

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

## **Wetlands Wildlife Committee Report**

**Stephen V. Rockwood, Committee Chair**

**Sunday, October 21, 2018**

**Mobile, AL**

**Meeting convened:** 1:00 PM

**Chaired by:** Jamie C. Feddersen (TN) and Dale James (DU)

### **Committee Members and Guests Attending:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Bob Baker	TX Parks and Wildlife
Cody Dunagan	TX Parks and Wildlife
Schuyler Dartez	LDWF
Mike Schummer	SUNY ESF
James Rader	Ducks Unlimited
Donald "Duck" Locascio	LDWF
Tim Willis	Ducks Unlimited
Jamie Feddersen	TWRA
Seth Maddox	ADCNR
Bob Sargent	GADNR
Rick Kaminski	Clemson University
Heath Hagy	FWS
Jen Mock Schaeffer	AFWA
Ed Penny	Ducks Unlimited
Jeff Raasch	TX Parks and Wildlife
Dale James	Ducks Unlimited

### **Scheduled Discussion Items:**

- Migratory Bird Framework (S2942/HR6013) – Jen Mock Schaeffer (AFWA) provided an update on pending Congressional legislation that will have direct impact on the current system under which the States and the US Fish and Wildlife Service currently set migratory gamebird hunting seasons. The bills currently aim to set the ending framework date for hunting ducks at January 31 and provide hunting days specifically for veteran and military personnel. Staff from AFWA have communicated with Federal legislators and provided suggestions that modify the existing proposals to remove language setting season lengths and bag limits in perpetuity, thus removing science from decision making. Ed Penny (DU) added that Ducks Unlimited CEO Dale Hall Testified in front of House Natural Resources Committee. DU has no concerns with biological aspects of

framework and DU's formal position points to Hall's testimony and are comfortable with Bill language as revised.

- Clean Water Act (WOTUS) – Ed Penny (DU) updated the committee on the current standing of Obama-era definition of “Waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) in the Clean Water Act. In July 2017 the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed action to formally repeal and replace the 2015 definition of WOTUS. An August 2018 court ruling concluding the Trump Administration failed to seek public comment on the substance of WOTUS or the implications of delaying the regulation by two years. The court ruling means the 2015 WOTUS Rule will remain in effect in 26 states.
- NWR Farm Policy and SE Region Waterfowl Action Plan – Heath Hagy (FWS) informed the committee of recent policy rescinding a previous directive that prohibited the use of genetically engineered crops and neonicotinoid pesticides. However, NWRs will need to get their use approved through existing NEPA approval processes. The FWS Southeast Region has developed a Waterfowl Working Group to better organize waterfowl management activities on refuges. As such through Strategic Plan have developed several teams including those addressing issues with communication, science/research, habitat, NEPA process and human dimensions.
- 2018 Farm Bill Re-Authorization – Jen Mock Schaeffer (AFWA) provided an update on Farm Bill activities and indicated it expired at the end of September 2018. While EQIP remains funded, it is believed the House and Senate Agriculture Committees will not take any action on re-authorizing the Farm Bill until after mid-term elections. The committee discussed and prepared a draft letter urging members of Congress to re-authorize the Farm Bill. Following additional discussion and minor editorial changes, the committee passed a motion asking the SEAFWA Directors and SE-TWS Executive Committee to approve and the letter in support of the Farm Bill.
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Support Letters – Dale James (DU) discussed the current status of NAWCA which has not been re-authorized by Congress since 2012. The committee discussed and prepared a draft letter supporting the reauthorization of NAWCA. Following additional discussion and minor editorial changes, the committee passed a motion asking the SEAFWA Directors and SE-TWS Executive Committee to approve and the letter in support of NAWCA.
- Restoring America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) - Jen Mock Schaeffer (AFWA) updated the committee on pending legislation to provide dedicated funding to State wildlife agencies for managing nongame species. HB 4647 and S3223 bills would provide funds primarily from oil and gas revenues, could provide up to \$1.3B into an existing subaccount of Pittman-Robertson funding that would be available to states. This is one of AFWA's highest legislative priorities. The committee discussed and prepared a draft letter supporting RAWA. Following additional discussion and minor editorial changes, the

committee passed a motion asking the SEAFWA Directors and SE-TWS Executive Committee to approve and the letter in support of RAWA.

**Presentations:**

- Seth Maddox (AL) provided a presentation on Alabama's Waterfowl / Wetlands Program
- South Atlantic Wetlands and Waterfowl Workshop - Rick Kaminski (Clemson University) informed the group of a recent meeting of waterfowl biologists in mid and south Atlantic states to identify, prioritize, and conduct waterfowl/wetlands research to guide habitat, species, and population conservation in South Atlantic Flyway and beyond. The group identified seven priority research questions with the beginning focus on recruitment of wood ducks from nest boxes and natural cavities.

**Action Items and Recommendations:** Continue to monitor activities associated with Clean Water Act and Farming on Refuges and its impacts to migratory bird management. Forward three recommendations to SEAFWA Directors and SE-TWS Executive Committee supporting 1) Farm Bill re-authorization, 2) NAWCA re-authorization, and 2) FY 2018 NAWCA funding appropriation, and RAWA support.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:00 PM

**Submitted by:** Jamie C. Feddersen (TN)

**Attachments:** Farm Bill Re-authorization Letter, NAWCA Re-authorization Letter, RAWA Letter of Support

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