

Western Governors' Wildlife Council Meeting

October 5 – 6, 2009

Meeting Summary and Next Steps

Decision Items & Next Steps	Who
<p><u>White paper</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Hunting will propose language (send to WGA staff) for the intro of the paper clarifying what the DSSs are and are NOT intended for. A restoration category will be added to the list under Step 1 – using language sent out previously by Joanna and Sharon. Arizona, Montana, Wyoming and California will propose a tiered approach to the list of categories under Step 1. Redraft language to tighten the link between the white paper and the MOU, and the white paper and the pilot projects, to show that coordination between all efforts will take place, and to provide a description of the Council's broader goals and objectives. <p><u>Council members should send their edits to WGA staff no later than October 30. Staff will compile all edits and send a revised version to the Council. The Council will discuss the paper on a future conference call.</u></p>	<p>Kevin Hunting</p> <p>WGA staff</p> <p>Josh Avey lead with MT, WY and CA</p> <p>WGA staff</p>
<p><u>Pilot projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WGA Chair and Vice-Chair will draft a letter to MOU signatories (copying federal land management agencies) highlighting progress on MOU implementation and WGWC efforts to 1) identify specific Federal representation on pilot projects; and 2) link white paper definitions and development guidance to the pilots. WGA staff will prepare an enhanced pilot template for WGA/state contractual purposes after the DOE grant is awarded. States should continue working together to revise pilot proposals, focusing on adding specific Federal agency contacts, if possible, and highlighting the pilot linkage to the white paper. Pilot partners should use the existing proposal template, but enhance the proposals with the information listed above. <u>Revised pilot proposals should be completed by November 30</u>, and will then be posted on the WGWC Web site. Work with Dave Stout to plan Fed/state edge-matching workshop to encourage coordination with Federal efforts and enhance state technical capacity. Funding details from FWS to be determined. 	<p>WGA staff draft letter for full Council review</p> <p>WGA staff</p> <p>Council members</p> <p>WGA staff</p>

<p><u>Operational</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft charge and composition for State/Federal Implementation Group for Council consideration. <i>Purpose: Federal agency leads and Council chair and vice-chair map out areas for coordination, including oversight for pilot projects and their connection to white paper definitions.</i> • Draft charge and composition for WGWC Advisory Group. <i>Purpose: stakeholder group to recommend enhancement to Step 3 in white paper, give advice on pilots, and act as longer-term sounding board.</i> • Reconvene DSS Subgroup to serve as a technical state team, advising the Council on ways to coordinate the pilots and DSSs among all states. • Put Science Subgroup on hold and notify them that they may be reconvened at some future time to advise the Council. • Create organizational chart of Council and subgroups and process chart for activities. Use charts to schedule future in-person meetings. • Create 1-pager to communicate Council mission, charge and purpose. • Explore pros and cons of creating WGWC letterhead and bring proposal to Council. 	<p>WGA staff</p> <p>WGA staff</p> <p>WGA staff will notify existing group</p> <p>WGA staff will notify group</p> <p>WGA staff</p> <p>WGA staff</p> <p>WGA staff</p>
<p><u>Next Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish standing conference calls on the second Tuesday of every month at 2pm MT. The next conference call is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10 @ 2pm MT. • SAVE THE DATE for the next Council business meeting on January 12 – 13 in Phoenix, Arizona. Possible agenda topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finalize revisions to white paper, for purpose of testing in pilots ○ Finalize pilot projects including work schedule and funding details ○ Plan for edge-matching workshop sponsored by USFWS ○ Update Council workplan for 2010 – 2011 ○ Sketch out summer and fall Council meetings 	

NOTE: All of the documents referred to in this meeting summary are available on the WGA's Wildlife Corridors Web site: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/corridors/index.htm>.

DAY 1 – October 5

Welcome, Introductions and Recap of Recent Council Activities

Pam Inmann, Executive Director of WGA, opened the meeting by introducing the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Wildlife Council, and thanking all of the Council members for their leadership on this initiative within their states. Ms. Inmann thanked the staff of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for hosting the meeting and for their leadership in developing a wildlife Decision Support System (DSS). She recognized Shaun McGrath, former WGA staff on the wildlife corridors initiative and now staff in the White House, and also acknowledged those sponsors of the WGA corridors initiative who were present at the meeting.

John Harja, Wildlife Council Chairman, reviewed the work for the Council and their subgroups since the Council formed in December 2008, focusing on their efforts to provide wildlife sensitivity maps for WGA's Western Renewable Energy Zone project and refine definitions of crucial habitat for public feedback. Mr. Harja stressed the Council's work products as draft, developed internally and being shared more broadly to begin a conversation with federal and private partners about the development of state-based DSSs.

Then Joe Maurier, Council Vice-Chair, introduced Governor Schweitzer, WGA Chairman, to provide opening remarks. Governor Schweitzer spoke of the challenge that Western Governors have to seek a balance between developing the tremendous resources of the region with the desire to protect the landscapes and creatures that inhabit them for future generations. The Governor also highlighted the need to balance energy and transmission development, and other land use planning decisions, with wildlife and human concerns. The Governor stressed the importance of tools like wildlife DSSs to direct the transmission and energy develop that is happening in the West to the most appropriate places.

Montana's Crucial Areas and Connectivity Assessment Demonstration

Joe Maurier then introduced T.O. Smith and Janet Hess-Herbert to present a "sneak peek" of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Park's (MFWP) Crucial Areas and Connectivity Assessment (CACA), thanking them and their staff for their dedicated efforts on this project.

Since January 2008, MFWP has been working to develop a wildlife DSS. The CACA is an interactive GIS mapping tool that exposes the results of a refined assessment of fish, wildlife and recreational values in an effort to identify crucial areas and fish and wildlife corridors. It will include science-based recommendations for avoiding or mitigating the adverse impacts of development, and will help the agency identify opportunities to integrate these efforts into the policies and practices of local, state and federal government and private industry.

The CACA will ultimately be made publicly available, however, at the time of the demonstration the data analysis was still being refined. MFWP expects CACA to become public on their agency website in early 2010.

Members of the Council and the audience asked MFWP staff questions about their system. Questions related to dealing with uncertain or insufficient data, availability of state personnel and resources for such an effort, efforts to understand possible mitigation options, and process for developing management recommendations to accompany the mapping tool.

In response, MFWP staff provided the following information:

- Agency data was augmented through a very close relationship with the Montana state natural heritage program.
- The initial investment to centralize key datasets is critical, as is the future investment to keep data current in this dynamic system.
- The Agency made this project a priority so staff dedicated their time, and the agency was able to hire one full-time person for the project.
- The agency recognized some inconsistency in the application of mitigation measures across the state. A focus in finalizing the system will be to tie known information about mitigation to the management recommendations. The recommendations will relate directly to the mapped information and will be developed in a credible and defensible manner.
- The system has been developed to serve the mission of MFWP, and it has succeeded in doing so. Future work may include seeking public input on the weighting criteria that was used to identify crucial habitats.

The Council responded very favorably to the demonstration, many noting that they looked forward to learning from MFWP staff as they undertake their own state efforts to develop coordinated DSSs. Some pointed out the value of such a tool in helping state agencies proactively conserve and improve lands, as opposed to just reacting to specific development proposals. Others recognized the need for ongoing funding streams to maintain such systems once they have been developed.

Presentation of Wildlife Council Draft White Paper

Wyoming Council member John Emmerich presented the work of the Council over the past several months to refine the definitions of “wildlife corridors” and “crucial habitat” for the purpose of providing a coordinated understanding of these terms among the states, and to provide guidance for the mapping of wildlife corridors and crucial habitat as a part of the DSS. The first part of the draft White Paper includes these refined definitions. With established definitions, states can begin the process of assembling important data, analyzing and prioritizing the data into categories based on habitat conservation needs, and compiling the data into a useful tool or system. These steps are also outlined in the draft White Paper as guidance.

The purpose of presenting the draft White Paper at the meeting was to communicate to federal and private partners the preliminary shared understanding of the states in how they will move forward to develop coordinated wildlife DSSs.

The Council recognized that not all of the guidance steps are fully formed. Step 1 is the most complete, with important information listed that should be included in any mapping of crucial habitat. However, steps 2 and 3 list the challenges that each state will likely encounter at each point, but the White Paper does not yet provide recommendations on these steps.

After the introduction of the White Paper, Oregon Council member Holly Michael moderated a panel of potential DSS customers. The panelists were asked to provide their reactions to the visual demonstration from MFWP as well as the definitions and guidance in the Council’s draft White Paper. The reactions were as follows:

Jack Sahl, Director of Environment and Resource Sustainability at Southern California Edison and Steering Team member of Freedom to Roam, described how planning by utility operations is now being driven by low-carbon generation and has the potential to span multiple state boundaries. The utility industry has a desire to site transmission lines that have limited environmental impact, but they have a difficult time making those decisions without tools like wildlife DSSs as they have been described by the Council. He emphasized the need to provide industry with clear information on where state wildlife agencies do not want development, but more importantly to provide industry with information on where it may be most appropriate for them to develop.

Mr. Sahl also provided specific thoughts on the Council's White Paper including the need to emphasize corridors as well as crucial habitats, to include a data category for restoration habitats to assist industry in efficiently conducting offsite mitigation, and to understand the value of making the weighting criteria for identifying crucial habitat transparent to the public.

April Johnson, Executive Director for Programs and Policy at American Wildlands, spoke about how the NGO community has a limited number of tools to help them work through challenging conservations issues, like trans-boundary conservation. She reacted positively to the MFWP demonstration, and stressed that the work be replicated across bordering state boundaries. Specifically related to the Council's White Paper, Ms. Johnson recommended creating a category for data that can examine shifts in habitat due to climate change, and a prioritization amongst the states to fill known data gaps as she sees lack of data as a large hurdle to incorporating wildlife information into planning decisions.

Paul Matheny, Vice President at Questar Exploration and Production Company, agreed that as an operator and proponent of energy projects, the biggest impediment to cooperation and collaboration between industry and management agencies is the lack of data. Collaboration on projects can lead to creative responses to development issues, and a consistent approach to landscape level mapping will be very helpful in collaborating. States may not have to collect all of their own data to fill important data gaps, as that information may already be held by industry. And when the data is being assembled it is imperative that it be an objective and transparent process. Finally, Mr. Matheny reminded the Council that some projects have siting options, while others like oil and gas need to be sited where there resources are located.

Danielle Flynn, Wildlife Program Lead in the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Bureau in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), provided comments on the white paper from a BLM perspective to help the Council understand some of the agencies' challenges and how the DSS may be of value in helping the BLM to address them. Ms. Flynn listed a number of questions that the agency felt could benefit from clarification in the white paper. They included, whether the system is an analytical tool to support conservation goals or simply a compilation of data to use as a reference; If the DSS is a compilation of data without an analytical component, how the Council plans to would envision land management agencies translating translate GIS data into policy and land-use decisions regarding allowable land uses and intensity of land uses within inside and outside of identified crucial habitats and wildlife corridors ; how the Council sees DSSs providing value for prioritizing non-listed species and habitats for consideration in land use decision making (for example, programmatic NEPA

analyses such as in the current draft BLM Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for solar development); and how the systems will create a level of consistency in the identification and prioritization of crucial habitats and wildlife corridors across the Western states that industry and the federal land management agencies will need. Ms. Flynn added that BLM will be conducting ecoregional assessments, utilizing available data, information and analyses, across the West, and the agency hopes to engage the Council in that effort in order that data, information, definitions and prioritization criteria can be shared and consistent across jurisdictional boundaries.

Mary Sexton, Director of Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MT DNR), provided her comments on the DSS and White Paper from the perspective of a state agency that also deals with land use issues. Ms. Sexton noted that the MT DNR would utilize a DSS for assistance managing state trust lands, for conducting analyses under the Montana Environmental Policy Act, and for identifying mitigation and restoration opportunities. She added that MT DNR currently has some Arc software similar to what MFWP uses, and going forward using the same technology will help to foster collaboration. In closing, Ms. Sexton added that EISs take much less time on private lands, and the state could be a bigger player in wind development if their EIS process could be streamlined using a DSS tool.

Council members asked the panelists how the states should seek funding for the DSS coordination efforts, since coordinating between states is not a core function of state wildlife agencies. In response, panelists offered that the NGO community may not have large financial resources but they can develop creative means of providing services like collecting missing data. Customers of the DSSs, like industry, may be a source to fill some funding deficiencies, but the request has to be fair and for a specific effort and scope. Since utility regulation comes from the state Public Utility Commissions or equivalent agency and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, perhaps those entities could help raise funding for state DSS development.

Wildlife Council Presentation of Proposed DSS Pilot Studies

New Mexico Council member Joanna Prukop moderated this session where Council members presented each pilot concept and took questions from the audience. Consistent with a Memorandum of Understanding agreed to on June 15, 2009 between Western Governors and the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture and Energy, the Department of Energy included a wildlife task in a broader regional electricity transmission funding opportunity. The funding opportunity indicates DOE's desire to provide seed money for projects designed "to aid the development by each Western state of its own 'decision support system' that is capable of compiling all data on wildlife relevant to the development of renewable and other generation capacity and associated transmission facilities."

WGA worked with the Western Governors' Wildlife Council to develop a number of multi-partner pilot projects that seek to accomplish DOE's request. The Council decided that the pilots should be multi-state or multi-jurisdictional; should utilize or help develop the best available science in a GIS format; should be geographically located so that an energy nexus linkage can be made; should be designed to invite and integrate federal government and non-governmental participation; and should build from known multi-jurisdictional issues already identified in the Wildlife Corridors Initiative report and the Western Renewable Energy Zones Phase 1 report. The pilot projects should be completed within 6-12 months of WGA's award of a contract for

resources, to ensure the application of early successes across the region.

WGA proposed eight pilot projects covering 18 of the 19 WGA states. A brief summary of the pilots follows:

Alaska: The purpose of this pilot project is to 1) prepare spatial data for respective aquatic/resident fish, 2) consolidate up to 4 of the spatial datasets for the arctic migratory caribou herds, 3) work with partners to prepare metadata incorporating base maps and fish and wildlife data, and 4) demonstrate capabilities to apply the WGA guidelines to define crucial habitats and corridors. Partners include the State of Alaska's – Department of Natural Resources and the North Slope Science Initiative (a consortium of local, state, federal governments [e.g., departments of Energy, Interior] and various NGO's, industry [e.g., Conoco Philips] and university partners [e.g., University of Alaska – Fairbanks]).

California/Nevada/Arizona/Utah: States will partner to establish similar data protocols, and share information on methodology, analysis tools, and other products to provide a more consistent approach to developing their DSSs. Focus of the pilot will be on issues relevant to solar energy development in the states.

Colorado/New Mexico: The initiative will compile the best science and information available from various partners and generate a digitized product that will facilitate the ability of decision makers to effectively consider and protect wildlife and crucial habitats in their land management/use decisions. The success of this initiative will rely heavily on digitized maps to facilitate understanding and provide a useful decision-support system. Therefore, all information will be geo-referenced in a commonly accepted GIS format. Likely partners on this include the Jicarilla Apache Tribe, the Southern Ute Tribe, the Ute Mountain Tribe, private land owners, and nongovernmental organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the Intermountain West Joint Venture. Collaboration with the USFS, BLM, and other State, County, and Municipal entities will be important.

Idaho/Montana: Idaho and Montana have a common boundary that runs from Yellowstone National Park to the Canadian border that in both an ecological and topographic sense represents a vital connection between the last remaining, and relatively intact North American rocky mountain ecosystems in Canada and the United States. However, this boundary is increasingly bisected by expanding transportation, energy, and recreation developments that risk severing the existing fish and wildlife connectivity and corridors. The pilot proposes initiation of a Decision Support System (DSS) to address this important wildlife linkage area through: 1) completion of a data inventory and data protocols for both states, 2) identifying existing differences and similarities among existing data, 3) merging data layers most similar to one another to provide a seamless layer in GIS, 4) identify protocols for merging and exchanging less compatible but important wildlife data, and 5) identify planning and modeling efforts to address wildlife connectivity issues related to land use, development, and climate change along the Divide.

Idaho/Oregon/Washington: Washington, Oregon, and Idaho propose to complete a pilot project that creates an Integrated Decision Support System which would require that we 1) identify crucial habitat consistently across all three states for conservation of species that contribute to the Biodiversity of the Columbia Plateau, 2) define framework and major components that would

comprise the IDSS given each states' existing DSS's, habitat prioritization strategies, and data management structures, 3) identify major costs and obstacles for development of IDSS, and 4) develop draft timeline for establishment of the IDSS in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. The pilot would be based on our previous experiences working on several multi-state coordination activities. Currently different states use different methods for identifying connectivity landscapes – e.g. focal species or landscape integrity. Dataset quality differs from state-to-state. Similarly, a common definition of 'crucial habitat' can be difficult to agree – varies between state plans. Partners to date in this overall effort include Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Transportation, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Northwest, and University of Washington, and the Washington Habitat Connectivity Working Group. The states plan on adding appropriate federal partners (e.g. BLM, USFS, USFWS) to the project as it develops.

Kansas/Oklahoma/Texas: Recently, various mapping efforts have been initiated to identify lesser prairie chicken (LPC) habitat in relation to various threats such as wind energy development and agriculture. WAFWA would like to develop a model that would identify critical areas for LPC using information based upon population size and location, habitat, and expert opinion. This modeling effort is consistent with actions identified in the *Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Initiative* and would be vetted through the LPC Interstate Working Group, which includes the 5 state wildlife agencies, USFWS, BLM, USFS, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, The Nature Conservancy, and other interested parties.

Nebraska/North Dakota/South Dakota: The initiative proposes to use ecological niche modeling to predict the distribution and blocks of habitat for a suite of grassland species within member WAFWA states including, but not limited to, black-footed ferret, swift fox, black-tailed prairie dog, mountain plover, burrowing owl, Sprague's pipit, and ferruginous hawk. Ecological niche models combine environmental data (such as temperature, precipitation, vegetation, etc.) with species occurrence information (specific sightings data) to construct ecological requirements of a species and predict its geographic and ecological potential providing testable hypotheses of distribution potential on the landscape. We will then incorporate GIS layers for Wind Resource Areas and proposed transmission lines from the National Renewable Energy Lab to identify wildlife concentration areas in relation to energy development plans. We suggest that this methodology will be useful for evaluating potential energy sites (e.g. wind farms or solar panel arrays). In this way, combining spatially-explicit species' distributions with energy site planning will allow for improved risk assessment and or mitigation planning of future energy sites.

Wyoming: This project will utilize a distributed spatial database model to maintain, manage and utilize key wildlife and resource data across Wyoming for decisions related to energy and other types of long-term development activities. Database population, maintenance and management will be performed directly by key individuals assigned by partnering agencies in Wyoming such as WGFD, the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WYNDD), USFWS, and the BLM. All spatial data maintained by these groups will be replicated and stored within a centralized spatial database hosted at WyGIS. Standards within the database will be applied which will promote cross agency and multi-state data sharing. Decision makers from these agencies and other key state partners such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Wyoming Dept of Transportation (DOT), Wyoming Office of State Land and Investments (OSLI), and Wyoming

Dept of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will have access to these data via a web- based decision support application.

Across the board, the Council members highlighted that the current proposals are still in concept and were created in an expeditious manner to meet a deadline for submittal to DOE. The states will continue to refine the pilot proposals over the next several months based on feedback from the meeting and their own continued efforts with neighboring states. Specifically, proposals will be revised to highlight explicit partnerships with relevant Federal agencies.

NOTE: Descriptions of the pilot projects are available on the WGA's Wildlife Corridors Web site: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/corridors/index.htm>.

Briefing on Key Conservation Issues and Regional DSS Development

Bob Broscheid of Arizona moderated the session that was designed to allow members of the NGO community to brief the Council on what they see as the most relevant activities related to protecting habitats and corridors. At the opening of the session, Mr. Broscheid recognized Joanna Prukop's designation by the Council to be its liaison to the Freedom to Roam initiative that was discussed later in the session.

Rob Ament, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, presented on new federal policies related to wildlife corridor conservation. Mr. Ament highlighted eleven new Federal initiatives relevant to the Council including a number that provide money for the states to work on climate adaptation. The HR.2454 and S.1733 (aka the climate bills) both specifically include the establishment of a National Wildlife Habitat and Corridors Information Program through collaboration between states and federal agencies.

Keith Aune, Wildlife Conservation Society, presented on the emerging science and technology related to wildlife corridors and connectivity, including an update on WCS's work to develop a guidance document with best practices for corridors conservation. Mr. Aune also provided some general principles and characteristics of connectivity assessment and planning.

Monique DiGiorgio, Western Environmental Law Center, briefed the Council on the multiple ways that NGOs can act as partners in the Council's work, including providing capacity, science, outreach and work to further policies and garner funding. Ms. DiGiorgio also presented specific opportunities for engagement related to federal transportation legislation and the Federal Highways Administration rule-making, implementation of the state-federal MOU, and state wildlife pilot projects, along with incorporating broader public participation in Council activities. This presentation came on the heels of a day-long meeting in Helena where representatives from the NGO community came together to develop opportunities and actions for engaging in WGA's wildlife corridors initiative.

Jeffrey Parrish, Freedom to Roam, gave an update to Freedom to Roam's activities to communicate to the broader public the importance of protecting wildlife corridors. Freedom to Roam is a broad-based coalition of organizations and businesses working to increase support for and protection of wildlife corridors across North America so that animals can continue to move and adapt with human use and climate change. Dr. Parrish is the organization's newly hired Executive Director.

Following the presentations, Council members asked a number of questions. In response, the panelists provided the following information:

- The pilot projects may be able to benefit from the guidance document WCS's Science Committee is developing. As the pilots begin to go forward Keith Aune is available to have conversations about more specific utility of the document.
- The information on corridors is limited in the current draft of the White Paper. However, one of the likely lessons learned from the pilots is to further develop how to address that topic and include those lessons in the White Paper.
- Several land trusts are already engaging in the corridors issue, and Freedom to Roam currently has a working group on corridors that considers private lands, among other issues. Perhaps tools used on the local level by land trusts can be used for protection efforts in a more regional context.

NOTE: Presentations from this session are available on the WGA's Wildlife Corridors Web site: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/corridors/index.htm>.

DAY 2 – October 6

Coordination with Federal Partners and MOU Implementation

Alaska Council member Kim Titus moderated a panel intended to engage relevant federal land management agencies in an effort to implement the June 15 wildlife MOU. Federal agencies were asked to present on their work that is relevant to DSS development, provide any comments and suggestions on the Council's work products to date, and suggest specific opportunities for partnering with the Council.

Bruce Beard, Basing Directorate, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Installations and Environment, provided an overview of DoD's commitment to environmental protection, focusing primarily on the wildlife mapping effort underway by the Western Regional Partnership's (WRP) Wildlife Corridors Committee. The WRP as a whole was established to create a regional senior policy level partnership among the Department of Defense, other Federal agencies, and State and Tribal executive leadership in the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. The Wildlife Corridors Committee promotes information exchange, development of GIS maps to help answer regional policy issues, and is currently conducting a number of corridor pilots in key focus areas.

Chris Iverson, Assistant Director, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife Air and Rare Plants Program, U.S. Forest Service, discussed areas of engagement for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture from two perspectives - development and then implementation of Decision Support Systems. With regards to how the agencies would coordinate on development of the DSSs, Mr. Iverson noted that NRCS has some soil databases and Ecological Site Descriptions and the USFS has road and trail data, both of which could be used by the states to identify potential lands for habitat and corridors. From an USFS perspective, the Service focuses on wildlife habitat and generally defers to states for wildlife observational and population data habitat data so they are most interested in implementation of the DSSs. Tools like the one Montana demonstrated would be a

very good resource for the Service.

More specifically related to implementation, NRCS sees the DSS as a tool for prioritizing allocation of limited resources to maintain habitat through a variety of Farm Bill programs. The Service could use DSS information to revise their land management plans, and perform NEPA review for project implementation. While currently at relatively low levels, if transmission and renewable energy development continue to grow as a focus on Service lands the utility of DSSs will grow.

Mr. Iverson noted that multi-state edge-matching would be a useful addition to the current Montana system, as would a further delineation of corridors. Regarding the WGWC white paper, he noted that the data layers listed appear to be more general than what would fit into the crucial habitat definitions that reference biodiversity and viability - game ungulates are not generally considered a biodiversity or viability concern. In order to work with maps of crucial habitat, the layers of data that went into those maps will have to be available to understand source inputs. A clearer recommendation is needed from on what that categorization (Category 1-3) actually means from a management perspective.

David Stout, Chief, Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, spoke to the Department of the Interior's (DOI) support for the WGWC. Mr. Stout also summarized some of the existing DOI initiatives including the National Wind Siting Guidelines that are scheduled for release at the end of 2009, a GIS data delivery system called the National Wetland Inventory, the BLM ecoregional assessments to identify areas of high ecological value that may warrant conservation and restoration, and BLM's conservation strategies to conduct vulnerability assessments and determine appropriate adaptation strategies. Also, over the next 12 – 18 months the DOI will be conducting Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) which are shared management-science partnerships involving federal agencies, states, tribes, NGOs, universities, and NGOs.

Specifically relevant to the work of the Council is the USFWS's review of the 1981 Mitigation Policy which describes Resource Categories. The agency is seeking federal and state consistency in defining these terms, and that could be a very good link with the Council's crucial habitat definitions. Additionally, the edge-matching work that states are proposing to undertake through some pilot projects could benefit greatly from the work of the USFWS through their ECOS database and Information, Planning and Conservation System (IPAC) DSS. ECOS is a "publicly-accessible" data and map service to help the service and the public conduct geographic evaluations of natural resources and conservation efforts. IPAC is currently in the Beta form on-line, and is designed to streamline environmental reviews and encourage landscape-level conservation and planning for specific activities; it also includes best management practices. At the end of the presentation Mr. Stout offered to fund a workshop for federal and state agency staff to discuss process and procedures related to edge-matching.

Shaun McGrath, Deputy Director for Intergovernmental Affairs, The White House, was present to offer a broader set of comments on the efforts of the Council to date. Mr. McGrath's role has been to coordinate the White House offices and federal agencies in their involvement with the Council. Related to the White Paper, he recommended that the Council ensure collaboration with the Federal agencies, describe the bigger end goal of the effort, provide an associated

budget, and link the White Paper back to language in the wildlife MOU that highlights the need for consistency in data. Mr. McGrath asked specifically how the wildlife pilot projects will lead to the identification of crucial habitat categories, and what role the Council members will play in the pilots versus their staff. Implementation of the MOU is important, and Mr. McGrath suggested the Council work with the federal agencies to determine a process for coordination. In closing, he stated that the federal agencies will endeavor to compile a list of resources and programs that are ongoing, so that they can be used in the Council's work to advance the effort and not cause duplication.

Council members responded to some of the federal staff comments and asked additional questions. Panelists provided the following feedback:

- An edge-matching workshop for state and federal staff could be a starting point for enhancing state-federal collaboration in addition to working with other states. It could help identify details of on-going activities, like the USFWS IPAC system, to learn valuable lessons and eliminate duplication of effort.
- Implementation of the MOU is important to collaborating effectively with the federal agencies, so perhaps a group should be formed to identify key points of action.
- For development of the DOI LCCs, the USFWS has been in conversation with the Joint Ventures to see if the LCC functionality can be integrated into what the Joint Ventures already do, and the state representatives that already participate in those programs.

Mr. Titus asked the meeting audience if they had any questions or comments to add and it was suggested that the USFS has value to provide to the Montana and Idaho pilot project in sharing data for roads and trails, management and harvest practices, and fire history. It was also suggested that the initial money requested of DOE for the pilots was going to be sufficient to fully fund those efforts.

NOTE: Presentations from this session are available on the WGA's Wildlife Corridors Web site: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/corridors/index.htm>.

Technical Observations

J.D. Strong of Oklahoma moderated a session aimed at considering existing tools that are available for developing compatible DSSs.

Patrick Crist, NatureServe, said that while different purposes and different users need different tools, the general requirements for a DSS platform are universal, and every state does not need a completely unique tool. Creating information and knowledge from basic data for input into a system requires high end desktop tools, and those desktop tools need to link to online tools for an integrated DSS with analytical capability. There has already been a huge investment in online and desktop DSS that can be leveraged. Some examples of existing tools that Dr. Crist presented include LandScope, Conservation Registry, and VISTA. In closing, Dr. Crist advised the Council to start small and simple, but to design the system to expand in depth and breadth with time.

Chris Friel, ESRI, shared four integrated patterns of GIS implementation that have created successful DSS in numerous natural resource agencies throughout the country. Those being data management, planning and analysis, field operations support, and decision support. He

acknowledged that all WGA states are at different stages of adopting these four patterns so there will be a need for multiple systems that can interact – not one stand-alone system. Relative to the goals of the WGWC, he noted that data management is critical going forward as are database integration issues such as scale of data, data collection and compilation methods, and data standards. He identified tools that provide transparency to the process of creating wildlife maps - a requirement voiced by diverse stakeholders at the meeting. Mr. Friel concluded by encouraging the WGWC to adopt the four patterns as a framework for organizing ongoing and future DSS development efforts.

NOTE: Presentations from this session are available on the WGA's Wildlife Corridors Web site: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/corridors/index.htm>.

Wildlife Council Work Session

The Council held a two-hour work session where they discussed the information that had been presented over the last day. Their conversation focused on identifying next steps for the White Paper and the pilot projects, and coordinating their efforts with other partners.

Draft White Paper

The Council recognized the need to enhance the White Paper with information clarifying what the purpose of a DSS is, and therefore what a DSS is not as a way to appropriately set expectations for how the tools will be developed and utilized. *Kevin Hunting of California agreed to propose some language for the Council's consideration.*

John Emmerich proposed that the Council highlight in the list of information under Step 1 of the White Paper, those data layers that should be considered the foundation of any DSS and that states would commit to including, as a minimum, in their systems. The value of this would be that all state systems would include the same basic information. The downside however is that states may become so focused on those foundational layers that other important data layers could be minimized. Some members felt that a somewhat prioritized list of information would be helpful in garnering support for that data compilation in their state, as they basically work from scratch to develop a DSS. Ultimately the Council agreed to consider a tiered approach for the information layers outlined in Step 1. *Council members from Arizona, California, Montana and Wyoming offered to work together to develop a tiered list of information that will be brought to the full Council for consideration.*

Sharon Kiefer of Idaho requested that restoration habitat be moved to its own category of information under Step 1 and Council members agreed.

The Council also agreed to specific edits in the current draft of the White Paper that will be incorporated into the next version. *Edits were made to the original crucial habitat and important wildlife corridor definitions on page 4, and the category 1 definition of crucial habitat on page 5.*

Additionally, the Council asked WGA staff to edit the introduction to strengthen the connection between the White Paper, the wildlife MOU, and the pilot projects.

The revised White Paper will continue to be a living document. The effectiveness of the definitions and guidance will be tested through the eight proposed wildlife pilots. The White Paper will also be revised in coordination with the federal agencies as envisioned under the MOU.

Pilot Projects

It is anticipated that DOE will make an announcement regarding the pilot funding in early November. The Council decided to continue working together to refine the pilot concepts. Specifically, *the pilot proposals should be enhanced to describe how they will relate to the definitions of crucial habitat in the White Paper, how they will enhance the greater effort of DSS development, and what step in the White Paper guidance process the pilots will address.* Most pilots will be in the data collection stage (Step 1), however some may be able to test the analytical or information delivery steps.

Based on the DOE announcement, WGA staff will develop a revised pilot template to include WGA/state contractual requirements.

MOU Implementation

The Council agreed to *form a State-Federal Implementation Group* for the purpose of collaborating with the federal agencies on future versions of the White Paper and on pilot projects. The group will include the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council, and Federal agency representatives as designated by the Secretaries in accordance with the MOU. WGA staff will begin by drafting a charge for the group that the parties can consider.

The Council also agreed to *write a letter to the signatories of the MOU, with a copy to leadership of the land management agencies highlighting the status of the Council's efforts.* The letter will inform the Secretaries on actions to implement the MOU, particularly the formation of the State-Federal Implementation Group. The letter will also seek their designation of representatives to the Group. This letter will be proposed by the Wildlife Council to be signed by WGA's Chair and Vice-Chair.

WGA staff will follow up with the Department of Defense on their interest in signing a similar MOU.

Council Advisory Group

The Council agreed to *form a standing stakeholder group for the purpose of acting as a sounding board for activities*, and specifically for providing feedback to enhance the White Paper, assisting in developing more details for the decisions delivery step of the DSS, and tracking the pilot projects. WGA staff will begin by drafting a charge and potential make-up for the group that the Council will consider. It will be important to carefully develop the charge, workplan and composition of the group to make sure they have clear direction. Resources necessary to manage and supply the advisory group also need to be considered and raised.

DSS and Science Subgroups

The Council determined that the Science Subgroup has fulfilled their charge by developing definitions and guidance in the White Paper. That Subgroup will be put on hold until they are needed at some future time to advise the Council. *The DSS Subgroup will be reactivated to act as a state technical team*, advising the Council on ways to coordinate pilots and DSS

development among all states. This team would be made up of state GIS experts who can provide technical advice, while the stakeholder advisory group would be more weighted in policy. WGA will notify both groups of these decisions.

Operational Activities

WGA staff will develop an organizational chart for the different groups, showing their roles, to assist the Council in the appropriate composition of each group.

WGA staff will draft a 1-pager about the Council's charge and activities to be used as a communications piece.

Next Meeting

The Council agreed to reserve the second Tuesday of each month, at 2pm MT, for a standing conference call. *The next conference call is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10.*

Bob Broscheid offered to host *the next in-person Council meeting in Phoenix, Arizona January 12 – 13, 2010*. This will be a Council business session and will not include extensive speakers and panels. Meals and social events will also not be organized for public attendees.

Possible agenda topics include:

- Consider revisions to White Paper for purpose of testing in pilots
- Finalize pilot project proposals including work schedule and funding details
- Finalize charges for new advisory committee and implementation group
- Plan for edge-matching workshop sponsored by USFWS
- Update Council workplan for 2010 – 2011
- Sketch out summer and fall Council meetings

ATTACHMENT A: AGENDA

Meeting of the Western Governors' Wildlife Council October 4-6, 2009

Best Western Helena Great Northern Hotel
835 Great Northern Blvd
Helena, MT 59601

Sunday, October 4

6:00 pm – **Registration Open** (Oriental Room, Great Northern Hotel)

7:00 – **Opening Reception and Dinner** (Oriental Room)

Monday, October 5

7:30 am – **Registration Open** (Western Star Room)

8:00 – **Breakfast** – A free continental breakfast is provided for hotel guests. Pastries and coffee will be available in the meeting room.

8:30 – **Welcome, Introductions and Recap of Recent Council Activities**

- Pam Inmann, Western Governors' Association Executive Director
- John Harja (UT), Western Governors' Wildlife Council Chair
- Joe Maurier (MT) Western Governors' Wildlife Council Vice-Chair

9:00 – **Opening Remarks of Montana Governor and WGA Chair Brian Schweitzer**
“Wildlife Corridors in Montana and the West”

9:15 – **Montana's Crucial Areas and Connectivity Assessment Demonstration**

Visual demonstration of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Crucial Areas and Connectivity Assessment followed by question/answer period.

Moderator: Joe Maurier

- T.O. Smith, Bureau Chief, Strategic Planning and Data Services, MFWP
- Janet Hess-Herbert, Bureau Chief, Information Management, MFWP

10:15 - **Break**

10:30 – **Presentation of Wildlife Council Draft White Paper, “Western Regional Wildlife Decision Support System: Definitions and Guidance for State Systems”**

Moderators: John Emmerich (WY) and Holly Michael (OR)

11:00 – **Customer Panel** – Potential users of decision support systems provide feedback on the white paper and demonstration.

- Jack Sahl, Director, Environment and Resource Sustainability, Southern California Edison
- April Johnston, Executive Director, Programs and Policy, American Wildlands
- Paul Matheny, Vice President, Questar Exploration and Production Company
- Danielle Flynn, Wildlife Program Lead, Division of Fish, Wildlife & Plant Conservation, Bureau of Land Management
- Mary Sexton, Director, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

12:30 pm – **Buffet Lunch**

1:30 – **Wildlife Council Presentations of Proposed DSS Pilot Studies**

Council members summarize their Department of Energy pilot proposals and take Council and audience comments/questions.

Moderator: Joanna Prukop (NM)

3:00 - **Break**

3:30 – **Briefing on Key Conservation Issues and Regional DSS Development**

Panel presentations and question/answer period.

Moderator: Bob Broscheid (AZ)

- Rob Ament, Center for Large Landscape Conservation
- Keith Aune, Wildlife Conservation Society
- Monique DiGiorgio, Western Environmental Law Center
- Jeff Parrish, Freedom to Roam

5:00 – **Wrap Up & Concluding Remarks**

5:30 – **Adjourn**

6:30 – **Reception and Dinner**

The Montana Club

24 West Sixth Avenue, Helena

(6:00pm- Registered attendees meet in Great Northern Hotel lobby for bus transportation)

Tuesday, October 6

7:30 am – **Breakfast** – A free continental breakfast is provided for hotel guests. Pastries and coffee will be available in the meeting room.

8:00 – **Reconvene and Review from Day One** (Western Star Room)

8:05 – Coordination with Federal Partners and MOU Implementation

Federal agencies present on their current initiatives related to the Council's workplan.

Moderator: Kim Titus (AK)

- Bruce Beard, Basing Directorate, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Installations and Environment, U.S. Department of Defense
- Chris Iverson, Assistant Director, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants Program, U.S. Forest Service
- Dave Stout, Chief, Division of habitat and Resource Conservation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Shaun McGrath, Deputy Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, The White House

8:50 – Technical Observations – Looking Ahead

Implementation of pilot projects and further development of a DSS regional framework needs to address data and platform compatibility issues. Two experts will speak from their experience tackling these issues.

Moderator: J.D. Strong (OK)

- Patrick Crist, NatureServe
- Chris Friel, ESRI

9:10 – Wildlife Council Public Work Session

- Wildlife Council review white paper and pilot proposals, and determine next steps/action items (*John Harja*)

11:45 – Meeting Recap, Action Items and Schedule Next Council Meeting

12:00 pm – **Adjourn**

ATTACHMENT B: ATTENDEES LIST

First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Company/Organization	State
Gail	Abercrombie	Regulatory Affairs Consultant	Devon Energy	OK
Peter	Aengst	Deputy Director	The Wilderness Society	MT
Rob	Ament	Senior Conservationist	Center for Large Landscape Conservation	MT
Keith	Aune	Senior Conservation Scientist	Wildlife Conservation Society	MT
Josh	Avey	Habitat Branch Chief	AZ Game and Fish	AZ
Carmen	Bailey	Impact Analysis Coordinator	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	UT
Lydia	Bailey	GIS Manager	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Jeff	Barber		The Nature Conservancy - Montana	MT
Betsy	Baur	Rocky Mountain Land Protection Initiative Project Coordinator	The Nature Conservancy	MT
Bruce	Beard		OSD	VA
Daniel	Belin	Project Manager	Walsh / E&E	CO
Bob	Broscheid	Assistant Director	AZ Game and Fish	AZ
Christina	Calabrese	Environmental Manager	Horizon Wind Energy	TX
Sarah	Canepa	Lands Specialist	The Vital Ground Foundation	MT
Lew	Carpenter	Regional Representative	National Wildlife Federation	CO
Paul	Cathcart	Executive Director	Association of Northwest Steelheaders	OR
Scott	Christensen		Greater Yellowstone Coalition	MT
Joel	Clement	Program Officer	Wilburforce Foundation	WA
Frank	Craighead	Director	Craighead Environmental Research Institute	MT
Patrick	Crist	Director, Conservation Planning	NatureServe	CO
Bill	Daigle		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Monique	DiGiorgio	Conservation Strategist	Western Environmental Law Center	CO
Peter	Ditton	Associate State Director	Bureau of Land Management	ID
Amy	Duffy	Managing Member	Department of Defense/Duffy Consulting	AZ
Janet	Ellis	Program Director	Montana Audubon	MT
John	Emmerich	Deputy Director	Wyoming Game and Fish Department	WY
Tom	Ferraro	Office Manager	Ecology & Environment Inc.	UT
Dwight	Fielder	Chief	Division of Fish, Wildlife & Plant Conservation, BLM	DC
Danielle	Flynn	Wildlife Program Lead	Bureau of Land Management	DC
Steve	Forrest	Manager of Restoration Science	World Wildlife Fund US	MT
Tom	France	Director, Northern Rockies and Prairies Office	National Wildlife Federation	MT

Wendy	Francis		Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative	AB
Chris	Friel	Senior Account Executive	ESRI	FL
John	Gale	Regional Representative	National Wildlife Federation	CO
William	Geer	Director-Center for Western Lands	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership	MT
Sterling	Grogan	NM Project Manager	Biophilia Foundation	NM
Jon	Haber	Planner	USDA Forest Service	MT
Theresa	Hanley	DSD-Resources	Bureau of Land Management	MT
John	Harja	Director	Public Lands Policy Coordination Office	UT
Suann	Havener		Bureau of Land Management	NM
Mark	Heckert	BoD	National Wildlife Federation	WA
Jeff	Herbert	Assistant Administrator	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Janet	Hess-Herbert	Information Management Bureau Chief	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Kevin	Hunting		California Department of Fish and Game	CA
Joseph	Icenogle	Director of Environmental Affairs	Fidelity Exploration & Production Co.	CO
Pam	Inmann	Executive Director	Western Governors' Association	CO
Chris	Iverson	Assistant Director	USDA Forest Service, Washington Office	DC
Matt	Jennings		Grasslands Renewable Energy LLC	MT
April	Johnston	Executive Director, Programs and Policy	American Wildlands	MT
Tom	Kaiserski		MT Dept. of Commerce, Energy Promotion & Development Office	MT
Sharon	Kiefer	Assistant Director	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	ID
Michael	Leahy	Rocky Mountain Region Director	Defenders of Wildlife	MT
Darren	Long		Wildlife Conservation Society	MT
Gabe	Lovasz	GIS Analyst	ManTech SRS Technologies/OSD Contract Support	CA
John	Mankowski	Executive Policy Advisor	Office of Governor Chris Gregoire	WA
Paul	Matheny	Vice President - Rockies	Questar Exploration & Production Co.	
Joe	Maurier	Director	Montana Dept of Fish, Wildlife & Parks	
Patricia	Mayne		Concerned Citizen	MT
Colin	McGowan		Gaelectric North America	MT
Shaun	McGrath	Deputy Director, Intergovernmental Affairs	The White House	DC
Katie	Meiklejohn	Conservation Director	American Wildlands	MT
Adam	Messer		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Holly	Michael	Policy and Special Project Coordinator	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	OR
Jennifer	Miller	Program Officer	Wilburforce Foundation	MT
Sterling	Miller	Sr. Wildlife Biologist	National Wildlife Federation	MT
Doug	Miyamoto	NRCS Liaison to WGA	USDA-NRCS	CO

Ken	Morrison		TransCanada	MT
Thomas	Murray	Technical Sales Manager	ESRI	CO
Paul	Orbuch		Orbuch Consulting, LLC	CO
Jim	Owens	Program Officer	Brainerd Foundation	WA
Jeffrey	Parrish	Executive Director	Freedom to Roam	CO
Adam	Petersen		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
John	Pierce	Science and Research Program Manager	WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife	WA
Joanna	Prukop	Cabinet Secretary	NM Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources	NM
David	Pulliam		Nevada Department of Wildlife	NV
Brianna	Randall	Water Policy Director	Clark Fork Coalition	MT
Bob	Ream	Commissioner	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Mark	Reller	Constituent Account Executive	Bonneville Power Administration	OR
Dave	Risley		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Joy	Ritter		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Lara	Ryan	Executive Director	Green River Valley Land Trust	WY
Jack	Sahl	Director, Environment and Resource Sustainability	Southern California Edison	CA
Anne	Schrag		Climate Research Program Officer	MT
Brian	Schweitzer	Governor	State of Montana	MT
Bart	Semcer	Director-Hunter/Angler Heritage Program	Sierra Club	DC
Mary	Sexton	Director	MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation	MT
Paul	Sihler		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
William	Singleton		Singleton Strategies LLC	CO
Mike	Smith	Director, Regulatory Affairs	Questar Exploration & Production Co.	WY
Nathalie	Smith		ESRI	WA
T.O.	Smith	Strategic Planning and Data Services	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Tricia	Stabler		Concerned Citizen	MT
Scott	Story		Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	MT
Dave	Stout	Chief, Habitat Conservation	USDOJ/FWS	VA
J.D.	Strong	Secretary of Environment	Office of the Governor	OK
Kristi	Swisher	TES Program Leader	USDA Forest Service	MT
Carl	Sylvester	Regional Manager	ESRI	CO
Gene	Terland	State Director	BLM	MT
Kim	Titus	Deputy Director	Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game	
Bob	Vahle	NWF Representative	Arizona Wildlife Federation	AZ
Jordan	Vana	Land Program Director	Green River Valley Land Trust	WY
Kendall	Van Dyk	Field Coordinator	Trout Unlimited	MT
William	Van Pelt	WAFWA Grassland Coordinator	Arizona Game and Fish Department	AZ
Jeremy	Vesbach		NM Wildlife Federation	NM

Bethanie	Walder	Executive Director	Wildlands CPR	MT
Ken	Wall	President	Geodata Services, Inc.	MT
Anne	Watkins		Biophilia Foundation	NM
Gregory	Watson	Chief, Office of Landscape Conservation	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	CO
Magill	Weber	Government Relations Associate	The Nature Conservancy	AZ
Madeleine	West	Program Manager	Western Governors' Association	CO
Mark	Winland	Board of Directors, Wyoming Wildlife Federation	National Wildlife Federation	WY
David	Wood	Biologist	Bureau of Land Management	MT