



**Meeting Date:** December 3, 2019

**Meeting Location:** Atlanta, GA

**Attendees (in-person or via phone):**

AFWA Representatives	WSFR Representatives	Guests
Rusty Garrison (GA) – Co Chair	Paul Rauch (FWS-HQ) Co-Chair	Tammy Brooks – Chair - FACWG
Bryan Burhans (PA)	Mike Piccirilli (IR2, IR4)	Julie Kempf – Vice Chair - FACWG
Lisa Holt (AK)	Colleen Sculley (IR1) - phone	Mike Sawyers (MA) - phone
Mark Tisa (MA) - phone	Clint Riley (IR5, IR7)	Scott Knight – WSFR HQ
Dustin Temple for Martha Williams (MT)	Lisa Van Alstyne (HQ)	Christy Vigfusson – WSFR HQ
Lane Kisonak – (Counsel)	Bob Curry (HQ)	Tim Smith – WSFR HQ
	Greg Siekaniec (IR11)	John Frampton - CAHSS
	Larry Mellinger (Counsel)	Marilyn Lawal - WSFR (IR2, IR4)

**TUESDAY, December 3, 2019**

**Meeting Kick-off:** Introductions, logistics and agenda review (AFWA Co-Chair and Paul Rauch)

**AFWA Update** (Lane Kisonak)

- AFWA Executive Communications Council – A draft charter is being developed, and this is a way to process high level issues, priorities, regulatory issues, etc. It will be discussed at the AFWA December Executive Committee meeting.
- Collection of excise taxes – this topic came up with the Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council. They want to close the collection loophole with online purchasing. AFWA wants to adopt a letter to send to Secretary Bernhardt to make some headway for cooperation.
- The RAWA mark-up is happening soon.
- PR modernization – we are waiting to see what happens with this.

**Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Update** (Paul Rauch)

- Strategic Communications Plan – This is an internal effort, and we have completed the research part. Colleen and Tim are co-chairs, and are putting together recommendations for strategies to use for our messaging. We hope to have that ready by the spring WSFR Chiefs meeting.
- Shared Vision – This is for program administration, as well as working with our industry partners. We are focused on assessing our internal workflow processes, what we do best, and what needs to be done while allowing for maximum flexibility. These will not only benefit us internally, but will improve our grant administration efficiency. We want to address approaches to evaluations, determinations, and create some consistency.
- Administrative funding request – we have worked through the JTF and AFWA to develop an analysis and agree on a funding level. We worked with Coast Guard to make sure language was included in their proposal.
- New organization under WSFR - Financial Assistance operations function for over \$400 M of Service (non-WSFR) grants, and is part of a larger effort for administrative services. We were happy to include this under WSFR. There was concern expressed that the admin/fiscal folks have an increasing burden with no succession plan. The new organization and sharing can help.
- Departmental Reorganization – DOI has been reorganized into 12 regions. There are positive changes, but challenges as well. Regional Directors are meeting to discuss proposals and changes that present challenges (state regional designations issues, uncertainties, budgets). A unified recommendation will be drafted for the Director to submit to DOI. Reports are due to the Director by Dec 18.



- Transition to Grant Solutions – Scott Knight presented on this topic. To increase transparency, the HHS Grant Management System, Grant Solutions, will be implemented in late April. PRISM was lacking in utility, so perhaps this is a good change. The timing not ideal, but WSFR is not in control of that. There is currently a lot of work with roles and responsibilities being done. The system does include interaction with recipients. Change management is the biggest issue. FWS will be the first DOI Bureau to go live. There will be virtual training. Ranking committees will be within the system itself. NOFOs will also have an internal process. The vendor will do trainings.
  - State representatives expressed concern about the timing of the training and required implementation dates for new system, especially for early grant submitters. WSFR responded that they will not let any funds be lost due to this delay, and will figure out a way to get the funds through the system.

#### **Review Action Items from April 2019 JTF Meeting (Bob Curry)**

- Reviewed the document on Action items that was provided to the group.

#### **AFWA Reversion Survey (Lane Kisonak)**

- Had responses from 17 States. There were a few interesting trends:
  - Where there were reversions for PR funding, the causes were discernible and there were not any surprises.
  - Area of highest consensus:
    - States were generally comfortable with sharing information, and were satisfied with the level of communication with the regions.
    - All States were interested in pooling Section 4 and Section 10 funds.
  - Some States were interested in an alternative destination for reverted funds. Concerns expressed on where the reverted funds are directed, and how they can be directed to PR/DJ programs. Is there something that can be done to help reduce the rate of reversions?
  - Discussions from the group: Many reversions come on the back end of long-standing grants when they are closed and don't make it through the safety margins.

#### **State Fish & Wildlife Agency White Paper (Lane Kisonak and Larry Mellinger)**

Desired Outcome: *Identify next steps.*

- Lane discussed the process of the development of the white paper since the JTF April meeting, and input from AFWA and WAFWA legal committees. The WSFR Chiefs also provided feedback on the white paper, and emphasized that any model legislation should align with 50 CFR 80.2.
- Language in 50 CFR 80 doesn't line up clearly with assent language.
- Types of control – there was substantial discussion on types of loss of control, and how much of the problem the JTF or AFWA could address without unintended consequences. There was consensus that there is little opportunity for legislative fixes, and therefore little reason to consider a revision to 50 CFR 80.2.

**DECISION POINT:** We will table the issue of defining state fish and wildlife agencies unless the AFWA Executive Committee says otherwise. Lane will brief the Executive Committee next week at their meeting in DC.

#### **Issue ID (Clint Riley and Paul Rauch)**

FACWG Role in issue vetting process and 2020 Issue ID Memo

Desired Outcome: *Agree on FACWG role in issue vetting process and agree on language for January 2020 request to State Directors for potential issues.*

- See handout.
- FACWG Role in issue vetting process – we made some simple improvements via the FACWG on their role in the JTF Issue ID and recommendation process. There was discussion that the FACWG would contact States to scope the topic further, as needed.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
Joint Federal-State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF)



- 2020 Issue ID Memo – There was discussion about ways get more responses. Some rewording was recommended to make sure the entire message is read to put the main items in front.
- There was a request that the issue papers are delivered to JTF members, FACWG, and WSFR Chiefs at the same time to allow for adequate review in advance of the Spring Meeting.

**ACTION ITEM:** Tammy will reply to Bob's email with a sentence/edits added to step 3 in the JTF Topic ID Protocol. We will then make it a clean copy to go back out to the group. We will modify this as needed.

**ACTION ITEM:** Streamline the JTF Memo for Annual Call for Issues and get it out for action/review in January through the communication protocol.

**Policy Development** (Bob Curry and Christy Vigfusson)

*Desired Outcome:* Inform JTF on DRAFT policy development protocol and discuss using the protocol to develop a process to prioritize policy needs.

- This is part of ongoing WSFR Visioning work, and identified as Task 3. We had a retreat with WSFR Chiefs and one topic was how we go about developing a written procedure for policy development. We began looking at a draft, and this Policy protocol is now Christy's NCLI project. It will be developed between WSFR HQ and Regions and will go to States for review. There have been calls for developing a charter, which we will use to set priorities. We will report on progress at the Spring meeting.
- Christy said to contact her if anyone has interest in participating. Lisa Holt (or someone on her staff) expressed interest.

**ACTION ITEM:** Christy will put together a formal request to ask for 3-4 volunteers (in addition to Lisa-AK) who are interested in participating on the policy development protocol team.

- Paul expressed an idea to re-evaluate if the WSFR program overall is meeting the needs of its customers; is it satisfying conservation needs, or do we need to explore other opportunities? He talked about coming up with a shared vision on where we want to focus our efforts to better serve the conservation needs of today rather than those from years ago. There was much discussion on this topic including these comments (abbreviated):
  - "Always good to relook at it."
  - "Some people trying to define the program in relation to audit findings. Here's what we're about: it's conservation."
  - "Ties into what AFWA is doing for relevancy."
  - "Different parts of the country have different needs for conservation".
  - "Are there new demands that we could make some changes on to be where we want to be."
  - "CAHSS is an example of how new things can be included."
  - Discussed marketing as an example.
  - "We spend a lot of time around eligibility issues. Where are the sideboards?"
  - "If there is flexibility, do we really want to go there?"
  - "Are there sideboards that we want to set firmly?"
  - "Timing: AFWA is undertaking a strategic planning process now, so timing might be good."
  - "Tools in relevancy roadmap."
  - "Sideboards are interpreted differently."

This topic will be discussed at the AFWA Executive Committee meeting next week.

**ACTION ITEM:** Christy will put together a request for the FACs to distribute asking for input.

**Subrecipient/SubContractor Monitoring Strategy** (Scott Knight)

*Desired Outcome:* Establish guidance subteam and assign tasks.

- The draft OIG Management Letter was discussed.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
Joint Federal-State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF)



- Paul described the basics, and emphasized the benefits of having FASO policy under the WSFR umbrella.
- Providing guidance – due March 24, 2020. Discussed the process we intend to use. The deadline is part of a negotiation.
- Tight turn around to get this draft letter out.
- Timelines – discussed by Scott Knight
  - Provide guidelines to States;
  - After group agrees on draft, will submit to the JTF for review through communications protocol; and
  - Guidance will to be issued by March 24, 2020.

**ACTION ITEM:** Review the draft on the subrecipient/contractor guidance.

**ACTION ITEM:** January 27, 2020 – distribute draft guidance for review.

**ACTION ITEM:** Hold conference call on February 3, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the draft guidance for the subrecipient report.

**WSFR Conservation Viewer** (Mark Tisa, Tim Smith, and Paul Rauch)

Update on Working group and status

Desired Outcome: Inform members of current status and identify next steps.

- Tim provided a presentation, and discussed industry priorities from strategic communications plan research.
- The “Public Viewer” in TRACS is now the “Conservation Viewer.” The Conservation Viewer will be brought to the JTF Spring meeting with a recommendation and the JTF will comment. Then it will go out to the States for comments and final decisions to take to the developers. Mark and Tim took the lead on this.
- Tim and Mark provided a Power Point presentation. Mark thinks the Industry Summit was very helpful. He asked industry what types of information they are interested in. Industry feels an urgency to obtain this information.
- Discussion on return on investment (ROI), and why industry wants information. The excise taxes are typically the largest check an industry writes - sometimes more than their profit. Companies such as Responsive Management and Southwick & Associates do those type of ROI studies, as well as Multistate Conservation Grant projects. It’s not WSFR’s expertise.
- Discussion that PR/DJ dollars aren’t the whole story. States often will pay for certain projects with only State dollars and use Federal funds elsewhere. There needs to be a way to capture that also.
- Focus initial efforts on what we have, while looking at what we might need.
- Benefits of Partner with a Payer was discussed. A question was asked if this is something that AFWA needs to look at. It was suggested that it would be up to AFWA. There is certainly a nexus.

**FAIR** (Scott Knight and Christy Vigfusson)

Overview of FAIR: impacts to property acquisition using WSFR Funds

Lands Chapters

Desired Outcome: Informational.

- FAIR final rule was published Aug 30, 2019.
- There were a lot of State comments to the Financial Assistance Interior Rule (FAIR). There was support that business competition is to be expected. The conflict of interest parts didn’t change anything, just highlighted it. A lot of comments were made on “data.” The Service and USGS were tasked with responding to those comments. No programs seem to be issuing anything further on data.
- Applied Yellow Book appraisals and use of SF-429 as mechanism for reporting. Can use alternative method for reporting.
- Applies to all land acquisitions
- Changes are being made to the Lands Chapter based on the first pilot Lands Training class. Once chapters publish we will distribute them via the communications protocol. FAIR was effective as of Oct. 29, 2019. One of the last minute changes to align to the FAIR were requirements for appraiser credentials. The FAIR stated that AVSO sets the guidelines for appraisers and review appraisers, so we didn’t do more.
- WSFR Policy and Training Branches, AVSO, and others developed a distance learning course for review appraisers and we encourage its use. Also being developed is an online Administrative review course.



**ACTION ITEM:** The Lands Chapters will be sent out for distribution once they are finalized using the communication protocol.

**TRACS: Lands and Facilities Matrices** (Tim Smith)

Desired Outcome: Inform members of current status and identify next steps.

- Tim provided a presentation. Over 120 participants responded to the request for comments on the lands and facilities matrices.

**ACTION ITEM:** Move forward to the Fatal Flaw review.

**TRACS: Status Update** (Tim Smith)

Current Schedule

Performance Reporting Template

Desired Outcome: Inform members of current status and identify next steps.

- Tim provided a presentation. See handout for notes and schedule. TRACS release date is now June 15, 2020. Roll-out training for 12 weeks, etc.
- We completed TRACS Alpha testing, and received over 400 comments that Dan's team will prioritize and address.
- There are a series of subgroups working on specific issues. Mike S. leads the Performance Reporting Subgroup. In Sept drafted template, revised in Oct, subgroup finalized initial template in Nov. We will present final template to the JTF at the Spring 2020 meeting.
- State Hand-off will be October 1, 2020.
- Specific date for States to begin entering data will be discussed and determined.

**TRACS: SWG Effectiveness Measures** (Tim Smith)

Desired Outcome: Inform members of current status and identify next steps.

- Tim provided a presentation. See handout for notes and next steps.

**Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sports** (John Frampton)

Update on Age Progression Study

Desired Outcome: Informational

- John provided a presentation about CAHSS's age progression study for hunting and angling participation.
- Analysis from survey was discussed.

**Selection of Format, Time and Place for Spring 2020 JTF Meeting**

Scheduling for future meetings:

- Have agenda topics at least 60 days out to determine if break-outs are needed, and if a virtual meeting is feasible.
- Perhaps a virtual meeting in December and a face-to-face in Spring as some issues call for face-to-face discussions.
- Travel/set meetings at airline hubs to ease travel.
- Suggested - 2 in-person meetings per year, based on agenda topics.

**ACTION ITEM:** Agenda topics should be drafted and distributed 60 days before the meeting.

**ACTION ITEM:** To help set possible spring meeting dates (Tuesday, Wednesday), a Doodle poll will be sent out to everyone.

**Wrap up, Review of Action Items and Decision Points** (Paul Rauch and AFWA Co-Chair)



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
Joint Federal-State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF)



**ACTION ITEM: Kelly Hepler will be recognized for his service to the JTF**  
Mike Piccirilli was recognized and applauded for his participation on the JTF since 2008.