

SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES
WILDLIFE HEALTH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Operational Guidelines

Approved Oct 2022

BACKGROUND

There is an ever-growing need for interagency communication, collaboration, and coordination surrounding increasingly complex wildlife health challenges. The Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS), a wildlife disease research, service, and diagnostic cooperative founded in 1957 by agencies of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) provides an example of such cooperation. The SCWDS Steering Committee, a SEAFWA Project Committee, is responsible for working collaboratively to develop a regional approach to wildlife health issues and promote consideration of health in all aspects of wildlife management. Members serve as a two-way conduit between SCWDS and SEAFWA state agencies and their Directors.

In the face of increasing need for communication and collaboration between SCWDS and technical staff in member agencies, SCWDS formed the Southeast Wildlife Health Technical Group (SEWHTG) in 2015. The SEWHTG has been comprised of a technical staff representative from each SCWDS member agency and the group has met annually since its founding. All meetings have been held in Athens, Georgia. Beginning in 2016, a co-chair structure was adopted comprised of a SCWDS faculty member and a state agency member co-leading the group. Formal wildlife health committees have been active in both the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for many years and there has been growing interest in formalizing the SEWHTG. This document describes operational guidelines for the SEAFWA Wildlife Health Technical Committee (WHTC).

MISSION

The WHTC serves as a resource to SEAFWA, including the SCWDS Steering Committee and the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC). The WHTC provides collaborative guidance and solutions to local and regional wildlife health issues, including (1) identifying regional wildlife health priorities and developing ideas for science-based solutions, (2) identifying collaborative research and management projects to address wildlife health problems, and (3) developing recommendations and guidance related to management, regulations, and policy that impact wildlife health, as needed and as requested by the SEAFWA Directors. An agency Director will be appointed by SEAFWA leadership to serve as a Director Sponsor for the WHTC.

MEMBERSHIP

The WHTC shall consist of one representative for each SEAFWA member agency appointed at the discretion of the member agency's Director. Committee members should be member agency personnel who have agency duties related to wildlife health management, or are uniquely qualified to function as the representative to the WHTC. Each member should be under clear instructions that participation on the WHTC is expected. At the discretion of Committee leadership, more than one representative from a state member agency, or other interested persons, may participate in WHTC activities, but each member agency is limited to one official member and one vote. The SCWDS faculty representative serving as co-chair will serve as the official member representing SCWDS on the WHTC. Representatives from SCWDS member agencies that are outside of SEAFWA, including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Wildlife Health Office), will fully participate as associate members but will not be able to vote. Additional Federal agency partners may be invited to participate in WHTC activities at the discretion of Committee leadership and the SEAFWA Directors.

In the absence of the official WHTC member, another individual from the same agency may serve as proxy. Authorized designees shall represent an absent member in all matters.

Guests (e.g., representatives from the AFWA, other state/federal agency personnel, University personnel, etc.) may be invited to attend annual meetings as deemed appropriate by WHTC leadership to provide specific expertise and foster collaboration.

CO-CHAIR APPOINTMENT AND CO-CHAIR DUTIES

The SCWDS Director shall serve as the co-chair from SCWDS, or shall appoint a representative of SCWDS to serve in the role. A co-chair from a SEAFWA member state will be appointed by SEAFWA leadership. The term of service as co-chair should be a minimum of 2 years and not to exceed 6 consecutive years.

The WHTC Co-Chairs shall be responsible for:

- 1) Scheduling of Committee meetings and preparation of agendas, including notification to WHTC members and others (e.g., SCWDS Steering Committee Chair, WRC Chair, etc.) as appropriate.
- 2) Working with SCWDS staff (or host state) to finalize arrangements for accommodations where WHTC meetings are to be held.
- 3) Conducting meetings in a manner to best accomplish the charge of the WHTC. Co-Chairs have great discretion in running meetings but must ensure procedures and rules sufficient to address the issues and matters being considered and the soundness of Committee recommendations. Co-Chairs should ensure WHTC members have seating priority at the meeting table.
- 4) Providing written and verbal reports of WHTC meetings to the SEAFWA Directors, and others (e.g., SCWDS Steering Committee, WRC, etc.) as appropriate. Written reports, including potential action items, shall follow a standard format. Copies of all final annual reports will be maintained at SCWDS and will be made available, as needed.
- 5) Ensuring communication and coordination of WHTC activities with WRC taxa-specific working groups that may have overlapping responsibilities or mutual interests regarding wildlife health. When possible, pursue joint activities.

MEETINGS

The WHTC shall meet annually in Athens, Georgia immediately preceding the SCWDS Steering Committee meeting to conduct WHTC business, or at another time and location. The WHTC may also meet in conjunction with other SEAFWA Working Groups to better coordinate activities and collaborate on specific tasks. The WHTC, or sub-groups thereof, may meet, as needed, outside of the annual meeting to coordinate regional activities. WHTC decisions shall be governed by parliamentary law as outlined by *Roberts Rules of Order*.

CHARGES

- 1) Provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, methods, and approaches designed to effectively address challenges and opportunities associated with wildlife health surveillance, research and management in the SEAFWA region.
- 2) Discuss important wildlife health issues and needs in the SEAFWA region and bring recommendations for science-based, economically feasible and efficacious solutions.
- 3) Facilitate opportunities to collaborate on multi-state and regional wildlife disease surveillance and research needs and priorities.
- 4) Provide counsel concerning wildlife health issues to the SEAFWA Directors, and other groups (e.g., WRC, SCWDS Steering Committee, SEAFWA Working Groups, etc.), as requested.
- 5) Discuss the roles, responsibilities and authorities of state fish and wildlife agencies and encourage partnerships among the states and between state, federal, tribal and non-governmental entities involved with wildlife health management.
- 6) Facilitate educational and cross-training opportunities to further develop wildlife health expertise in the region.
- 7) Accomplish other tasks as assigned by the SEAFWA Directors.