

# Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council

## SUMMARY OF MEETING

December 19, 2022

The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council was convened for its first meeting at 8:30 A.M. on December 19, 2022. The meeting was held virtually using the Microsoft Teams platform. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

### **Council members present:**

#### *Co-Chairs:*

John Devney  
Collin O'Mara

Colin Beck  
Ryan Busse  
Jeff Crane  
Michael Crowder  
George Dunklin  
Bethany Erb  
Dan Forester  
Cole Mannix  
Lucas Martinez  
Lydia Parker  
Joel Pederson  
Land Tawney  
Keith Tidball  
Tony Wasley  
Joel Webster  
Ed Arnett\*  
Kathleen Falk\*  
Mark Hennelly\*  
Blake Henning\*  
Wayne Hubbard\*  
Marshal Johnson\*  
Simon Roosevelt\*  
Theodore Sedgwick\*  
Roberta Salazar-Henry\*  
Michael (Ford) VanFossan\*  
\* *Alternate member*

#### *Ex Officio*

Martha Williams, Director – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ron Regan, Executive Director – Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

**Convene, Member Roll Call, and Announcement of HWCC Co-Chairs - *Doug Hobbs, HWCC Designated Federal Officer***

Hobbs announced that Collin O'Mara and John Devney were selected as Co-Chairs selected by the HWCC membership.

**Comments of Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland**

Secretary Haaland thanked the HWCC members for their service on the Council and discussed Departmental priorities.

**Meeting overview**

Co-Chairs Collin O'Mara and John Devney discussed their roles in the FACA group and how they are jointly co-chairing the team. O'Mara provided an overview of agenda.

Prior to Under Secretary Moffitt joining the meeting, there was a short discusses of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Dan Forester gave a quick background and current status update on CWD. Inadequate funding is an issue and more research is needed to inform monitoring and management decisions.

**Overview and Update on Animal Disease Surveillance and Management: *Jenny Lester Moffitt, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture***

Highlighted 3 items:

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza - Hugh impacts to domestic poultry and wild bird populations. Had to de-populate nearly 52M domestic poultry. Detected in 48 states and bio-security is a major issue.

Chronic Wasting Disease - Still learning with the rest of the conservation community. FY22 granted \$9.6M to states and tribes for research. National Research Institute has a strong role. Janet Bucknell pinned in the chat, information about the CWD Symposium Website

SARS COV 2 - It is found in wildlife species populations along with humans. Difficult to tell how extensive it is. Research being performed in how it transfers from one species to another.

Wayne Hubbard asked if and how are we communicating any research finding to our non-traditional partners.

**Overview of Private Land Conservation and Farm Bill programs implemented by the Department of Agriculture: *Bidisha Bhattacharyya, Senior Advisor - Climate and Conservation, U.S. Department of Agriculture***

Highlighted USDA Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Investments - Climate Smart Commodities. Have an open Request for Information (RFI) to external partners and the public to help inform them on how to best spend the billions of dollars they received.

Talked about Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) - Emphasis and the 3 Frameworks released by NRCS

Piloting a Big Game Migration Corridor and Conservation effort in Wyoming

Discussed Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Collin O'Mara - Should tell this success story, Ed Arnett- Asked a question about match. Should change policy to allow for more creativity around match. Wayne Hubbard, commented about creating spaces for wildlife and engaging diverse communities. Mark Hennelly, rental rate caps in California are a barrier. George Dunklin, is USDA going to do a wetland pledge under this administration? Simon Roosevelt- MOU signing in Wyoming, is there any direct connection to SO 3362?

**Overview of Wildfire, Restoration and Recreation on National Forest System lands: *Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture***

Wildland Fire - 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy/Updates to wildfire transmission risk

Connectivity - Land management plan. How are habitats shifting?

Infrastructure and Equitable Access - Discussion about match issue and FY21 FS Economic Report is available.

Collin O'Mara, what are the spend rates for IRA? Lydia Parker, What does equity look like, how are we increasing access? Joel Webster, Thank you and request their agencies review of the MAPS ACT. Tod Sedgwick, Please highlight the Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, FL. Colin Beck, Tribes are lacking the long-term staff capacity. Wayne Hubbard, Does funding tie to EJ40? How about employment opportunities for diverse groups? How has co-stewardship been working.

**Public comment period** (See HWCC website for some of the public statements provided by presenters.)

- Hardy Kern – American Bird Conservancy - Lead should be phased out completely on FWS NWR & NP's. This is not a stance against hunters and anglers. Very little information on state fish and wildlife agencies. Advocated for exchange programs as a possible solution
- Chandra Rosenthal – Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility - History of lead being harmful to humans. Request nationwide ban on FWS lands.
- Kylah Staley – Center for Biological Diversity - Recommend phase-out of lead ammunition and tackle on NWRS. Cited eagle study.
- Elaine Leslie - National Park Service Conservation (?)- Lead is a huge concern
- Mike Leonard - American Sportfishing Association - Discussed loon example in the Northeast. Lead tackle does not have population impacts. Discouraged a rule banning the use of lead fishing tackle.

**Overview and discussion of issues related to future management of the use of lead-based firearm ammunition and fishing tackle on public lands and waters managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

Summary of lead-related provisions of 2022 Hunt/Fish rule: *Mitch Ellis, Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning Chief – National Wildlife Refuge System*

Ellis presented on the NWRS Hunt & Fish Regulation and discussed the interplay between the regulation and the NWRS Improvement Act. Since 2017, there have been nearly 2,700 new opportunities for hunting and fishing. Lead comments have been a vast majority of comments that come in back through the Federal register. There are 9 Refuges looked at proposing requirement for non-lead phased out in Fall 2026. No final decisions have been made, must go through the formal process.

Joel Webster, has FWS explored incentive-based programs for non-lead? Jeff Crane, were there specific issues related to the Refuges that are proposing lead phase-out? Ryan Busse, FWS should explore incentive-based opportunities, model after waterfowl conservation. Michael Crowder, asked about Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP's) and why aren't Refuges following them, specifically discussed Eastern Washington.

Impacts of lead exposure on wildlife health: *Todd Katzner Ph.D., Research Wildlife Biologist, Forest & Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey*

Katzner gave a PowerPoint presentation on the impacts lead has on wildlife. (See the HWCC website for a copy of the full presentation.)

Keith Tidball had a question about NH loon data and population modeling. Joel Webster, any research on people and demographics...who uses it and how to target them?

Summary of factors for addressing the use of lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle on National Wildlife Refuge System lands and waters, including available administrative mechanisms and opportunities: *Cynthia Martinez, Chief – National Wildlife Refuge System*

Martinez discussed some of the factors to consider when making decisions on NWR's. These include but are not limited to 1) Endangered Species Act (ESA) 2) National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act 3) Bald and Golden Eagle Act and 4) Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Cynthia mentioned the Joint Task Force Working Group w/AFWA and increasing tribal engagement.

Lydia Parker, how are you going to engage with tribes? John Devney, asked USFWS Director Williams, how do Sportsmen best engage to find a solution?

**ACTION ITEM:** Land Tawney asked for the North American Non-Lead Partnership to present on the lead issue at a future meeting. Leland Brown from that partnership was in attendance and agreed he would be willing to engage the group. Jim Heffelfinger was also asked to speak about lead.

**Council discussion and identification of future issues for consideration**

(See HWCC website for Excel Spreadsheet with issues that were identified.)

**Closing comments by FWS Director Martha Williams**

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 P.M.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Douglas Hobbs  
Designated Federal Officer  
Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council

Collin O'Mara and John Devney  
Co-Chairs  
Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.