

First, thanks to Dody and to IWRC for the confidence you express in me. I'll try to do a competent job of chairing this committee. And to start, I hope that this email reaches all of the right parties. If I have emailed you in error, please tell me so. And if you see that I've overlooked someone, please forward this along.

As the new kid, I'd like to know a bit about all of you-- both IWRC and NWRA committee members. And I think you are entitled to know a bit about me. I realize that everyone is busy, and I do not want to be a burden right off the bat, but a very brief note will suffice. Please send me:

- your full name (so I can associate it with your email address),
- your affiliation (IWRC / NWRA),
- your organization, if applicable,
- some illumination of your history with, and your interest in, the document MSWR,
- and any other information you deem appropriate.

For my part, I seem to be the new Chair of the IWRC Minimum Standards Review Committee (is that the correct formal name?). I am also a long time member of IWRC, NWRA, and Florida Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (FWRA). I presently serve on FWRA's Board of Directors. I have been a permitted wildlife rehabilitator for more than 30 years. I have been employed by Treasure Coast Wildlife Hospital, Inc. since 1993, and consider it to be my vocation. Previous to that, I was VP and CEO of a transportation company in Miami, and rehab was my avocation. My academic background is in biology, chemistry, and secondary education. I was - briefly - a high school teacher, and an adjunct instructor at the community college level. For a time, I was also a "regulatory specialist" for the Florida Department of Agriculture, first in its Bureau of Special Programs and, later, its Division of Plant Industry. At that time I was one of the regulators, interpreting and enforcing the rules. Perhaps my interest in professional systems and regulatory issues stems from that period.

Since my full time employment in rehab beginning 1993, my perspective changed; I am now a stakeholder, one of those being regulated rather than one doing the regulating. As such, I have been involved with a number of governmental agencies on matters relating to wild creatures and domestic animals, including but not limited to the following: Circa 1997 - 2000, I was a member of a committee appointed by our local Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) to review animal ordinances at the local level. As a result of the committee's work, the BoCC adopted sweeping changes that modernized and enhanced animal regulation in our county. I was also instrumental in facilitating (politics isn't always a dirty word) the transfer of our Animal Control agency from the Emergency Services department, where it was languishing from neglect, and its reincarnation with the Sheriff's Office. As a result, Martin County now has properly trained animal control officers, with full police powers, enforcing reasonable regulations. I continue as a consultant to the Sheriff's animal control division, and help to train their officers.

I serve on the County Health Department's Rabies Task Force, and its West Nile Virus Task Force. Both of these groups work with stakeholders (animal owners, veterinarians, health workers, etc.), government agencies, and the general public, disseminating information and developing contingency action plans for the governmental units affected.

Approximately once a decade, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (Florida's ultimate governing body for all matters relating to wildlife, both native and exotic) impanels a group of presumed experts to consult on current regulatory issues. Called the Captive Wildlife Technical Advisory Group, the latest panel worked from 2005 through 2007. Members included representatives from major captive collections, major wildlife exhibitors, veterinarians, animal industry, "personal possessors" of wildlife, wildlife rehabilitators, and others. (Details at <http://myfwc.com/captive/captivewildlifeTAG.html>) I was a member of this CWTAG. (Yes, we laughingly refer to ourselves as "Cow-Tag".) The scope of work included a comprehensive review of captive wildlife regulation in the state, including caging standards, husbandry, qualifications for possession, prohibited species, penalties, and wildlife rehabilitation. A number of our recommendations have been adopted by the Commission, and others are under review and public comment. Currently I continue to work with FWC on the development of a written examination to test applicants' qualifications to possess venomous reptiles.

I believe that I have relevant experience from both sides of the fence, as a government regulator and as a stakeholder being regulated. Philosophically, I believe that stakeholders and governmental entities can be worthy partners. This applies equally to "Professional Associations" of stakeholders like IWRC, NWRA, and FWRA, which sometimes buffer between the regulators and the people directly affected. However, it would be foolish to overlook the fact that regulators and stakeholders approach the same issues from opposite directions. Regulators focus on problems and abuses, and tend toward "systematic" (some would say bureaucratic) solutions. Stakeholders focus on successes, and tend toward individualization. If the relationship between the two is not carefully managed, it can become strained or even adversarial. It is incumbent upon regulators to be open minded and receptive to the needs of those they govern, and luckily, with few exceptions, that is the case with wildlife rehab. However, it is equally necessary for the stakeholders, and their representatives, to be forthright and unambiguous about both the mission and the realities of the regulated activity. I believe that our task with MSWR is critical to maintaining this positive working relationship between wildlife rehabilitators and the various agencies that govern us.

That's my 2 cents worth. I await yours.

Dan Martinelli