

The Habitat Restoration and Conservation Working Group (HRCWG)

As Immediate Past Chair for the Habitat Restoration and Conservation Working Group (HRCWG), I am excited to have this opportunity to share all our accomplishments over the past couple of years with our members. The Working Group is very active, and I encourage TWS members to become engaged contributors to this or any other working group to maintain this high level of activity. The HRCWG's mission and purpose is to provide a professional forum for the exchange of scientific information that advances the restoration and conservation of wildlife habitat. The group draws upon lessons from wildlife ecology, conservation science, and restoration ecology to identify and promote effective strategies, restoration methods, and assessment tools for restoration and conservation. This is accomplished by providing webinars, symposia, workshops, technical sessions, and position statements. The HRCWG continues to provide input on TWS policy statements and educational opportunities to TWS membership.

In 2020-2021 the working group was reorganized with the goal of igniting renewed interest within TWS membership and refocusing activities to better reflect the HRCWG's mission. The HRCWG was extremely active in 2022; we commented on position statements focusing on climate change, lead in ammunition and fishing tackle, and livestock grazing. We also recognized that early career professionals and persons not presenting were ineligible for grant/scholarship awards to attend the annual TWS conference. We identified this as a unique opportunity to increase participation and eligibility with our own scholarship. We now offer awards to students, early career professionals, presenters, and non-presenters. We issued three awards in 2022 for individuals matching these qualifications.

Throughout the year, we worked to deliver on two initiatives for the 2022 TWS annual conference; a R-A-D workshop and advancing the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (hereafter UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration). We were successful in bringing together several researchers at the forefront of the development of the R-A-D (Resist-Accept-Direct) framework. The workshop, attended by approximately 20 TWS members, discussed the R-A-D framework for wildlife management, and its application and practical implementation. These professionals introduced the concept of the framework as an exciting next step at the forefront of science to conserve and restore wildlife populations and their habitats.

To bring internationally focused, large scale restoration efforts to the attention of the TWS membership, we hosted a panel discussion on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. This well attended panel discussion demonstrated the need for a greater connection between professional societies, biologists, and practitioners in the wildlife and restoration fields.

To heighten the impact of our introduction of the UN Decade on Ecological Restoration to the TWS membership, the HRCWG approached the TWS Council to advocate for TWS to become a full supporting partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The HRCWG recognizes that by earning this role, TWS will be able to elevate the position of wildlife conservation and restoration in the broader conversation of ecological restoration. Although the application is not completed, the HRCWG continues to work with the Council to move forward with our goal of enhancing the presence of TWS in restoration and as an international partner, while simultaneously joining the Society for Ecological Restoration and other professional organizations as a Supporting Partner for the UN Decade on Restoration.

The HRCWG is building on the successes of 2022. We are completing an update to the working group's charter to address position transitions on the executive board and will be sending out an election ballot to formalize the appointments of our new Chair, Chair-elect, and two at-large board members. As with 2022, the HRCWG provided two awards providing financial support for attendance to the 2023

conference in order to support our member's professional development. Additionally, the board developed, and had approved through TWS, a "Member Incentive Award " that provides a financial award to members for their active engagement in the Working Group. This engagement can take any form including developing activities for the annual conference, high-level promotion of the working group, or demonstrating leadership through active support to implement Executive Board projects and/or priorities.

The Communication committee was extremely busy this year, as they fully revamped the working group's social media presence and official webpage. This great effort was accomplished while simultaneously working to develop a restoration focused webinar series. Webinars presented to date included: Habitat Restoration: Addressing Challenges in a Changing World presented by Dr. Jonathan Haufler in February and Using Spatial Subsidies to Identify Inequitable Outcomes Across Migratory Species' Ranges, Including Bats, Insects and Birds presented by Laura Lopez Hoffman, Aaron Lien, and Charles Chester in May. We hope to continue developing this series and to provide more educational presentations to the membership.

The HRCWG presented a successful conference symposium titled "Evolving Approaches to Habitat and Ecosystem Restoration: A Wildlife Perspective" during the 2023 Conference in Kentucky. This symposium highlighted the wide range of wildlife restoration activities occurring across the country with topics ranging from Tribal activities to re-introduce California Condors to Hell's Canyon to evaluations of collaborative restoration efforts using emerging technologies. At the same time, Executive Board members successfully presented a proposal to TWS Council to join the UN Decade on Restoration as a supporting partner. The TWS Council voted to support the effort to develop a full application which will be presented to Council in spring.

As the Immediate Past Chair of the HRCWG, I thank everyone who participated in making 2022 and 2023 so successful, especially my predecessors and current executive board members. None of this would have been possible without their dedication and effort. I encourage all TWS members to become active members of this or any other working group. Participating at this level in TWS not only adds to a member's professional network but it provides enhanced credibility as a professional. The Habitat Restoration and Conservation Working Group is already planning for 2024, so stay tuned for more opportunities for member engagement opportunities.