

Western Governors' Wildlife Council Summer Business Meeting

June 13-14, 2013

Curtis Hotel

1405 Curtis St. · Denver, CO · (303) 571-0300

Meeting Objectives:

- Consider and approve processes/products from Phase III Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) development, including crucial habitat roll up methodology, to prepare for release of Western Governors' CHAT in December 2013.
- Consider next steps and workplan for Wildlife Council pending WGA policy resolutions.
- Consider and approve White Paper addendum integrating Phase II outcomes.
- Review progress on Western Governors' Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) and next steps, including roll out of beta version of the viewer for state and stakeholder review.
- Identify steps necessary to ensure long-term funding and hosting of CHAT.
- Continue to coordinate with federal initiatives and with stakeholders.

Thursday, June 13

Private Wildlife Council Meeting at WGA offices, 1600 Broadway, 5th floor conference room

11:00 a.m.	<p>Agenda Review and Update on Congressional Testimony and Fundraising <i>Kevin Hunting, WGWC Vice-Chair</i></p> <p>WGA staff presented the status of WGA's efforts to seek language in the FY 14 Interior Appropriations measure that would direct federal agencies to use state fish and wildlife information and analyses. Language was requested in the House by four individual members: Reps. Gosar (AZ), Herrera Beutler (WA), Lummis (WY) and Daines (MT). In the Senate, Senator Tester (MT) included it in his request list. But even among those that did not request the language, there appears a willingness to support it during future deliberations. The goal now is to get it included during mark-up, the timing of which remains uncertain.</p>
11:15	<p>Western Governors' CHAT Development - Phase III Products and Processes</p> <p>Audrey Hatch, WGA Technical Consultant, Ryan Nosek, AZ, Chet Van Dellen, NV, Arty Rodriquez, OR made presentations to the Council on the outcomes of Phase III regional workgroup products and processes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial Habitat Rollup Approach • Species of Concern • Landscape Integrity

	<p>The Council also was presented with memoranda from staff including the Summary of Steps/Timeline to Produce Crucial Habitat Layer Public Draft and the Similarities and Difference Memorandum that outlined the extent of state collaboration and customization.</p> <p>The Council discussed and had questions of staff regarding the presentations and products presented.</p>
12:45 p.m.	<p>Review and Approval of Products, Processes, and Papers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase III Products and Processes for Public CHAT Development • Policy White Paper Update • Western Governors’ CHAT Consistencies and Differences Memo <p>The Council approved all the recommendations of the CHAT Leads for the products and processes developed through the regional workgroups. The Council agreed that the Crucial Habitat Rollup Approaches could be further assessed by individual states with stakeholders if the state desired prior to the public launch of the Western Governors' CHAT. States would also consider iterative approaches to improving their Crucial Habitat Rollup Approaches as public feedback is received over time on state and regional CHATs. The Council emphasized the importance of a focus on the CHAT customer focus, encouraging Leads to maintain that focus over time so that the tools continue to be valued by the public. Public feedback and education are vital to seeking to continually improve and make useful the CHAT tools.</p> <p>The White Paper was reviewed by the Council and they will get another chance to review and then approve the document for public release on their July conference call. The Council agreed to postpone the decision until after the WGA Annual Meeting is concluded and the potential wildlife policy resolution is finalized and voted on by the Governors.</p> <p>The Consistencies and Differences Memorandum was approved by the Council for internal use only. It should not be made publically available, but can be drawn on by the Council and CHAT leads in responding to public inquiries.</p> <p>The Council also agreed to refer to the one-page timeline document setting forth the steps and deadlines to complete the public crucial habitat layer over the rest of the 2013 and to ensure their CHAT leads were also able to adhere to the deadlines. This document needs to be electronically distributed to the Council and the CHAT leads.</p>
2:15	<p>Western Governors’ CHAT Preview, Timeline and Action Items <i>Jeff Hamerlinck, Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center (WYGIS) and</i></p>

	<p><i>Michael Turner, AppGeo</i></p> <p>A visual preview of the Western Governors' CHAT was presented by Jeff and Michael. The Council was impressed with the wire frame/draft pages presented and welcomed the opportunity to contribute high quality photographs of examples of each state's wildlife habitat to display on the front page of the Western Governors' CHAT. The Council asked the CHAT leads to provide a recommended list of region-wide data sets that would serve as ancillary/background layers on the Western Governors' CHAT to help provide context and additional information to public users.</p> <p>After reviewing a slide from App Geo that depicted the vastly different approaches each state wanted to take with respect to underlying data visualization and display, the Council agreed each member would review and revisit its initial answers to the survey on these topics and discuss this matter on the July Council conference call.</p> <p>Council members from Oregon, Nevada and New Mexico reported that they were aiming to have their State CHATs online in December 2013 to correspond with the release of the Western Governors' CHAT.</p>
3:15	<p>Long-Term Support for Western Governors' CHAT & State CHATs: Next Steps <i>Gregg Seroveen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Audrey Hatch, WGA</i></p> <p>Gregg and Audrey reported on the options for individual states and the Council as a whole to develop partnerships that would help to sustain CHATs from a data and financial perspective over the long-term.</p> <p>On the individual state level, they discussed the opportunity to strengthen relationships, formally and informally with the Natural Heritage Programs in each state given the species data development overlap that exists. Based on the presentation at the December 2012 Phoenix Council meeting from Montana on its formal agreement with its Heritage Program, a number of states reported they were working to strengthen this relationship. At present all states are in varying degrees of relationship with their Heritage programs.</p> <p>At the regional level, NatureServe may be interested in some type of relationship with the Council that could benefit both the state and Western Governors' CHAT and we heard from Mary Klein in Phoenix. The Council was interested in this opportunity but agreed with the recommendation from Audrey and Gregg to wait to hear from NatureServe on any next steps.</p> <p>Next, Gregg and Audrey reviewed a paper they developed with assistance from USFS regional staff about how a closer relationship with USGS could be of</p>

	<p>substantial benefit to states and USGS given the large amount of overlap between our data development and maintenance needs. The Council agreed that a closer relationship with USGS could be helpful and asked staff to share the draft paper and use it as a starting point for discussions with DOI leadership in DC.</p> <p>BLM interest in renewing its IM regarding use of state data and DOI interest in renewing the MOU were also discussed as part of the long-term CHAT support topic. There was strong interest from the Council in pursuing both of these renewals.</p> <p>Finally, the Council agreed to explore a business model for supporting CHAT in the long term. Next steps TBD.</p>
4:15	<p>WGA Resolutions and Council Workplan: Next Steps (Holly comments summarized here)</p> <p>A WGA policy resolution stating the Governors’ priorities on wildlife conservation was still under review at the time of the meeting. It is now available on WGA’s website.</p> <p>The Council reviewed a draft workplan to guide their work for June 2013-December 2014. The workplan emphasizes the development of CHAT and the outreach surrounding/after its public launch. Holly Propst, Policy Director of WGA, joined for the discussion, emphasizing the importance of the Wildlife Council as technical experts and asking the Council to engage with WGA Staff Advisory Council (SAC) members in Governors’ offices.</p> <p>The Council made one addition to the Workplan, asking to make sure the WGWC is connected with and able to inform/be informed by other WGA affiliates in the Energy, Water, and Forest Health issue areas that are also in WGA’s portfolio.</p> <p>The Council deferred approval of the workplan until after WGA resolution was passed, and agreed to vote on the issue during their July call.</p>
5:00	<p>Prep for Public Meeting and Sessions with Federal Representatives and Stakeholders</p> <p>The Council reviewed items pending with the federal family and the Stakeholder Advisory Group including interest from DOI in renewing the MOU between WGA and the three federal agencies given its expiration this month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM - Updating/extending Instructional Memorandum and highlighting successes. Future efforts to divide labor on data development and modeling.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FWS - LCC coordination, data integration • USFS - Creating forest service policy that requires use of state wildlife data in forest planning processes as per Deputy Chief's letter. • SAG items
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Friday, June 14:

Public Session at the Curtis Hotel

8:00	<p>Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review <i>James Ogsbury, WGA Executive Director and Kevin Hunting, WGWC Vice-Chair</i></p>
8:20	<p>Western Governors' CHAT and Mapping Tools in Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHAT Overview Prezi <i>Gregg Servheen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game</i> • Utah Sage Grouse Conservation Plan <i>Carmen Bailey, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources</i>
9:00	<p>Crucial Habitat Data Development & Policy White Paper Revision</p> <p>Audrey Hatch, WGA Technical Consultant, Chet VanDellen, NV, and Arty Rodriquez, OR made presentations to the Council on the outcomes of Phase III regional workgroup products and processes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial Habitat Rollup Approach • Species of Concern • Landscape Integrity <p>State technical leads and the Wildlife Council reviewed these final region wide products and crucial habitat roll up approaches that are the foundation for the Western Governors' CHAT viewer premiering in December. The Wildlife Council also previewed its updated White Paper that will describe and incorporate these new products and processes. The White Paper will be posted on-line soon after the Wildlife Council meeting.</p>
10:00	<p>Western Governors' CHAT Preview and Public Review <i>Gary Vecellio, Idaho Fish and Game, and Kate Hickey, Applied Geographics</i></p> <p>A visual preview of the Western Governors' CHAT was presented by Gary and Kate, who was on a conference line from Applied Geographics' offices in Boston, MA. Wire frame/draft pages were presented. The states will have the opportunity to contribute high quality photographs of examples of each state's wildlife habitat to display on the front page of the Western Governors' CHAT. The Council is still deciding on ancillary datasets to include and is considering how much underlying data will be viewable and downloadable.</p>

	<p>Council members from Oregon, Nevada and New Mexico reported that they were aiming to have their State CHATs online in December 2013 to correspond with the release of the Western Governors' CHAT.</p>
10:30	<p>Long-Term CHAT Support <i>Gregg Servheen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Audrey Hatch, WGA</i></p> <p>Gregg outlined how the Council is looking to support the CHATs over the long term. They are looking within individual states to strengthen relationships with their Natural Heritage Programs as a means of making data development and maintenance more efficient and effective. They have been looking regionally at NatureServe and federal agency partnerships to help support the CHATs. Ultimately, it may be necessary for the Council to explore how to use a business model to support CHATs into the future.</p>
11:00	<p>Federal Partners Roundtable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from DOI, BLM, FWS and USFS joined the Wildlife Council for a discussion of next steps to better integrate state wildlife data into federal decision making and other timely topics. Representatives joining the Council were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Michael Bean - Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, DOI ○ Greg Watson - Chief, Office of Landscape Conservation, US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 6 ○ Frank Quamen - Wildlife Biologist, BLM National Operations Center ○ John A. Sinclair - Assistant National Wildlife Program Leader, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants, USDA Forest Service <p>Michael Bean stated he was looking forward to the completion of the Western Governors' CHAT and has been impressed with the work so far. He pointed out that the Lesser Prairie Chicken CHAT was used in the Range-wide Conservation Plan for the Lesser Prairie Chicken, produced by WAFWA and the Lesser Prairie Chicken Interstate Working Group. CHATs also align themselves nicely with a number of other DOI priorities including:</p> <p>a) Energy and transmission development planning b) Regional mitigation analysis; for example solar energy zones in Nevada are looking beyond project boundaries to designate mitigation opportunities. Counselor Bean anticipates projects in the future can use CHAT to help identify areas with mitigation opportunities well outside project boundaries to seek more rapid approvals for development. BLM will be putting out policy on regional mitigation and CHATS will be referenced as a source for mitigation information. DOI is also hosting a regional mitigation conference in DC in late June.</p>

- c) Sage grouse conservation
- d) DOI strategy regarding climate adaptation
- e) Can help states and federal agencies make due in an era of budget tightening

Finally, Counselor Bean stated DOI's interest in renewing the MOU with WGA that is expiring this month. The focus could be changed from coordination of data as in the original version to how to maintain CHATs and how federal agencies can continue use and help to improve CHATs.

Greg Watson, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), stated that Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) recognize the strong utility of CHAT data. Five LCCs have already provided support to a number of state CHAT efforts.

WGA is a partner in a pending national LCC grant request to help integrate CHAT data with LCC needs through LC Map. A decision on that grant request should be made in the next two-three weeks.

Mr. Watson believes there is a promising opportunity for FWS to use CHAT in land acquisition assessments that make use of land and water conservation fund purchases. In addition, CHAT can assist in evaluating efficacy of the surrogate species initiative that FWS is developing. CHAT can also inform regulatory undertaking by helping complement and inform FWS decision making.

Regarding a question about LC Map, Mr. Watson stated that LC Map does not hold and store data; rather, it's a portal to other sources of data. Accordingly, LC Map should not raise proprietary data issues. LC Map is already available and can address other data sources like fire/invasive species/climate, etc.

Frank Quamen, BLM, described how BLM policy comes from manuals and instructional memorandum. The BLM IM regarding the use of state wildlife data expires in August 2012 and BLM plans to renew the document. If WGA would like to provide any input on the renewal, it should do so as soon as possible. BLM is producing a regional mitigation guide and CHAT will be included as a reference in the guide. A wildlife manual and a field guide on landscape assessments are also going to include CHAT references.

State involvement in the development of Rapid Ecological Assessments has been going well. BLM's assistance agreement with WGA has distributed \$400,000 to date and BLM is pleased with state wildlife agency participation so far. More resources may be available for states to participate so if states have any feedback on this process and how REAs are being implemented or followed up on, please let WGA and BLM know so they can address it.

	<p>BLM has found that base data layer development for REAs is a much more efficient process when federal agencies and states collaborate by identifying core layers, dividing labor, and collectively performing assessments. In the future, Mr. Quamen sees the potential for BLM webinar/workshops on CHAT to help integrate this tool further into BLM's work.</p> <p>The Council asked Mr. Quamen about the mitigation guidelines that are scheduled for release soon and how they would be applied to projects already under development or completed. Mr. Quamen was not sure how the policy deals with grandfathering and status of projects already underway.</p> <p>Regarding a question about the value of state data, Mr. Quamen stated that for management plan development, BLM uses the best data available and that state data certainly qualifies. However, it is not the only data source. BLM policy documents are intended to guide the BLM staff that as they make decisions. State data sources are referenced directly as a source to assist in making decisions.</p> <p>John Sinclair with the U.S. Forest Service referred to the Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon's letter of December 2012 whereby she urges regional foresters to use state CHAT data as forest plans are revised under USFS's new planning rule. Regulations for the new planning rule are being finalized and a FACA is helping to review.</p> <p>Mr. Sinclair provided a schedule of Forest Plan revisions. Forests are seeking state data even where there is not CHAT data on line yet. Planning rule calls for partners to be brought in early with their data.</p> <p>Forest Service formalizes its policies through its manual and handbooks. To formalize the USFS use of state CHATs, those documents would need to list state CHATs as a data source. From the USFS perspective, the December 2012 letter accomplishes the same purpose at the present time.</p> <p>The planning rule FACA could be an avenue for more formal recognition of CHATs through the state agency representative from Michigan that is on the committee. The FACA will meet again at end of June. Any eventual changes to Forest Service regulations would have to be national in scope so language cannot be western-states specific.</p>
12:00 p.m.	<i>Lunch Available</i>
12:15	<p>Working Lunch: American Wind Wildlife Institute <i>Taber Allison, Director of Research and Evaluation, AWWI</i></p>

	<p>Mr. Allison made a presentation on the development and use of AWWI's wind-wildlife assessment tools. AWWI is a unique collaboration of wind industry, non-profit, and state agency leaders, joined in a shared mission: To facilitate timely and responsible development of wind energy while protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Council was impressed with the presentation and a number of Council members saw an opportunity to collaborate more closely with AWWI on the state level and they agreed to follow up with him directly to explore next steps.</p>
1:00	<p>Stakeholder Roundtable</p> <p>Representatives of the Council's Stakeholder Advisory Group discussed next steps for the SAG with WGWC representatives. Members expressed interest in becoming more active in reviewing the user interface to be sure that it meets needs, according to their industry/NGO perspective. Additionally, SAG members expressed interest in helping to increase awareness about CHAT in their communities.</p>