort of add to the, you know, the affirmation train here.

I'll. I'll be honest. When I looked at the timelines, Christian that you that we sort of trotted you on?

I'm glad the Council took time and was deliberative and went through lots of lots of thoughts and lots of discussion, but I'm worried.

As I've looked at the timelines that you all face.

Was gonna be a pretty heavy left and.

Congratulations to you and everybody else on the team, including I know station managers that have all sorts of responsibilities.

This got sort of was another brick on their load.

And so congratulations to you all for being successful on what are we're pretty hasty timelines. If we're really conscientious about it.

So thank you all and Shiv, I know that doesn't.

I mean, you can deflect all you like, but.

That doesn't, you know, that's allowing your team the latitude and flexibility and resources to stand something up as quickly as these folks did would have been possible without your and Martha's leadership.

So thank you very much.

I don't want to talk about lead for awhile.

How's everybody with that?

We've I think we've we found a good blueprint here.

I think it's gonna be incumbent on us and I like the way Simon phrased it.

And it Shiva sort of double back on it.

This is this is a good model for dealing with the difficult issue.

My guess is no matter who's in charge and which administration's in charge, what the politics of the day may be, this issue is going to be.

Front and Center for a long time and hopefully this builds to is is, I think land really sought out to do is build a more durable solution, something that can be sustained in the future so.

Hopefully we contributed to that as the Council and I know so many of you played really essential role.

So thank you very much. And Christian thanks you.

Thank you very much for your report today.

**MM** **Myers, Christian M** 54:16

No problem.

**JD** **John Devney** 54:17

Alright, with that, Cynthia.

We're we're moving you up a little bit, but I think you've been sitting in listening all the way along to writes or are you OK to jump into queue, Cynthia?

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 54:31

I asked her.

Mr. Chair, I am and before I start with that, I do wanna express my sincere appreciation and thank you to the Council for the lead Free partnership project and pilot program.

Land for your leadership, everybody that was on that on that subcommittee, if you all recall, we ended up with the Hugo version, not the Cadillac version.

So we still have opportunities to improve and.

You know, I think that we would love to see this occur again.

25 We're not going to be able to do it by ourselves, just like we weren't able to do it by ourselves now in 24, so.

Regardless of what happens to the Council, however long it takes, whatever happens in the next administration, really looking forward to working collaboratively with you all and your support to continue that work.

I appreciate, Mr. Chair, the recognition of the lips that it took, and certainly and the stations that we did it at and.

Speaking of stations, I'm actually coming to you from the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

Wanted to pilot programs and it's fun to talk to this group while actually having my feet on the ground on a national life refuge.

So with that, if you're OK, I will go ahead and start before we get the PowerPoint presentation up.

I just wanted to thank the Chair for inviting us and I appreciate chair prerogative when it comes to talking about the National Wildlife Refuge system, so.

**JD** **John Devney** 56:00  
Oh yeah.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 56:05

Thank you, John.

I really, really appreciate it.

I love talking about the National Life Refuge system.

It's a challenge when we have to talk about, you know, some of our challenges, the things that we don't necessarily able to get done, but your continued interest and personal interest in the National Life Refuge is in this system is really unwavering. So thank you.

Courtney's going to help me out and put the slide presentation up because I don't want to be that person. That is like technically challenged and can't figure out how to get it done.

And so I appreciate her assistance with that.

Love having the opportunity to talk about the National Wildlife Refuge system?

We're gonna talk a little bit of the state of the system in 24.

It's a place where we thrive.

The next slide.

You know the National Wildlife Refuge system stands as a vast and vital network of public lands and waters for both wildlife and people thrive.

I know that you all know that.

However, we do have growing environmental pressures, we've got limited funding. An outdated infrastructure that are putting the system's ability to protect these natural treasures and benefits to communities at risk.

National Wildlife Refuge system spans over 95 million land acres from the salmon rich watershed of Alaska to the Prairie Pothole region, a seasonal sanctuary for millions of migrating waterfowl and pollinators like the monarch butterfly and to the southeast hardwood forests that offer essential shelter for species like.

Black bears and Montrose songbirds and the endangered Panthers.

573 National Wildlife refuges.

This includes our latest addition to the system in the Southern Maryland Woodlands. And we just celebrated that addition last Friday with the Secretary and the director.

The next item, the refuge system, protects over 760 million acres of marine environments and 181 coastal refuges across the Pacific along the Atlantic and in the Caribbean.

These areas are vital for species like sea turtles, shore birds and marine life, while it also supports fisheries and coastal communities.

Coastal refuges protect wildlife.

Coastal refuges protect wildlife.

Natural barriers that protect communities from storm surges and raising sea levels.

If we take a look at the refuge system budget at a glance, what you see here is that the refuge system's flat budget over the last decade have eroded capacity despite the fish live service innovating to manage through challenging budget environments.

By making management decisions such as.

Establishing refuge complexes for management efficiencies.

Expanding our partnerships, leveraging additional funding sources like Goa.

Thinking that's a Great American Outdoors Act seeking reimbursable agreements to support our staffing needs and establishing cross programmatic teams to share expertise.

But I have to tell you, capacity is now at a tipping point that puts the economic and conservation vitality of the national life wreckage system at risk.

When when provided the capacity to manage properly refuge lands and waters boost coastal resilience and we make landscapes more adaptable to change.

By restoring and protecting natural habitats, especially along coast refuges, buffer against floods, storm surges and erosion.

This reinforcement not only safeguards wildlife, but it also reduces costs associated with disaster recovery.

The refuge system is responsible for 50% of the prescribed burns within the Department of the Interior. These control buyers enhanced habitat.

They've used biodiversity, they reduce fire risk both on refuges and in neighboring communities.

Land protection is one of the most effective and immediate responses to climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

So the refuge system conserves nearly 100 million acres. Working with willing sellers.

We excuse me, we added 130 acres to the refuge system in fiscal year 24, more than 104,000 acres were purchased from willing sellers with funds from L.

And duck stamp. Thank you. My opportunity to say thank you to you all.

109,000 acres were purchased.

Using.

LWCF dot stamp and other funding sources as well.

We currently in the refuge system have approximately 5,000,000 acres in easements and we have secured irreplaceable habitats for recreational access and also for building resilience to escalating climate threats. The next slide.

National Wildlife refuges engineer with nature. We do that through habitat restoration.

Netting durable solutions, often at a cost savings to the taxpayer.

For example, the use of living shorelines on refuges is often way more cost efficient and durable than more artificial means like sea walls.

The next slide.

Refuge habitats also provide critical ecosystem services that help reduce climate risk at nearby communities.

These natural infrastructures improve air and water quality and reduce wildlife risk.

These are a couple of examples on the slide in front of you.

So for example, at the McFadden, Texas point National Hwy. On that coast of Texas, these two refuges protect the community and oil industry from dangerous impacts of flooding, preventing severe weather events from creating contaminants disasters.

And we're all very familiar with the Hurricanes that have occurred in that part of the country in our recent past.

Next slide, we have had 13 years of flat or declining budget and those have led to organizing.

Many refuges and fill stations and complexes and super complexes to try to maximize staff capacity and share services now operating within this decrease. Availability of regional allocations paired with increased environmental stressors. Refuge lands and waters are at risk of further degradation. Services ability to combat invasive species and serve as flood and wildfire buffers to local communities is limited, as is their ability to plan for future resident readiness. So, for example, coastal refuges, coastal lands in the Caribbean and Texas and Florida and along the Gulf Coast.

They're constantly battered with increasingly larger storm events. We had back-to-back hurricanes at Helene and Milton in 2024.

We're losing.

The battle to invasive species like feral hogs, Asian carp and Burmese Python.

We have 3.3 million acres of service land that are infested with non-native species, representing a 30% increase since 2005.

Current resources only allow successful control of approximately 7% of these lands.

We have seen some success with on site by site basis with the deployment of invasive species strike teams, but the limited capacity that we have prevents early detection and rapid response activities and those are critical to maintaining cost and preventing the spread to neighbours. We have 67.

Percent of our refuge units need conservation plans.

This limits our ability to adapt to changing conditions and delays the expansion of public access.

At the beginning of 2025, our comprehensive conservation plans for more than 49 stations and revisions to existing plans at 357 stations will not be completed with the congressionally mandated deadlines as required by the National Life Refuge System Improvement Act.

We do have significant delays in some of our current planning efforts like compatibility determinations and need for compliance and those are the things that we need to do to open up these land and opportunities.

Next slide.

Refuges Harbor a disproportionately higher percentage of species diversity in the US, especially for birds and for mammals.

These protected areas play an indispensable role in safeguarding our nature's natural heritage.

All life refuges provide habitat for nearly half of the bird and mammal species in the



United States, supporting 800 bird species and over 200 mammal species.

Refuges protect critical spawning and nursery habitats for freshwater fish such as rivers and wetland. Playing a key role in the reproduction survival of many fish species vital to biodiversity and local fisheries.

Next slide.

The growing number of wildlife diseases pose a threat to both wildlife and the humans, the Fish Wildlife Service supports the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Wildlife Health Initiative.

Our coordination with federal, state and tribal groups to detect, diagnose and respond to wildlife disease outbreaks, including including CWD, chronic wasting disease, and highly pathogenic avian influenza, is at risk.

These disease threats extend beyond wildlife.

They're impacting lives.

You're impacting domestic animals and human health as well as local and regional economies.

Increasing algal blooms and other water quality issues cause harm to humans, livestock and wildlife health.

These problems are compounded by flatten, decline in budgets and have spread and have widespread impacts across the refuge system.

Next time you know some of our wildlife refuges are tourist destinations, but most are accessible public lands at nearby communities can also regularly enjoy where your backyard neighbor there's at least one refuge in every state and territory and within an hour's drive of most major cities this.

Accessibility makes it easy for communities to enjoy their wildlife heritage. This.

Was what helps make us different like other public lands, the refuge system is also vital part of our recreation.

And preserving history through engaging storytelling and stewardship of natural spaces.

There are 491 refuges that welcome approximately 70 million visitors each year.

People come to experience a range of activities, from wildlife viewing and fishing to hunting education.

More, we still continue to expand access for hunting and fishing rule in this year's rule, and we're going to open or expand opportunities at 52 refuges.

Due to the volume of local and tourism visits, I think we need to the next slide.

Refuges are considered now a high impact service provider and that's for the Office

of Management and Budget OMB and this means that fish modified service is mandated to to improve the virtual and in person customer experience.

That's something we have to report on. And so this includes recreational trip planning on our website and also with using other partners like all trails and Onyx.

Although most of our national life refuges are free to visit, a few sites, charge entrance or permit fees, and as part of customer experience improvements, the fish market services committed to transparent and responsible use of these recreation fees with up guided guidance to better align with the federal.

Lands, Recreation Enhancement Act and with limited capacity, we focused on improvements to provide secure electronic feed collection through platforms like recreation.gov and.

Rec access these these increase efficiency, enhancing the visitors experience and significantly reducing the need for cash handling.

These improvements have led to 40% increase in electronic feed collection in fiscal year 24. Next slide.

Wildlife refuges nearby.

Open place for local families and school children there. Frequently, economic engines for local community recreational business refuges generates an estimated 3.2 billion in local economic activity annually. That's coming from our 2017 banking on Nature report, a report that needs to get updated and see where.

We do stand in 2024 and 2025.

As well as jobs related to refuge management construction.

Biology visitor services and it generates 1.1 billion in job income and supports over 41,000 jobs in local communities.

Next time, renewable resources for local business refuges issue, hundreds of specialist permits to big game guide, fishing guides, ecotour and kayak companies each year providing valuable renewable resource for local business owners, often in rural communities. Refuges partner with local Chambers of Commerce and many others to support Bird.

And other wildlife festivals bringing much needed revenue to communities, often during the shoulder seasons when businesses are in need of that.

Next slide, 80% of the United States population live in cities. We have to recognize that right?

So access to nature.

Is in decline.

So is participation in traditional wildlife dependent activities like hunting and fishing?  
We know this right?

So all refuges, including the nearly 101 refuges near major cities and suburbs, these are gateway places and programs to recruit the next generation of outdoor recreation.

And so we need to work together to to help improve that.

Here's some ways we can do that.

The next slide.

National Wildlife refuges.

These are really great places to recruit new hunters.

Anglers, boaters and birds.

They're easy, easily accessible tubes, lands with a variety of opportunities.

Refuges regularly partner with our States and our local sporting groups to offer skill building and mentoring programs, often for youth and veteran. Some of the permits for hunting and fishing opportunities on National Wildlife refuges are managed in cooperation with states or provided electronically.

On easy to use platforms like recreation.gov and Rec access.

Next slide.

Despite increasing visitation and the addition of new refuges, the system has lost nearly 800 full time positions over the past decade. This reduction in staffing combined with lower operational funds limits the ability of refuges to serve both wildlife and the public effectively.

I know this is a really busy slide, but that last slide shows how many more refuges, how many more acres, how many more millions of acres we've opened to hunting and fishing since 2010.

And and the the dark blue graph shows the appropriations or the the.

The number of employees you see the visitation has gone up while the workforce has gone down.

Next slide.

So as I was saying, well, visitors visitation has increased our face to face interactions at visitor centers is down as much as 74% from our 2018 figures in some regions.

This decline in customer service has far reaching consequences that extend beyond visitor satisfaction.

We have inadequate staffing that can compromise visitor safety, particularly in remote areas where visitors may require assistance or encounter unexpected

situations.

Staff members available to monitor trails, respond to emergencies and provide guidance.

Visitors may be at increased risk since 2021.

There have been 124 deaths that have occurred on wildlife refuges and in seven states there are no federal wildlife officers available to respond.

This results in delayed response times and limited capacity to ensure visitor safety.

The dependency on volunteers, many of whom are older retirees, poses further safety risks.

Left to handle emergency situations, accidents or difficult visitors without the support, the supportive train staff without sufficient staff to monitor visitor behaviour and enforce regulations, there's a heightened risk of wildlife disturbance and habitat degradation. Visitors may stray from designated trails.

Approach wildlife too closely or engage in activities that disrupt sensitive ecosystems.

This can have detrimental effects on wildlife populations and the overall health of the refuge.

Becky just won't no longer before we, before we move on.

I wanna make the point that refuges will no longer be able to support the junior duck stamp programs in California, Nevada, Mississippi, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Washington.

Hunting events like the mentored Turkey Hunt at Sacramento and Delavan refuges, and a youth white tailed deer hunt at Rydale National Wildlife Refuge, we're going to have to cancel those hunting opportunities for mobility and visually impaired individuals would be reduced or cancelled, and these include water hunts at.

Humble Bay at Modoc at Stoneley National life refuges.

Dear friends at Clarence Canyon, Canon National Wildlife Refuge.

You know, the inability for us to fully open and staff our visitor centers also has a ripple effect in local communities. Many of our refuges are key drivers of economic activity through tourism, and when we have to reduce hours and close visitor centers that impact sales at the.

60 visitor centers and nature stores that are run by Friends, group or partners, and this results in less money raised to support station.

We put this next slide in to talk about.

History and culture so that you'll people are aware of the other things that we are

responsible for administering.

We have 17,000 archaeological sites over 2500 historic buildings, 6.5 million museum objects and and this is 22 cultural resource staff is what we have to track these resources and 86% of their time is actually spent on 106 compl.

Next slide.

But also responsible.

And, you know, refuges are vital for culture.

We have 532 ancestors in our care and 7800 associated objects, and so we in the Fish and Wildlife Service are committed to fulfilling our obligations and then under the Native American Graves Protection Repatriation Act of failure to comply could result in ETH.

Compromise, loss of trust with our tribal partners and missed opportunities for.

Deeper understanding, we do have 29 Co sponsorship arrangements.

In 2024, these arrangements cover a wide range of activities, which could include habitat restoration, species management, cultural resource protection and and education as well.

Some of the examples would include like bison conservation or seed collection habitat restoration as well.

Next slide.

Refuge system.

Our infrastructure portfolio and also drives local economic activity and supports every recreation and conservation activity that occurs on service lands.

See the numbers there of the 5300 buildings and 8800 water control structures, 18,000 roads and bridges and 9800 other structures.

These other structures capture assets, including utility systems, marinas, aviation systems, railroad ships, monuments, fortifications, towers, amphitheaters.

This data is current as of June 30th of 2024.

Next slide.

Our infrastructure is always degrading.

It's just like owning a house, right?

It's one problem is fixed, others develop.

Service infrastructures are particularly vulnerable to deterioration because of remote field stations and the increasingly destructive effects of climate change to repair and maintain our vast portfolio. The service receives about 200 million a year in appropriations.

That deferred maintenance backlog of 2.5 billion grows at about 18% per year. Say infrastructure is near or past the end of their maximum useful life span. Gaps in funding lead to a compounding backlog and repair, which equates to an accessible hunting, blinds, dilapidated fishing Piers, overgrown or washed out trails deteriorated public access, roads with potholes and ruts and unmaintained visit. Centers excites.

The Fish Mind service maximizes the impact of funding that we receive by leveraging other funding resources.

Prioritizing build assets based on use and condition, making strategic investments and using our maintenance action teams.

We are working toward a lifecycle approach to infrastructure management. This proactive approach emphasizes regular scheduled maintenance instead of deferring maintenance to failure through our approach. If fully funded in the right sub activities, we can maintain the service infrastructure portfolio at 1.33% of the C. Current replacement value which is well below the industry standard. We also deploy maintenance action teams that support job training for our employees. Job satisfaction for our maintenance professionals.

These map projects, they also cost 30 to 300% less than if that project were completed with contractors, allowing for even fewer deferred maintenance projects to be completed.

Next sign we obligated over 235,000,000 out of the 378 million of consumable budget that we have received in Goa. The Fish Modeling Service has highest obligation rate which is 47% of the four Goa bureaus. That includes the. Doi bureaus so it doesn't include the Forest Service, but includes the Park Service. BL, MB IA and.

We've had over 700 projects to date with an estimated two 27.5 million.

In savings over contracting out the work, and that's what the use of our maintenance action teams.

We supported that 77% person maintenance professional strike force team to help us do these projects in house much more efficiently than than what would have done otherwise.

The next slide is about leveraging our IRA funds and the the percentage is actually out of date here today.

We have already obligated over 98% of our \$121 million.

For projects on more than 50 replicas in 20 state wildlife management areas and you

see the numbers there of the restored 42107 acres, you know this is this is one of those as you look at these slides that there was concern now at the at.

Of this administration that we could potentially lose the dollars and so the regions and our contracting and our finance folks did a tremendous lift to get those dollars obligated so that we could put those to use on the refuges that we said we were going to do it.

To do the project that we said that we would do next slide.

The refuge system really owes its conservation success, at least in part, to our commitment to fostering strong public and private partnerships and serving as a vital asset to local communities. Our ability to fulfill our critical mission really hinges on the dedication and collaboration of a diverse array of.

Partners, we have 180 friends groups.

These are dedicated groups enhanced that enhance refuge experiences.

They support local local communities and they amplify.

Directions voice. We have more than 50 youth employment partners that help us recruit nearly 800 interns and fellows.

This is the refuge system in zesting. In future conservation leaders.

We have 23,000 volunteers that contribute countless hours to habitat restoration, wildlife monitoring and visitor education, and then thousands of state, county, private tribal partnerships, collaborative efforts with these.

Land owners, conservation organizations. Certainly the honeymoon Wildlife Conservation Council.

And cultural and local community groups foster a landscape scale approach to conservation. So as you can see.

Partnerships are not merely a matter of convenience. They are an absolute necessity for the National Wildlife Refuge system, and they've been relied on for a long time to provide basic operations and broader support.

For example, one Midwest Refuge manager reported that partners contributed to 90% of annual habitat restoration efforts.

Guess what? That's not uncommon.

The fish mileage services declining capacity has placed our ability to form and foster partnerships in great peril.

With viewer staff to coordinate, volunteer programs, engage with community groups, and cultivate relationships with neighboring land owners.

The very foundation of the refuge system is eroding.

Staffing shortages have forced many refugees to cut back or eliminate volunteer programs, hindering the invaluable contributions of those dedicated individuals. Donate their time and expertise to support the refuge system without strong partnerships.

The National refuge system's ability to conserve wildlife, to protect habitat, to connect people with nature, to provide access to hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife dependent activities that will be severely compromised. We risk losing not only the ecological integrity of these vital lands, but also the INV.

Contributions.

Our partners who extend the reach and impact of conservation efforts far beyond what the Republic system could achieve along this declining capacity and the resulting inability to maintain refuges and provide services, can erode public trust and diminish support for the refuge system, further jeopardizing its future.

In closing, I just wanna say let's work together to ensure that these baths and vital landscapes remind vibrant and essential for generations to come.

I can tell you it is incredibly difficult for people that work on national life refuges to admit the things that we can't do because it's we feel like it's a reflection of The Who we are and what we do.

But if we don't talk about it, then who will?

And who can we partner together with to really tell the true story?

What the state of the refuge system is in, Mr. Chair. With that, I will turn it back to you. And again I thank you for the opportunity.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:24:51

Yeah. Thank you, Cynthia.

An incredible amount of information.

There, let's take some time.

I see Mark Kennedy's got his hand up.

Let's take some time to visit with Cynthia and answer any Questions Council members may have.

Mark Kenley and then to Mr. George Nunklin.

**MH** **Mark H.** 1:25:13

Thanks John.

Yeah. It's Mark Henley with California waterfowl.



I was just curious, Cynthia, on the refuge closures, is it best for us to try to contact the refuge manager directly to talk about those?

Reductions and hunt opportunities, or what's the best way of getting more information?

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:25:34

Yeah, I think maybe starting with the original refugee.

So what we did is that right, we're in.

We're in fiscal year 25 and we recognize that we have to, even though we're under a continuing resolution.

Hopefully they figure that out by the end of Friday.

All that we're hearing, that you all are hearing there will be a continuing resolution through March, but we have to still manage for what could come, which our planning target was taken like a -, 6% decrease.

And so with the fish, live service said is if you have to take a -, 6% decrease, what are the things you're not going to be able to do?

And so these are some of the examples that we have had to make really difficult decisions about. We don't want to do any of those.

Maybe we won't have to.

It'll depend on what their appropriations actually come in at.

But until Congress passes a budget, we won't know.

So we are in this planning for the worst.

Situation we have to put things out there that we're not gonna be able to do because we simply can't do everything.

So I guess like I would encourage you to give her a call.

And and and and have those conversations with him.

**MH** **Mark H.** 1:26:55

Great. Thank you. Happy to do that.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:26:58

Tell you about. Thank you.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:27:00

George dunklin.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:27:02

Thank you.

Thank you, Cynthia.

This is George Dunklin.

I'm in.

I'm in near Stuttgart, AR.

I'm a been of over 40 year volunteer Ducks Unlimited.

So extremely involved with the past President, organization runner Honey Lodge called Five Oaks Duck Lodge.

I've been doing that for 41 years.

I.

I I just was blown away by your presentation and with the the services faced with on on a daily basis these these budget.

Decline is just incredible that you've had to face and and I'm sure inflation has just been.

Ripping your heart out.

Also, losing the amount of people you've lost.

That's just. That's incredible.

We in Arkansas, we have about lower 320,000 acres of critical wintering habitat for mallards.

You probably know of our refugees here, Dell bumpers and Cache River, and several of those. And when you look at bottle land, hardwoods, it's the largest in the in the world right here in Arkansas.

And then you add on what Arkansas gave it. Fish has about 60,000 acres for waterfowl, so.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:28:03

Ah.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:28:07

It's just not much left.

What? What can we do as a Council?

Or how can we help you?

It changes what's going on. John might be a question for you, Mr. Chairman as well.

What? What can we do to to help be better partners and to help alleviate this problem?

Because this this trend line is not good at all for putting.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:28:29

Cynthia, I'm gonna let you off the hook.

I I think you'll probably appreciate that, right?

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:28:35

Well, I think well, maybe and I really appreciate that. But but I I do think I have a couple of points that won't get me fired. How about that?

**JD** **John Devney** 1:28:44

That's fine.

I'll let you.

I'll let you do that and I'll fill in from there as can others, yeah.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:28:48

OK.

OK.

Maybe I can tee it up and then you can.

You I can do a handoff. Part of thing, right?

I.

I mean part of the part of the challenge that we've had is that we haven't done very good job of letting people know the facts, right. What I gave you are facts.

These are facts about the amount, the number of points that we have and what we've lost.

The challenge that we have is that it has been sustained now, like I have people that are getting their ten year certificate and they think this is the way that it's always been.

I think we finally have to start to change how we talk about it. And like I said, we're very proud.

We're proud about what we do.

We're passionate about our works.

It's really hard for us to tell this side of the story.

I think that when people talk about the National Life Refuge system, it becomes more impactful as the pot as opposed to talking about one off refuges, right? But when we talk about the vastness of the national.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:29:52  
Mm hmm. Yep.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:29:55  
Refuge system from the US Virgin Islands. Pass main Arctic.  
Pass the Hawaiian islands.  
Forget those Guam, Saipan, American Samoa, before we get back to San Diego, and that is the vastness of the National Life Refuge system.  
We are definitely stronger together than we are as individual refuge.  
Mr. Chairl, pass the baton for the rest of the story.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:30:23  
Yeah, I'll.  
Yeah, I've. I've got some thoughts.  
But Colin and Lantani both have their hands up.

**CO** **Collin O'Mara** 1:30:34  
Hey John, I'm happy to. I'm going to kind of stay on the same vein as John as George as George, I mean. But John, John, jump in first.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:30:42  
No, I'll. I'll pass it on to go ahead. Go ahead.

**CO** **Collin O'Mara** 1:30:43  
OK.  
So yeah, at first I think it was fantastic and please share you know, please share have Doug share this blessing and kind of get it out. And I think all of our groups have to, you know, find ways to make this more common knowledge.  
Six years ago, when we were putting together the Great American Outdoors Act, you know, a lot of folks in the screen were the ones that were trying to force the refuge system into that pill, which led to the, you know, \$400 million that you all have.

Done a better job spending than most, the other most. The other Land Management agencies.

There's an opportunity to increase that again, but the reason that a lot of us were pushing for.

10 or 15% for the refuge during those negotiations.

The reason that it ended up at 5% is that at that time your maintenance backlog list I think was less than a billion dollars, while the parks I think was, I don't know, \$475 trillion or some nonsense number. And so if there.

That was a joke. If there's a way that like to have a have the biggest possible deferred maintenance list, that's practical, that's reasonable.

It will significantly help us in those negotiations this year.

So you said I think 2.5 or 2.6 billion.

Now I'm guessing that number is higher than that, but you know, I think a lot of us would like to see that number at 10 or 15% of the next goal.

You know, to try to get that number up as a way to get at the backlog.

And there's also the appropriations issue with, you know, staffing and just the cuts you've seen all across the board.

But there may be some opportunities with the new administration on the, you know to to do the maintenance piece in one part, you know, other habitat restoration to another set of investments. And then we have the fights in appropriate.

Trying to run both OPS and, you know capital through your same appropriation lines, just not.

It's just not enough for you guys.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:32:13

And and I really appreciate that Colin, and you know some of the challenge we have is that we're also trying to be realistic.

We don't inflate our deferred maintenance backlogs just to get funding, right?

Like, we're just not gonna do that.

We're gonna give you what it is.

That would have also gonna try to give you is what it really takes to manage what we have. So we don't ever get to that point of deferred. We should be operating in this life cycle maintenance of.

**JD John Devney** 1:32:33

Thank you.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:32:41

Congress, this is what we need to actually administer the reputation.

As you intended it to under the national Refuge System Improvement Act in 1997 and so, so I get that perspective, but we do struggle with. We also are trying to be judicious with the dollars that we get to be efficient with them and to do what.

We've said that we were going to do with those and whether it's storm supplemental dollars, we have the same thing there.

The IRA dollars.

The bill dollars some of our challenges. You know, Congress doesn't necessarily.

By regular order, the way that they used to and and when it came to the bill dollars, the IRA dollars, those didn't come through the Appropriations Committee.

They came through the authorizing committee and and some of those authorized committees that we're in were up against some, you know, people that have pretty big needs and budgets. And somehow it feels like we get lost at the table in those convers.

Ations.

**CO Collin O'Mara** 1:33:44

All that and you guys are more realistic and more that's not rewarding those processes, right?

And I think, you know, I've been working with your team during Sandy, right? We were able to put together big numbers, which led to the amazing improvements of prime locations up and down the coast.

I think I would just encourage again being realistic, but like you know to George's point, factoring in for inflation, I mean the cost of actually doing things.

I mean, giving yourself more of a margin because an estimate from five years ago is garbage today, right?

And I just worry that a lot of things wind up on a list and they're not indexed for either inflation or just.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:34:08

I don't know.

**CO Collin O'Mara** 1:34:12

You know the cost of everything.

So just thinking about how I'm just, I'm worried about a scenario where the Forest Service still says they have 10 billion.

Service as they have.

You know, they still have 13 billion. You guys say you have 2 1/2 billion like, oh, we'll just make it proportional in the negotiations where, you know, the Park Service hasn't spent a lot of their money yet, right.

I mean like, I mean I think they operate like 25 or 26% less I heard. And so again, it's the kind of things that helps us help you if we can figure that out together.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:34:38

Sharon, I really appreciate that. And I guess one last thing, I'll say the the Fish Life Service perspective, you know the go the first go around the National Fish hatchery system wasn't included in Great American outdoors.

It's certainly something that the Fish and Wildlife Service would like to see that I would like to see that we include the national fish hatchery system as well, which to me says that we should then perhaps then an increase in percentage would come along with that.

Thanks Kellen.

**JD John Devney** 1:35:06

Cynthia's thanks Colin land.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:35:06

I appreciate your thoughts.

**LT Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:35:11

Yeah. Cynthia. Thank you so much for that presentation.

It was kind of depressing and I think, like you said, it's not anything new, but I think you are changing your tune a little bit about it, which I totally encourage you to

continue to do.

I understand the kind of overall plight that the refuge system is placing, but you saw Mark get real excited real quick when you start talking about refuges that are having real impacts. And Mark, I hope that you're able to kind of figure out a way forward there.

But I also think you know these refugees are in everybody's backyard.

And so I think addressing.

Having even refuge staff in those places talk about those specific problems I think will help.

You know, I think I'm pretty impressed with the 48% Great American Outdoors Act and also the 98% on IRA. You guys are putting the money on the ground, which is awesome.

Kudos to your team for doing that.

It should be, as Colin just said, 25% of the National Park system like we got to spend this money, especially if we're asking for more.

That all said, and I think the appropriations process and everything like I want us to start thinking about dedicated funding to for the.

For the for the official Life service, just because, like you said, Cynthia, you're up against a lot of other budgets and a lot of other people without that dedicated funding. I think we're gonna have this problem for, you know, eons. And I think it's always gonna be the.

Agency that gets the least.

And so, you know, if that's expanding the duck stamp or something like it, like, I think those are things that to be to be considered.

But again, appreciate all the work that you and your team do just to make things happen at a refuge level.

And look forward to kinda trying to figure out what those opportunities are going forward so you guys can do more work.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:36:47

Thank you, Joel Webster.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:36:50

Yeah. Just real quick, Cynthia.

Thanks for the presentation and I really appreciate the slides.



I just wanna make sure that we get those to Doug.  
So they're up on the website because I'd like to share them with my team.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:37:03

I was gonna make a specific request that we get the presentation cause lots of really good impactful information.

I'll just, since nobody else has their hands up. I don't mean to cut off commentary.

You know George is living in it in the heart of the Mississippi Oluvia Valley.

We've seen, especially in places like Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, California.

Lots of parts of the country that are really important, especially to wintering waterfowl. I think we're starting to see this issue through a different lens than we would have 20 years ago. If we look at what's happened with storms and changing agriculture in Louisiana, if we look at.

The change in agricultural practices in the Arkansas Rice Prairie.

Places our National Wildlife refuges play a far higher.

All in sustaining wintering waterfall populations they have at any other point in our history.

And George, you live in Arkansas.

I don't you know, number of you hunt in Louisiana.

I don't get there as much as I would like to, but I don't see that trend reversing.

We're going to need more out of our public trust assets to sustain waterfowl.

You know, waterfall populations, waterfall habitat and consequently waterfall hunting.

We're going to demand more rather than less out of our public trust assets.

And that was the reason I wanted to socialize this conversation. Simon myself.

I know Colin.

Folks from your team were there in February when Cynthia gave us a similar presentation that she and Siva organized, and I my goal with this today is leave everybody with the response that George had.

Is holy crap. We have a massive conservation challenge here.

That while we've been working on farm bills and we've been working on all the rest of things that are of really high importance, we're not forgetting about the refuge program as we're advocating.

And I think from my vantage point, George, you asked a question.

What do we need to do?

I think we've got to be real clear with the incoming administration that we want significant but incremental progress on the Fish and Wildlife services score function. Especially guys like you and I care about both refuges and migratory bird program. But we're going to have to work the hill Inappropriators better and and start to tell the story of the the the story that Cynthia shared with us today. And back in February.

So we can start making the case, as Collin said, for an increased funding and the reauthorization of ropa, but operations.

How do we deal with staffing, Congressman?

Chairman Westerman's got some interesting ideas that were part of his habitat bill, but this is gonna take a big left from the community and I think.

Sort of. Is, is this Council? Maybe in its waning days?

I wanted to share this with everybody to get you all, all you great minds in all your organizations thinking about what we can do collectively.

I saw another hand go up here, I think Crowder.

**MC** **Michael Crowder** 1:40:38

Yeah. Thanks John.

And I want to reiterate.

Completely agree with you and George totally.

Not just people from DC.

From DC, we need to keep that message on with with local users and especially duck hunters and and I've. I've heard a lot in my area my my local complex and I was just texting with George.

Is that when I was running a private duck club, I had more people working for me than my complex manager that had three refuges and it's not that he doesn't want to do it. He doesn't have the money or people to do it and we have to keep.

Reiterating that that's why it's.

So important that we buy duck stamp and then keep people.

Into the process to make sure du and Delta and all these other organizations that are on here that we're, we're here to support Cynthia and her team and and got to keep that message going.

So thank you, John.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:41:34

Beth.

Any other comments or questions for Cynthia?

**LT** **Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:41:42

John. Yeah, I I think you mentioned it earlier, but maybe this is like the last thing that the Council can do before this next administration comes in is write a letter to talk about what you just said about setting them up to think about this increase and I.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:41:43

And.

**LT** **Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:41:57

Mean I would.

I would love to have the Council send a letter like that.

No, it's right before Christmas and we only got a couple of days.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:42:04

Joel Webster.

**LT** **Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:42:06

You know, we come back before the 20th, but I just keep that.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:42:11

Webster this had come through your purview.

I I'm I'm happy to work with other stakeholders in drafting that letter and transmitting it before the holidays if you're amenable.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:42:27

Just the group think.

I mean, I know their sensitivities and how we'll be perceived with the \*\*\*\* \*\* under a administration from a different party submitting a letter.

Versus.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:42:39

I'll just. I'll just, I'll just there's no sense to be cloaking at.

Ducks Unlimited CWANSSF in delta are transmitting transition Team landing team documents to both Doi Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA.

And refuge funding is at the very top of that.

So I'll just just know that that that activity is underway.

Just for all your all's benefit.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:43:15

I think that's great.

I mean, I think if folks think that such a letter would be well received from this group, I'm more than open to it.

I do think we need to deliver that message.

I'm just asking the question, is this the right group to send a a letter to the incoming administration or should it come maybe from ad database CP or something else? I'm just.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:43:35

WCPAWC PS:, another likely candidate.

Joel, you and I know some folks, right? So.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:43:42

Yeah.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:43:44

Maybe maybe it is better coming from awcp rather than a chartered fodka that may cease to exist.

Relative may cease to exist relatively soon.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:43:56

And I and I. Yeah, absolutely.

And I just think I think we just to the Fish and Wildlife service like we want to help here and just want to make sure that we do so in a way that'll be received the best.

So maybe that's the way to do it.

Yeah.

**JC** **Jeff Crane** 1:44:12

Yeah, I I don't know that doing it from this spaca on the waning days of this administration is gonna help the cause. Just looking at it from the macro political sense. And I think a WC, PSA better route and then the efforts that you referenced, John, just my.  
Two cents on it.

**JD John Devney** 1:44:33

Well, I think you've got my word.  
Is incoming chair of Awcp.  
Trains train can invoke his staff.  
Whose outgoing president of Awcp and Joel Webster, is incoming Awcp vice chair, that we will prioritize this for action right after the first of the year if that's. If if everybody's cool with that.

**CO Collin O'Mara** 1:45:02

And John, one thought we could actually see if you know awcp would be open to allowing some of the organizations are on this call to kind of sign that letter the way we do with other things.  
So you know 'cause like I love to Michael on I'd love to have, you know, give me some other folks that are, you know, not leading one of those groups.

**JD John Devney** 1:45:12

Yep.

**CO Collin O'Mara** 1:45:19

Wayne, of course.  
I mean, just different folks.

**JD John Devney** 1:45:23

I will.  
I'm gonna diarize it for the first full week in January.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:45:35

So, Mr. Chair, if I may, I appreciate that. I would remind folks the facts, the National

Monarch Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, passed by unanimous consent in the Senate and 419 to one in the House.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:45:54

Oh, the good old days.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:45:54

I'm not sure many others can say that.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:45:57

Yeah, all the good old days.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:45:59

I know.

I appreciate that and I think one thing to you know, I try to remind folks like.

This isn't going to change overnight.

But we have to start somewhere, and this is the long game, right?

We know that this is in the long game and in addition to appropriations, we're also going to have to figure out where to get other dollars as well. I think that's our reality.

I really appreciate all of the time that you all gave us today, and thank you again, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity.

It's always, always a privilege to talk about the national prefix system, even if it is not a great story at this time.

Land it is a little on the depressing side, but I can tell you there's still birds out there and they're still gonna come.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:46:51

Right. Cynthia, can you work with Doug so he can just e-mail us a copy of the presentation just so everybody's got it live.

**MT** **Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:46:58

Yes, I want to make sure that we got that percentage right on the IRA dollars before we get it to you.

**JD John Devney** 1:47:04

That's perfect.

**HD Hobbs, Doug** 1:47:04

Yeah, I'm in. Courtney's already working on the updates, Cynthia. So I'll work with Courtney and we'll get the slides out.

**MT Martinez, Cynthia T** 1:47:10

Courtney is amazing and just makes all kinds of this kind of stuff happens. So you're in good hands.

**JD John Devney** 1:47:17

Perfect.

Is we move to adjournment here.

I'll just take a moment to express my appreciation to all of you on the Council who have put, who have leaned into this process.

You know, obviously I've gave land a little crap this morning.

But dealing with him last but.

You know, candidly, I wish we had a lot more non led voluntary partnerships.

We could walk away from this Council.

Celebrating. But if that's the one we're gonna celebrate, that's a fairly consequential outcome.

But, you know, often times.

With these councils it you can have a diversity of people that may or may just frankly be happy to be there.

But this Council's been one that has worked hard at the subcommittee level. We've had great leadership at the subcommittee chair levels that have kept.

The business of the Council moving.

And so whatever the future of this particular composition of the Council is, I want to express my sincere appreciation for all your work.

Your earnest and hard work.

And wish you, you and your families all a wonderful Christmas and a happy holidays.

And with that, I will.

Ask for a motion to adjourn.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:49:00  
So moved.

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:49:00  
I'll make the motion.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:49:03  
I think Mr. George Dunklin made the motion.  
Can we have a second?

**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:49:09  
Oh, second.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:49:09  
Joel Webster all in favor signify by saying aye.  
Hi so moved. Motion. Adjourned passes.

**LT** **Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:49:13  
Alright.

**MC** **Michael Crowder** 1:49:13  
Hi.

**JC** **Jeff Crane** 1:49:14  
Aye.

**JD** **John Devney** 1:49:18  
Thank you everybody for your work and Merry Christmas to you and all your families.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:49:23  
Merry Christmas.

**LT** **Land Tawney (Guest)** 1:49:23  
Thanks, Mr. chairman. Thanks John.



**JW** **Joel Webster** 1:49:23  
Thank you.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:49:23  
Thank you, John.

**HD** **Hobbs, Doug** 1:49:24  
Yeah. Thanks.

**AS** **Andrew Schmidt** 1:49:25  
Thank you. Thank you.

**MM** **Myers, Christian M** 1:49:25  
Thank you. Bye bye.

**HD** **Hobbs, Doug** 1:49:26  
Bye.

**GD** **George Dunklin** 1:49:26  
It's been sent to me.

**CO** **Collin O'Mara** 1:49:26  
Thanks John.

**CO** **Collin O'Mara** 1:49:27  
Good job, John.

□ **Hobbs, Doug** stopped transcription