

WREZ Environment & Lands Work Group
Conference Call June 20, 2008
Next Steps

Call Participants

Pam Eaton, TWS	Kate Winthrop, BLM
Arthur Haubenstock, BrightSource	Carl Zichella, Sierra Club
Shay LaBray, PacifiCorp	
Julia Levin, Audubon	Shawn McGrath, WGA
Joseph Merrill, CEC	Madeleine West, WGA
Brian Rutledge, WY Audubon	Abby Arnold, Kearns & West
Brian Weber PacifiCorp	Will Singleton, Singleton Strategies

Overview

On the call members and WGA staff discussed progress on the workplan, Work Group (WG) timing, and coordination between this project the Wildlife Corridors Initiative.

Shaun McGrath noted that while he will be leading the discussions on wildlife issues for WGA and Madeleine will be leading discussions on non-development areas relating to land-use and other issues within the purview of the WG. If properly organized, the two conversations should be able to move in parallel as the land use discussions may not need the full input from states that the wildlife issues will be receiving.

Next Steps

Task	Who	When
Revise workplan to include regulatory screen steps	Brian Weber	By June 24
Circulate Pam's list of initial regulatory screens (add NREL exclusion screens if possible)	Pam & WGA staff	By June 27
Schedule conf call briefing from NREL on exclusion list	WGA staff	July 10 conf call
Discuss possible WG representatives from Can & Mexico – raise membership question with TC	WGA staff & WG co-chairs	Ongoing
Work with WG co-chairs to add wildlife steps and timeline into workplan	Shaun McGrath	After July 2
Determine appropriate state agency representation on WG (in additional to convening group of 11?)	Shaun McGrath & WGA staff	After July 2
Provide briefing on Wildlife Corridors recommendations	Shaun McGrath & WGA staff	After July 2
Convene 1 st meeting of state wildlife agencies	Shaun McGrath & WGA staff	July 12

Wildlife Corridors Summary, Coordination & Work Plan Discussion

Shaun and Will Singleton provided a brief summary of the status of the Wildlife Corridors project, the objective of which is to identify wildlife corridors and crucial habitats and develop policy recommendations for protecting those areas. Shaun noted that there were six working groups in the project; two most significant to WREZ are the Energy Work Group and the Science Committee. The Energy WG has prepared recommendations for considering wildlife values when considering energy development and transmission. The Science Committee is determining how to create a mapping effort for wildlife corridors and crucial habitat in the West. Currently, WGA is waiting for the Governors to either adopt or provide direction on the Wildlife Corridors report at the Annual Meeting June 28 – July 1. Their direction will let WGA know how to implement the Wildlife Corridors recommendations – the intent being that the WREZ Environment & Lands WG serve as the avenue for implementation of the Wildlife Corridors recommendations.

Wildlife Corridors has proposed a “decision support system” which is a GIS mapping tool that will be developed (upon approval of the Governors) to achieve standardization, to the best degree possible, of data on wildlife corridors and crucial habitat across states and on a regional basis. The decision support system is being created to inform decision-makers about the location of sensitive areas. The WREZ project offers Wildlife Corridors an opportunity to develop such a system by convening representatives from the 11 states to discuss, on a regional scale, the species that are potentially impacted by renewable energy development.

Assuming the Governors adopt the Wildlife Corridors recommendations, WGA envisions the following next steps for discussion of wildlife issues in the Environment & Lands WG:

1. Convene state wildlife agencies in 11 states with WGA staff – meeting objective will be to brief agencies on the WREZ process, achieve their buy-in in using them to drive the wildlife identification process.
2. Hold a second meeting for state agencies and the Environment & Lands WG to discuss WG work plan in depth with regard to the identification of wildlife and sensitive areas.
3. Outreach to individual states – hold a public process to get feedback on what WG has identified as sensitive wildlife areas.
4. Begin policy discussion – examine crucial wildlife habitat zones and have WG determine what actions to take in those areas (avoid development, minimize or mitigate).

Shaun will work to plug in the above steps with approximate deadlines into the WG work plan. The first meeting with state wildlife agencies could possibly take place mid – late July.

Work Plan Discussion - Regulatory Screens

WG members then discussed how to move forward with land use issues and non-development areas outside of the wildlife process Shaun outlined. Pam Eaton suggested that the group pursue developing a list of initial exclusion areas (the “initial non-development areas”) by August 15 to allow NREL to map “candidate study areas” with criteria from the ZITA WG by September 1. The WG could begin with a list of areas that are Federal non-development areas and other areas where any development, or specifically generation development, is legally prohibited. Starting with that list, WG members would have a meeting to try to reach consensus on the list. Any “gray” areas that the group cannot reach consensus on for the initial exclusion areas will be deferred for further discussion at a later stage in the process.

Pam is developing a first-draft of the initial exclusion area list for discussion – this list contains regulatory screens of areas that are already protected by law. NREL probably has data on many of these regulatory screens, but another early step is to get the list of screens NREL has in their base maps. WG members agreed to the following process for identifying initial non-development areas:

1. Circulate Pam’s list of regulatory screens (include NREL screens)
2. NREL present to WG on screens and discuss consistency of data in the region
3. WG meeting to discuss regulatory screens and aim for consensus on list of initial non-development areas (by August 15).
4. Decide how to move forward: explore consistency of existing data OR discuss additional, more controversial filters to apply to the candidate study zones.

The group recognized that coordination with the other WREZ WGs is essential in determining the timing of these steps. For example, information on zones from the ZITA WG (and Black & Veatch consultants) would be helpful so that the Environment & Lands WG does not debate areas that aren’t even under REZ consideration because they do not meet a certain level of resource criteria. Additionally, at some point the group will need to determine how to move forward – whether going forward with imperfect data or deciding to gather more data as a way to move forward.

WG members raised a couple of questions during this discussion that WGA staff and/or the Technical Committee will need to address.

- Is the end product for Phase I a one-shot REZ identification or will there be a process for regular updates of the areas?
- Can the regulatory screens be discussed without direct input from state agencies? Will the state agencies want to provide the data on what their regulatory screens are?

Brian Weber volunteered to edit the draft workplan based on the conversation on the process for identifying initial non-development areas. He will send that out to the WG by Tuesday, June 24.

Work Group Membership

The group raised concerns about engaging representatives from the Canadian provinces and Baja California, Mexico. While members agreed that those areas should be

represented since they are within the purview of the group, they also worried about finding appropriate representation. Specifically, the Environmental NGO community might be more challenging to engage in Canada and Mexico. The WG Chairs will raise the question of representation to WGA staff and the Technical Committee, and WGA staff will begin soliciting suggestions for representation from those areas.

WGA staff (Shaun) will advise on how state wildlife agencies would like to be represented in the WG. Should all 11 states be represented on the WG? Just some representing the entire state agency group?

Nada Culver will represent TWS on the WG while Pam is on vacation, although Carl will still serve as the WG co-chair in her place.

WG members continued to discuss how to be inclusive to interested parties while still keeping the WG a manageable size. The WG chairs will discuss with the Technical Committee how to manage the size of the group.

Next Call

Thursday, July 10, 2 – 4pm MDT (1pm PDT, 3pm CDT, 4pm EDT)