

**CHARTER**  
**CONSERVATION GENETICS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**  
**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**October 31, 2011**

**I. Introduction**

Conservation genetics is and will be an important component for landscape-scale biological planning, conservation design, and conservation delivery. In addition, conservation genetics can provide important information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) conservation efforts through Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and the National Wildlife Refuge System's inventory and monitoring network. The Service has a strong conservation genetics research capacity (i.e., dozens of employees at six laboratories in Regions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9) and conducts genetic research and uses genetic information for a variety of management and conservation issues. In addition, many other Service employees regularly apply genetic information to management and conservation issues, requiring varying levels of understanding of genetic theories, principles, and applications. The Conservation Genetics Community of Practice (CoP), initiated, sanctioned and funded by the Office of the Science Advisor, was established to encourage interaction and promote the sharing of ideas among individuals in order to efficiently and effectively responds to the genetics needs of the Service, as well as, the broader conservation community.

**II. Mission**

The mission of the CoP is to serve as an interactive forum to facilitate the growth, application and exchange of conservation genetics expertise, information, and technology among members.

**III. Goals**

Goals of the CoP include, but are not limited to:

- Integrating conservation genetics where applicable to fulfill the Service's Mission
- Providing an interactive forum for discussion of conservation genetics questions, issues and applications
- Providing conservation genetics expertise to the Service and through a recognizable "point of contact" group
- Enhancing Service conservation genetics expertise
- Encouraging, promoting and refining genetic laboratory operating procedures and standards
- Providing education opportunities in conservation genetics,
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**IV. Structure**

The CoP encompasses three general groups:

1) CoP Steering Committee

Members will include a representative from all USFWS Conservation Genetics Laboratories (including the National Forensics Laboratory) and representatives from other Service Programs or the broader conservation community as deemed appropriate. Members of the Steering Committee are expected to be among the most active participants in the CoP, ensure proper communication and function of all CoP groups, and are accountable for the successful operations of the CoP. Lead a genetic panel of experts to provide scientific review in response to Service requests.

2) CoP Lab Group

Members of this group will participate in discussions and community activities pertaining to conservation genetics lab practices, such as daily lab operations, protocols, equipment issues, data management, data analysis and interpretation. Membership involvement is self-selected and not limited to Service employees.

3) CoP Applications Group

Members of this group will participate in discussions and community activities pertaining to the integration of genetic information in management and decision making. Membership involvement is self-selected and not limited to Service employees.

**V. CoP Charter**

This Charter is a flexible document; recommendations for changes will be considered by the CoP Steering Committee.