



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Science & Research Committee Report
Chair: Terry Steinwand (ND)
Vice Chair: Bruce Thompson (NM)
Tuesday September 9, 2008
Sarasota Springs, New York

Meeting convened at 1:15pm to 4:50pm, chaired by Terry Steinwand, 28 participants in attendance, including 17 current Committee members.

The new AFWA committee meeting structure was reviewed by the chair, Terry Steinwand, with regional reports to be submitted in written form and committee meetings to last two hours rather than four.

A discussion of the National Conservation Need (NCN) formation and Multi-state Conservation Grant (MSCG) was added to the agenda in order for the committee to be prepared with a draft NCN by Feb. 1st for review. The committee set a requirement at the last meeting that they receive NCN proposals at least 6 weeks (4 weeks for review by committee members and 2 weeks of revision by authors) before the March committee meeting. Priya Nanjappa-Mitchell clarified that the deadline for proposal review is set by the Grants Committee (4 weeks) but the Science and Research (S & R) Committee can select a deadline for NCN review. The Committee agreed that 6 weeks before the meeting is sufficient.

Scheduled Discussions:

Science and Research Workshop Update

Jay Hestbeck discussed plans for the workshop on behalf of the workshop committee.

- The workshop will be held at the North American Conference by the S & R and Invasive Species committees in March 2009 in Washington DC. He requested clarification by the committee as to the format and focus of the workshop. Two options were presented:
 - 1.) An example agenda with a list of invasive species case studies. OR
 - 2.) A compilation of abstracts regarding structured decision making with examples from invasive species response and management.
- The committee indicated that they prefer the approach presented in the compilation that focuses on structured decision making.
- The discussion also included:
 1. Who the target audience would be? (Directors)
 2. What the objectives are? (structured decision making vs. invasive species management)

3. potential supporting materials (binder or CD with additional information and case studies)
 4. desired components (stakeholders and their involvement, example of decision making without a structured decision making process, how to incorporate science and adaptive management into the process where possible, caution against considering this a linear process)
 5. How to plan this workshop so that it tiers into future annual workshops.
- USGS and USFWS also have courses at the National Conservation Training Center that address structured decision making:
http://training.fws.gov/bart/Resources/Decision_Analysis/SDM.htm.
 - Terry Steinwand also mentioned that the workshop is a good example of the inter-committee work that the Director's would like to see (as indicated by comments made at the Director's Retreat) and commended those involved from both committees for their efforts.

Genetics Database for Large Carnivores

Chasa O'Brien provided the committee with information on a large carnivore genetic database.

- The database is intended to contain genetic data for species that are often far-ranging and whose populations likely span several states and countries. This potential database, beginning with mountain lion data, would compile microsatellite DNA, (which GenBank currently does not contain), single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP), and other types of genetic data.
- Provision of data would be voluntary and is not intended to remove the intellectual property rights of those who provide them.
- Suggestions were made to contact the Smithsonian and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who already have similar large databases and may be able to provide recommendations and/or structure.
- Concerns were raised regarding potential for data to be subject to public records requests, occurrence of large datasets that are likely not currently in GenBank because they are being collected for estimation of population size, and general release of proprietary data.
- Should this committee take on Information/Data Management? This topic was tabled for later discussion.

WGA Wildlife Corridors Initiative

Bruce Thompson reviewed the recent report produced by the Western Governor's Association (WGA) Wildlife Corridors Initiative.

- The group was formed in February 2007 to look at wildlife habitat and connectivity in the West. The final report was approved June 19, 2008 at the WGA meeting. The report forms the Western Wildlife Habitat Council which encourages incorporation of wildlife considerations into land use planning and provides the states a decisions support system for identifying and providing for wildlife habitat needs.

- The full report is available on the web:
<http://www.westgov.org/wga/meetings/am2008/wildlife08.pdf>

Round Table Discussions:

Meeting Science Needs

The chair, Terry Steinwand, began a round table discussion with the committee on three questions that were defined at the 2008 North American Meeting.

- What is the definition of research?
The discussion had many facets but the committee focused on the difference of pure vs. applied research and the need for applied, management-oriented research. The importance of communication of research results to the general public and managers was also discussed as well.
- How do you meet research needs in your agency?
Representatives from state and federal agencies discussed how their respective agencies go about meeting their research needs. Various state agencies have specific research sections while others contract out their research. Federal agencies collaborate with a variety of entities such as stakeholder groups, other federal agencies, and universities.
- What has been the trend in your agency with research over the past 10 year?
Not discussed.

Terry Steinwand indicated that he would like to see **a survey of the states to determine how all states are serving their state's research needs and setting research priorities**. He presented a list from a survey conducted in 2006, which 10 states responded to. He will send a copy of the survey to Committee members.

- Members expressed concern that a comprehensive list of research needs was created a couple of years ago and that we shouldn't need to start from scratch. It was suggested that it may be better to begin with the previous list and have states rank priorities.
- A group was formed (Terry Steinwand, Chasa O'Brien, Kevin Whalen, and Walter Donaldson) to review past priorities and create a survey.
- **Results of the research needs and prioritization should assist the Committee in drafting one or more NCN summaries for Committee review and selection.** A suggestion was made to possibly consider some of the broader questions that had come up during Committee discussions regarding capacities to address research and science issues, and need to identify effective communication methods for non-scientists.

Action Items

A survey of the states will be conducted to determine how all states are serving their state's research needs and setting research priorities.

Submitted by Terry Steinwand, Chair