

Western Governors' Wildlife Council Meeting

May 16 – 17, 2011

Boise, Idaho

Meeting Summary and Next Steps

Next Steps:

Next Meeting

- The Council will consider convening informally during the WAFWA Summer Meeting in Big Sky, MT July 15-20. The next formal WGWC meeting will likely be in mid-fall.

Federal Coordination

- WGWC members agreed in principle to a federal agreement with DOI and USDA to further implement the [June 2009 MOU](#). WGA staff will work with the WGWC Chair and Vice Chair to send the agreement to WGA's Staff Advisory Council for final review. WGA will aim to announce the agreement at the Governors' Annual Meeting June 29-30 in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho.
- WGA staff will work with BLM to finalize an assistance agreement that would give funding to WGA and states to develop DSSs in coordination with REA and other BLM needs.
- Pilot leads led by Carmen Bailey of Utah will work with the USGS GAP program to help validate regional species models, and will inform USGS about priority model needs for the pilots/DSSs.

Online Planning Tool Development and Pilot Projects

- WGWC members decided that greater direction is needed through the pilots on application of the White Paper crucial habitat definitions. WGWC members will consult with their pilot leads and pilot counterparts in order to send to WGA by June 17 options currently being contemplated for applying the crucial habitat definitions.
- WGA staff will make revisions to the white paper for the WGWC to review that will include:
 - A WGWC vision statement
 - Pilot technical progress papers on achieving regional compatibility (scale, edge matching, data gaps) that were approved for release at the Boise meeting
 - A defined public product for meeting the Governors' 2013 deadline (i.e. Scenario 3)
- Pilot leads are directed to further develop the components of a 2013 product that incorporates a regional viewer tool.
- WGA will propose criteria and timelines for Phase 2 pilot project proposals, including identifying crucial habitat and building towards a public product in 2013.

Communications Plan

- WGA will work with Pure Communications to revise the draft communications plan and propose a specific workplan for WGWC and SAG members based on the feedback received from the Council, SAG and others in Boise.
- Fundraising will be necessary and WGA will follow-up on an earlier proposal to the GNLCC with LCC national leadership based on the new federal agreement.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

- WGA will work with Pure Communications to revise the draft communications plan and propose a specific workplan for WGWC and SAG members based on the feedback received from the Council, SAG and others in Boise.
- WGA staff will follow up with the SAG on proposed actions for DSS implementation in transmission planning (presented by Monique DiGiorgio and with input from Jack Sahl).
- SAG members are encouraged to continue to develop advice and guidance for the WGWC on DSS implementation in planning processes (i.e. local land use and transportation).

Regional Transmission Planning

- WGA and the WGWC will form a subgroup of pilot leads to review future environmental data proposed for inclusion in the Regional Transmission Expansion Planning project. A volunteer group of pilot leads are needed going forward to assist WGA and WGWC in reviewing lists of data sets for reliability.
- WGA will continue to work with NREL to use Montana and Arizona DSS data as examples to understand how to best incorporate environmental information into WECC's transmission planning process.

Meeting Summary:**Welcome and Introduction**

Lieutenant Governor Brad Little provided welcoming remarks. Governor Otter joined attendees for breakfast on Day 2 of the meeting where he conveyed his support for the work of the WGWC, and reiterated the importance of quickly developing these state-based planning tools to help better inform development and other land use decisions.

Idaho Pilot Presentation

Gary Vecellio, Idaho Fish and Game, presented on the status of Idaho's two pilot projects – the Columbia Plateau pilot with Washington and Oregon, and the High Divide pilot with Montana. Gary provided a demonstration of a draft, internal map viewer developed by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks staff to display wildlife information across both states. Audrey Hatch, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, joined the presentation to discuss progress in the Columbia Plateau pilot to develop climate change and connectivity/landscape integrity modeled data layers. The pilot is working with several different groups, including the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group and the University of Washington, to provide this information for the pilot states.

Long-term Vision of WGWC

Idaho's presentation was followed by a WGWC discussion on the overall vision of the initiative, as originated by the Western Governors in 2008. The development of regionally compatible, on-line planning tools in each state is paramount, but as important is the utilization of these tools by the public and decision-makers. WGWC members discussed the importance of parallel efforts to develop the tools while also working to ensure the information they provide is utilized. Council members acknowledged that the prioritization of wildlife information into "crucial habitat"

provides a significant value. In addition to prioritized information, the long-term nature of these tools provides a value. Several states already have GIS-based tools in their agencies that serve up data to the public. Those tools could be broadened to accommodate crucial habitat information, which would also increase the ability of each state wildlife agency to take over long-term ownership of the tools and integrate them into their daily activities.

It is important to remember that while 2013 is the deadline set by Western Governors' to make these tools publically available, the products will continue to be updated with current information over many years.

To maintain the high-level focus of this project, WGWC members tasked WGA staff with proposing a WGWC vision statement for their review and approval. The vision statement will be incorporated into a revised WGWC white paper, along with other additions.

Round Robin Report-out On Pilots

Each state provided a verbal update on the status of their pilot project including recent challenges and successes, stakeholder outreach and the pilots' role in long-term utilization of the tool in each state.

Wildlife and Regional Transmission Planning

Byron Wertz, Western Electricity Coordinating Council, presented on the work of a stakeholder group in the Regional Transmission Planning Project that is identifying important environmental data for consideration in regional transmission routing and planning. Byron presented the recent work of the group, the Environmental Data Task Force (EDTF), in identifying important data, but noted that there is not currently a mechanism for integrating this information into WECC's decision-making. This mechanism will likely be developed in the coming year. John Harja sits on the EDTF as a representative of the WGWC, and helped gain a place-holder in their list of data for crucial habitat as identified by states in the on-line planning tools. A significant amount of information is available about the WECC and the RTEP Project. Useful links include:

- WECC Home Page: <http://www.wecc.biz>
- RTEP Home Page:
<http://www.wecc.biz/Planning/TransmissionExpansion/RTEP/Pages/default.aspx>
- SPSG Home Page: <http://www.wecc.biz/committees/BOD/TEPPC/SPSG/default.aspx>
- EDTF Home Page:
<http://www.wecc.biz/committees/BOD/TEPPC/SPSG/EDTF/default.aspx>
- "Environmental Recommendations for Transmission Planning" document:
<http://www.wecc.biz/committees/BOD/TEPPC/SPSG/EDTF/Shared%20Documents/Report%20to%20SPSG/Environmental%20Recommendations%20for%20Transmission%20Planning%2005-06-2011.pdf>
- Other important documents for EDTF:
<http://www.wecc.biz/committees/BOD/TEPPC/SPSG/EDTF/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Paul Orbuch, WGA, then presented on an additional process WGA is leading in the RTEP that would inform the broad assumptions WECC makes on the amount of renewable energy that could be accessed by future, hypothetical transmission lines. Using information from Montana

and Arizona's on-line planning tools, the National Renewable Energy Lab is helping WGA recommend a methodology for incorporating wildlife sensitivities into the WECC assumptions.

The WGWC asked several questions regarding the RTEP process, and is interested in maintaining their connection with the project as it offers the ideal regional, pre-planning structure for applying wildlife information from the on-line planning tools.

Communications Plan

Dan Igoe, Pure Brand Communications, presented a draft plan for communicating the effort of the WGWC to develop a collection of on-line planning tools across the West. The purpose of the plan is to 1) raise awareness of and generate positive anticipation for the region-wide launch of the WGWC's on-line planning tools; 2) encourage adoption and ongoing use of the tools by key audiences, especially individuals at the early stages of land use planning; and 3) longer-term, effectively communicate the impacts and successes generated by the ongoing use of the tools across the West. The plan includes clearer, targeted messaging for the diverse set of interests who will utilize the tools, and also suggests a number of actions that the WGWC and their Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) can jointly undertake to meet the objectives listed above.

SAG members acknowledged the benefit of having products to help them communicate, explain and "sell" the online planning tools to their colleagues. The SAG also plays an important role in developing a feedback loop between user groups and the WGWC as they develop their tools. For the tools to be successful, accurate and clear messaging is necessary to address concerns and questions raised by different stakeholders. Success also involves the development of products that make communication easy for SAG and WGWC members who are volunteering their time on top of their regular jobs. Products could include presentations and handouts that communicate the value of these online planning tools to different users.

WGWC members understand the importance of more accurately and clearly communicating the online planning tools, but were wary of large, cumbersome efforts like multi-day road shows. Council members also indicated that the messaging was accurate, but there still seemed to be too many messages to efficiently and consistently communicate the value of the planning tools.

Audience members suggested that good communication would include messaging about the overall WGWC and corridors initiative, as well as the online planning tools. But they also counseled that the messaging should explain what the tool will mean, or what impact it may have, for different user groups. This would also include information about what data and definitions are used to identify crucial habitat.

The WGWC directed WGA staff to work with Pure to revise the communications plan based on that feedback, and bring back a revised proposal.

Stakeholder Advisory Group Presentation on Online Planning Tool Implementation

The SAG has been tasked by the WGWC to assist with communication and outreach, as discussed in the communication plan above. This includes an important feedback loop to the WGWC on how the online planning tools can be designed and developed to best meet the needs of users.

The SAG has also been asked to provide advice to the WGWC to ensure that the planning tools are utilized in relevant planning processes. SAG members will bring to the group their suggestions for activities to support implementation in a given arena. Monique DiGiorgio began by sharing thoughts (developed in coordination with Jack Sahl) on how the tools can be utilized in various stages of the renewable energy and transmission planning. Monique presented their work, and suggestions for opportunities at both the federal and state level. As an example, she presented the work her organization is facilitating that uses GIS to help inform county commissioners about wildlife sensitivities as they consider siting of the Mountain States Intertie Project (MISTI) transmission line through Montana and Idaho.

The purpose of this discussion was to identify specific activities for DSS implementation in transmission and renewable energy planning, but to also clarify the role of the SAG in advising the WGWC. Other SAG members are empowered to develop their own ideas for implementation within their area of interest. Previously, transportation planning and local land use planning have been mentioned as important topic areas, so those sectors and will be targeted based on SAG interest.

WGA staff will follow up with the SAG to discuss recommended steps forward for implementation on transmission planning, and to identify future arenas for developing implementation recommendations.

Federal Coordination

On September 1 the Western Governors' sent Secretary Salazar a letter requesting a meeting to refocus on implementation of the June 2009 wildlife MOU. Since then the WGWC has been working with both DOI and USDA to better achieve the intent of the MOU – stated as coordination between state and federal agencies to develop state-based wildlife Decision Support Systems. Michael Carrier, FWS, presented the WGWC with an agreement under the MOU for their consideration, which outlines the shared interest in increasing efficiency across multiple state and federal landscape conservation initiatives. The agreement also exhibits the federal agencies' willingness to make extensive use of information about crucial wildlife habitats and corridors within the state online planning tools. The WGWC approved the agreement in principle, and tasked WGA staff to work with the Governors' staff and DOI and USDA to secure final approval. The agreement will be signed by leadership of the WGWC and DOI and USDA representatives on the State-Federal Implementation Group, formed to implement the MOU. WGWC members aim to announce this agreement during the WGA Annual Meeting June 29 – 30 in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho.

Discussions then turned to steps necessary to implement this agreement. Tom Olliff, National Park Service, presented on a demonstration project within the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC) which aims to identify technical efficiencies for development and implementation of similar GIS mapping products within the boundaries of the GNLCC. The demonstration project will study state online planning tools in Montana and Idaho, the Northern Rockies Rapid Ecoregional Assessment being developed by BLM, and the USFS Northern Region's Integrated Resource and Protection Strategy.

Then, Travis Haby, BLM, presented BLM's offer of a long-term assistance agreement with WGA to support the development of a number of state online planning tools. In return, the BLM

would be provided with useful wildlife information to be used in the REAs and for additional decision support within BLM.

Lastly, Carmen Bailey, Utah Division of Wildlife, and Jocelyn Aycrigg, Conservation Biologist at the University of Idaho and consultant to USGS GAP program, discussed efforts within the pilot projects to partner with the GAP program. GAP will be able to provide the states with priority species models at the range-level, which will be essential to the states' efforts to edge matching data across political jurisdictions and identifying crucial habitat.

Pilot Projects & Online Planning Tool Development

Technical Updates

The WGWC discussed future efforts to develop the online planning tools, utilizing the current pilot projects. The pilot leads have articulated progress in developing "regionally compatible" tools by articulating both the challenges and paths forward on a number of technical issues; scale of data, cross jurisdictional issues like edge matching, and dealing with data gaps. The WGWC decided to publish this information as a status update in a revised WGWC White Paper.

Goal for 2013

The pilot leads had also asked the WGWC for more direction on the product necessary to meet the Governors' deadline in 2013. Pilot leads had provided a number of options that could be accomplished successfully by 2013, given challenges to regional compatibility and differences in individual state capacity. The WGWC determined that the pilot leads should be guided by a 2013 product that includes a regional viewer.

In this scenario, each state will still build an individual online planning tool. States will provide access to their aggregated "crucial habitat" layers based on the mapping definitions outlined in the WGWC White Paper to a third party entity. These layers would be combined together as a derived, regional layer for crucial habitat. This layer would be published as a map service and hosted in a separate regional application. Individual states could "consume and display" the layer if they chose to inside their individual DSSs. Additionally, the regional viewer application could display regional datasets that currently exist or will exist by 2013 (no datasets have been selected, but examples of possible data to include sage grouse habitat, Mule Deer, all SGCN distribution maps, SGCN occurrences, etc.). These would be categorized into crucial habitat levels by the states and displayed in the regional viewer.

This regional viewer can be completed and functional shortly after the states complete their individual crucial habitat layers because it does not require that each state have their own published online planning tool. This scenario will also accommodate those clusters of state/pilots that choose to develop sub-regional viewers.

The benefits of this scenario are that:

- States maintain control over the layer that they provide to the regional map application, and data security is provided.
- This produces a single application that can focus on a regional view of crucial habitat information; and is a completed regional (all 17 states) "standardized" map of crucial habitats defined by several cross jurisdictional data layers by 2013.

- Does not rely on “completion” of individual state tools, but does rely on each state developing their data and prioritizing/identifying crucial habitat.
- States with limited resources will be focused on meeting the 2013 deadline through data development and crucial habitat identification; less short-term focus and resources are required for the tool/viewer development.
- Functionality and performance measures in a regional viewer can be achieved through good design.

Prioritizing Crucial Habitat

Articulating a goal for the pilot leads in 2013 is necessary, but the WGWC determined that their priority in the short term is to provide greater direction to the pilot leads on how to identify crucial habitat. These decisions include an element of subjectivity, and will be driven by the regulatory environment and conservation objectives in each state. It is also a challenging exercise to aggregate and weight very different types of data that are difficult to compare (i.e. large unfragmented habitat or locations for threatened or endangered species), and some consistency in the approach used by each state may be useful.

Therefore, the WGWC determined that each member will talk to their pilot lead about the methodology or approach being considered for applying the crucial habitat definitions. The primary questions under consideration by the WGWC will be 1) whether states should develop a single map of crucial habitat, or develop a system that can generate crucial areas based on specific issues (i.e. types of development); and 2) Whether the concept of the crucial habitat definitions needs to be refined to apply them to aggregated, landscape-scale data?

Feedback from each WGWC member will be sent to WGA staff and organized for WGWC consideration on a subsequent conference call. The WGWC will strive for consensus on an approach for applying the crucial habitat definitions, and this will better guide the technical aspects of developing the online planning tools through the pilot projects.

Pilot Projects - Phase 2

Phase 1 of the pilot projects is scheduled to end on June 30. The WGWC is endeavoring to provide necessary guidance to support strong proposals from pilot projects for Phase 2. The WGWC tasked WGA staff with developing criteria and a timeline for phase 2 pilot proposals, which includes recent WGWC guidance on a product for 2013 and identification of crucial habitat.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The WGWC will consider a half-day meeting during the WAFWA Summer Meeting to discuss progress on application of the crucial habitat definitions and Phase 2 pilot proposals. WGA staff will also work with Joe Maurier and TO Smith, MFWP, to schedule a briefing for WAFWA Directors on the WGWC initiative.

The next full meeting of the WGWC will likely be in mid-fall 2011.

ATTACHMENT A: AGENDA

Western Governors' Wildlife Council
Preliminary Business Meeting
May 16-17, 2011
The Grove Hotel, 245 S. Capitol Blvd., Boise, ID, (208) 333-8000

Business Meeting Objectives:

- Discuss progress toward meeting the long-term vision for regionally compatible DSSs;
- Determine and release progress report on the Council's eight decision support system pilot projects, consider next steps to meet Governors' 2013 deadline for regional DSS compatibility;
- Engage federal officials to further integrate state DSS efforts with federal landscape scale mapping initiatives and consider written agreement of commitment;
- Expand Council relations with Stakeholder Advisory Group and consider proposed joint action items;
- Review and consider proposed Wildlife Council Communications Plan; and,
- Consider additional issues for Wildlife Council attention and action.

Monday, May 16, 2011

11:00 a.m. *Council Private Meeting and Lunch (Ivy Room, 2nd floor)*

1:30 Welcome Remarks, Introductions and Agenda Review
(Cedar Room, 2nd floor)

Brad Little, State of Idaho, Lieutenant Governor
John Harja, State of Washington, WGWC Chair

2:00 Presentation of Idaho Pilot Projects:
Demonstration of Idaho-Montana High Divide Mapping Tool &
Modeling/Mapping Efforts in the Columbia Plateau
Sharon Kiefer and Gary Vecellio, Idaho Department of Fish and Game &
Audrey Hatch, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

3:00 Progress Towards Meeting Long-term Vision of DSSs

3:15 Round Robin Report Out by Council Members on Progress, Opportunities and
Challenges of Pilot Projects and DSS Development

4:00 *Break*

4:15 Regional Wildlife & Transmission/Energy Planning
Paul Orbuch, WGA & Byron Wertz, Western Electricity Coordinating Council

5:00 Public Comment Opportunity and Adjourn

5:00 *Reception and Cash Bar for All Attendees
(Terrace, 4th floor)*

6:00 *Attendees - Dinner on your own*

Tuesday, May 17

7:30 a.m. *Breakfast & Welcome from Governor Otter for All Attendees
(Ivy Room, 2nd floor)*

8:30 Reconvene Meeting and Day 1 Recap/Follow-up (*Cedar Room, 2nd floor*)

8:45 Review and Consider WGWC Proposed Communications Strategy
Dan Igoe, Pure Brand Communications

10:00 Stakeholder Advisory Group Presentations, Discussion and Next Steps
**Monique DiGiorgio, Western Environmental Law Center and
Jack Sahl, Southern California Edison**

11:15 Public Comment Opportunity

11:30 *Break and Lunch Served for All Attendees (Ivy Room, 2nd Floor)*

12:30 p.m. Status of Efforts to Integrate State Wildlife Information with Federal Landscape Level
Mapping Initiatives
**Presentation by Montana, Idaho and Great Northern LCC staff on their
Demonstration Project to integrate state DSSs, BLM REAs and USFS data and
mapping.**

2:00 Council Discussion on Future Phases of Pilots and Regional Compatibility

2:30 Finalize Action Items, Next Steps, Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn

ATTACHMENT B: ATTENDEES LIST**WESTERN GOVERNORS' WILDLIFE COUNCIL MEETING
May 16 – 17, 2011**

First Name	Last Name	Title	Organization
Josh	Avey	Habitat Branch Chief	AZ Game and Fish Department
Jocelyn	Aycrigg	Conservation Biologist	University of Idaho
Carmen	Bailey	Impact Analysis Coordinator	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Robert	Breckenridge	Sr. Environmental Scientist	Idaho National Laboratory
Bob	Broscheid	Assistant Director	Arizona Game and Fish Dept.
Joseph	Burns	Threatened and Endangered Species Program Leader	U.S. Forest Service
Mike	Carrier		U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Dave	Chadwick		Colorado Division of Wildlife
John	Chatburn	Administrator	Idaho Office of Energy Resources
Yvette	Converse	Great Northern LCC Coordinator	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mike	DeArmond	Forester	Bureau of Land Management
Monique	DiGiorgio	Conservation Strategist	Western Environmental Law Center
Cameron	Ellis	GIS Manager	The Sonoran Institute
John	Emmerich	Deputy Director	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Steve	Ferrell	Director	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Jon	Foster	Branch Chief, Resources and Science	Bureau of Land Management
Chris	Friel	Senior Account Executive	ESRI
Dennis	Glick	Director	Future West
Travis	Haby	BLM Science Advisor (Acting)	U.S. DOI, BLM
Dave	Hamilton	Director	USGS Fort Collins Science Center
John	Harja	Director	Utah Office of Public Lands
Audrey	Hatch	Environmental Planner	WDFW
Richard	Hatcher	Director	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Don	Hover	Okanogan County Commissioner	Okanogan County
Kevin	Hunting	Deputy Director	California Dept. of Fish and Game
Dan	Igoe	Managing Partner	Pure Brand Communications
Sharon	Kiefer	Deputy Director	Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
Spencer	Kimball	Manager of Government Affairs	Western Energy Alliance (formerly IPAMS)
Sonya	Knetter	GIS Analyst	Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
Brad	Little	Lt. Governor	State of Idaho
Bob	McCready	Assistant Coordinator	Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Holly	Michael	Conservation Policy Coordinator	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Owen	Miller	Corporate Environmental Affairs Specialist	Chesapeake Energy
Tom	Olliff		National Park Service
Paul	Orbuch	WGA Consultant	Orbuch Consulting LLC
C.L. "Butch"	Otter	Governor	State of Idaho
Brad	Powell	Energy Director	Trout Unlimited
Laura	Richards	Division Chief, Wildlife Diversity	Nevada Department of Wildlife
Michael	Rivera	CO/NM Ranch Manager	ABV Ranch
Kirk	Robinson	Executive Director	Western Wildlife Conservancy
Lara	Rozzell	Public Lands & Energy	Idaho Conservation League
Julie	Schneider	Wildlife Corridors/Linkages Coordinator	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Keith	Sexson	Ass't Secretary for Operations	Kansas Wildlife and Parks
Melissa	Simpson	Director of Gov't Affairs & Science Based Conservation	Safari Club International
Chris	Smith	Western Field Representative	Wildlife Management Institute
Nathalie	Smith	Regional Manager	Environmental Systems Research Institute
T.O.	Smith	Strategic Planning and Data Services	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Tod	Stevenson	Director	NM Department of Fish and Game
Kim	Titus	Chief Wildlife Scientist	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Gary	Vecellio	Staff Biologist	Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Jennifer	Watkins	Conservation Associate	Conservation Northwest
Madeleine	West	Program Manager	Western Governors' Association
Will	Whelan	Director of Government Relations	The Nature Conservancy, Idaho
Byron	Woertz	Senior Project Manager	WECC