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Management TRACKS



News from the Organization of Wildlife Planners

OWP: Ready, Willing and Able

By Chris Burkett, Wyoming Game & Fish Department

When the U.S. Congress decided to address funding issues for nongame wildlife, the Organization of Wildlife Planners was there. In fact, the OWP was active when the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Plan evolved into State Wildlife Grants (SWG), and was involved with the initial Teaming with Wildlife movement. Over the past decade, OWP members have worked hard to help state and federal wildlife professionals meet the political challenges of finding funding for species in need of conservation. Members continue to serve on national advisory boards, develop training opportunities, and deliver and participate in regional workshops on SWG planning. The OWP had a strong contingent at the recent Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy "One Year Out" meeting in Nebraska (see page 3), and members added greatly to the discussions.

Given the long history of involvement and continued participation, one might think the OWP has little left to offer. Nothing could be further from the truth. The OWP serves as a vast repository of experience and services that enhances many ongoing efforts, and is readily available to advance future initiatives.

Between now and October 1, 2005, state wildlife agencies will be developing their Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCS), documents that represent one of the most

ambitious planning efforts undertaken by the wildlife management community. Who better to assist than the organization dedicated to applying planning principals to agency operations. In fact, the OWP's first president, Douglas Crowe, literally wrote the book on the subject, *Comprehensive Planning for Wildlife Resources*. As Crowe indicates, all wildlife planning, including the creation of a CWCS, eventually comes down to answering four deceptively simple questions: "Where are we?" "Where do we want to be?" "How do we get there?" and "Did we make it?" The OWP, through its varied services, is uniquely capable of helping agencies answer these questions.

The OWP listserv is an easily accessible resource. With it, CWCS planners can connect with their counterparts across the country. A variety of federal personnel, academics, and private individuals can also be contacted through the listserv. This is an outstanding tool for brainstorming ideas, finding existing information, sharing data with others, or just making contact with people doing similar work.

The OWP also has a long tradition of teaching agencies how to create and employ planning processes. The long-standing course, *Developing Comprehensive Management Systems for Wildlife Agencies*, has been presented many times all over the country. In es-

sence, it provides participants with a broad overview on how to develop complex plans for wildlife management, such as a CWCS.

Another course, *Measuring Program Performance—Results Driven Management*, also has direct applicability to SWG planning. Although wildlife managers hate to admit it, a certain political element is associated with the SWG program. If the funding is to persist, it will be important for agencies to be able to show that progress is being made, and this course has been designed to help managers take a broader view of how to identify, report on, and use performance measures.

The OWP's membership represents centuries of wildlife planning, public participation and social science experience with varied and contentious wildlife issues in the most varied natural and political environments. If individuals or agencies have questions or need guidance on wildlife planning issues—CWCS or otherwise—the OWP stands ready to help.

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Small but Mighty

The 2004 OWP Annual Conference

By Phil King, Ohio Division of Wildlife

“Small but mighty” aptly describes the 2004 OWP Annual Conference held April 20-23 at Mohican State Park Resort in Ohio: Small in attendance, but mighty in the quality of content and amount of work accomplished. The conference was hosted by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife, with tremendous support from the Division of State Parks and Recreation.

The theme of “Building a Conservation Coalition” shone through in presentations about the many effective partnerships that exist between state wildlife agencies and other conservation entities. Also, the new performance measures workshop, developed by a select group of OWP members, made its debut. Steve McMullin (Virginia Tech), Laura Preus (Minnesota), and Rob Brooks (Montana) instructed nearly 40 participants in the one-day workshop that preceded the conference and focused on improving the techniques used to measure outcomes of a project or plan.

Conference highlights included the Weikel Award luncheon, where the esteemed Tom Niebauer from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was honored as the 2004 recipient. In addition, representatives from the Columbus Zoo gave presentations, and even brought several zoo tenants, much to the delight of OWP members. Mary Merrill, Ohio State University, led a session on generational differences, from which we all learned about the unique characteristics associated with each generational era.

Other notable guests included Allen Wentz, executive vice president of Ducks Unlimited; Steve Gray, chief of the ODNR Division of Wildlife; Tony Celebreeze, U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance; and many others.

Many attendees took part in the conference’s extracurricular activities, including a tour of Ohio’s Amish country

to learn about the unique challenges of meeting the needs of this ardent constituency. Visits to Heini’s cheese factory, a livestock auction and Lehman’s hardware store were some of the tour’s highlights, topping off with an incredible evening meal featuring Amish cooking at Der Dutchman restaurant.

On Thursday the conference venue changed from Mohican Lodge to Malabar Farm State Park. Malabar Farm is the former home of renowned conservationist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Louis Bromfield. An interpretive tour of the farm and great house provided participants with an opportunity to learn about Bromfield’s conservation legacy. The tour concluded with a business meeting and hog roast at the Pugh cabin nestled on a wooded hillside. It was here that the ceremonial passing of the chicken took place, where Michele Beucler transferred leadership of OWP to newly elected president, Shaun Keeler.

During the conference, great progress was made toward completion of OWP’s strategic plan. It will be exciting to see how the new plan will guide our organization’s efforts in the future.

The 2004 Annual Conference provided outstanding food and accommodations, a tantalizing agenda and, as promised, second-to-none hospitality. We all left eagerly anticipating next year’s conference at Sylvan Lodge in Custer State Park, S.D. For more information about the 2005 conference, see page 7.



Committee Updates

(continued from page 6)

Mann; Karen Hockett, Conservation Management Institute; Paul Vanderford, University of Wisconsin; Steven Bender, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; and Jill Mrotek, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Strategic Planning Committee

The results of the SWOT analysis session that took place at the annual conference in Ohio were distributed to the OWP membership shortly after the meeting. The distribution included the identification of six strategic issues/areas that surfaced from the analysis. The Strategic Planning Committee has drafted issue statements and direction statements for each of the six issues. These will be shared with the OWP membership soon.

Field Notes (continued from page 5)

Committee are the USFWS, U.S. Forest Service, and Arkansas Academy of Science. In addition, the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is considering our request to facilitate public involvement.

Kentucky

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources’ planning priority for the next year is to complete the CWCS, during which we’re also revising our strategic plan, including developing more outcome-based performance measures. The new Republican administration has made several leadership changes in state government but none in KDFWR. It changed the name of the Tourism Development Cabinet, to which we are administratively attached, to the Commerce Cabinet. The change has not affected our science-based programs, but it has motivated us to do a better job of showing how healthy ecosystems and fish and wildlife populations contribute to quality of life. For example, our research shows that communities with good wildlife

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Get ready for next year’s OWP conference

By Larry Gigliotti, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department

The 2005 OWP Annual Conference will be held in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. The meeting provides an excellent opportunity to combine a family vacation with the conference, as lots of interesting sites and activities are available in the surrounding area. Also, the 2005 conference agenda offers an excellent reason to bring additional agency staff to accompany our regular attendees—agenda items will relate to the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) that states are now developing, and opportunities will abound to interact with agency planning experts from around the country and to compare notes related to the CWCS. A one-day workshop, *Performance Measures for Ecosystem Management & Ecological Sustainability*, taught by Jon Haufler, is scheduled for May 22. In addition, the business meeting will take place on the last day of the conference, providing nonmembers more concentrated content the first few days and an opportunity to return to their jobs more quickly or—better yet—time to enjoy the beautiful scenery and exciting activities that the Black Hills offers.

2005 OWP Annual Conference

May 21–26
Sylvan Lake
at Custer State Park
South Dakota

“Humans in the Environment—Ecosystem Planning Approaches”

see www.owpweb.org
for agenda & location information

Committee Updates

The strength of the OWP lies in its members—that's a message received loud and clear from the OWP strategic planning work we did in Ohio this year. Our members are an extraordinary collection of knowledge, experience, skills, dedication, soul, and heart. When we bring these qualities together at our annual meetings or while working together on OWP committees or in leadership positions, we can accomplish incredible things. Without members volunteering, though, we accomplish little. Please consider volunteering this year to run for office, serve as a Regional Director or serve on a committee. It is highly rewarding to work together with other wonderful OWPer in service of our mission. In addition, having a formal role strengthens your organization's justification for future representation at OWP annual meetings and adds to your professional list of accomplishments. Please consider contacting a committee chair (page 7) or Executive Committee member (page 2) now to express your interest.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee has started work on redesigning the OWP Web site to (1) improve its functionality as a communications tool, (2) offer expanded capacity for agencies to collaborate on planning issues and projects, and (3) serve as a central, accessible data management hub for OWP's records, reports, research, and other significant documents. In May, the Executive Committee chose Silvertip Productions, Inc. as the contractor for the project. Bill Romberg will be working with Silvertip to develop the new design (a database-driven format) and transfer the information from our existing Web site to the new site. The total cost of the redesign project is \$9,000, half of which OWP has paid up front. Chris Burkett and Genevieve Pullis developed grant proposals seeking additional funds to help defray the costs. A draft site design should be available for review this fall. Once the new site is up, features will be added, and the OWP will continue to manage it with the user-friendly software application, Macromedia Contribute. Anyone interested in assisting with the redesign effort or learning how to manage the Web site's content should contact Bill Romberg at william_romberg@fishgame.state.ak.us.

In addition to the Web site redesign, the Communications Committee has re-created training course flyers and a general informational brochure in Microsoft Word, which will allow for edits. Previous versions of these documents existed in other software programs that offered less editing flexibility; now we can keep this information more current and accessible from the OWP homepage.

Education Committee

The Education Committee presented OWP's newest training product, *Measuring Program Performance—Results Driven Management*, at the annual meeting in Ohio. Steve McMullin (Virginia Tech), Rob Brooks (Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks), and Laura Preus (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources) developed the course with help from Sally Guynn and the Management Assistance Team. Rob, Steve, and Mark Burch (Alaska Department of Fish and Game) are working on a slight revision of the course, based on feedback from the participants in Ohio. Mark and Steve taught the most recent offering of the course August 20 in Pierre, S.D.

The agenda for the revised 8-hour course includes basic principles of performance measurement and evaluation, how to incorporate performance mea-

surement into a comprehensive management system, how to deal with "the dark side" of performance measurement, examples of performance measurement from state natural resource agencies, and exercises designed to get participants started on the development of a performance measurement system for their agencies.

Measuring Program Performance—Results Driven Management is a great training opportunity for agencies that want to incorporate Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies into their overall agency planning framework. If you'd like to bring this course to your agency, contact Steve McMullin at (540) 231-8847 or smcmulli@vt.edu. The course is available on demand and will be taught by experienced wildlife planners at a site that's convenient for you.

Membership Committee

Currently, 32 government organizations are paid members of OWP, including 28 state agencies, one Canadian province, and three federal agencies. Another 20 Associate Individual members and four Associate Organization members round out the membership. From the Associate Organizations come nearly 100 individuals who serve as members. A decline in the total number of government agency memberships within the last few years is occurring, which may be a reflection of tight state budgets and/or changes in personnel within state agencies.

Members interested in helping develop an outreach effort, focusing on promoting relationships with university natural resource programs and agencies, should contact Bill Romberg. Changes to your contact information can be sent to Bill also (see page 7 for contact information).

We would like to welcome our newest OWP members: Laura Preus, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Chris Miller, PBS&J Ecological Consultants; Elizabeth Barber, Barber and

Continued on next page

The Prez Sez...

A few words from our president

By Shaun Keeler, New York Department of Environmental Conservation

In April 1994, Gerry Barnhart sent me to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to attend the Organization of Wildlife Planners' "CMS" course, *Developing Comprehensive Management Systems for Wildlife Agencies*. It was my first exposure to the OWP. The course knocked my socks off, right from the get-go. The knowledge and experience that the five instructors brought to Albuquerque was just what I was looking for (and needed, without even realizing it). I became almost mesmerized as they spoke about comprehensive management systems being a "process, not an end"; emphasized the importance of the "social inventory"; described the need to focus on outputs, outcomes and benefits; explained the reasons for developing real, measurable objectives that the public is on board with; and much more. This really was "where it was at": recognition, acknowledgment and dialogue on the critical ingredients that I needed to be successful back in New York. And it was all being presented by a group of mostly state fish and wildlife agency professionals, my counterparts and fellow state representatives to the OWP. The following year I attended my first OWP conference and never looked back. Now, 10 years later, the membership has granted me the privilege and its confidence to serve as president of the organization.

I've always viewed the OWP as the entity that continues to ensure that fish and wildlife agencies, institutions, and related groups have the opportunity to secure representation and participation in an organization committed to serving their needs in several crucial and unique areas—areas of organizational effectiveness such as strategic planning, comprehensive management systems, human dimensions, and public involvement. During our annual conference in Ohio this year, we conducted an extra evening session to address issues as well as ensure that the OWP was on course. I was quite impressed when the conference attendees flooded the room that evening, energized and ready to get down to business (after all, the hospitality room was already open in a separate part of the building!). We knew that it was important to do a reality check, as the needs of our home organizations are ever-changing. Supporting the states' development of their CWCS and providing additional offerings of the OWP's course, *Measuring Program Performance—Results Driven Management*, were just two topics of discussion.

One of the concerns raised that evening was the limited growth of the OWP's membership over the years, and that several states and provinces are still not members. I suggest that we try to keep this in perspective. Many orga-



nizations in this field are not getting any bigger, and we do live in an age of downsizing. Also, holding our 2006 meeting in Alberta presents us with a great opportunity. In my 1994 CMS manual, there's a list of the OWP membership as it existed at that time. The OWP was not a very large organization back then (when it first knocked my socks off), but like today, it was very stable. When I look down the list of our current participants—state agencies, provinces, the USFWS, universities—and also look at the people representing these organizations, your president feels pretty good about the current health of the OWP. I am very fortunate to be a part of it, and would like to thank my director for sending me to Albuquerque 10 years ago.

CWCS "One Year Out" By Brian Stenquist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

The IAFWA-sponsored Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy "One Year Out" meeting was held August 2-4, 2004. Dave Chadwick and Naomi Edelson (IAFWA) teamed up with Mark Humpert and Kristal Stoner (Nebraska Game and Parks) to put on an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating conference. Presentations, many of them humorous as well as meaningful, touched

on all aspects of Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) activities. Participants could identify topics of interest and spend afternoons in fruitful dialogue. These one-hour discussions included "Projecting a Dollar Cost for a CWCS," "Administrative Challenges—Dealing with the Match," and "Words that Explode!" Several OWP members attended, as did Steve Williams, USFWS director, and Paul Schmidt,

USFWS assistant director for migratory birds and state programs. Paul explained the role and current perspectives of the National Advisory Acceptance Team, which the USFWS assembled to help review CWCS documents. And Steve's warm, straightforward talk assured everyone that his team is focused on supporting good CWCS efforts and not on trying to micro-manage them.

Editor's Note: Many of the reports below mention a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, also called by some states a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan. We have used the abbreviations CWCS or CWCP, respectively, to refer to these.



Field Notes

Take a gander at what's been happening across the regions

Compiled by the Regional Directors



WESTERN REGION

Arizona

The Arizona Game and Fish Department hired Jeff Sorensen this year as its CWCS planner. Through Jeff, the department will host at least four "Wildlife Summits" in the fall, where invited stakeholders and customers will provide input into our CWCS. Ty Gray, AGFD's responsive management coordinator, will help conduct public surveys, including one targeting Spanish-speaking people. Also, due to recent human-mountain lion conflicts, AGFD is hosting mountain lion workshops to solicit input about how to handle these conflicts. Results of these workshops will be posted online at www.azgfd.com.

Montana

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is refining and improving its comprehensive management system (CMS) while also developing a comprehensive fish and wildlife plan. We'd like to tie these efforts together into one truly comprehensive plan—from the strategic to the work plan level. We've updated strategic plans for the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreation programs, as well as agency management programs, as part of the planning process for identifying strategic initiatives for these programs and for legislative needs. We've also partnered with the U.S. Forest Service on a project to grasp the social and economic forces at work in Montana, understand their impacts on fish and wildlife, and use this knowledge to help preserve these resources.

Utah

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is on track with submitting its CWCS to the National Acceptance Advisory Team in May 2005. A draft will be presented to our Regional Advisory Councils and the Utah Wildlife Board in spring. Work continues on the two

WAFWA Human Dimensions Committee surveys. The *Hunter Response to Chronic Wasting Disease* survey was distributed and collected in August and September, and the *Wildlife Values in the West* survey is being distributed and collected shortly thereafter, with results anticipated in time for inclusion in the CWCS. Dana Dolsen is the UDWR representative on the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife-Associated Recreation's Western Regional Technical Committee, as well as the chair. A great session took place in Denver in June, with many unique human dimensions insights shared among state representatives and incorporated into the 2006 National Survey design.

Wyoming

Planning for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is largely focused in three areas: CWCS, sage grouse, and personnel. Wyoming's CWCS continues to make progress despite a few minor setbacks. Drafts of species summaries, which will address the first four CWCS criteria, have been completed, and reviews by other agencies and organizations were initiated in August. After the initial success of three citizen groups working on sage grouse issues, the governor directed the WGFD to establish five additional groups in different parts of the state. These groups should be operating by September. Finally, Wyoming planners and human resources personnel have started collaborating to devise an agency strategy to deal with the pending retirement of baby boomers and the administrative confusion this exodus will have on the agency's systems and operations.

MIDWEST REGION

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' CWCS is focusing on rare, declining, and vulnerable species, many

of which are aquatic invertebrates. We are halfway through this 2-year project. Minnesota is also involved in a two-pronged planning project related to trout streams. The first prong is gaining informed consent on a suite of special regulations on a third of the highest quality trout streams in southeastern Minnesota. The special regulations involve catch and release, slot limits and bait restrictions. The second prong is creating new guidelines for habitat improvement (HI) work in trout streams. The HI challenge is how to restore stream function, enhance stream ecology and make trout fishing even better.

Missouri

The Missouri Department of Conservation is more closely aligning strategic planning, budgeting, and accomplishment reporting. Our Federal Assistance coordinator has proposed adjustments in the way staff codes time and accomplishments to provide better accomplishment reporting and accounting for Federal Assistance reimbursement. Additionally, we will look at several options for the strategic planning process, including moving to an every-two-year review rather than an annual review and update of the plan. All changes will be implemented in the 2006 fiscal year. The CWCS is scheduled to be finalized on time. Dennis Figg, CWCS coordinator, has developed a clear timeline of meetings and products planned for completion between now and October 2005.

Nebraska

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's comprehensive management system continues to make steady progress despite the lack of a dedicated planner. Our long range plan is being updated and printed to cover 2004 to 2010. An abbreviated 'popularized' version was

printed in our *NEBRASKAland* magazine. The plan was augmented by a commissioner-driven request for progress reports on measurable accomplishments associated with key issues. Work on our CWCP, which we have grouped under our Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, is on schedule for completion by October 2005. Marketing has gained emphasis in recent years. Our most recent push has involved using imagery from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's "Water Works Wonders" program in TV, radio, and print media. We've also ventured into using billboards and movie theater slides. Finally, a permitting task force is examining changes to and/or new offerings for some of our permits. We plan to work with our constituents to finalize proposals before taking them to the legislature.

North Dakota

North Dakota Game and Fish developed a special issue of the department's magazine, *North Dakota Outdoors*, devoted to the CWCS planning effort. The issue was entitled "North Dakota's 100 Species of Conservation Priority" and featured color photos and short profiles of each species, its habitat and range in the state, and why it was selected. An introductory section explained the CWCS process, the levels of concern, and the geological features of North Dakota.

Ohio

As one of the five states that receives Federal Assistance through the CMS funding option, Ohio was represented on the writing team that updated and clarified Chapter 4 (about the CMS funding option) of the Federal Assistance Handbook. News from the Washington Office of Federal Assistance is that the revised chapter has been through the surname

process and is ready for the USFWS director's signature. The writing team consisted mostly of active OWP members. Also, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife was selected to help develop a department-wide strategic plan due to the division's expertise in this area. The plan is currently in draft form and awaiting final approval before implementation.

South Dakota

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has begun work on its CWCP. We have contracted with Jon Haufler (Ecosystem Management Research Institute) to write our CWCP using an ecosystem approach, and with Dynamic Solutions Group to help us with the public involvement associated with this project. Also, on August 20, South Dakota hosted OWP's *Measuring Program Performance* one-day workshop for 27 South Dakota and six North Dakota participants.

NORTHEAST REGION

Delaware

The Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife's CWCS is well underway. Our CWCS coordinator is gathering agency feedback on a list of "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (SGCN) and the methodology used for compiling it. He is also developing the ecological framework for Delaware's strategy and assembling information on species-habitat associations. GIS staff is mapping habitats based on existing data for SGCNs and building coarse-filter habitat maps. Information sessions with partners and stakeholders are in progress, and focus group discussions are planned to identify conservation actions.

New Hampshire

In recent months, the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department has made great

strides towards completing its CWCP. The department will rely heavily on conservation partners to complete the plan. As such, over the past few months NHFG biologists have spent considerable time negotiating and finalizing contracts with partners, including Franklin Pierce College, the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau, the University of New Hampshire, the state chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and St. Anselm's College. These partners will develop about half of the 109 profiles and 47 habitat maps for species and habitats of conservation concern that will be included in the CWCP. The remainder is the responsibility of NHFG staff.

New York

Like many other states, New York's Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources' current planning efforts are heavily focused on developing its CWCS. Early this summer, New York held its first statewide CWCS Partnership Meeting, which has been followed by other smaller meetings addressing the needs of specific taxonomic species groups. The CWCS, once completed, will be very valuable in implementing the Division's strategic plan.

Vermont

Vermont Fish and Wildlife has just about completed its third strategic planning effort. The plan will cover 2006 through 2010. Changes in our approach this time include a 5-year time frame to allow sufficient time for implementation, division into four areas of products and services (with a few goals/outcomes in each area), and the development of a limited number of indicators for each outcome as measures of progress. The draft plan should be out this fall.

SOUTHEAST REGION

Arkansas

Long-standing partnerships are paying off as Arkansas Game and Fish develops its CWCS. Audubon Arkansas, Arkansas Natural Heritage and The Nature Conservancy are teaming with AGFC to develop the data and GIS features of the strategy. Also included on the CWCS Steering

Continued on page 7