

TWS COUNCIL REPORT

Bob Lanka, Central Mountains and Plains Section Representative

TWS Council met virtually September 26-27 just prior to our recently completed virtual Annual Conference.

2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

The just completed TWS Annual Conference was successful beyond all expectations. Over 2,500 people registered making this conference the best “attended” TWS conference ever. This first ever virtual conference was pulled together by TWS Staff in just four months. Council waited as long as it could to make the call on whether to hold or cancel the in-person conference. Finally the reality of what we needed to do for our members forced our hand so this past June the decision was made to go virtual. Consequently the timeline for TWS Staff to figure out how to make this happen for the first time ever in a meaningful way for our members was incredibly short. I know from personal experience that there were some technical difficulties during the Plenary on Day 1, maybe other events as well. If you experienced an interruption in service I hope your reaction was one of kindness and understanding. In recognition of the incredible performance of TWS Staff in planning this conference, really above and beyond any expectations, Council spearheaded by Vice President Gordon Batcheller, developed and read a proclamation praising them at our Annual Meeting of the Membership held Thursday evening ending as follows:

Be it proclaimed that The Council of The Wildlife Society heartily commends and congratulates all TWS staff for their tremendous effort and dedication in holding the 2020 virtual conference thereby making a tangible contribution to the advancement of both wildlife science and the wildlife profession.

Adopted by unanimous consent by the Council of The Wildlife Society at the annual members meeting held on October 1, 2020.

BUDGET

In March 2020, pre pandemic, Council passed a fairly standard FY21 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021) annual operating budget of about \$2,777,000. Because of the uncertainty surrounding things like membership, conference attendance, and partnership and personal donation income resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, Council reduced the annual operating budget by about \$883,000 to about \$1,894,000 in July. Council and Staff will be monitoring this situation throughout the remainder of the year to ensure that adjustments are made as needed to keep TWS on solid financial footing. Fortunately, due to higher than expected income in FY20 and lower than expected expenses, TWS ended FY20 with a substantial budget surplus. With uncertainty expected to last for the remainder of this fiscal year and possibly even impacting next fiscal year, this surplus plus the TWS Permanent Reserve Fund (fund goal is to have 6 months of TWS operating expenses in reserve which has been achieved) should enable TWS up to weather the storm.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Council has continued its work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The TWS website now includes a DEI page where members can read about TWS DEI efforts (<https://wildlife.org/dei/>). Take a look and sign up to add your voice if you want. TWS joined The Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM; <https://societiesconsortium.com/>) in 2020. According to the Council Diversity Committee's report, "This Consortium is an initiative of academic and professional disciplinary societies to advance professional and ethical conduct, climate, and culture. It is focused on effectively, and cost- and time-efficiently, operationalizing sexual harassment prevention and response." Council voted to establish a TWS Ombuds Office. While details are not yet finalized, it looks like this will be a small, trained office of TWS members available to provide Ombuds services to TWS members. Staff and Council will work to develop this office, hopefully in time to implement by our next Annual Conference. Finally, Council provided funding for a temporary staff person to help Jamila Blake (TWS Professional Development Manager) and Mariah Simmons (Unit Services Manager) develop a draft DEI Strategic Plan for Council's consideration.

AWARDS

Congratulations to the following members of our Section who were recognized by TWS for their exemplary service.

- Dr. Michael Gutzmer of Nebraska – Special Recognition Service Award
- Jim Hays of Kansas – Distinguished Service Award
- Tom Ryder of Wyoming – Honorary Membership

TWS awards (<https://wildlife.org/engage/awards/>) are an excellent way to recognize the efforts of your colleagues. I know it takes time to put together a meaningful nomination statement but the effort is worth it. This year there were no nominations for the Jim McDonough Award. This award goes to a CWB who is on the front lines making conservation happen on the ground. As a past recipient of the McDonough Award, seeing no nominations this year really struck home. Obviously I am as guilty as each of you for not nominating a deserving individual. I ask you to join me by committing to nominating one person or group for a TWS awards for 2021. They will thank you.

ODDS AND ENDS

Council and Staff continue to work with the recently incorporated Canadian Section to ensure that the Section and all the Chapters in Canada are in compliance with Canadian nonprofit laws while still maintaining close ties with TWS. TWS recently received a petition from several TWS members in Mexico to form a chapter there. TWS will be working with these individuals to ensure that how we make this happen is in compliance with the laws of Mexico and consistent with the purposes and mission of TWS. Melissa Merrick and others on the TWS International Wildlife Management Working Group put together a fantastic report to Council making several recommendations on how TWS might increase our involvement internationally. Council will be considering their recommendations in the near term.

Thanks to the work of Steven Castleberry and others on the Certification Review Board (CRB) team, Council approved several changes to the CRB handbook. Changes included a cap on how many course credit-hours can be substituted for with experience and the acceptance of unofficial transcripts with an application among others. Council also approved Dr. Terry Messmer of Utah State University as the CMPS representative on the CRB. Thanks for volunteering Terry and congratulations.

THANK YOU AND WELCOMING OUR NEW REPRESENTATIVE TO COUNCIL ANDREA ORABONA

This was my last meeting as Central Mountains and Plains Representative to Council. After six years on Council I can safely say that being allowed to serve our professional society, The Wildlife Society and all its members was one of the top highlights of my professional career. Part of my duties as Council Rep involved traveling to Chapter Meetings in each of the seven states of our Section as well as our Section meetings. It was wonderful to get to know so many of you and I appreciate all the hospitality. To all that have stepped into leadership positions with your state or student chapter or with our Section, thank you for answering the call to serve. Your contributions are important positive contributions to the mission of TWS at all levels.

I would be lying if I told you I won't miss our interactions and developing relationships with new leaders throughout our Section and on Council. But after 6 years as your voice on Council I know that change is a good thing. So I want to personally welcome our new Council Representative, Andrea Orabona. Andrea and I have known each other for years through our work with TWS at multiple levels and with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. She will bring her ever present smile and important new perspectives to Council deliberations. I look forward to her leadership and know that the future of our professional society, The Wildlife Society, is in great hands. Andrea, my friend, I hope you enjoy your time on Council as much as I have.

I will always be yours in conservation. Thanks for all you do.