

**MINUTES OF THE 85th  
ANNUAL MEETING OF  
THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
June 8-12, 2021  
Virtual**

**June 8, 2021**

**Opening General Session – Videoconference**

**Welcome Address**

The 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation (“NWF”) was opened on June 8th, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time by its Board Chair, Bill Houston. Mr. Houston first welcomed the attendees and spoke of the extraordinary circumstances related to the global pandemic that required the Federation to hold the Annual Meeting in a virtual format. He highlighted that this online format has enabled NWF to bring even more people to the WildlifeUnite conference. This year WildlifeUnite was hosted by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Craig Challoner, Board President of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, was introduced and welcomed attendees to Milwaukee. Mr. Challoner explained that WildlifeUnite gathers the dozens of National Wildlife Federation affiliates across the nation to set national conservation policies and learn from each other's successes and challenges to continue to build the strength of advocacy for the benefit of wildlife resources, our country and beyond.

**Honoring the Milwaukee Indigenous People**

Mr. Houston then recognized that while we gather virtually from across the nation, we stand upon traditional, ancestral, Indigenous, and tribal lands no matter where we physically are today. He explained we honor these places and further recognize them in a special video produced for this conference by the award-winning Wisconsin-based filmmaker Finn Ryan. After the film, NWF Board Member Arthur “Butch” Blazer, a member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, concluded by reminding attendees we are still on, and should honor, Indigenous lands even as we gather virtually. NWF Board Members, Stevie Parsons, Koa Kaulukukui-Barbee, and Gloria Tom also shared recognition and acknowledgment for Indigenous people and land.

**Great Lakes Restoration Panel**

Mr. Houston welcomed the Director of the Healing Our Waters Coalition (“HOW” or “Coalition”), Laura Rubin. Ms. Rubin then introduced a Panel to share their stories about Great Lakes Restoration efforts in Milwaukee and the Great Lakes generally. The panelists were Kevin Schaefer (Executive Director of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewers District) and Brenda Cooley (Co-executive Director of the Milwaukee Water Commons). The panelists discussed the main priority of the HOW Coalition this year was to ensure water infrastructure funding. The Coalition aims to build an ecosystem restoration program and create an economic driver in the region that provides a three-to-one return on investment, while doing so collaboratively to ensure all communities are benefitting equally. Ms. Rubin notes HOW Coalition seeks to not place some Members above others and, most importantly, seeks to respond when Members are in distress. She also explained that the Coalition attempts to listen and honor different ways of doing things and intentionally lifts up the voices it has traditionally ignored. In closing, Ms. Rubin noted the Coalition has made great progress restoring ecosystems throughout the Great Lakes, while providing an economic boost for the region.

### **Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin Welcome Speech**

Mr. Houston introduced the 45th Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin, Mandela Barnes. Mr. Houston explained Lt. Governor Barnes uses a platform of sustainability and equity to fight for solutions that invest in opportunities and fairness for every child, person, and family in Wisconsin. Mr. Barnes opened by wishing WildlifeUnite could have been held in-person, allowing everyone to visit Milwaukee, but also noted that “regardless of the fact that this is a virtual event it's still an honor that the National Wildlife Federation chose Milwaukee.” He then elaborated on the current outdoor activities in Wisconsin, and expressed the desire to create more inclusive, accessible, and diverse outdoor spaces while preserving the environment for the next generations. Mr. Barnes described Milwaukee's environmental challenges - pollution and contaminated water that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, extreme weather conditions, flooding, and rising temperature disrupting ecosystems. His administration has joined the US Climate Alliance, created an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy, and is on the Governor's Task Force on climate change. In closing, Mr. Barnes encouraged activism in fighting the issues of climate change.

### **NWF Environmental Justice (EJ) Program Update**

Mr. Houston welcomed the NWF Environmental Justice team, who shared an update of the NWF Environmental Justice Program. Ms. Rebeca Villegas, Senior Environmental Justice Program Manager, highlighted the team's accomplishments, including a Roundtables Series to discuss environmental justice issues with frontline leaders. The Series reached more than 124 grassroots voices within this initiative and ultimately led to the creation of a national town hall where recommendations were made and uplifted to the Administration and Congress. Simone Lightfoot, Associate Vice President for Environmental Justice and Climate Justice, then shared the history of the EJ Program within NWF. Mustafa Santiago Ali, Vice President of Environmental Justice, Climate, and Community Revitalization, was introduced and spoke about how NWF is different from other organizations by integrating environmental justice into all of the policies, programs, activities and budgeting decisions. Mr. Santiago Ali highlighted the creation of the first Environmental Justice Advisory Council within NWF and explained none of the other Big Green have something similar. This will allow the EJ Team to make sure that NWF's priority areas have leadership and expertise from the EJ world.

### **National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Awards**

Mr. Houston turned to the NWF Conservation Achievement Awards. These awards recognize the dedicated people in organizations engaged in the traditional conservation education or advocacy work who are breaking the mold and charting a new course. Affiliate Volunteer of the Year Award, Jomar Floyd, Director at Large, introduced the first two award winners.

2020 Affiliate Volunteer of the Year-Pete Pedersen, Environmental League of Massachusetts

2021 Affiliate Volunteer of the Year-Laura Mendenhall, Kansas Wildlife Federation

### **Announcements**

Mr. Houston reviewed the program and discussed the importance of the upcoming conservation resolutions, bylaws revisions, and elections. He introduced the candidates nominated for NWF Board positions and invited attendees to the Candidate Forum. He then reviewed the upcoming schedule of events. He emphasized that NWF is dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for everyone and asked that we treat each other with dignity and respect during all portions of the Annual Meeting, including social events. Mr. Houston referenced the Shared Values and Respect Statement in the printed program, and if anyone has any concerns, please report them.

At 3:30 p.m., Mr. Houston concluded the General Session.

**June 11, 2021**

**General Session-Videoconference**

**Welcoming Address**

NWF Board Chair Bill Houston reconvened the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Mr. Houston welcomed the attendees and briefly spoke about the exciting committee discussions and a number of engaging learning sessions during the conference.

**Conservation Leadership Awards**

NWF Board Member, Koalani Kaulukukui-Barbee, presented the 2020 and 2021 Conservation Leadership Awards.

Claude Jenkins, from Alabama, was presented the 2020 National Conservation Achievement Award. Mr. Jenkins is the Senior Wildlife Biologist with the Alabama Wildlife Federation and has over 21 years of experience working with private landowners and a diverse group of conservation partners to conserve wildlife habitat and ecosystems. Jay Kehne, from Washington, was presented the 2021 National Conservation Leadership Award. Mr. Kehne works for Conservation Northwest and leads the organization's program for rancher-wolf social tolerance and coexistence and supports the development of wildlife corridors.

**Great Lakes Freshwater Campaign**

Mr. Houston introduced Beth Wallace, the NWF Manager for the Great Lakes Freshwater Campaign, to lead a panel discussion of Enbridge's Line 5 Pipeline. Ms. Wallace explained that NWF first became aware of Line 5 about ten years ago after another Enbridge oil pipeline gushed over a million gallons of tar sands oil into a small creek that feeds the Kalamazoo River. In comparison, Line 5 is a 650-mile pipeline built in 1953 that transits beneath the Straits of Mackinaw. Any rupture would significantly impact the Great Lakes, which make up about 20% of the world's freshwater.

Ms. Wallace introduced President Whitney Carvel of the Bay Mills Indian Community, who spoke of Enbridge's violations of Tribal treaty rights and the work being done to remove the pipeline from sacred waters. Ms. Carvel thanked NWF for their partnership in encouraging and uplifting Tribal voices. Ms. Wallace then introduced Bruce Wallace, who spoke of various efforts via the legal system to combat Line 5.

**National Conservation Young Leader Awards**

Mr. Houston introduced NWF Board Member Mary Van Kerrebroek to present the 2020 and 2021 Young Conservation Leader Awards, which recognize the conservation achievements of young people. The 2020 Young Conservation Leader Award was presented to Manoj Sarathy from Washington. Mr. Sarathy uses machine learning to help wildlife conservation efforts. A 2021 Young Conservation Leader Award was presented to Charmayne Planter from Maryland. Ms. Planter is a former leader of the National Wildlife Federation's Earth Tomorrow program and has

been heavily involved in bringing awareness of clean air and water, safe communities, and equitable access to nature to her peers and organizing them to act. A 2021 Young Conservation Leader Award was presented to Earyn McGee, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Arizona. She is recognized for her efforts to bring more Black women into conservation careers. Ms. McGee co-organized Black Birders Week, which led to the founding of Black AF in STEM, a collective of young Black scientists studying and helping others become engaged in the outdoors and nature by showing interest in the life sciences. Finally, a 2021 Young Conservation Leader Award was presented to John Deitsch, a volunteer with the Georgia Wildlife Federation from the age of twelve and currently a junior at Cornell University. Mr. Dietsch participated in invasive plant removal, avian censusing, bird banding, bird and insect identification, and cleaning duck nesting boxes, and is currently working to curate and catalog the dragonfly and damselfly specimens in the Cornell University Insect Collection.

### **Environmental Justice 21st-Century Award**

Mr. Houston then introduced Mustafa Santiago Ali, National Wildlife Federation Vice President for Environmental Justice Climate and Community Revitalization, to present the following Environmental Justice 21<sup>st</sup> Century Awards:

- An Environmental Justice 21st-Century Outstanding Board Member Award was awarded to Dr. Mamie Parker, a pioneer and leader in the conservation world who broke barriers as the first Black person appointed as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional director. Dr. Parker has been instrumental in the National Wildlife Federation's Creating Safe Spaces initiative.
- An Environmental Justice 21st-Century Outstanding Board Member Award was awarded to John Robbins, a long-standing leader at the National Wildlife Federation and North Carolina Wildlife Federation, who has dedicated time and leadership to the Creating Safe Spaces initiative along with helping the Federation cultivate new partnerships.
- The Environmental Justice 21st-Century Outstanding Program Award was awarded to Earth Tomorrow, a long-standing program at the Federation that has worked with over 5,000 youth, primarily students of color, in conservation action and environmental service-learning projects in Atlanta.
- An Environmental Justice 21st-Century For The People Award was awarded to Samantha Lockhart, eastern region field director at the National Wildlife Federation, for her recommendations and commitment to environmental justice work across the Federation.
- An Environmental Justice 21st-Century For The People Award was awarded to Antonio Cosme, education coordinator at the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Regional Center and program manager for the Detroit Leadership & Environmental Education Program, for creating safe and inclusive spaces for students of color to engage and learn about the environment and mobilizing people across Detroit to advance environmental and climate justice.

### **President's Remarks (Collin O'Mara - NWF President and CEO)**

Mr. Houston then introduced NWF CEO, Collin O'Mara, to give his opening remarks. Mr. O'Mara began by acknowledging the incredible team who worked on the production of the virtual conference and then congratulated the many inspiring award recipients. Mr. O'Mara then discussed NWF's equity and inclusion efforts and the need to have partners in more places and more spaces. He then spoke of the need to ensure NWF stands in solidarity with our Black, LatinX, and Indigenous brothers and sisters. Mr. O'Mara explained that if we can bring people together, if we can do things across political lines, if we can build a multi-ethnic, multiracial, multi-regional coalition, we can truly achieve big things.

Next, Mr. O'Mara discussed recent policy achievements, including permanent funding of the Land Water Conservation Fund, the passage of the Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund, and a range of clean energy programs, innovation, and investments. He then highlighted the success of bipartisan cooperation in increasing conservation funding, resources, restoration, and Tribal funding. He also noted there is a general consensus for focusing more on plant conservation as part of the conservation mission for the country. Mr. O'Mara concluded by applauding the tenacity, dedication, and spirit of the Federation throughout the country.

### **Dianne Dillon-Ridgley Fellowship**

Mr. Houston then introduced Dr. Mamie Parker, NWF Board Member, to announce the first Dianne Dillon-Ridgley Fellowship. The paid fellowship is a professional training, career development, youth education, and research opportunity for a student or recent graduate of Agnes Scott College. The fellow will work over the course of a year with the National Wildlife Federation Board of Directors and Governance Department, learning and honing the skills needed to embark on a career in conservation nonprofit leadership. Dr. Parker was introduced to describe the many accomplishments of Dianne Dillon-Ridgley and then introduced the first fellow – Zoie Moore. Ms. Moore received a bachelor's degree in Africana Studies and a minor in Education and Environmental Studies and Sustainability. Dr. Parker explained that the Fellowship hopes to serve as a template for other organizations to follow. The Texas Conservation Alliance has recently started an internship inspired by the DDR Fellowship.

### **Announcements**

Mr. Houston thanked all of the participants for joining the General Session meeting and reminded attendees the business meeting will occur at 2:00pm EST on June 12. The meeting closed with a musical performance by Kelly Jackson, an international award-winning Native American artist based in Wisconsin whose music is personal and also inspired by the Environment Conservation Empowerment of Women in indigenous activism.

At 3:30 p.m., Mr. Houston concluded the General Session.

**June 12, 2021**

**General Session - Videoconference**

**Call to Order**

At 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Mr. Houston called to order the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation.

**Introduction, Conservation Pledge, and Voting Instructions**

Mr. Houston welcomed the attendees to continue the important work on behalf of the country's wildlife and wild places. He provided instructions to the delegates about how to best participate in the meeting, including voting using the Zoom platform and controls. He then led the attendees in reciting the Conservation Pledge. Mr. Houston reported that a new Affiliate, Utah Wildlife Federation, was added during the November Board of Directors Meeting.

**Adoption of Official Roll**

Mr. Houston introduced Ms. Kathy Hadley, Committee Chair and Past Chair of the Board. Ms. Hadley reported the receipt of proper credentials for 53 Affiliate Representatives from all 53 affiliate organizations entitled to send a voting delegate to the meeting. In addition, 49 Alternate Representatives were credentialed. *Ms. Hadley moved on behalf of the committee that the list of Affiliate Representatives and Alternates at the 85th Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation be adopted. All approved without discussion.*

**Roll Call and Quorum**

Mr. Benjamin Kota, the Secretary of the National Wildlife Federation, called the roll from the approved list, with 50 affiliate representatives present. A quorum was declared present.

**Approval of Minutes and Order of Business**

Mr. Houston entertained a motion that a reading of the minutes of the Federation's 84th Annual Meeting be waived, and unless there are any additions or corrections, that they be approved as distributed. *A motion was made to waive the reading of the Minutes of the 84th Annual Meeting and approve the Minutes. The motion was seconded and approved without further discussion.*

**Announcement of Re-Elected At-Large Directors**

Mr. Houston noted the NWF Board of Directors recently re-elected five At-Large Board Members and introduced them: Butch Blazer, Jomar Floyd, Koalani Kaulukuki-Barbee, Stevie Parsons, and Phil Roos.

**Moment of Memory**

Ms. Rebecca Pritchett, NWF Region 4 Director, was introduced to lead a tribute to our fallen conservation heroes. Ms. Pritchett recognized three very special conservation heroes in the National Wildlife Federation family who passed away in the past year.



Jim Posewitz was a fighter for conservation and ethical hunting for more than 60 years. His determination and strategic mind, relentless humor, hearty laugh, and unflinching attitude ensured success in many arenas. He led many efforts to protect the water resources of Montana as an employee of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks department. As a result of his efforts, the Missouri river is still undammed in the Wild Misery Breaks Country; an open pit coal mine along the flathead river was never built; and in-stream flows for fish and wildlife were documented and successfully defended. Upon retirement, he became a key player in the conservation funding world as the leader of the Center Bar Foundation for more than 25 years, supporting the constitutional right of Montanans to a clean and healthy environment. His first book, *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting*, sold more than a million copies.

Levi Joseph Holt was a member of the Escapo Band of Nez Perce, served on the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and followed his passion for advocating for his people, the sanctity of the Treaty of 1855, and for the conservation of Mother Earth. He spoke with grace and eloquence for the rights of Indigenous people and for the wolf, salmon, buffalo, clean water, and healthy forests. He secured the place of many species through his advocacy and his conservation legacy will be as the voice of the wolf and their return to the Pacific Northwest. Mr. Holt began to develop the NWF wolf conservation partnership with the Nez Perce. He assisted NWF's efforts within the tribe, and later became a key public spokesperson for our partnership. Soon after, he was elected to the NWF Board of Directors and continued to assist our tribal conservation partnerships.

Adam Kolton was a 15-year veteran of NWF who helped lead our national advocacy work in D.C. before becoming the Executive Director of the Alaska Wilderness League. Initially the Legislative Director and then, Vice President for National Advocacy, Adam was a brilliant strategic thinker, a tireless advocate, but most of all, a man with a big heart. He was a political force who helped lead on many issues, including Arctic protections, climate action and resilience, wetlands and public lands protection, conservation funding, and army corps reform.

### **Charlie Shaw Conservation Partnership Awards - Affiliates**

Scott Gilmore, NWF Region 10 Director, was introduced and presented the 2020 and 2021 Charlie Shaw Conservation Partnership awards to affiliate leaders who reaffirm the commitment to building strong affiliates. The 2020 award was presented to George Meyer, the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. The 2021 award was presented to Brad Powell, the President of the Arizona Wildlife Federation Board of Directors.

### **Resolutions Committee Reports**

Mr. Houston reminded the attendees of the order of business, including passing important conservation resolutions that set NWF conservation policy, considering proposed amendments to the Articles and Bylaws, and electing members of the NWF Board of Directors.

NWF Board member, Bri Jones Rich, was introduced to Chair the resolutions session. Ms. Jones Rich reminded the Affiliates of the resolutions process:

- The chair and vice chair of each Resolutions Committee will report amendments made by their committee to the proposed conservation policy resolutions that were sent to each Affiliate Representative and Alternative Representative earlier this month.
- Such amendments will be projected on the screen.
- Ms. Jones Rich will ask the committee chair for the committee's recommendation as a motion for or against adoption. Motions should refer to the resolutions as "as amended by the committee" and shall be followed by discussion.
- During the discussion of each proposed resolution, if any new amendments are offered, they will be voted on.
- When the discussion of the proposed resolution is concluded, the vote will be taken on the proposed resolution as amended.

Ms. Jones Rich explained there are six (6) resolutions this year and reminded the delegates about the importance of establishing resolutions, as they establish the conservation policy voice of the National Wildlife Federation. They form the basis for the efforts of NWF volunteers, affiliates, and staff in working together to advance the entire Federation's mission. The resolutions adopted also inform other institutions, the press, government, and the public of our position on various issues. This is what makes it one of the most important tasks affiliates undertake.

Ms. Jones Rich then called each committee's name, and ***the chair or vice chair of the committees introduced and moved that the following resolutions be adopted:***

Ms. Mary Rafferty of the Virginia Conservation Network, Chair of the Climate and Energy Committee, recommended on behalf of the Committee that Climate and Energy-1 be adopted as amended by the Committee. Mr. Robin Kaye spoke in support of the Resolution. Mr. Dave Brandt and Mr. Paul Chakroff recommended changes to grammar, which were accepted as friendly amendments. ***The amended resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with three abstentions.***

Ms. Rafferty then recommended on behalf of the Committee that Climate and Energy-2 be adopted as amended. Mr. Lance Ness, MN, spoke in favor of the Resolution. Following no further discussion, ***the amended resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with two abstentions.***

Mr. Mark Berry of Georgia Wildlife Federation, Chair of the Conservation and Restoration Committee recommended on behalf of the Committee that Conservation and Restoration-1 be adopted as amended by the Committee. ***The amended resolution was unanimously adopted.***

Mr. Berry then recommended on behalf of the Committee that Conservation and Restoration-2 be adopted as amended. After discussion, several motions were made, and seconded, to properly insert and reference language from Executive Order 14,008 into the resolution, which were adopted. Two friendly amendments proposed by Joe Engeln and Dave Brandt to modify grammar and order were adopted without opposition. ***The amended resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with three nays, and one abstention.***

Ms. Eileen Murphy of New Jersey Audubon, Vice Chair of the Plants and Invertebrates Committee, recommended on behalf of the Committee that Plants and Invertebrates-1 be adopted

as amended by the Committee. There was no discussion, and the ***amended resolution was adopted, with one abstention.***

Ms. Laura Mendenhall of Kansas Wildlife Federation, Chair of the Plants and Invertebrates Committee, then recommended on behalf of the Committee that Conservation and Restoration-2 be adopted as amended by the Committee. There was no discussion, and ***the amended resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with one abstention.***

Ms. Rich thanked the affiliates that submitted resolutions, the committee members and the Chair and Vice-Chairs, and each of the delegates for participating in this important process.

### **Charlie Shaw Conservation Partnership Awards – NWF Staff**

Mr. Gilmore then presented the 2020 and 2021 Charlie Shaw Conservation Partnership awards to NWF staff who foster strong partnerships between NWF and the affiliates. The 2020 award was presented to Frank Szollosi, who served for over a decade with NWF working on climate and water policy. The 2021 award was presented to Benjamin Kota, NWF's General Counsel and Corporate Secretary.

### **Bylaws Amendments**

Mr. Houston introduced Mr. Siva Sundaresan, NWF's Western Vice Chair, to give a report of the Bylaws Committee. Mr. Houston explained the Bylaws Committee was comprised as follows: Chair, Siva Sundaresan; Norm Ritchie, Region 11 Director; Jacqui Bonomo from Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future; Bob Vahle from Arizona Wildlife Federation; Peter Iwanowicz from Environmental Advocates of New York; George Cunningham from Nebraska Wildlife Federation; and Staff Advisor, Benjamin Kota. The committee was formed to continue to review the NWF governing documents and consider amendments for debate and adoption at this meeting.

Mr. Sundaresan provided an overview of the proposed amendments to make the Innovation Committee a standing committee of the Board and to expand the number of Executive Committee members from seven to nine. A motion was made to add the Innovation Committee as a Standing Committee. Following no further discussion, ***the resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with one abstention.*** A motion was then made and seconded, to increase the number of Executive Committee Members from seven to nine. Following no further discussion, ***the resolution was adopted by a majority vote, with one abstention.***

### **Elections**

Mr. Houston then introduced Ms. Rachel Sprague, Region 12 Director, to chair the elections session, including the elections of the Central Vice-Chair and Region 5, 6, 7, 9, and 13 Regional Directors. Ms. Sprague explained the nominees for each position had been forwarded to the delegates and list made available by the Secretary.

Ms. Sprague explained that a nomination for any position up for election may be made from the floor. She asked for any additional nominations, and none were offered. She asked for any objection to skipping the reading of the rules related to nominations and no objection was offered.

*A motion was made to close nominations for all Director positions, which was seconded and unanimously approved.*

*A motion was made, and seconded, to approve the following slate of nominees:*

*Central Vice Chair: Mary Van Kerrebrook*

*Region 5 Director: Greer Tidwell*

*Region 6 Director: John Goss*

*Region 7 Director: Cody Kamrowski*

*Region 9 Director: Lyndzee Rhine*

*Region 13 Director: John Salazar*

*The motion was unanimously approved.*

Ms. Sprague offered her congratulations and thanks to all of the candidates for participating in the election process. This concluded the 2021 elections. Mr. Houston then swore in the new and re-elected members of the National Wildlife Federation Board.

### **Departing Board Members**

Mr. Houston then thanked the following departing Board members for their years of service and dedication to the Federation: Brian Bashore, Eric Freyfogle, and Bruce Wallace. All were eventually presented a departing gift to honor their commitment to the Federation.

### **Affiliate of the Year Awards**

Dr. Mamie Parker, NWF At-Large Board Member, announced the winners of the 2020 and 2021 Affiliate of the Year awards. The award recognizes an NWF affiliate organization for conservation accomplishments and contributions to collaborative efforts across the NWF Federation.

Idaho Wildlife Federation was presented the 2020 Affiliate of the Year Award. Since 1936, the Idaho Wildlife Federation has been the state's leading voice and influence in ensuring the people's right to clean waters and public lands, and curtailing the decline of game and wildlife populations, setting an example and standard for other conservation groups across our nation. Through perseverance and passion, IWF's work is boosting Idaho affiliates and individual members, partnering to promote and achieve the policies necessary to guarantee ecologic restoration, environmental education, and healthy wildlife and game populations.

Michigan United Conservation Clubs was presented the 2021 Affiliate of the Year Award. MUCC engages with NWF in many venues and on many different issues, but none have been as important as clean, fresh water for Michigan's fish and wildlife. MUCC's successes – including helping to pass a ballot measure to fund Michigan's public lands acquisition and stewardship through oil and gas lease subsidies in perpetuity – are a testament to the power of a diverse coalition of interests operating in unison. MUCC's grassroots model serves as a standard for other organizations across the country engaged in targeted grassroots advocacy and education and field campaigns.

## **Chair's Address**

Mr. Collin O'Mara showed his appreciation for Mr. Bill Houston's service as Board Chair by playing a tribute video of various NWF Board members and staff expressing their gratitude for Bill's service to the Federation as Chair. Mr. Houston then spoke of his experience as Board Chair and then told a story about his time in grade school and high school and then eventually giving a speech in front of 3,000 people and now giving a bookend speech today.

Mr. Houston spoke about how wildlife and wild places have always been his salvation. There is research showing just how important it is to our mental and physical well-being to spend time in nature and the pandemic has driven home how important it is to spend time outside as we all need a wild place and we all need to have interactions with wildlife. But sadly, too many Americans do not have access to or the means to experience the benefits of the natural world. He explained how he learned through the Safe Spaces work that many of these places are still unsafe for many BIPOC people, and the realization that his most sacred space was viewed with fear by so many was eye opening. Today, BIPOC visitors to our national parks are only a small fraction of their representative population as a whole. Some 3% of visitors are black, 2-7% are Hispanic, and a fraction of 1% are Native Americans. We all need to work together to make the wild safe and available to everyone. We all need to step foot in the wild as often as possible, and we need to set a new definition of wilderness from traditional wild places to any place where the sights and sounds in the field of nature predominate, whether that's in our backyards, schoolyards, or church grounds.

While we know that wild places and wildlife are critical to human health, we know that without people knowing and loving wildlife, there will be no one to speak or advocate for wildlife. The link between people and wildlife has never been clearer, we need both to thrive for either to thrive.

Mr. Houston called on the Federation add to its mission by declaring that we will unite all Americans to ensure wildlife and people thrive in a rapidly changing world. He recognized that we must do a better job of uniting all Americans, if we are to achieve our mission. We need to fully engage the voices of all people who care about wildlife in an authentic way from a place of mutual trust. And we know there are large groups of people who have not yet even engaged often because they are suffering the worst effects of environmental injustice.

He then reflected on an auction item – the Greg Smith memorial canoe – and that Greg had always said NWF is not a big tent organization, but a big canoe organization because we are not stationary, but always moving forward. As we have heard this week, we are at a transformational moment where we are doing incredible work and yet we know we need to do more. It's time to get a big canoe. We can and must grow our affiliate network and expand the most effective conservation model, there is. A grassroots organization that reflects the full diversity of America that works together so that people and wildlife thrive. We still have work to do to get in shape to paddle that bigger canoe but now is the time and he's confident we can be a very big canoe organization moving forward as a powerful voice for wildlife and all Americans.

He thanked everyone and offered his congratulations to the new Board Chair, Kent Salazar.

Passing of the Gavel

Mr. Houston then introduced Chair-Elect Kent Salazar. Mr. Salazar was first elected to the NWF Board of Directors in 2007. He served as Region 10 Director for seven years and then was elected Western Vice Chair for two terms.

In his day job, Kent worked for twenty years as a director of environmental health for the City of Albuquerque. Among his many contributions, he has served at the request of two New Mexico governors and a senator on the Western Governors Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission, the New Mexico Climate Change Task Force, the New Mexico State Game Commission and the U.S. Senate Outdoor Resources Review Group. In 2011, Mr. Salazar was appointed by President Barack Obama to Chair the Valles Caldera National Trust Board, which he helped transition to a National Park Preserve. Mr. Salazar is a long-time member and Past President of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and he is a board member of HECHO, Hispanics Enjoying Camping Hunting and the Outdoors. He then passed the gavel, virtually, to Mr. Salazar.

Mr. Salazar thanked the Federation for this opportunity to serve and thanked Mr. Houston for his service. He explained his goal will be to continue to ensure wildlife thrive and wild places are protected across the country. Mr. Salazar ended by looking forward to working with each of the attendees more closely over the next two years.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.