

Science Committee Notes and Actions
October 4-5, 2011, Denver, Colorado

Science Committee Members in attendance: Gaby Chavarria, Rick Coleman, Megan Cook, Ken Elowe, Ed Espinoza, Al Fisher, Soch Lor, Mike Millard, Ralph Morgenweck, Joel Reynolds, Tom Roffe, Emily Silverman. Oversight Committee Members in attendance: Bryan Arroyo, Geoff Haskett, Tom Melius, Hannibal Bolton.

Everyone introduced themselves and Hannibal Bolton (Chairman of Directorate Oversight Committee) welcomed the Science Committee and, on behalf of the Directorate, expressed appreciation of all the work the Committee has done to infuse science excellence in the Service.

Gaby Chavarria provided an overview of the Oversight Committee meeting:

- For future meetings, the Oversight Committee will meet during Monday dinner or Tuesday breakfast in order for the Science Committee to begin meeting on Tuesday morning.
- The Science Vision Statement was approved by the Oversight Committee (“Excellence in science and its application to natural resource decision-making is the hallmark of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”); we will post on the website and circulate.
- As part of the joint USFWS-USGS-NPS task to describe each bureau’s science needs and use, the Oversight Committee is recommending that the Science committee lead the effort to develop the Science Mission Statement for the Service and identify someone to spearhead the effort to reach out to the Service to identify science needs and use. There was discussion on how this effort will help us rebuild science within the Service and assist in communicating with USGS on science issues. The Committee decided to wait to pursue this until Soch reports the results of the structured-decision-making workshop in Sacramento later in October.

Updates on Previous Action Items:

- Al Fisher provided an update on LUA and described the two ways to get elevated privileges for machines connected to scientific equipment or in Service science labs: either through full elevated privileges or elevated privileges on specific programs through SUDOWIN. The group discussed remaining issues with LUA and decided to draft a memo to express appreciation for progress thus far and to express concern for the remaining issues before the DOI IT transformation effort occurs. Awaiting revamping of memo on LUA process (Shelly Hartmann) before sending a Service-wide message to science community
- Scientific Integrity Policy is all set and will be released as a Director’s order. Currently contains a placeholder phrase for Animal Welfare Act compliance and will be updated once a compliance decision has been made.
- The Directorate has recommended that Gaby work with a smaller group to develop the scientist career track proposal. Gaby will work with someone from Region 2 to develop, then engage others.

- Emily Silverman, Joel Reynolds, and Soch Lor provided an update on data management and archiving. They described the distinction between stewardship (collection, analysis, and use of data) and custodianship (preservation, archiving, and accessing data) and focused on custodianship to start thinking about the issues of policy and infrastructure to support custodianship efforts. The goal is to produce a template with guidelines to help regions/programs develop their own procedures for data sharing and release, including case studies to work through specifics. At this point, need to expand the committee membership to others with experience and expertise in data sharing and release issues – would like nominees from IRM, Fisheries, ES, and LE. Suggested nominees: Sheila Einsweiler (LE), Chriss Lett or Sean Finn, Linda Probian (sp? - Purviance?) (ECOS / ES). Gaby to invite participation via email. To finish this effort, more help may be required, such as a detail in Gaby's office.

Roles and Responsibilities Discussion:

There was some discussion on how Committee members represent the interests of the programs to which they belong with the general consensus that it is an informal process with opportunities to engage the different programs. There was a unanimous vote by the Committee to approve the Roles and Responsibilities; to be posted on the OSA website. Committee discussed idea of developing orientation information to aid future members (time commitment, roles, activities, etc.).

Strategic Habitat Conservation Discussion:

Gaby Chavarria presented progress on SHC, along with an overview of the various SHC-related teams that have been assembled. Ken Elowe gave a presentation on SHC representative species and population goals, which led to a discussion on definitions of representative species and population goals, implications of using representative species, region-specific concerns, time scales involved with SHC, treatment of uncertainty associated with setting and assessing achievement of population goals, and public involvement in the process. The Science Committee will be kept informed of developments in SHC and are asked to pass along any concerns heard from the Regions.

Animal Welfare Act Compliance Discussion:

John Bryan from the National Park Service presented an overview of the NPS Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), including background on the Animal Welfare Act and the steps NPS took to form its IACUC. The Committee agreed that following the NPS model with a national structure and regional representation made sense for FWS. Tom Roffe to draft a proposal that enumerates the pieces of an animal care and use program with the recommendation for a larger committee to finalize details (tentative committee members include Tom Roffe, Ralph Morgenweck, Ed Espinoza or other lab member, Emily Silverman, Gaby Chavarria, Region 7 representative, and Pat Heglund). Proposal should include kudos to Region 7 for taking on this topic. Pending approval by the Directorate to pursue forming an

IACUC, will put committee together and present final committee recommendations at April Directorate meeting.

Wildlife Health Program Discussion:

Tom Roffe provided an overview of the One Health paradigm and described the Service's lack of a wildlife health program and suggested recommending to the Directorate an effort similar to the National Park Service. It would be an overarching veterinary services and wildlife health program and would cover animal handling, drugs, disease, etc. It would not be replicating the national wildlife health center from USGS (there would be no diagnostics services). There was some discussion on whether to bundle the wildlife health program efforts and the animal welfare compliance with the decision not to bundle for now but remain flexible to do so in the future.

Vulnerability Analysis Discussion:

Mark Chase (Chief of Inventory & Monitoring Program for Refuges, Fort Collins) led this discussion and solicited feedback from the group. Issues raised were the lack of a definition for vulnerability assessment and the need for coordination among various agencies in order to avoid duplicating efforts. The group discussed the role the Science Committee or SA ARDs might play in helping to coordinate vulnerability assessments. Gaby Chavarria and Ken Elowe will draft an awareness memo to the Directorate to outline these concerns and request assistance in determining a path forward.

Domestication Discussion:

Ed Espinoza described the components of the final domestication discussion paper that he developed. These included three criteria to determine whether a species is domesticated – tractability, sustained selection for useful traits, and successful captive breeding. There were several examples of how the criteria could be applied to assess species. Following this, the committee decided that its role was completed. Gaby Chavarria will convene a roundtable discussion with the affected programs in December 2011 and report back the final decisions of each program. The discussion paper will be added to the Science Committee's Accomplishments list and updated on the website.

New Item Raised - Media and Communications:

Ed Espinoza raised a new topic for the Committee's consideration regarding the response, or lack thereof, of the Service to negative media coverage. The ensuing discussion also brought up the role of social media in the Service's outreach efforts and identified the need for guidance for employees in using social media in a professional vs. personal capacity. The Committee agreed the issue was important and something we should address, especially since it relates to our scientific integrity policy. Gaby Chavarria to email the Oversight Committee for approval to develop a Science Communications Strategy.

Science Awards Discussion:

Lee Sutta and Kim Tompkins from IRTM, who have been working to revamp the science award website, gave a brief demonstration of the new website and its features. Ralph Morgenweck, Joel Reynolds, and Ed Espinoza will meet with developers on 10/11/11 to work out final details; the developers will try to work out a testing plan for all the components. Nominations will be open Oct 17 until Nov 30. The screening committee is Gaby Chavarria, Emily Silverman, Joel Reynolds, Ed Espinoza, and Geoff Haskett (Gaby to confirm Geoff's participation). Megan Cook to draft a notification memo for Director's signature; Ralph Morgenweck to provide relevant info.

Future Science Committee Meetings:

There was informal discussion by committee members on the last night regarding the format and length of Science Committee meetings. Gaby Chavarria suggested that the time be increased to three full days, with the third day devoted to field trips and/or small workgroups who can begin working on identified action items. Those present (Soch Lor, Joel Reynolds, Mike Millard, Ed Espinoza, Emily Silverman, Megan Cook) agreed it would be a valuable use of time and likely lead to greater progress on committee initiatives. The tentative plan is to follow this format for the Ashland, OR, meeting in April.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Circulate finalized vision statement (Gaby Chavarria; Ken Elowe to circulate to Science Applications ARDs) and post to website (Megan Cook).
2. Following report from Soch Lor on Structured Decision Making workshop in Sacramento, determine path forward for addressing Directorate's task of identifying the Service's science needs and how the Service uses science (no specific assignment).
3. Rick Coleman to check into the new Cooperative Unit being formed in North Dakota to determine whether we can play a role in its development.
4. Re-establish the Science Advisory listserv (Gaby Chavarria, Al Fisher, Megan Cook).
5. Draft memo on LUA to express appreciation of progress so far and identify concerns about remaining issues before DOI IT transformation effort happens (Ed Espinoza, Joel Reynolds, Al Fishier). Mike Millard to provide new fisheries lab LUA issues to include in memo.
6. Provide suggestions and feedback on OSA webinar series to Gaby Chavarria (ALL).
7. Work on scientist career track proposal to take to oversight committee. Gaby Chavarria to work with Region 2 person to develop, then engage others. Rick Coleman to send Gaby information on the Refuges career track.
8. Draft email to invite people to help with the data management and archives process for Gaby to send out (Emily Silverman, Joel Reynolds, Soch Lor).
9. Post finalized Science Committee Roles and Responsibilities on the website (Megan Cook).
10. Gaby Chavarria to send SC the presentations from the Strategic Habitat Conservation discussion.
11. Keep track of efforts to change wildlife curriculum requirements and report back to the Science Committee (Soch Lor).

12. Tom Roffe to outline Animal Welfare Act compliance proposal and circulate to Science Committee for review and comment in time for Directorate video conference the week of October 26th.
13. Develop awareness memo to Directorate with Science Committee concerns about vulnerability assessments. Request help on recommending a path forward to prevent duplication of efforts and ways to get information needed to those who need to make decisions. Circulate to Science Committee for edits, then send to Directorate within the month (Gaby Chavarria and Ken Elowe).
14. Circulate final domestication discussion paper to Science Committee (Ed Espinoza) and add its development to Science Committee Accomplishments list (Megan Cook).
15. Take domestication discussion paper to relevant parties for roundtable in Dec (Gaby Chavarria and Ed Espinoza).
16. Email oversight committee for approval to develop Science Communications Strategy, including traditional and social media, (Gaby Chavarria) and then start developing strategy to discuss in Ashland.
17. Draft science awards nomination announcement for Director (Megan Cook). Ralph Morgenweck to provide relevant information to Megan. Gaby Chavarria to confirm Geoff Haskett's participation in the screening committee.
18. Upload test science award nominations to SharePoint website (Ralph Morgenweck, Ed Espinoza, Joel Reynolds).
19. Next conference call to take place in early November. Megan Cook to send out doodle poll to schedule.
20. Update Science Excellence website with separate Science Committee page that includes the Science Committee's Program of Work for next year (with these action items), meeting notes, and member names (Megan Cook).