

# **SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

## **Wetlands Wildlife Committee Report**

**Stephen V. Rockwood, Committee Chair**

**Sunday, October 16, 2016**

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

**Meeting convened:** 1:00 PM

**Chaired by:** Tom Moorman (DU) and Jerry Holden (DU) acting on behalf Stephen V. Rockwood (FL)

### **Committee Members Attending:**

Larry Reynolds (LA)	Jerry Holden (DU)
Andi Cooper (DU)	Tom Moorman (AL)
Andy Nyman (DU)	Steve Smith (LA)
Cynthia Edwards (WMI/SECAS)	Joel Porath (MO)
Andrew Schmidt (AFWA)	Chris Colclasure (AR)
Jeff Gleason (USFWS)	Chris Smith (AL)
Jessica Graham (SARP)	Bill Bartush (USFWS)
Jen Mock Schaeffer (AFWA)	Rick Kaminski (Clemson)

### **Scheduled Discussion Items:**

- Clean Water Act – Tom Moorman (DU) informed the committee that the U.S. Court of Appeals for 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit issued a stay on the Clean Water Act Rule pending further action of the court and acknowledging that clarification of the rules is needed. In the meantime and in response to this decision, the USACOE and EPA will rely on the agencies' prior regulations defining "waters of the United States." Both agencies' will utilize guidance documents developed in order to clarify jurisdictional determination. Furthermore, it is likely that numerous environmental will issue a "Amicus Brief" in December summarizing the importance of the rule.
- Farm Bill Update – Andrew Schmidt (AFWA) provided an update on the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program. In fiscal year 2015 and 2016, approximately 18% and 20% of the WRE applications were funded, respectively. Preliminary estimates for FY16 - \$301 million for new ACEP enrollments, resulting in estimated 100,000 acres of farmland, grasslands, and wetlands protected. Under the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership, NRCS awarded \$44.6 million to support 10 wetland enhancement projects in 12 states, helping protect, restore, or enhance 15,000 acres. Southeast states that were awarded funding: AR, KY, LA, MS, MO, TN.

The AFWA Agricultural Conservation Committee (ACC) is standing up an ad hoc 2018 Farm Bill Working Group to be the primary vehicle for identifying and drafting reauthorization principles and policy priorities for the Farm Bill. This working group will draft a policy platform that will then be submitted for adoption by AFWA at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2017. The working group will include representatives from each regional association of fish and wildlife agencies, in addition to ACC leadership, NGO partners, and AFWA staff. Interested parties can reach out to AFWA staff or their state agency Farm Bill coordinators for more information and to engage in the process.

- Farming on Refuges – Jen Mock Schaffer provided an update on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service internal policy banning the use of neonicotinoids and genetically modified crops on refuges beginning in January 2016. In the southeast, farming on refuges provides approximately 44,000 acres of crops for waterfowl and other wildlife. This policy change raises questions on whether or not refuges will be able to achieve existing habitat objectives established in the refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan for providing adequate forage habitat and sanctuary to support waterfowl and other migratory birds. The US Fish and Wildlife Service Regions 4 and 5 have requested support from the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture staff and others to update step-down NAWMP population objectives at the state level and local level if possible and quantify habitat objectives using an energetics-based approach. This effort should be scalable to the local level so that managers can better understand the implications of policy change on migratory birds.

**Presentations:**

- Jessica Graham (SARP) – Overview of Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership Program
- Larry Reynolds/Steve Smith (LA) – Wetland Management Strategies to Address Duck-use Energy Days Deficits in LA.
- Rick Kaminski (Clemson) – James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Center

**Action Items and Recommendations:** Continue to monitor activities associated with Farming on Refuges and its impacts to migratory bird management.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:00 PM

**Submitted by:** Stephen V. Rockwood