



The Balance Wheel

Newsletter of the Association of Conservation Information

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Inside This Issue:

President's Corner

- Joan shares her thoughts for the New Year and reflects on ACI conferences gone by

National News:

- Interview with New USFWS External Affairs Chief
- \$350,000 Grant to Northeast I&E Association Funds 13-State Public Opinion Survey on Fish and Wildlife Issues
- **SPECIAL UPDATE:** *To ensure up-to-date and timely information, the follow-up on the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Hunting Heritage Grants will be in the Spring '04 issue*

Strategic Planning:

- Wildlife License Tags: Revenue Generation Versus Political Sacrifice
Will establishing a cause-related tag in your state pay off?

Skill Building:

- How are you using digital media, or how could you be using it?
- What does it take to be an ACI Award Winner?
 - Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife Knows How to Get Attention with Regulation Publications
 - How Oklahoma went from Mistake-Ridden to Award-Winning Regulation Publications

Upcoming Events & Deadlines:

- 2004 ACI Conference
- ACI Awards – Nomination/Entry deadlines

ACI Member News:

- 2002 National Wild Turkey Federation ACI Communicator of the Year Winner – Allen Ricks
- Allen Ricks with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency writes a first-hand account of the trip he won as Communicator of the Year.
- Don Kleiner, I&E Director for Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife moves on.

Special Section:

- Minutes from 2003 ACI Conference Business Meeting

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Joan Guilfoyle

Well, it's a cold, bright day in Minnesota, first day of the New Year. The sun jumps off the snow with a glaze powerful enough to make you turn back inside. Until my snowshoes get ice-, snow- and water-proofed, I will dream of the soft, humid air of southern Louisiana a mere six months from now.....greeting old friends and making new ones once again in the wonderful deep south.

I love the geographic diversity of ACI's membership. For me, there is an undeniable celebration of the American landscape that deepens every year I attend our annual conference. The dry air of the Wyoming desert in 2003. The old, low, rainy mountains of West Virginia, rich with history the year before. Did you get to experience the Victorian feel of that coastal town in New Jersey, gingerbread deluxe? Unmercifully hot central Texas, with the sweet taste of a million bats careening just above the picnic tables? Bubbling creeks and hot springs of Arkansas. Sweetgrass baskets, former slave markets and high walls of South Carolina. The quiet island life in Ohio (yes, Virginia, there are islands in Ohio). Sail-filled harbors of New Hampshire (okay, one harbor). Pert'near favorite memory: Bob and Kathleen refusing to step foot outside our cabin, wondering why they didn't just *spray* the darn Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area. Uh huh. But Bob *did* do the wood-fired sauna, and just like the Finns, too. They took me on their rafting trip in Idaho's crisp Snake River, my first rainbow trout. What good days those were.

I not only get to look back at wonderful places I've been with ACI, I can anticipate what's to come, what years (and locations) coming up that I absolutely cannot miss. And I have found none that should be missed, surely not Louisiana with those sweet sounds of the blues echoing off the balconies of the Quarter, the endless horizons of the gulf coast, grass twice daily covered and uncovered, crabs and dolphins sharing the bounty. As members line up to host our mid-sized group each year, I think a natural desire to show off the very best takes over. We are the huge beneficiaries of this enthusiastic competition.

We have that same diversity in the people of ACI. Some of us looking back over a career of good work, some in the first five years of figuring out exactly where our talents best fit. Some, like me, in the final third, looking at what else I want to put my energies to, what else needs to be done.

I am extremely grateful to have known, continue to know and more that I will know this coming July and beyond. I hope to see you all there, for the first time or the twenty-first time. This will be my 13th conference and Louisiana will show us her best, I'm sure. Don't miss it. And leave your snowshoes at home.

Seeing you where the sun always shines,
Joan

And, by the way, some very cool items fully branded with the National Park Service internationally known arrowhead (you know it is!) will be at our auction. Get 'em while you can. I expect they won't come around again soon. And Steve, our auctioneer, will make you pay more than you ever imagined. He's the best.



NATIONAL NEWS

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Chief of External Affairs Answers Questions on Relationships with State Agencies

By: Ben Ikenson, USFWS Office of Public Affairs and Michelle Griffin, Editor, The Balance Wheel

As it becomes more and more necessary for states to work cooperatively with federal agencies, it's beneficial to know how the leaders of the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) view their jobs and their relationships with State agencies. The Balance Wheel thanks Ben Ikenson for posing the following questions to the recently appointed USFWS Chief of External Affairs, Tom Melius. We also thank Mr. Melius for responding giving us insight into his role.

Q: How is the USFWS helping state wildlife and natural resource agencies achieve their missions?

A: The Service is committed to working with state partners in a variety of ways. One of the most important links between states and the Service occurs through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program. Each year, millions of dollars in excise taxes on hunting, angling and shooting equipment, as well as motorboat fuels, are

administered by the Service and apportioned to states to support a diverse array of fisheries and wildlife management activities and related recreational opportunities. This program, a hallmark of success in conservation for more than a half-century, is one of the Service's strongest links to its state partners.

New grants administered by the Service that benefit states are available under the State Wildlife Grants Program, which was signed into law by President Bush in February 2003. Under the new law, \$70 million was appropriated by Congress for Fiscal Year 2004 for wildlife conservation grants to states, territories and tribes. The grants are intended to support work that benefits game and nongame wildlife and their habitats.

States also benefit from the training and other opportunities offered by the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, W.Va. As you may recall, NCTC had the pleasure of hosting ACI's conference in 2002, where I hope many of your readers had a chance to experience the center firsthand.

In addition, FWS Director Steve Williams issued a new policy requiring National Wildlife Refuge System managers to involve states early in the refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning (CCP) process. The policy requires the refuge program to work with states when initiating national policy development to address legislative requirements or broad-scale refuge management concerns, needs or issues.

Director Williams also expanded the agency's Division of Conservation Partnerships and assigned it under External Affairs. This division works with all levels of the Service to seek new partnerships to achieve conservation benefits, identify new opportunities within existing partnerships, and increase the visibility of successful partnerships. The states play a critical role in many of these partnership efforts and are well-represented in several partnership advisory capacities, such as through the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, which advises the Secretary of the Interior through the FWS Director on sportfishing, boating and aquatic resource issues.

Q: Some of the present administration's natural resource policy decisions are different from those of previous administrations. How is the USFWS embracing these new philosophies and working with the Bush Administration to ensure effective strategies are engaged?

A: The present administration is devoted to improving access to federal lands so Americans can have more and better opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. For example, during this administration, a significant number of national wildlife refuges opened their doors for recreational hunting and fishing. In addition, Director Williams is working hard to reinvigorate and strengthen the historic relationship involving the Service, state agencies and hunters and anglers, who are some of the nation's most dedicated conservationists.

New administration-driven grants programs also allow the Service to conduct more conservation work with its partners. For example, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton's Cooperative Conservation Initiative focuses on existing successful programs that build resource protection partnerships, many of which are done in cooperation with state agencies. This fiscal year, the administration sought \$15 million in increases for the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (which funds several joint venture programs), and Coastal and Refuge Challenge Cost-Share programs.

Q: What external communication strategies are being used by the USFWS and could also be used by communication professionals at the state level?

A: I'm glad you asked. One of most effective steps we have taken is to require formal communications plans for the Service's major decisions. This means that we are not surprising key legislators or constituent groups with announcements, and that we are ready with the materials we need to help the news media provide accurate coverage. Obviously, this system isn't perfect, but it has greatly improved our preparedness for making major announcements. We're also devoting time to serious communications efforts on behalf of selected Service programs – in 2003, for example, the Centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Our newest outreach effort is an attempt to boost recognition and illustrate the importance of its Fisheries Program. To this end, the Service is delivering very specific messages in a strategic attempt to draw media attention to the successes and benefits of the program. The early returns are good. We've received considerable media coverage about what the Service is doing on behalf of fish. In addition, stay tuned for more information about upcoming outreach efforts we are planning on behalf of the Service's Migratory Bird Program.

Q: With increasingly tight budgets, how do you see state and federal wildlife and natural resource management entities working together to reach common goals?

By working together as partners, we – state and federal agencies and nongovernmental entities – must leverage our collective resources to achieve common goals. Strengthening these partnerships and increasing communications with each other can streamline activities, avoid duplication of effort, and allow us to discover and share new resources to get the job done. These partnerships, and the communications necessary to keep them active, effective and expanding, will govern the future for wildlife and natural resource conservation now and in the future in the face of budgetary uncertainties. In no way can any of us complete these tasks alone.

Q: What new or revised USFWS programs directly benefit the efforts of state wildlife and natural resource management entities?

The Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program continues to provide almost three quarters of a billion dollars through apportionments to states, which represents much of the total funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. In addition, a variety of other funding initiatives are helping states achieve their conservation goals.

New National Wildlife Refuge System policies will facilitate refuge managers working closely with state land managers on conservation initiatives, recreation management and land acquisition. In the Lower Mississippi River Valley, for example, states, the Service and private partners are all working cooperatively to restore thousands of acres of bottomland hardwood.

Likewise, our Fisheries Program works with states on a range of issues that include development of a national fisheries habitat plan and cooperative efforts to deal with aquatic invasive species. Through a resolution passed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, states are now fully engaged in development of the unprecedented habitat plan.

Q: How does your background as the former Federal Aid chief help or hinder efforts in your new position?

I take the role of communicating effectively with state information and education folks very seriously. My knowledge of Federal Aid and its importance to state agencies and other partners is critical in carrying out the duties of my current position. Regular, effective and candid communication with the states and other partners is essential to the Federal Aid Program and to maintaining and enhancing the Service's relationships with states and other partners in all facets of the Service's work.

Q: Having been in this position for a short time, what is your focus for the USFWS, and how can State communication professionals work to help you reach your goals?

My hope is that External Affairs can help enhance relationships between Service communicators and their state counterparts by strengthening our relationship through ACI. This can be accomplished by sharing resources, expertise and working cooperatively on conservation outreach and communication initiatives. This interview is a good example of things to come.

Q: What is your favorite part of the job?

Getting to know some of the most creative people in wildlife and natural resource conservation is truly inspiring. Incredible work is being accomplished on the ground through innovative means and with limited resources. The ability to work with the leadership of the Service and with states and other partners to communicate about these successes is a privilege.

Q: Do you get to work one-on-one with States very often?

My relationships with many individual states stem from my previous position within Federal Aid, and these contacts have carried through to my current duties. There are countless examples within the work being conducted by External Affairs of individual States working with the Service on projects large and small. I look forward to discovering more opportunities for the agency to work collectively and individually with States.

Q: What is your favorite External Affairs project/responsibility and why?

Working with the different programs within the Service to try to meet their communications and congressional outreach needs. There are many exciting initiatives being created to address specific needs and concerns within the Service. I look forward to sharing these with you as they become ready for prime time.

Thanks again to Tom Melius and Ben Ikenson for their willingness to reach out to state programs and explain the philosophy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

**\$350,000 Grant to Northeast I&E Association Funds
13-State Public Opinion Survey on Fish and Wildlife Issues**

By Jim Sciascia, Information and Education chief, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

A large public opinion survey on fish and wildlife management issues and the reputation and credibility of fish and wildlife agencies in the northeast United States will be completed in early 2004. It is being conducted by Responsive Management for the Northeast Conservation Information and Education Association. NCIEA represents the fish and wildlife agencies of the 13 northeast states that compose US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 5 - Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia. The survey was made possible through a \$350,000 multi-state grant from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The goal of the NCIEA is to find ways for all 13 member states to work together cooperatively, pooling resources so that communication efforts are enhanced and made more efficient. Its overall communication goal is to let people throughout the northeastern states know about the missions of our agencies and the good work being done by those agencies, thereby enhancing our credibility and our ability to inspire action and gain the support of the public we serve. We also seek to increase our individual agencies' name recognition in order to distinguish ourselves from other government agencies and non-governmental organizations so we can better serve.

In 1998, the NCIEA Technical Committee presented its five-year plan to accomplish its mission and goals to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Association directors. The NCIEA identified a research template as a top priority in helping the agencies do a better job of communicating with their various audiences.

An effective analysis tool is necessary to consistently measure trends in public opinion concerning fish and wildlife management issues. Without research, it is impossible measure public perception of the agency and the degree of effectiveness of Information and Education programs. To meet this need, the NCIEA contracted with Responsive Management in 2002 to develop a baseline survey template and a shorter tracking survey to measure changes in public attitude and effectiveness of communication efforts. Responsive Management also produced an RFP for the individual states to solicit proposals for obtaining adequate samples, executing the survey instrument and analyzing and reporting results.

The challenge faced by all the states individually was to secure the resources to perform the surveys. That was the impetus for the NCIEA to apply for the grant from IAFWA so all the states would have the guaranteed opportunity to do the baseline survey with the added benefit of being able to look at the results for all the states collectively to provide a regional perspective.

Knowing how the public perceives us and our work will help identify where administrative, program or operational changes may be necessary to gain public confidence and support. It will also allow us to identify regional communication needs to address problem areas and provide additional opportunities for collaboration to achieve our common communication goals.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Wildlife License Tags: Revenue Generation Versus Political Sacrifice

Will establishing a cause-related tag in your state pay off?

By: Michelle Griffin with contributions from Susan Balgie(Minnesota), Dave Chandra(New Jersey), Scott Ball(Florida), and Beth Brown(Georgia)

During these times of decreasing funds and increasing needs, The Balance Wheel is making an effort to help our members consider all revenue-generating options at their disposal. We thought it would be beneficial to look at ideas working for some of our member states. I'm not talking about a bake sale, friends. I mean serious alternatives to create revenue and make our state agencies more financially independent.

In this article we look at the pros and cons of establishing a wildlife vehicle license tag to generate funds. Four of our member states have graciously shared with us their experiences so you may learn and consider whether or not this is a viable option for your state. Minnesota, Georgia, Florida and New Jersey provided information related to their experience, and this is the resulting information.

Deciding To Establish A Tag – The Process

Consistently, states considered vehicle license tags for the same reason – to raise money or replace existing funding sources that were thought to be vulnerable. In particular, funds were often sought to support programs such as nongame or natural heritage. For some states, inspiration came from success in near-by states such as Georgia observing neighboring Florida enjoy monies from multiple tags.

State wildlife agencies who were first to take the calculated risk of creating and marketing a specialty tag reaped big benefits. Those who had to compete with established specialty tags found they were still successful in raising funds, just at more modest levels. Even those first-time specialty tags eventually experienced lower returns as other cause-related tags came on to the scene.

In states like Florida where the number of specialty tags has skyrocketed (last count was 56!), there are concerns related to how effective each is for raising funds (the wildlife tags account for the top two best selling tags in the state). There are also concerns from law enforcement agencies regarding enforcement efforts. Florida is presently looking at ways to limit the number of tags while other states, like Minnesota are trying to be proactive from the beginning to avoid a glut of tags available to the public.

It should also be noted, as is apparent from Florida's success, that vehicle tags depicting wildlife are consistently better sellers than other cause-related tags. Minnesota experienced success with their initial tag (two deer on a tan background) and a more recent version (loon on a lake in autumn). The first tag was the most popular of all other Minnesota tags until the loon tag came out, which quickly surpassed it in sales.

All states found it necessary to weather the legislative process in order to establish a tag. However, none found it difficult to find support in Congress. For those states already offering tags some criteria such as application fees, marketing studies, and financial analysis were required.

In establishing legislation, none of the states initially had many political obstacles. If any arose, it was typically after the license plate had been established and was successful in the marketplace, leading us to the next important topic....

Dispersment And Protection Of Generated Funds

States differ slightly in what they actually collect from the sale of vehicle tags, but all seem to fall between a \$15-\$25 range. As stated earlier those states first to introduce a cause-related tag experienced a first-year boom then a decline in revenue, while states joining a competitive pool of tags seemed to experience a low first year, but an increase in subsequent years.

To give you an idea, in its first year of selling a wildlife specialty tag (1997 – it featured a quail), Georgia sold 563,111 tags generating \$7.8 million. Keep in mind, this was the first wildlife specialty tag offered in Georgia while the only other specialty tag ever offered was the Olympic tag, which expired the same year the wildlife tag was introduced. In 2002 the numbers had fallen to 37,155 tags generating \$520,000. Comparatively, Minnesota introduced its first tag in 1997 generating \$333,449 and by 2002, the second tag was generating \$2.5 million.

Clearly, every state is going to have circumstances resulting in varying degrees of sales success from year to year. Regardless, these are significant sums of money, and we all know with large amounts of money come large amounts of decision making.

Predominately, states specified within the legislation how the funds would be used. This both ensured purchaser's money went for the cause they invested in, and protected funds from being robbed by other interests. States like Georgia went the extra mile in deciding how funds were used to benefit wildlife by including both internal agency staff and external professionals.

Specifying use of the generated money became extremely important when marketing tags and also when and/or if it became necessary to protect the funds from being pilfered by outside interests. If the legislation used to establish the funds included specific wording on how the funds could be used, it was much more difficult to justify "borrowing" from these funds without betraying the trust of state residents who bought the tags.

Cost Of Producing Tag – Political & Financial

Specialty vehicle tags have generated significant funds for states. Our next question concerned the cost of producing the tags – both financially and politically. Since passing legislation to establish tags seems to have been relatively painless, it comes as no surprise that none of the states felt the establishment and subsequent success of their tags came with a hefty political price tag. Although some success caused increased interest in the generated monies, no state had trouble defending the intended use of the funds.

Several states like Georgia and Minnesota were resourceful and creative when finding a way to design the tag. They held a state-wide contest, open to all residents, to design the vehicle tags. All had good response to the contest with Minnesota receiving as many as 120 entries. Georgia test-marketed designs to see which would sell the best, while Minnesota used a wide range of judges including biologists, graphic designers, and outdoor media to choose the favorite tag design.

Some states, such as Florida and New Jersey hired tag artists or used in-house staff talent. Although they spent money on an artist or personnel salary, they saved time and money by not using multiple staff members necessary to execute a contest.

Overall, it appears the benefits of introducing a vehicle tag far outweigh the costs. Timing is clearly a significant factor, as is the design of the tag in comparison to other competing tags. The drawbacks, of course, include the uncertainty of long term funding, as most of the states enjoying success have only had their tags available to the public since the late 1990's.

****Do you have a revenue-generating idea that has worked for your agency? Please contact The Balance Wheel editor, Michelle Griffin. We would love to share your success with others.****



SKILL BUILDING

Moving Toward Digital

By: Craig Bihrlle, Communications Supervisor for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

In late July 2003, at the same time several of my coworkers at North Dakota Game and Fish were en route to ACI in Cody, I got a UPS delivery with the first copies of our August magazine. I opened the box with more than a normal level of curiosity.

Every month when our magazine, *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, comes back from the printer, I'm anxious to see what the images look like. I've either written, edited or proofed every word in the magazine once or twice, so I know what it says. I've seen the page proofs and colors proofs, but until I see a printed version, I don't really *know* if the pictures will look like the originals.

Our printers get good marks for consistency, but we've had a few instances where the printed picture didn't look like the slide ... and so I worry, just a little. In this instance, however, I didn't have a slide for comparison, only a series of images on a computer screen and on paper.

We've used digital original photos on the inside pages of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* for well over a year now. It hasn't been and is not yet, a complete conversion. We started with a picture or two per magazine and now we're up to maybe a half dozen, plus or minus. The change in what we see on the printed page is remarkable since we graduated from the Nikon Coolpix 990 to the Nikon D1x. Some of the improvement also comes from slowly learning the things you can do with Photoshop to prepare an image.

Our results on inside pages were good enough that we wanted to try one on the cover. In short, it worked better than I thought it would. When Ron Wilson, our magazine editor, came back from the ACI meeting, he said some folks were interested in how our "experiment" turned out, so I volunteered to provide an update.

Like most magazines, our standard for judging digital photos is how they look compared to a sharp slide. Honestly, if I had a sharp slide and a sharp digital of the same subject, I'd use the slide every time – for now, at least, given our current digital SLR, the Nikon D1x. I say this assuming that saving money on a high-resolution drum scan isn't a consideration.

But money, of course, is a consideration. At about \$35 for a 9x12-inch 300dpi, we've so far saved a couple thousand dollars on scan charges. And that's where most of the eventual savings will come from as I think the other digital vs. film cost factors are a wash.

The drum scans we get from slides for images that will cover a full page usually run from 30 to 40 megabytes in size in a TIF file. The largest TIF file I can get from my D1x is 16.9 mb. I usually have to crop the digital somewhat, so the file is usually 12-15 mb for a full page photo. In the end, the digital cover pictures we've used have less than half the information as a scan from a slide. (The newest Canon pro-level digital SLR, the EOS-1Ds, generates a TIF file of a little over 30 mb, so the gap is narrowing.)

Can I tell the difference? Yes. Is it enough of a difference that readers will notice a decline in quality? Based on the two covers we've tried, I'd say no. But with some qualifications.

First, the digital images we used were carefully picked. They were sharp to start with. In Photoshop I bumped the brightness and contrast a bit, and also ran them through the unsharp mask. For the November issue cover, we wound up turning it into a black and white because the original was taken in shadows and it had an annoying blue cast to it.

We ordered color proofs early and had alternatives lined up so we could switch if the digitals didn't measure up. Everything looked good when our August magazine went to press, but I was still anxious, and then pleasantly surprised when I opened the box.

It's probably not a good comparison to judge how our covers looked based on the two photos that accompany this article. You can get a better look on our website at discovernd.com/gnf/ndoutdoors. I would also be happy to mail a copy of our magazines to anyone who wants to inspect closer. Just email me at cbihrl@state.nd.us or call at (701)328-6317. You might even have exchange copies around your office somewhere.

We're by no means pioneers or experts, but we are getting some decent results. And we'd also like to hear from anyone who can help us improve our process.

Author's note: Since I completed the first draft of this article, we chose a digital original for the cover of our January issue, as well as for one of our calendar issue photos.

What does it take to be an ACI Awards Winner?

In our Spring 2003 Publication, we began asking ACI Award winners to share their secrets. The idea is to help all ACI members improve their skills in various areas. This issue we are focusing on the challenging task of creating exciting and effective regulation publications. We asked our two big winners from last year, Indiana and Oklahoma to share with us how they developed award-winning publications.

How Oklahoma went from Mistake-Ridden to Award-Winning Regulation Publications

By: Todd Craighead, Information Specialist, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

For as long as there have been state wildlife agencies, there have been state employees that cringe at the thought of having to produce hunting and fishing regulation booklets. Let's be honest, it's not the most glamorous assignment a

person could aspire to. It's a thankless, painstaking task that few people comment on unless there's a glaring error. Because of this cloud of negativity, it can become a vicious cycle – many times the only comments are negative, which drives our attitudes down and eventually affects our commitment to quality control leading to more negative comments.

Such was the case for decades in Oklahoma. When it came to regulation booklets, we were stuck in a rut, and we knew it. Finally one too many errors and the realization that there was probably no greater opportunity to gain the awareness, understanding, acceptance and support that we need from the hunters and anglers in our state led to change.

The epiphany led to a commitment to change. We would literally reinvent the production process from the ground up. No longer could we just shrug our shoulders at mistakes and commit to trying harder next time. The battle we fought and won was entirely an internal one within our agency. Our constituents know nothing of our change except that there are considerably fewer, if not any mistakes today. My supervisor put it this way – “Simply slapping a new coat of paint on an old house may help the aesthetics, but does nothing to address the termites in the walls.”

An elaborate system of checks and balances, responsibility sharing and timelines was developed. Our Information and Education Division had, up to this point, bore the regulations books burden alone and likewise received all the internal finger pointing when things went wrong. But this new master plan equally distributed ownership of our four annual publications to all appropriate players within our agency. Committees were formed for each publication with our licensing section, law enforcement, administration and the appropriate fisheries or wildlife division.

Forming a plan was the easy part – internally “selling” the plan was the hard part. Nobody else wanted to jump in to a new and additional commitment. But today, six years later, the fruits of our efforts are surfacing. Not only has our I/E division taken steps to put our money where our mouth is and commit to making these four publications (Hunting, Fishing, Waterfowl and Controlled Hunts) our top priority, but other divisions have done the same. They have embraced our vision and are bursting with well-deserved pride at our ACI accolades. They've even taken this shared ownership concept to the next level and rewritten personnel job descriptions to include specific regulation publications responsibilities. We are happy to share our success with the rest of our agency, because a rising tide of accomplishment does truly lift all boats and makes everyone's job easier and more fulfilling.

We'd be happy to send you a copy of our production guidelines and timelines if it will help in the improved effectiveness of your publications. Just contact me at (405) 521-3900, tcraighead@odwc.state.ok.us or at Todd Craighead, ODWC, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152.

How to create an award winning publication

By: Rebecca Mauser, Public Affairs Program Manager, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife

As the designer and editor of the 2002 Indiana Fishing Guide, I was asked by ACI to write a story on how I produced this ACI award-winning publication. Well, I'm not sure there are any secret tricks or magic involved, just lots of trial and error, and a sense of design developed over many years of experience.

I usually begin the production of our guides about 5 months before the publication deadline. I prepare a timeline for each step of the process and provide a copy to each person involved, from the fisheries or wildlife specialists to the support staff who handle distribution and mailing. This enables our staff to be prepared for the big production coming their way and schedule time for their part in the production.

The production of our regulations publications can be divided up into four main areas: Content, page design, cover design and production management.

Content

I begin each publication by contacting our staff specialist who oversees the content in the guide. I receive any changes to be made to the current guide on an enlarged marked-up copy. I edit the changes and make corrections. I resist suggestions to add redundant material. All rules are written in easy to understand language. The actual legal text from the law or statute is not quoted verbatim but always rewritten for the average reader. In cases of exceptionally complicated rules or unique exceptions, the guide refers the reader to our website for further explanation or gives a contact phone number for them to call. This keeps the guide a small manageable size and allows the reader to access the more common regulations easily.

Page design

I use the same basic template for each page. Margins, gutters, rules and page numbers are consistent throughout the

guide. In designing this template, I try to stick to some basic design principles so that the guide has a pleasing, easy to read look.

- Use lots of white space around the perimeter of the page. This frames the text and illustrations to give it a unified look.
- I use only two typefaces to give the publication a simple contemporary look. This also enhances legibility.
- Line length should be proportionate to your type size. Keep them fairly short. Avoid long lines of small type going across the page. It's hard on your eyes. Legibility suffers.
- Section headings should be placed in the same area on each page. Be consistent with upper and lowercase. These should be large and the same size throughout the publication.
- Subheads should be consistent in size and style.
- Use plenty of leading in text, but tighten it up in the headlines. I rarely use default leading.
- Page numbers should be large and easy to find.
- Avoid running type around objects unless it has some purpose or enhances the design. Cute, in-your-face, cluttery text and images usually detract not only from the publication's legibility but also it's presence and purpose – to communicate.

Cover design

I contact our photographer several months before our deadline to discuss ideas about the content and direction of the cover photo. But it usually happens he has a spectacular photo in his archives that is perfect for the cover. Our photographer often frames his shots with the cover in mind and leaves extra space above his subject matter. This allows room for the masthead.

The objective of the guide cover is to capture the attention of the reader and invite them to pick up the guide to find out what's inside. It should communicate that this information may be useful and interesting to the reader. A simple bold design, a dramatic photo and easy to read masthead usually accomplishes this.

The best photo to select is one that is simple and tells a story or evokes an emotional response from the reader. I try to avoid selecting cliched photos of the angler holding his catch of the day or the hunter walking in the field with his shotgun. I look for photos with simple backgrounds and plenty of room to crop. Cropping can turn a ho-hum photo in to a dramatic image. The placement of the masthead should catch the reader's eye then lead it into the main subject of the cover photo. I try to use only three main elements on the cover; the photo, the masthead and a block of subheadings or website address. More than that dilutes the effectiveness of a dramatic cover design.

Production

An award winning publication needs a good printer, otherwise the color can look muddy or uneven. Even the best designed images won't look good if the skin tones are green or the trees are blue.

I establish good communication with our printer early on, so that pre-press production goes smoothly and surprises are avoided. Be sure to attend the press-check and insist on correct color. Always take random proofs of your scans with you to ensure that the color matches. Don't sign-off until it is acceptable...even if it takes all day for them to get it right. Demand good color ink coverage even on newsprint pages. Specify it in your contract.

When I began designing the 2002 Indiana Fishing Guide, my goal was to design a regulations publication that communicated effectively with the reader and enhanced better understanding of state regulations. Achieving that goal is a win-win for both outdoorsmen and law enforcement. Winning a national award for designing that publication is just icing on the cake. Maybe this year it will be you!



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

2004 ACI Conference

It's time to mark your calendars and earmark the funds!

Channels of Communication
ACI Conference 2004 New Orleans, LA
July 11-15, 2004

The time of our annual gathering is quickly approaching, and we are gearing up for a grand time in the Big Easy. The 2004 ACI Conference in New Orleans will be one that won't quickly be forgotten.

As we prepare for the invasion of ACI'ers, we in Louisiana are designing a conference that will educate, inform and entertain.

Just like the myriad of offerings now available for consumption from your local cable or satellite providers, there are many different aspects to communications that we will explore. Our workshops will feature training in media relations, publications and education.

While surfing the "Channels of Communication," you'll find something for everyone. Those involved in the media will enjoy workshops and forums that will focus on the use of body language, improving relationships with editors and writers, and working with "the big boys." Audio-visual folks will see the present and future of the industry. Publications specialists will get a chance to hone their skills in proofing and layout. And we want to include a special invite to our education crowd to come and enjoy workshops and speakers specifically designed for you.

And what would a trip to New Orleans be without a good time? Conference attendees will have the opportunity to see the Louisiana swamps first hand, ride a steamboat down the Mighty Mississippi, as well as the chance to visit one of the world's finest aquariums. Other field trips are in the works and details are forthcoming. And don't worry, there will be plenty of time for extra-curricular entertainment as well.

As we say down here, "laissez le bons temps rouler!" We'll see y'all in July!

Lodging:

Doubletree Hotel: Single & Double rates \$80 per night; triple \$100; quad \$120. Rates good for three days before and after the conference. Reservations must be made by June 11, 2004 to receive these rates. Call 1-800-222-TREE and request rates for the Association for Conservation Information Conference 2004 (c/o Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries.)

Conference registration information:

Jeff DeGraff, (225)765-2465, degraff_ja@wlf.state.la.us

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!!!!!!!

ACI Awards 2003

It Ain't Payin' Unless You're Playin'

By: Chuck Schlueter, Award Program Chair

In a world filled with "what have you done for me recently," ACI is ready to answer the challenge. You see, they have this handy little tool for improving your craft. It is called The ACI Awards.

The benefits are not limited to the winners. In fact, winning is really just a bonus. The big winners are those who enter, have their materials judged by an independent panel that can provide new insight into what you are doing well

and how you might make your product better. But there is a catch. Unless you submit your entries, you won't be able to benefit from the awards competition.

Last year the ACI Award entries dipped to 278 total, a drop of 61 from the previous year. At a minimum, we would love to get back to our 10-year average of 301 entries.

You will soon find complete information about the ACI Award competition on the ACI web site, along with entry forms. It is important to note this date on your calendars:

Monday, March 1 – Entries must be received by category chairs.

While March 1 is the deadline, I encourage you to submit your entries (note, plural) at your soonest convenience. This will benefit you by ensuring that your entries are received in plenty of time. Entries received after the March 1 deadline **will be returned unprocessed**.

All told, ACI offers 24 different categories for entries. In addition, there are four special awards offered through cooperating partners that are given out in conjunction with the ACI Awards: Izaak Walton League of America Association for Conservation Outdoor Ethics Conservation Information, National Wild Turkey Federation's ACI Communicator of the Year, The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's Water Works Wonders Outreach and Education Award, and the "Pass It On" Communications Award from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

These are some great opportunities for you and your agency. This is an awards competition that is set up to make everyone a winner. Watch for reminders to come through the ACI e-group and check the information and entry forms on the ACI web site.

If you are playin', the awards will be payin'!



ACI MEMBER NEWS

Ricks Named First Winner of National Wild Turkey Federation Communicators Award

By: Jonathan Harling and James Powell

Allen Ricks, a member of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) for 21 years and ACI for 18 years, is the first recipient of the NWTF's ACI Communicator of the Year award. He didn't just slip into the outdoor communication industry yesterday— in fact, some would say the name Allen Ricks of Morristown, Tenn., echoes through the industry like that of an early morning gobble in the spring turkey woods.

Created by the NWTF, the ACI Communicator of the Year award honors communicators and media specialists who show an interest in the NWTF and turkey hunting, and reflect those interests in their writing and producing.

Ricks surpassed all expectations with his extensive list of wild turkey media forums including: press releases, articles, photography, hunting and safety seminars and newspaper columns. Ricks has covered topics such as turkey hunting safety education, youth and women outdoor events, wildlife habitat improvement and the growth of wild turkey populations.

"I was totally elated and surprised to win this award," said Ricks, information and education coordinator for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. "The NWTF is an organization with their heart in the right place, especially when talking about ethics, safety and habitat preservation."

Tammy Bristow Sapp, NWTF's vice president of communications, presented Ricks with the NWTF's Legacy sculpture, a certificate and a scholarship to visit the Wild Turkey Center next spring. Ricks accepted the honor in the presence of his peers at the 2002 ACI conference in Shepherdstown, W.Va.

"You couldn't wish for a better person than Allen Ricks to win the NWTF's first ever ACI Communicator of the Year award," said Bristow. "Allen understands the value of sharing those great conservation success stories with his readers. Through his articles and columns, Allen tells how partnerships between hunters, wildlife agencies and conservation organizations like the NWTF work for the benefit of wildlife. He's not only a great communicator, he's also a true-blue NWTF volunteer."

The NWTF will honor a Communicator of the Year each year in the future. Contact Tammy Bristow, vice president of communications at 1-800-THE-NWTF for more information and to submit applications.

NWTF Award Far Exceeds Expectations

Allen Ricks Tells Story of Winning NWTF Award

By Allen Ricks, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Information & Education Coordinator

When it was announced last year there was a new Association of Conservation Information (ACI) award category being sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), my interest immediately peaked. Heck, anything about wild turkeys peaks my interest.

The NWTF said the award was to honor ACI communicators and media specialists who show an interest in the NWTF and turkey hunting and reflect those interests in their writing/producing. The winner's work would be recognized for helping preserve our hunting heritage by sharing the turkey hunting tradition and the NWTF's role to protect that heritage.

Through my work as a regional information and education coordinator with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, I have been active for a number of years with the NWTF chapters in East Tennessee assisting them in holding fund raising banquets, JAKES events, and WITO workshops.

Because of the accomplishments that had been made over the previous year, I thought I had a fair chance of winning the award and receiving a nice plaque to hang on the office wall.

It was at the 2002 ACI Conference in Shepherdstown, W.VA., that Tammy Bristow Sapp named the first winner of this new award. I was excited to be recognized by the NWTF for the work that I had done, but I was blown away when she brought out the Heritage Sculpture that was presented as the award. Tammy also presented me with a scholarship for a trip for my wife and I to visit the NWTF Headquarters in Edgefield, S.C.

I had visited the NWTF headquarters several times over the years, but thought it would be interesting to see the improvements and additions to the office and museum. My wife had not been to Edgefield and I knew she would enjoy the trip.

And then "page two" as Paul Harvey would say. Tammy notified me that she wanted us to come down in April so that I could turkey hunt a couple of days. The hunt would be taped for a segment of Turkey Call TV. To be properly outfitted for the camera, she needed my clothing sizes for a new camo outfit.

My wife and I left early on Thursday, April 3rd, so that we would have time to tour the headquarters and museum that afternoon. When we arrived in Edgefield, we went directly to the NWTF Headquarters to meet Tammy and the other people who work behind the scenes. After introductions, we toured the museum. Anyone can learn a great deal about the wild turkey story by a visit to the museum.

We finished our tour with just enough time left to go to the motel and freshen up before dinner. Tammy had made reservations at the Old Edgefield Grill. The Grill is located in a Southern Victorian style home that is shaded by two huge magnolia trees. Not only was the building "Southern Style," so was the food which was prepared by Chef Sean Alexander Wight.

It was at the Grill we met John Brown and Travis Sumner. John is a videographer for NWTF and would be recording the turkey hunt the next day. Travis is a wildlife biologist with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. He is also on the Quaker Boy Pro Staff team and guides turkey hunters during the spring turkey season.

After we finished dinner, plans were made for Travis and John to meet me at the hotel at 4:30 a.m. The next morning we made a short drive to some private property that Travis had permission to hunt. We quietly slipped in and set two decoys, a hen and a bubba jake, out in the pasture field. We had just barely gotten set up when a bird gobbled just off the end of the field.

As Travis and John were making seductive hen calls, two hens entered the field followed by a huge gobbler. He would answer the calls but seemed nervous about coming down into the field. We soon learned why when three jakes came into the field and whipped the old bird and ran him off.

We hunted hard for two days and although we saw and heard several turkeys, we were able to take a gobbler. Apparently, no one had told these turkeys that they were being hunted by an award winner. Well, that's why it's called turkey hunting.

My hat is off to the National Wild Turkey Federation for the effort they put forth to recognize and reward those who work for the wild turkey and the hunting heritage. Any ACI members who are working with wild turkey safety seminars, recruitment events for youth or women, or promoting turkey hunting, should certainly write up your efforts and accomplishments and submit them in this award category. You could not only receive a wonderful award but you will also develop memories that will not soon be forgotten.

Kleiner Leaves Maine to Start His Own Business

Don Kleiner has left the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, where he was director of Information and Education, and is now busy with his own company, Maine Outdoors.

"I am moving into marketing and promotion of outdoor-recreation-based businesses and agencies," said Kleiner. "I am also working on an Internet portal that would offer entry into all of the hunt lotteries in New England, an online store, and in my spare moments a guide service so that I will be able to get out once in a while to enjoy what it is that got me into all of this."

Recently he was bemoaning the fact that he was "laboring over a consulting proposal in between deer hunting and fishing for sea-run brown trout."

Maine's new I&E director is Marc Michaud, a retired school teacher.

Don can be reached in the following ways:

Don Kleiner
Maine Outdoors
PO Box 401
Union, ME 04862
meoutdrs@tidewater.net
Phone – (207) 785-4496



SPECIAL SECTION

Minutes from 2003 ACI Conference Business Meeting

ACI Business Meeting

July 29, 2003, Cody, Wyoming

The meeting was called to order and roll call conducted by Acting Secretary Nels Rodefeld. A quorum was present. A motion was made by Scott Ball to approve the minutes of the 2002 meeting as published in TBW Fall 2002; motion passed.

President's Report

Joan Guilfoyle reported on business that the officers and board conducted via conference calls in November and April, and during its Board meeting at the beginning of the 2004 conference. Items include:

- Approved a new ACI logo. (see website)
- At the recommendation of The Balance Wheel committee, awarded a contract with Complete Communications (Michelle Griffin) to serve as the editor of "The Balance Wheel" and Membership Directory.

- Formed a sub-committee to locate a new pro-bono lawyer for ACI. Members are Chris Chaffin, Kay Ellerhoff and Dave Rice.
- Dave Rice will draft a new "Members in Good Standing Policies and Procedure" regarding how the organization will handle late payments for membership dues and/or awards entries.
- It was determined that the host state for the annual conference will be responsible for conducting a post-conference evaluation and providing this information to the next year's host agency.
- It was determined that the 2004 Membership Directory will be printed with updated By-Laws and Articles
- Approved 2004 Budget
- In 2004, Louisiana will be asked to seek session "reporters" will takes notes at the conference which can then be posted to the Web site for those who are not able to attend.
- The organization also will need to look at ways to consider spending some of its savings, which is approaching \$25,000. A new "Special Projects and Grants Committee" was subsequently formed to address this question. Chaired by Lydia Saldana. Members: Jen Levin, Jim Sciascia
- Joan also said that there would be an attempt to modifying the nominating process for officers/board members in the coming year. The goal will be to make the process easier to understand and more inclusive to the membership. A new "Nominations Process Committee" was formed to address this. Chair is Randy Henry. Members: Bill Greer, Scott Pengelly, Joy Hill, Judy Stokes, Judy Hosafros.
- Joan emphasized that there are many ways to get involved in ACI and invited all members to consider doing so. Opportunities (at the time of the conference) include: a vacancy as Midwest Liaison; one (state) vacancy as State-Federal Liaison; TBW committee members; assisting with the auction; offering to serve as a category chair for the Awards program; acting as a reporter at next year's conference; hosting a future conference; talking with non-member states about ACI.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Dave Rice was not present, so the report was taken from information given at the Board Meeting earlier in the week. ACI is in good shape financially. The trust funds has over \$20,000 in it and it is growing. Reasons for the increase include an increase in membership dues and West Virginia turning back \$7,000 from last year's conference. Expenditures for FY03 are projected to be \$19,886 and income is projected at \$22,123.

Awards Committee Report

Awards Chair Nels Rodefled informed those present that Chuck Schlueter (South Dakota) will serve as the chair for the coming year. Nels said he would continue to serve as the associate chair to assist Chuck as needed. Rodefled also advised that the total number of entries for this competition were down significantly.

Ways/Means Committee

Dave Rice. No report available.

Membership Committee

Nels Rodefled announced The Outdoor Channel as a new supporting member.

Auction

Steve Wilson announced that \$4,744.50 was raised at the auction and several other silent auction items were going to be sold prior to the awards banquet.

The Balance Wheel Committee Report

Nancy Herron, Scott Ball and Scott Pengelly reported that TBW went to an all-electronic version. An editorial committee was formed to assist with the transition and content development. Volunteers were sought to form a new group to serve in this capacity for the coming year. Coordinated by ACI VP Dave Chanda (NJ), the new members are Scott Ball (FL), Nancy Herron (TX), Kathleen Jamison (DE), Greg Jenkins (NC), Randy Brudnicki (UT) and Randy Henry (OR State Marine Board).

Future Conferences Report

Reported by Judy Stokes for Kay Ellerhoff:

2004 will be in New Orleans, LA, July 11-15 at the DoubleTree Hotel.

'05 maybes include The NWTF, NC, UT or SD

'06 tentative is MN

'07 tentative is MA

'08 tentative is NV

A report on 2004 conference planning was given by Judy Hosafros.

Liaisons

IAFWA: Good activity at the International.

OWAA: New online directory and searchable database has been well received. OWAA also has a new logo, but members can continue using the old logo if they want. Bi-monthly electronic newsletter launched. OWAA has 726 individual members and 400+ supporting members; 800 were at the annual conference in Missouri. Next year's conference will be in Spokane, WA.

NE: Communication model planning has continued. A multi-state grant was awarded relating to determining and/or building agency credibility. Jim Sciascia (NJ) was awarded the Conservation Communicator of the Year at the Northeastern.

West: A successful education effort in WA was recognized. The effort focused on K-12 and dealt with learning to live with mountain lions. Arizona wanted to use parts of Project WILD but Project WILD did not want the state to use it in that manner; a compromise appears to have been reached that will allow the state to use the education materials. Also reported at the Western was a survey that showed despite CWD publicity in the west, there has not been a drop in hunter numbers.

State of the conference report was given by Judy Hosafros (WY)

Old Business

Immediate Past President David Warren stated that the past presidents at the conference had met regarding creating an ACI Communicator of the Year (to be awarded at the International) and they hoped to bring a specific proposal to the board for its fall conference call.

New business

Judy Hosafros agreed to write up a proposal regarding designating an ACI liaison to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting.

The Auditing Committee, consisting of Marc Sommer and Scott Pengelly, said the Treasurer's Report as submitted at the Board meeting was in order.

Nominating Committee

Members previously appointed by President Guilfoyle nominated the following persons for three-year terms on the board of directors: Charles Farmer (SC), Maureen Angel (NV), Jen Levin (RBFF), Chuck Schlueter (SD), Jim Sciascia (NJ) and Micah Holmes (OK).

Jen Levin (RBFF), Chuck Schlueter (SD), Jim Sciascia (NJ) were elected and will serve until 2006. They replaced outgoing board members Randy Henry, Scott Pengally and Lee Carolyn

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Scott Pengally and the meeting was adjourned.