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Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group

Newsletter

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Note from the Chair

I am excited to get our newsletter into circulation. I wanted to thank all of you who voted and all our members who were willing to throw their hat in the ring and run for various Working Group officer positions. We had a great deal of discussion about future paths at our meeting in Albuquerque New Mexico.

There has been a great deal of activity related to the hunting, trapping and conservation nationally in recent months.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has created new positions in each Region of the country with a charter ([link to PDF](#)) related to enhancing hunting and angling on National Wildlife Refuges. These positions enhance the potential to further engage the public in opportunities to hunt and fish on National Wildlife Refuges. The charter of the newly created "Hunting and Fishing Chiefs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service" directs a national effort to implement Service Orders 3347 and 3356. These orders related to enhancing access and opportunities necessary to

promote recruitment, retention and reactivation of the American sportsman and woman. Two pieces of legislation before committees in congress relate to changing the landmark Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937. These bills are H.R 4647 “Recovering America’s Wildlife Act” and H.R. 2591 – “Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act of 2017”. The Wildlife Society provided testimony on both these bills, supporting more funding for science, conservation and engagement of hunters and target shooters. I encourage you to review President John McDonald’s testimony on behalf of TWS.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Wildlife Services, and our Working Group have been working to conduct “Trapping Matters” professional development workshops around the country. These workshops relate to effective communications regarding regulated trapping and learning about existing Best Management Practices for trapping. There are tentatively five workshops scheduled in the next 10 months. For information contact Bryant White (BWhite@fishwildlife.org) at AFWA.

Working Group officers have had several discussions regarding activities related to our efforts for the future. Our discussions have focused on the following main points: fundraising, growing our membership, information found on our website, and supporting activities at the annual meeting.

Briefly, related to these topics, we have supported the submission of two projects for consideration for a workshop and a symposium at the annual TWS meeting in Cleveland in October. One proposal is for a hunter education class in conjunction with Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The second is a symposium related to Evaluation of Hunter Recruitment, Retention, or Reactivation (R3). We are hopeful both events will be approved by The Wildlife Society.

We are looking for members to form a fund raising committee. We have had several members of the Working Group offer guided hunts as donations, to raise funds for the Working Group. Thus, we have willing donors and are in need a several volunteers to help promote and coordinate these donated hunts. We don’t need members to actually go and fund raise, rather simply promote and coordinate the information related to the currently donated hunts. If you are interested in serving in this capacity please contact me.

There are a number of articles in this newsletter highlighting initiatives or programs related to hunting, trapping and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. If you have news or happenings in your part of the conservation universe I encourage you to share and send information to our Newsletter Editor, Andy Little.

I also encourage you to share any thoughts or ideas you have with any of our officers for improving or engaging our Working Group. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thanks and have a great spring!

- Tom Decker, Chair

First-Ever National R₃ Symposium Charts the Path Forward for Outdoor Recreation



Throughout the last few decades, participation in outdoor recreation (hunting, angling, boating and target shooting) has changed and these changes bring new challenges for the conservation community to address in order to continue to manage America's natural resources. Over the last few years, partners spanning the conservation community and associated

industries have joined together to address these changing participation rates through a movement referred to as Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R₃). New technologies, evaluation techniques and other innovations have resulted from this movement and have advanced the way in which we as a collective community interact and manage outdoor recreation populations.

Recently, after a few years of working on R₃, the collective community elected to host a national event which they deemed necessary to spur more progress on R₃ and to expedite the momentum through this initiative. The National R₃ Symposium was the first nation-wide event solely focused on resources and partnerships needed to secure the future of hunting, angling, target shooting, and boating. This meeting was the premier venue for the outdoor community to advance the field of outdoor recreation R₃ efforts in the United States. The National R₃ Symposium provided an unparalleled opportunity for agencies, industries and NGO's to share, learn and develop the limitless opportunities our community now has to accelerate the current state of R₃ effort and impact.

The event was targeted for anyone with a vested interest in increasing participation in outdoor recreation. This would include R₃ coordinators, as well CEOs/Directors/Presidents, Marketing, Communication and IT professionals, and any other individuals who are interested or actively working on R₃ efforts for their organizations. Event hosts welcomed more than 315 people to Lincoln, NE; an audience that represented industry, conservation groups and government agencies alike.

Participants expected a packed agenda designed to educate, inform and inspire action and advancement on R₃. The first day offered reflections of recent advancements in R₃ from various organizations spanning the conservation community. Speakers also presented on the connections between R₃ & data, R₃ & marketing, and then lead discussions on ways to engage sportsmen in strategic R₃ efforts such as mentoring and program evaluation. The second day featured work

sessions designed to identify the next steps necessary to accelerate and advance R3 in areas specifically focused on business practices and partnership.

The National R3 Symposium has set the stage for a new era of growth in R3 and event coordinators expect that the insights learned at this event will dictate the future of R3 in the U.S. The conversation on R3 has continued virtually on the National R3 Community (www.nationalr3plan.com) too as the presentations, contact information and other insights can be found there. Through R3 we have a unique opportunity to help chart the path forward for the collective benefit of wildlife conservation and the American outdoor heritage. Visit www.cahss.org to learn more about R3 and specifically www.nationalr3plan.com to find more information on the event.

For media inquiries, please contact Cyrus Baird at cyrus@cahss.org.

For other inquiries, please contact Samantha Pedder at samantha@cahss.org.

Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow—Program Summary



Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) was born from the need for professional development and has a simple goal: Identifying current and future leaders from the natural resources community who have not hunted and provide them with a professional understanding of hunting's diverse values and important role in conservation. The program's demonstrated success requires that those committed to leading the future of wildlife conservation work collaboratively and ensure that hunting continues to be relevant to conservation in North America.

Over the past 12 years CLfT has conducted over 120 workshops, producing more than 1,900 graduates from universities as well as state and federal natural resource agencies. More than 55 universities and 50 agencies from across the nation have participated, and a team of more than 150 highly skilled, dedicated and trained instructors has been assembled.

Since 2010, CLfT has focused on delivering highly effective professional development programs to those agencies charged with managing wildlife resources. CLfT provides the only professionally designed and delivered curriculum that emphasizes hunting and the consumptive use of wildlife as a primary driver of wildlife conservation and an integral part of the North American model for sustaining wildlife. Nearly 50 professional workshops have been conducted

to date and more than half of the states have signed agreements establishing CLfT as part of their leadership development process.

In September 2012 the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation partnered with the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation (the parent organization of CLfT) to expand the program in the western United States and to help deliver the program nationally at the collegiate level. Before RMEF and McGraw joined forces, only a few western states participated in CLfT and there were no professional workshops in the Rocky Mountain region. We now maintain two western facilities, and in 2017 RMEF resigned a long-term commitment to continue to help support CLfT.

CLfT attendees are very diverse. Agency participants are often upper- to mid-level professionals with a broad spectrum of responsibilities, including biological, law enforcement, legal, marketing, hunter education, outreach, accounting, legislative affairs, and commission and board appointments. University programs focus on graduate students and top undergrads who attend schools with a dedicated natural resources curriculum and maintain a student chapter of The Wildlife Society.

In early 2017 we began to examine more closely the impact that the CLfT program has on its participants. The first phase included analysis of confidential exit surveys from professional workshops. Those surveys and the many written accounts received from participants and their directors are clear indicators of success and positive impact. Nearly nine out of 10 respondents say their workshop experience was “Excellent.” Further results from the past four years can be found at Analysis of CLfT Exit Surveys on our website.

In addition, 24 individual learning objectives were assessed to track each participant’s perceived gain in knowledge. When viewed collectively across all 24 learning objectives, the average gain in knowledge was self-reported at 33 percent, an impressive result given the broad range of subjects and attendees.

The results of our long-term survey system clearly illustrate how the program has achieved its objectives, particularly ensuring a professional understanding of how “Hunting is Conservation.” Across the spectrum, respondents reported a 27 percent gain in knowledge regarding the relationship between hunting and conservation. Participants said the opportunity to experience an actual hunt during the curriculum was vital in building a level of understanding about the motivations of hunters.

CLfT workshops also contain elements of trapping and angling. Particularly impressive gains are made on the subject of trapping, with participants indicating a 51% gain regarding improved knowledge about Trapping Skills and Techniques and 49% increase on the topic of Trapper Demographics. These professionals also have the most potential to gain information about trapping as nearly all self-identify with being unfamiliar with the subject material related to regulated trapping.

Many members of the TWS Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group participate as CLfT Instructors and it will likely serve as a great resource to try and recruit additional CLfT instructors at a future date. If you would like to know more about the program please check out our recently remodeled website www.clft.org.

- Zach Lowe, Ph.D.

Vice President, Center for Conservation Leadership
Director, Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow
Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation

Workshop Report

The technical and wildlife management implications of hunting ammunition with a focus on non-lead options for big game hunting in North America

During the 2017 annual conference in Albuquerque, the Working Group co-sponsored (and took the lead on) a workshop that addressed issues on hunting ammunition. About 30 Wildlife Society members attended. We sought to inform members about the complicated factors that go into any discussion about hunting ammunition, with a focus on big game hunting. To accomplish this, we planned the workshop in two parts: First, we spent the morning hearing from experts on key issues: (1) the firearms and ammunition industry; (2) scientific evidence on lead-caused wildlife mortality and morbidity; (3) the basics of hunting ammunition from a shooting and hunting perspective; (4) human dimensions research on hunter attitudes; and (5) experience from the field with a focus on California condors in the western states, and bald eagles in the upper Midwest.

Our overall focus throughout the workshop was to provide the opportunity for a comprehensive examination of all the relevant issues pertaining to hunting ammunition, and to enable an understanding of the strong opinions held by the diversity of stakeholders engaged on the topic. In short, to drop the curtain on the prevailing political theatre so often inflicted on important natural resource management issues, and to dive into the technical, scientific, social, economic, and ecological factors that go into any intelligent discussion on the subject.

Following an engaging morning session, we headed for the City of Albuquerque Shooting Range Park to witness demonstrations of performance for high-powered rifle bullets, shotgun slugs, and muzzleloading bullets both in lead and non-lead configurations. With assistance from the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish, Wildlife Society members with The Peregrine Fund, Institute for Wildlife Studies, and Oregon Zoo, we watched as shots were fired into both ballistic gel media and a water collection system that enables the capture of bullet fragments. These

methods enabled a study of the wound channel (via the ballistic gel), terminal performance of projectiles (via an examination of expansion), and potential avenues for wildlife morbidity or mortality by understanding lead bullet fragmentation. Examples of what we observed are shown in the photographs that accompany this article. Hunters, shooters, and wildlife biologists can draw their own conclusions about projectile performance by carefully examining these photographs. I have thought long and hard about this topic, and I found the workshop strengthened my understanding of hunting ammunition from a natural resource management perspective. It also strengthened my understanding of opinions amongst fellow TWS members, and other resource management professionals. TWS recently adopted an updated position statement on this topic. It includes advocacy for all the following: stakeholder collaboration, educational and outreach initiatives, stepped up efforts to accomplish the voluntary phase out of lead hunting ammunition (and fishing tackle), and increased research to better understand the complex issues identified in the workshop. The entire position statement is available here: http://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/112117_PS_LeadinAmmunitionandFishingTackle.pdf

As a natural and vital preliminary step, it makes sense to me to make every effort to inform natural resource managers in state and federal agencies about the complexities associated with this issue. It is not “black and white,” and it’s a mistake to think that this issue is simple. The TWS workshop established a solid template for on-going outreach efforts, and I hope that the successful model that we demonstrated can be applied in other venues soon.

If this short article piqued your interest, feel free to send me an email to expand the network of productive and interesting discussion. I am at gordon.batcheller@gmail.com.

I wish to thank the following sponsors for their support of the workshop:

Institute for Wildlife Studies

The Peregrine Fund

Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Hunting, Trapping and Conservation Working Group of The Wildlife Society

Wildlife Toxicology Working Group of The Wildlife Society

U.S.G.S. Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units Program Headquarters

City of Albuquerque Shooting Range Park

New Mexico Department of Game & Fish Field Operations Division

- Gordon Batcheller