



**Northeast Section of
The Wildlife Society**

Terra A. Rentz, AWB
State University of New York
College of Environmental Science & Forestry
1 Forestry Drive, 254 Illick Hall
Syracuse, NY 13210
E-mail: tarentz@syr.edu



**Northeastern Division of
The American Fisheries Society**

John E. Cooper
Cooper Environmental Research
1444 Co RT 23
Constantia, NY 13044
E-mail: cooperresearch@hughes.net

19 April 2015

To: Northeast State Agency Directors
From: John Cooper, NED President and Terra Rentz, NETWS President
Subject: Increasing collaboration on the NEFWC with NETWS and NED

The association of the Northeastern Division of the American Fisheries Society (NED) and the Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society (NETWS) with the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) began in 1954 with a joint meeting between NED and TWS at Bretton Woods, NH. The association has persisted since then in various forms and has led to a robust network of wildlife and fisheries professionals in the Northeast.

However, in recent years the role of NED and NETWS in this partnership has changed. As NEAFWA grew many responsibilities that were once shared shifted to the shoulders of the state agencies and under that leadership the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference (NEFWC) has evolved. Unfortunately, during that evolution the involvement of NED and NETWS has declined for a variety of reasons. Members of both NED and NETWS have expressed dissatisfaction with our societies' level of involvement with planning and contributing to the NEFWC, particularly with reference to themes, meeting locations, and sessions. These concerns were prevalent in the late 1990s and both our societies and the state Directors have discussed a desire to improve our partnership as a result. Our discussion today strives to move forward to turn those desires into results.

In addition to involvement with planning we have growing concerns about the competition of the Northeast Natural History Conference (NNHC) in siphoning attendance of our wildlife and fisheries professionals, a decline in student activities, cost of attendance, and a clear venue for revenue generation for NED and NETWS. We have discussed options and opportunities from a logistical standpoint with Cindy Delaney to ensure our recommendations are not in conflict, but additive to conference operations. Our efforts will only be fruitful, however, with clear buy-in, consideration and endorsement by northeast state agency leadership.

Most of the following recommendations apply to both NED and NETWS. Recommendations specific to a single organization have also been noted. Our recommendations for changes are as follows:

1. **Formalize a position for NED and NETWS on the program committee** to assist with theme and session development and location selection. This change would allow our members to have more input into the conference and could spur interest in symposium topics. This would also provide NED and NETWS with adequate lead time to make arrangements for speakers, workshops, meetings, or other necessary business associated with the conference. In return, NED and NETWS can more effectively solicit our members to review abstracts and papers, judge presentations, host sessions or symposia, or volunteer during the conference.

2. **Allow opportunities for revenue generation.** Registration fees for NEAFWA go to support fish and wildlife conservation and research. We do not want to reduce those funds. However, NED and NETWS would like to conduct annual professional development workshops in association with the conference as a way to defray costs of hosting our meetings jointly with NEAFWA and to generate revenue. We would also like to pursue other opportunities such as auctions, raffles, or other means to generate revenue in association with the conference.
3. **Provide exhibiting booth space** for NED and NETWS where we could advertise our participation in the conference and recruit new members. Booth space is a premium and we recognize that this is usually a “pay-to-play” option. However, as partners we would like the opportunity to support the professional development and affiliations of your staff and the other fish and wildlife professional in the Northeast.
4. **Enhance student activities and services** through the NED/NETWS program committee liaisons. Both of our organizations have robust student involvement. We would like to help the host state in planning and organizing activities, events, and professional development opportunities that support the next generation of fish and wildlife professionals. In particular, NETWS has a student affairs committee that can be charged to specifically work on this aspect of the conference.
5. **Request that registrants indicate their discipline** (fish, wildlife, other) **and membership status** on the registration form and provide those totals to NED and NETWS. This would allow both societies to evaluate the success of our efforts and to better tailor our communication and outreach for future conferences.
6. **Minimize or eliminate conflict with the Northeast Natural History Conference.** This meeting, hosted by Eagle Hill Institute, has grown substantially in recent years and boasts sessions on fish and wildlife conservation, biodiversity, climate change, and management. It directly conflicts with the timing of the NEFWC and generally undercuts our costs by as much as 20%. As such, it is growing in its appeal to many of our colleagues who now chose to frequent this conference instead of our own. We would like to assist in developing a strategy to minimize conflicts with this conference (or absorb it into NEFWC) and addressing reasons why our professionals may choose this meeting over our own (costs, location, sessions, etc.). This issue is critical and will greatly impact our ability to recruit and retain participants at NEFWC.

These issues are no longer something that can be left up to discussion alone. The importance of addressing necessary changes to NED and NETWS involvement and minimizing conflicts with NNHC is paramount and has served as a springboard for our collective and concerted effort to highlight these issues with the Directors. The officers of NED and NETWS have come to agreement on these concerns and recommendations.

We are eager to provide support to facilitate these changes and seek the endorsement of the Directors to move forward with this effort.