

Western Governors' Wildlife Council Meeting
July 11, 2009

DRAFT Meeting Summary

Action Items
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. WGWC members will name Science Committee representatives for WGA staff to convene group and WGA is proposing Wednesday, July 29 @ 10am for the first conference call of the Science Committee.2. WGA will send out a revised pilot concept paper (for funding proposal to DOE) which will include criteria for the WGWC to use in agreeing to pilots. States should begin thinking about pilot opportunities with other states. In the next month, WGA will schedule a WGWC conference call to hear state ideas on pilots. The objective is to have pilots identified and agreed upon for discussion at the October WGWC meeting.3. WGA staff will add relevant items from the DSS framework text into the table and will refine the document into a 1-pager. WGA is accepting feedback from NGOs and Federal representatives.4. WGA will communicate WGWC meeting outcomes to the DSS subgroup on their next conference call.5. WGA staff will work with Joe Maurier to develop a preliminary agenda for the October Meeting and will circulate it to the Council.6. WGA will schedule a future conference call with the Council to consider advising WGA to send a letter to Congress supporting the Interior appropriations language, and to consider specific NGO requests for engagement and partnering opportunities.
<p>Next Meeting: Please mark your calendars for the next WGWC meeting October 5 – 6 in Helena, MT. <i>We will likely be asking members to fly in on Sunday evening for a Monday AM start time.</i></p>

The WGWC met on July 11 in Newport Beach, CA in conjunction with the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' Summer Meeting. The primary objectives of the meeting were to review interim work products from the DSS subgroup and decide on agenda items and outcomes for the October WGWC meeting.

DSS Subgroup

Council members discussed the work of the DSS subgroup – their proposed workplan and draft DSS framework document – and identified the following important components of a DSS:

- It is a GIS mapping tool, with an analytical component helps support decision-making on a variety of land use issues.
- Each state DSS needs to have compatible baseline data that allows the systems to talk to each other across states, but ultimately every state will have their own analysis and process for using the data to make decisions. Data may be inconsistent (i.e. crucial winter range vs summer range) but should account for

compatible values for the habitat limiting number of wildlife that each state agency is trying to manage for,

- Establishing compatible DSSs provides two major benefits; 1) it will encourage each state to get their GIS data and decision-making analysis in order, and out to the public in a transparent format so that the information can be used for proactive planning, 2) working across states to achieve compatible data and definitions of crucial habitat and corridors will establish valuable cross-state mapping and decision-making information.

The work of the DSS subgroup should be focused on identifying technical issues that prevent information sharing across states and recommending options for overcoming these issues in designing DSSs. The group should also consider the kinds of information that should be in the DSSs based on their knowledge of who the system users will be. States can consider using ESRI or others to create and crunch the once the subgroup has recommended the technical set-up for systems.

The major technical work will occur once the Science Committee determines that the definitions of crucial habitat and wildlife corridors are adequately defined and explained, so that all users have the common understanding of the habitat values represented by these definitions. This will ensure that the technical conversation is informed by the kinds of habitat information that will ultimately be included in the system. Some members thought that the GIS technical effort might spin its wheels if subgroup members don't know what data they are putting together (the Science Committee's charge). The DSS subgroup will be responsible for identifying roadblocks for sharing data across states, and identifying the technology and software needed to share data. While DSSs are being created to incorporate only certain datasets pertaining to crucial habitat and corridors, the technical platform should be able to accommodate any data that the state agencies wish to provide.

Action Items:

- WGA communicate this change to the DSS subgroup on Friday, July 17 and note that some subgroup members may be appointed to the Science Committee to discuss definitions and/or tasked to develop and work on multi-state pilots.
- Subgroup may utilize technical consultant to help pull together existing data to develop platform design options.

Pilot Projects

The WGWC will be proposing a number of pilot projects for the purpose of beginning on the ground work to make progress on a number of issues associated with establishing coordinated DSSs. The pilot effort will also be submitted to DOE in response to their Funding Opportunity Request that includes seed money to states for establishing DSSs.

The pilots will be for groupings of states dealing with issues that may include:

- States using different methods for identifying connectivity landscapes – e.g. focal species or landscape integrity
- Dataset quality differing from state-to-state. “Whose job would it be” to integrate datasets towards comparable quality of information?

- Common definitions of 'crucial habitat' can be difficult to agree on and varies between state plans.
- What types of synthesis can be done with the data from different approaches, different levels of quality? Will these analyses meet each state's needs?

Pilots can be species specific, basin specific, or address Federal land management interactions. And each proposal should determine Fed and NGO participation in pilots. One meeting participant noted that NGOs could possibly help with integrating local governments, local grass-roots organizations and land owners into the pilots.

Council members discussed some possible pilot opportunities, including the following:

- Oregon and Washington joint proposal
- Alaska: sharing information with Fed land managers & proprietary information from industry
- New Mexico & Colorado: oil & gas development that cross state borders
- Advancing the science in connectivity and climate change

Action Items:

- WGA will send out a revised pilot concept (for funding proposal to DOE) along with criteria for the WGWC to use in ultimately selecting pilots. States should think about pilot opportunities with other state that can achieve these criteria in 6 months/1 year (maximum). Participation from NGOS and Feds should be considered. DOD and DOT are interested in this process as well, so some pilots might want to focus on military lands or transportation in order to leverage DOE funding.
- In the next month, WGA will schedule a WGWC conference call to hear state ideas on pilots. The objective is to have pilots identified and agreed upon for discussion at the October WGWC meeting.

Compatible/Consistent Crucial Habitat and Corridors Definitions

WGWC will establish a Science Committee, who will work simultaneously with the pilot efforts, to develop compatible definitions for crucial habitat and wildlife corridors in each state. Membership should include biologists and program managers. Biologists will make recommendation for definitions, but policy people (WGWC members and others) may also participate.

Action Items:

- WGWC members will name Science Committee representatives for WGA staff to convene.
- WGA is proposing **Wednesday, July 29 @ 10am** for the first conference call of the Science Committee.
- Once convened, state people will consider an in-person meeting prior to October meeting and how best to include Fed/NGO/industry representation.
- The Science Committee will try to make significant progress on definitions this summer, in order to have a valuable progress report for the October meeting.

DSS framework

The paper developed by the subgroup can be used to create a 1-pager to communicate to other state agencies and Feds/NGOs/others what a DSS is and the product the WGWC is developing. The Council asked Federal agencies and NGOs at the meeting to send their comments on the framework draft.

Action Items:

- WGA staff will add relevant items from text into the table and will refine document to a 1-pager.
- WGWC members will be asked to read the 1-pager and provide feedback via e-mail. On a future conference call before the October meeting Council members will work to finalize the paper, as needed.

Gary Taylor, AFWA, provided an update on current legislation, including the climate adaptation language in the climate bill, language in the American Natural Heritage Act and money for the states to address wildlife and climate adaptation that is currently listed in the appropriations legislation for the Department of Interior.

Action Items:

- On a future conference call the WGWC will consider advising WGA to send a letter to Congress supporting the Interior appropriations language.

NGO Presentations

Keith Aune, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), presented on the WCS Best Practices work to define and understand wildlife corridors. The products of this group will be literature review, a paper on emerging issues, and a guideline and evaluation toolbox. Drafts of these products will be available for WGWC review in the fall. The Best Sciences group is also planning to host a workshop in winter 2010 to discuss how connectivity science can be integrated into policy. Keith also discussed WCS's current grant cycle, and highlighted that the grants are now open to state wildlife agencies for direct application. Keith promised to circulate any future grant opportunity announcements to the WGWC.

Monique DiGiorgio, Western Environmental Law Center, presented a proposal from a number of NGOs on partnering opportunities with the WGWC. Specific partnership opportunities included legislative activities (letters of support for America's Wildlife Heritage Act and Section 481 of the climate bill); administrative opportunities (supporting integrating corridors and crucial habitat into federal land management agency plans); and specific partnering with states (includes helping to test the effectiveness of DSSs in pilot corridors, vocal support for federal funding, and stakeholder cooperation). Monique also presented a number of examples of specific corridor research that is already under way and that the WGWC could engage in. These included:

- HD Mountains Mule Deer Corridor - Colorado
- Paunsaugunt-Kaibab Mule Deer Corridor-Utah/AZ
- Desert Wildlife Refuge, Bighorn Sheep – Nevada
- Mojave Desert Region – Nevada/California
- Anderson Mesa – pronghorn and migratory birds – Arizona
- Snoqualmie Pass, Washington – forest carnivores and ungulates

- Path of the Pronghorn – Wyoming
- Rincon-Santa Rita/Whetstone Mts Jaguar Linkage - AZ

Final opportunities for partnership were listed that related to the Transportation reauthorization bill, the farm bill, and an offer to present the NRDC Google Map tool to the WGWC.

Rick Ridgeway, Freedom to Roam, presented on the latest activities of the FTR initiative and offered an opportunity for the Council to coordinate with FTR, specifically by naming a representative to sit on the Board of Directors.

Action Items:

- On a future conference call Council members will consider whether/how they would like to take action on the invitation to participate on the FTR Board and NGO legislation priorities and partnership opportunities that were presented.

WREZ Update

The WREZ Phase 1 report was approved by the Governors at their June Annual Meeting. Thank you to those Council members who worked on getting the WREZ hubs and associated footnote language finalized within your state. The Phase 1 report is available on-line at: <http://www.westgov.org/wga/publicat/WREZ09.pdf>. The wildlife maps prepared by the WGWC have been posted on the Council's website, and a final report of the mapping process, prepared by NatureServe, will also be posted on the site as background material.

WGA is currently working with the Governors and other stakeholders to determine if future work on the hubs is required (i.e. refining to actual renewable energy zones). If there is future work on the hubs WGA will inquire with the Council on how best to engage them. Transmission planning efforts are still moving along, and WGA is scoping out more detailed activities for the transmission planning and siting phases of the WREZ. The Council will likely be given the opportunity to input into those future phases once they are more substantively fleshed out.

October Meeting

Joe Maurier spoke to Montana's desire to host the next meeting of the Council October 5 – 6 in Helena. Council members expressed interest in coming to Helena on Sunday night for a Monday morning field trip before the meeting commences. They agreed to stay through Tuesday afternoon to complete the Council meeting and to engage Federal government and NGOs in the meeting. Some preliminary agenda items may include:

- Public feedback on pilot opportunities and the DSS framework
- A report from the Science committee on their progress on definitions of crucial habitat and corridors.
- Opportunities for Federal agency and NGO engagement

Governor Schweitzer is scheduled to attend the meeting.

Action Items:

WGA staff work with the Montana Council member to develop a preliminary agenda for circulation within the Council.

Attachment A: Meeting Participants

WGWC Members

Utah - Chair

John Harja, Director
Public Lands Policy Coordination Office
Office of the Governor

Montana – Vice-Chair

Joe Maurier, Director
Montana Dept of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Alaska

Kim Titus, Deputy Director
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Arizona

Bob Broscheid, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division

Colorado

Jeff ver Steeg, Assistant Director
Colorado Division of Wildlife

Idaho

Virgil Moore, Deputy Director
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

New Mexico

Joanna Prukop, Cabinet Secretary (*via phone*)
New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources

North Dakota

Terry Steinwand, Director
North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Oregon

Holly Michael
Conservation Strategy Leader, Office of the Director
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

South Dakota

Tony Leif, Wildlife Division Director
South Dakota Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington

John Mankowski, Policy Advisor, Natural Resources
Governor's Office

Wyoming

John Emmerich, Deputy Director
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Observers

Keith Aune, Wildlife Conservation Society
Josh Avey, AZ Game & Fish Department
E. Lynn Burkett, BLM
Rick Cables, USFS
Gene DeGayner, USFS
Monique DiGiorgio, Western Environmental Law Center
Danielle Flynn, BLM
R.J. Kirkpatrick, NM Game and Fish Department
Elaine Leslie, National Park Service
Bart Semcer, Sierra Club
Anne Zimmerman, USFS

WGA

Paul Orbuch
Madeleine West

Attachment B: Meeting Agenda

**Western Governors' Wildlife Council Meeting
Hyatt Regency Newport Beach
Ocean Room
July 10-11, 2009**

AGENDA

Friday, July 10 – Dinner at the Rusty Pelican

6:45 pm Meet in hotel lobby to coordinate taxis/cars
7:00-9:00 Wildlife Council Private Dinner – Hosted by WGA
 (Council members or their designees only)

Saturday, July 11 – Hyatt Regency Ocean Room

7:30 am Breakfast Available

8:00 *Convene Wildlife Council Meeting* – John Harja (UT), Chair
 Introductions and Agenda Recap
 (Meeting Open to the Public)

8:15 *Decision Support System Subgroup Report* – Holly Michael & John Harja
 (and any additional DSS Subgroup members who are present) Members
 receive status Update and Review Work Products. Provide guidance on
 issues raised by subgroup in their preliminary conversations. Approve
 workplan, and provide feedback on draft DSS framework and comparative
 matrix.

9:45 *Discussion on WGA/DOI/USDA/DOE MOU and Next Steps*
 Federal representatives invited to participate in person or via phone.
 Achieve agreement on desired goal of Fed/state cooperation and discuss
 funding opportunities. Additionally, WGWC review and comment on
 draft proposal for DOE FOA.

10: 30 *Congressional Update and Council Action Items*– Gary Taylor (AFWA)

10:45 Break

10:55 *NGO Presentations (5 minutes each)*
 Best Sciences Workshop & Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund – Keith
 Aune (Wildlife Conservation Society)
 Partners in Wildlife Conservation – Monique DiGiorgio (Western
 Environmental Law Center)
 Freedom to Roam – Rick Ridgeway (Patagonia) *via phone*

- 11:15 *October Meeting Discussion: Schedule & Agenda Ideas* – Joe Maurier (MT)
- 11:30 *Western Renewable Energy Zones Update* – Madeleine West (WGA)
- 11:35 *Sage Grouse Partnership Update* – John Emmerich (WY)
- 11:45 Public Comment
- 12:00 pm Adjourn Meeting