

**Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize Advisory Council
November 2023 Meeting Minutes**

The Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize Advisory Council (Council) convened November 14-16, 2023, in Washington D.C. The hybrid meeting included in-person and virtual participants and was open to the public.

The following Council members were present and participated in the meeting.

Dr. Chuck Barger
Ms. Shelly Grow
Mr. Jim Heffelfinger
Dr. Toni Piaggio
Dr. Terri Roth
Ms. Suzanne Asha Stone
Ms. Rachel Wolstenholme
Mr. Joshua Gaskamp
Ms. Tchelet Segev

The following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff were also present at the meeting.

Mr. James Guthrie, Senior Advisor (attended Thurs, Nov 16, 2023)
Mr. Matt Filsinger, Deputy Assistant Director, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (attended Tue, Nov 14, 2023)
Ms. Stephanie Rickabaugh, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Ms. Lori Bennett, Program Analysis
Mr. Evan Bartow, American Conservation Experience Fellow
Mr. Scott Carlton, Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Branch Manager

The Council heard presentations from the 2023 Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize winners:

Protecting Endangered Species

Dr. Joshua King
Title: Hot Water Apparatus for Pesticide-Free Control of Fire Ants Impacting Ground Nesting Wildlife

Promotion of Wildlife Conservation

Dr. Jesse Senko
Title: Harnessing Solar Energy to Reduce Marine Megafauna Bycatch While Maintaining Coastal Livelihoods

Mr. Mike Ellis
Title: Merging Trends in Media and Mobile Gaming with a Non-Profit Framework to Advance Real-World Conservation Exposure, Engagement, and Action

Preventing Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking

Dr. JJ Apodaca

Title: Creating a Genetic Database to Repatriate Confiscated Turtles and Coordinate Among States

Dr. Timothy Mackey

Title: Artificial Intelligence Big Data and Machine Learning Multiplatform Detection and Compliance System for Identifying and Reporting Illegal Online Sellers of Wild Freshwater Turtles

The Council also heard updates in a panel of 2022 prize winners:

Mr. Cameron Krebs, Reducing Human-Predator Conflict prize competition winner for the Automated Mineral Bin. Mr. Krebs is currently in Italy, having been invited to speak on reducing human-predator conflict as part of an official delegation. Mr. Krebs spoke of partnering with Colorado State University's Innovation Center on a phase 2 development of his technological advancement.

Mr. Derek Yorks and Mr. Ben Stookey, Managing Invasive Species prize winner for the Automated Smart Trapping System. The team is continuing to work on their smart trap after developing partnerships with University of Florida and USDA APHIS and piloting it in Florida and Maine.

The panel provided updates on their progress in further developing and testing their innovations, expressed gratitude for the prize competition, and offered feedback to enhance the impact of prize competitions, such as:

Thought there would be more interest from USFWS technical staff to provide resources and support in moving the innovations toward implementation.

Innovators still need to conduct key research, testing, and pilot innovations to demonstrate the potential. Additionally, they are working on developing supporting evidence for potential marketing and up scaling. Both creating partnerships and bringing to market takes longer than expected for implementation.

Would be helpful to have resources or a list of resources; I-CORPS Spark courses from Maine Technology Institute helped innovators conduct market research analyses and identify dead ends.

Mentors would be valuable, e.g., to suggest considerations such as developing and submitting patents or having an innovator hub to find resources for bringing technology to market.

Help connect resources and technical experts with innovators and innovators to each other to continue advancement and entrepreneurship.

Public Comment

The public was invited to speak at 11:30 am (Eastern time) each day. No one signed up to give public comment prior to the meeting. Members of the public participating were also invited to provide comments. No public comments were provided. One person submitted written comments in response to the *Federal Register* posting. No follow up action is needed.

Council Business and Discussion

The Council approved the March minutes with two spelling corrections.

The Council members approved the meeting agenda unanimously. The agenda was later amended because the Thursday morning speaker was unable to attend. The amendment was approved on Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

Council discussions included:

Innovations developed by winners of the TRG Prizes seem to offer cost efficient ways for wildlife conservation and management (in terms of relationship building, public awareness, and investment). Winners have provided important input on adoption strategies.

Innovations from the winners are clearly novel ways to address challenging areas and we see them as potentially having significant impacts in those areas.

The prize competition program has demonstrated its value. Prize winners from 2022 have already been awarded honors from professional societies such as The Wildlife Society for their innovations and have received press coverage.

The Council would like to see opportunities for winners to work with USFWS to move their innovation to implementation, as well as connect them to an “innovator community” in the wildlife management space.

The Council members learned from Mr. Matt Filsinger, that “innovation” is a core value for the USFWS, coming out of the USFWS’s recent Values Journey. The Council found this encouraging for conservation and for supporting opportunities like the prize competition.

The six subcommittees presented draft recommendation for the Secretary of the Interior to the Council. The Council discussed the draft recommendations and synergies across some of them.

Members reviewed, discussed, and edited the wording for an introduction and conclusion in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, and for each recommendation and a related summary. On Thursday, November 15, 2023 the Council voted to move forward with the thirteen recommendations listed, in non-priority order, below:

Encourage and Amplify Technological Innovation

- Continue Prize Competitions in Technological Innovation for Wildlife Conservation
- Support Scale-Up of Wildlife Conservation Innovations

- Develop a National Award to Recognize Technological Innovators in Wildlife Conservation
- Establish New Mechanisms, Increase Awareness, and Amplify Efforts by Natural Resource Stewards Working to Protect Endangered Species

Leverage Expertise to Foster Development and Implement Innovation

- Establish a Nonlethal Human-Wildlife Conflict Reduction Task Force
- Establish a Nonlethal Human-Predator Coexistence and Conflict Management Task Force
- Incentivize Use of Social Science Data and Local Community Engagement in Nonlethal Human-Predator Conflict Resolution
- Integrate Animal Behavior-Driven Approaches When Evaluating Technological Innovation
- Connect Technological Innovations to the Invasive Species Advisory Committee and the National Invasive Species Council

Adopt Innovations and New Approaches for Wildlife Conservation

- Explore Innovative Technologies for Nonlethally Managing Insects
- Expand the USFWS Center for Pollinator Conservation
- Preserve Biodiversity by Leveraging Innovative Biotechnologies
- Adopt Consensus-Based Geospatial Data Standards to Combat Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking

Co-Chairs will review for consistency and format the letter. Stephanie Rickabaugh, the DFO, will provide the Council’s letterhead.

ADJOURNMENT

November 16, 2023, meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm (Eastern time).

Certified by the Council Chairs

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Grow**

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This was the last meeting of the Council. These minutes were sent around for consideration by the Council members, and any corrections or notations incorporated into the minutes.

