

The Balance Wheel

Newsletter of the Association of Conservation Information

Spring, 2005

Inside This Issue:

Presidents Message:

Dave Chanda talks about the 2005 ACI Conference and

National News:

Update on Chronic Wasting Disease – Robert Manwell, Wisconsin

Strategic Planning:

*Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies: Defining a Vision for Wildlife Conservation
Success in Every State – IAFWA staff – Dave Chadwick, Rachel Brittin, Naomi Edleson*

Upcoming Events and Deadlines:

2005 ACI Conference

Membership News:

Farewell for now....The Balance Wheel Editor Moves on to Second Career – Michelle Griffin

Welcome to the New Balance Wheel Editor – Michelle Griffin

From The Balance Wheel Subcommittee Members – TBW Subcommittee

Contributors to this issue: Dave Chanda, Dave Chadwick, Rachel Brittin, Naomi Edleson, Robert Manwell, Robin Thomas, Michelle Griffin, Scott Ball

Editor: Michelle Griffin, 404 433-9776 or michelle@complete-communications.com

Web Master: Nancy Herron 512 389-4362 or nancy.herron@tpwd.state.tx.us



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Dave Chanda

Are you ready for Utah? Because they are ready for you! What a fantastic job the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has done pulling together what promises to be one of the best ACI Conferences ever! If you haven't looked over the agenda I encourage you to visit the conference web site at www.aci2005.org.

The conference agenda looks awesome, the field trips exciting, Steve "Wild-man" Wilson has been busy gathering up auction items, and on Thursday we will travel to Snowbasin Resort where we will conduct the annual ACI Awards banquet. I understand the view is simply amazing.

I'd love to have you stop by the ACI Board Meeting on Sunday morning and see what your Board of Directors has been doing on behalf of the organization. Even if you can't make the board meeting, don't miss the afternoon discussion on the National Conservation Education Strategy. Tom Bennett, Commissioner of Kentucky's Department of Fish and Wildlife will address issues relating to, and extending from, the IAFWA Summit on Conservation Education that was held last December. Tom will update us on how the Agenda for Conservation Education in State Fish and Wildlife Agencies has been received and how it has affected the way your agency conducts business.

In addition, on Tuesday, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy will co-host a very important workshop on how to communicate about the state wildlife strategies. IAFWA will present the results of three focus groups and a national poll that specifically tested messages

that will resonate around supporting the state wildlife strategies. IAFWA will also provide an overview of their three-year communications plan for the strategies and get you prepared to get the most effective message out in your state. This workshop will not be held anywhere else!

As you can see, the staff of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has put together a very exciting conference. I strongly encourage each state and others from the conservation community to attend the ACI Conference on July 10-15.

I look forward to the opportunity to welcome you in person. Hope to see you there.



NATIONAL NEWS

Update on Chronic Wasting Disease: New cases in New York

By: Robert Manwell, Wisconsin

In the summer of 2003 the Balance Wheel published an article on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' communication efforts in the wake of discovering Chronic Wasting Disease in its wild white-tailed deer herd. Much has happened since then. Wisconsin's management plan has matured and so have communication efforts.

On February 28, 2002, when it was learned that three hunter-harvested whitetails had tested positive for CWD there was very little general public knowledge about the nature of this disease, its characteristics, human health risks or how to deal with it. Early outreach efforts emphasized quickly reaching as many people as possible with basic information through large and small public meetings.

But large public meetings are not the best tool to build the kind of trust needed to support a management plan that called for significantly reducing the deer herd in the affected area. Nearly all of the land area in Wisconsin's CWD management zones is in private ownership. Although state law allows entry to a property to address "wildlife health problems" it is and always has been the department's policy to respect landowner's rights to control access to their property. Landowner support was absolutely critical to a successful disease management plan – landowners, their friends and families would have to do most of the shooting.

We talked about this with the public in smaller focus groups and used insight gained from these citizens to create incentives for landowners to spend extra effort hunting their lands. We also formed a corps of "community liaisons" – wildlife biologists trained and equipped to visit landowners in the core of the disease zone on a one-to-one basis to answer questions, provide updates and leave information.

The corps of liaisons each had an area assigned to them within the core infection area. Over the course of several months they made personal visits to landowners in their assigned area. They were equipped with maps, management plans and human and animal health information. The primary purpose of the visits was to establish a trust building relationship with affected landowners – to "put a face" on the state's effort's to manage this problem. Landowners were also left with contact information for their liaison in case they had any follow up questions or problems.

The work of the community liaisons was augmented by production and distribution of a newspaper insert distributed to households throughout the disease area and a landowner newsletter sent directly to landowners in the core infection area. This past year a 1-800 number for information was established.

We also tried to work smarter. In response to the near constant requests from media and citizens for the number of deer tested and found positive, we worked with our Information Technology Bureau and GIS unit to develop a web page <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/whealth/issues/CWD/results.htm> that is updated weekly with the most recent testing numbers.

The website also allows hunters to access test results for deer they've registered by entering a confidential customer number.

In addition to this method of reporting test results we sent a post card to every hunter if their deer tested negative and made a personal phone call to every hunter registering a CWD-positive deer. Positive deer were not posted to the

website until the hunter had been notified. The website also has an interactive mapping tool that gives the user testing information down to the section level of their township.

Were we successful? In a survey conducted by Jordan Petchenik (Chronic Wasting Disease in Wisconsin and the 2002 Hunting Season; Gun Deer Hunters' First Response) data reveal that most hunters (68 percent) who chose not to hunt in the first season following discovery of CWD (fall, 2002) did so for non-CWD reasons. They were far more likely to mention scheduling conflicts, poor health, old age or lack of hunting companions as reasons for not hunting.

And data from a survey study of hunters from inside and outside the CWD management zone done by Dr. Robert Holsman and graduate student Ryan Meinerz at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, (Hunter Effort and Attitudes in Wisconsin's Chronic Wasting Disease Eradication Zone; Results from the 2003 Extended Deer Season) indicated that the greatest fear among hunters who hunted in 2003 (one year after discovery of CWD) was not personal health or even deer herd health, it was the threat posed to the future of hunting.

Wisconsin will continue its efforts to keep the public informed about chronic wasting disease in the state. This fall, the Wildlife Health Unit of the Bureau of Wildlife Management will resume major disease surveillance sampling for CWD in areas away from the current disease management zone. This will be accompanied with an appropriate regional information and outreach effort to alert hunters and citizens of this effort and solicit their support. Results will be added to the reporting website and should CWD be found, informational materials will be at hand.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies: Defining a Vision for Wildlife Conservation Success in Every State

By: IAFWA staff – Dave Chadwick, Rachel Brittin, Naomi Edelson

At this year's ACI meeting, communications leaders from around the nation will have the opportunity to participate in a workshop on the Teaming With Wildlife Initiative and the state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies. This one-day workshop will kick off a major communications initiative to help our agencies take our wildlife conservation efforts to a new level.

Over the last century, fish and wildlife agencies have had great success in recovering many of our most treasured fish and wildlife species. Where we have dedicated the resources, we have brought species back from the brink of extinction. However, most of our resources have focused on the fish and wildlife that are hunted and fished. While we have done a great job of saving these important species, many others have fallen through the cracks. Since the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, the number of fish and wildlife species listed as endangered and threatened has continued to climb.

The Teaming With Wildlife initiative began in the early 1990s as an effort to expand funding for wildlife conservation in addressing the needs of all species. Over time, the Teaming With Wildlife coalition grew to include more than 3000 organizations and businesses. In the late 1990s, the efforts of the Teaming With Wildlife coalition focused on passing the Conservation And Reinvestment Act (CARA). In addition to funding several other federal conservation programs, this bill would have provided \$350 million in funding for wildlife conservation through the creation of a new Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act.

Despite broad support in Congress and the public, CARA did not pass. However, Congress did agree to create two new programs to fund state wildlife conservation programs. The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program as envisioned in CARA was created and funded for one year at a level of \$50 million. Congress also created the State Wildlife Grants program, which has been funded annually through the appropriations process.

Over the last five years, State Wildlife Grants and the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program have provided a combined total of almost \$340 million for on-the-ground conservation projects aimed at keeping wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. [table] These projects and programs have helped restore degraded habitat, reintroduce native species, and promote the effective stewardship of private lands. In an era of tight budgets, the program's emphasis on preventive conservation has helped attract broad, bipartisan support in Congress and the Administration.

Teaming With Wildlife: Total Funding					
FY 01 WCRP	FY 02 SWG	FY 03 SWG	FY 04 SWG	FY05 SWG	Total
\$50,000,000	\$85,000,000	\$65,000,000	\$70,000,000	\$69,120,568	\$339,120,568

In order to receive funds from the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and State Wildlife Grants, each state and territory has been charged with writing a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy CWCS by October 2005. These statewide action plans will include information on priority wildlife species and habitats, the issues that need to be addressed to restore the viability of those species and habitats, and recommendations for addressing those issues.

The state wildlife strategies focus on the species that are in greatest need of conservation while addressing the needs of the "full array of wildlife" in each state. They are being developed according to requirements laid out by Congress for the WCRP and criteria developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the SWG program, but each state is developing their own approach based on local issues and management needs. *[Box: eight required elements – see below].*

Box 1: Eight Required Elements for State Wildlife Strategies

The strategies have been developed according to requirements laid out by Congress for the WCRP and criteria developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the SWG program. These requirements include:

- (1) Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;
- (2) Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (1);
- (3) Descriptions of problems, which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors, which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;
- (4) Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;
- (5) Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;
- (6) Descriptions of procedures to review the strategy at intervals not to exceed 10 years;
- (7) Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats; and,
- (8) Public participation in the development of the Strategy.

While the state wildlife strategies are built around the same core set of planning requirements, they each reflect a different set of issues, habitats, management needs, and priorities. The States have been together and in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure nationwide and regional consistency and a common focus on targeting resources at conserving declining wildlife and their habitat.

While state fish and wildlife agencies are leading the strategy development process, the aim is to create an action plan for conserving the state's wildlife, not just a strategic plan for the agency. The agencies have been developing the strategies by engaging a broad array of partners, including other government agencies, conservation groups, private landowners, the public, and anyone else who has a stake in fish and wildlife management. By pulling together a wide range of expert input and recommendations from other planning efforts, the agencies have been able to draw together the best thinking on every wildlife priority in each state.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has been at the center of the wildlife strategy development process, providing a forum for agencies to develop the planning process, share ideas and practices. The Association maintains a web site dedicated to the state wildlife strategies at <http://www.wildlifestrategies.org>. From this site, you can obtain information and updates on the development of the strategies in each state, as well as links to draft and final documents.

With the October deadline looming, the state wildlife agencies have been in high gear to get the strategies done. Every state is in the final stages of identifying their wildlife and habitat priorities, and many are moving toward completion with defining the action steps that will need to be taken to conserve them over the long term. Several states are already circulating draft strategies and engaging in marathon rounds of public meetings and stakeholder outreach.

When the wildlife strategies are done later this year, they will collectively bring nationwide attention to wildlife conservation needs. But because they are being drawn up at the state level, the strategies will include concrete actions based on local expertise, management needs, and priorities.

"The development of Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies in every state is an exciting and historic opportunity for wildlife management professionals and everyone who cares about wildlife conservation" stated Ron Regan, the Director of Operations for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. "For the first time, we are really getting ahead of the curve and thinking strategically about how to conserve wildlife. Instead of reacting to crises, we are able to focus on non-regulatory, preventive approaches to wildlife conservation."

Getting the strategies written is only half the job. The real challenge will come in getting them implemented, and translating all of their good ideas into on-the-ground success in every state. That will take broad public support and more funding at the state and federal level. To help build that support, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recently kicked off a major national public education initiative. This initiative will capitalize on the momentum created by the completion of the state wildlife strategies, to build, strengthen, and mobilize a core network of key individuals, organizations, agencies, and associations on behalf of securing full implementation of the state wildlife strategies. To support this initiative, the International Association, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, recently obtained a \$600,000 grant over three years from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

A key component of this effort will be using public opinion research — polling data, focus groups, and case studies — to provide critically needed information about public attitudes toward wildlife conservation and related issues and trends. Using these data, we will create universal messages and customized, strategic communications plans, which will provide supporters with the tools, expertise, and materials necessary to launch successful public education programs in their states. *[Box 2: main objectives & key milestone dates]*

Box 2: Teaming With Wildlife Communications Initiative Main Objectives & Key Dates:

Main Objectives:

1. Identify effective messages using up-to-date public opinion research
2. Develop a strategic communications plan based on polling data
3. Build, unify and activate network of supporters around a common message
4. Cultivate strategic relationships with media and other influencers
5. Capitalize on launch of State Wildlife Strategies through a concerted nation-wide media and public education campaign
6. Lay the foundation for future state-based campaigns to increase funding for implementation of state wildlife strategies

Key Dates:

- January - June 2005 --- Planning Phase
- July 12, 2005 --- Train the Messengers workshop at ACI annual meeting

- October 1, 2005 --- Completion of all State Wildlife Strategies
- Fall 2005 --- Concerted Media/Coalition Outreach Begins
- January - March 2006 --- National Press Conference and Release of Summary Report on Strategies

To date the International Association has conducted 6 focus groups (Nashville, TN, Appleton WI, and Scottsdale AZ). Three locations and two groups split by gender at each site. These focus groups helped fashion the national poll and get some early direction on key messages. We just conducted the poll of 1000 people and will release the results at the July ACI workshop.

For more information on the State Wildlife Grants program and Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, visit the Teaming With Wildlife web site at <http://www.teaming.com>.



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES



2005 ACI Conference

Nestled between the incredible Great Salt Lake and the towering Wasatch Mountains, this year's ACI conference is hosted by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in Ogden, Utah.

"The entire week of ACI 2005 is jam packed with outstanding sessions, field trips and social events," said Robin Thomas, this year's conference coordinator. "No one will leave unsatisfied."

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies will also be at ACI 2005 in force for the CWCS State Strategies (Teaming with Wildlife - Train the Trainers) training. The sessions they'll provide are timely and will effect us all.

Other sessions include Best Practices, Master Naturalist Programs, Branding and Identity Creating, Video Studio "Extreme Makeovers", Capture the Perfect Image, Creating Engaging Exhibits and an update on the National Conservation Education Strategy.

The complete agenda, registration form, information about Utah and more are available online at www.aci2005.org and don't forget to cash in on early bird registration savings by registering before July 1. The block of rooms being reserved at the conference hotel will be released June 26, so get your hotel reservations taken care of pronto!



MEMBER NEWS

Farewell for now....The Balance Wheel Editor Moves on to a Second Career

By: Michelle Griffin – Editor, The Balance Wheel

After ten years working as a communications professional in the natural resources field, I have decided to take on the hardest job yet: full-time mom to a two-year-old and a newborn.

I have to admit - I release a known world of intelligent people who carry a strong passion for their work, with much trepidation. I know in my heart the next several years will bring me joy and a lifetime of satisfaction knowing I was able to be the primary teacher to my kids in their formative years; and yet, that world of intelligent and passionate people tugs at my shirt sleeve and beckons me to stay.

I sincerely want to thank ALL ACI members for making these last three years incredibly satisfying. The dedication and fervor for natural resource management I have found among you has been nothing short of inspiring. With each issue I find a new group of volunteer contributors willing to make time to share their experiences and knowledge with the entire organization. And of course, the Balance Wheel Subcommittee members who offer their time and expertise to organize each issue is something an editor relishes with much appreciation (not to mention their much-enjoyed collective sense of humor☺).

I feel sure my path will cross that of ACI again in the future. Until then, I wish the organization great success in continuing to fight the communication battles ensuring our message is clear, succinct and understood. Please know that each of you is a gift to your organization and your passion is needed by the general public.

Enjoy, as The Balance Wheel enters the next chapter of its life.

Welcome Dottie! The New Balance Wheel Editor

By: Michelle Griffin, former editor of The Balance Wheel

It is with great pleasure I introduce the new editor of *The Balance Wheel*, Mrs. Dottie Head.

Dottie served the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for ten years first as an assistant writer, then progressing through the years to the position of Administrative Coordinator overseeing all public affairs duties – including the management of a five-person staff - within the Wildlife Resources Division. Since 1999 she has continued to serve the natural resources field as a freelance writer for several fish & game publications such as *Georgia Sportsman Magazine*, the National Safe Boating Council newsletter *Anchorlines*, and the bi-annual Georgia Outdoor Writers Association's newsletter. Among other professional affiliations, Dottie was a member of ACI from 1995-1999.

Her work has garnered such multi-year awards as the Georgia Outdoor Writers Association Excellence in Craft Award and the National Safe Boating Council Chair Award.

Dottie brings the unique combination of past ACI experience and a fresh brain of new ideas to the table. She will breathe new life into the newsletter and take it to the next level. Dottie embodies the same passion for her work found in the ACI membership and will be joining you in Utah this July for the ACI Conference. Please welcome her with the same enthusiasm typical of the ACI membership and enjoy her level of professionalism. She can be contacted via e-mail: dottiehead@mindspring.com.

From The Balance Wheel Subcommittee Members

As much as we look forward to working with Dottie Head on The Balance Wheel, we're sorry to lose Michelle Griffin. But having your second baby certainly trumps ACI in the grand scheme of things. As

editor, Michelle provided great leadership as we transitioned from a paper to electronic newsletter. Her energy and creativity were inspiring to those of us who worked with her over the past three years. On behalf of ACI, we wish Michelle much success, happiness and good times with her growing family.

-The Balance Wheel Sub-committee (past and present)

Scott Ball (Fla.), Randy Brudnicki (Nev., Texas), Dave Chanda (N.J.), Joan Guilfoyle (Fed., Minn.), Randy Henry (Oregon), Nancy Herron (Texas), Micah Holmes (Okla.), Kathleen Jamison (Del.), Greg Jenkins (N.C.), Hoy Murphy (W.V.), Scott Pengelly (Minn.), Liza Poinier (N.H.), Jim Sciascia (N.J.)

-END Spring 2005 TBW ISSUE-