

E&L/STG Meeting
December 10 – 11, 2008
Action items and Next Steps

What	Who	When	Status
Send additional comments on Data Request and recipient list to WGA	E&L/STG members	Noon 12/12	Done
Revise Data Request, recipient list, exclusion and avoidance lists, categorization strawman, and schedule based on meeting discussion – and send to WGWC (cc E&L/STG)	WGA staff	12/12	Done
Send out WGWC-approved Data Request to E&L/STG/WGWC and other targeted recipients	WGA staff	12/16	Done
Send final comments on exclusion and avoidance lists to WGA	E&L/STG members	1 /2	
Send edits and enhancements to categorization strawman to WGA	E&L/STG members, specifically volunteers identified on strawman draft	1 /2	
Conference call to finalize recommendations on exclusion and avoidance lists, and revise categorization strawman for WREZ TC review	E&L/STG	1/6 @ 10am MST	

Next Joint E&L/STG conference call: Tuesday, January 6, 10-11am MST

Call-in number: 800-704-9804; Participant code: 263356#

Discussion Items – Data Request

E&L and STG members spent the first afternoon revising the wildlife data request and discussing intended recipients. Their objective was to send a revised version of the data request to the Western Governors' Wildlife Council (WGWC) for their final review and approval. Key discussion items from E&L and STG members included the following:

- Adding the section on Ecosystems of Concern back in, under "Other High Conservation Value Areas" is important because the information from that section might not be included in other parts of the data request. And states may have additional data that is not covered simply by data from State Wildlife Action Plans
- If there is going to be an attempt to identify "more preferred" areas for development then data on areas of low conservation value should be requested.
- Include a section allowing states to list current data gaps that directly apply to the WREZ project.
- Clarification that NatureServe/WGA will collect wildlife data from British Columbia and Alberta as well as the 11 states in WREZ.

- State-wide data should be solicited, however if it is easier for states to limit their data responses to within the Candidate Study Areas they may.
- Members generated a targeted list of entities to send the data request to. In generating this list members agreed to including the following:
 - WGWC, STG and E&L members who may distribute it among their networks
 - Other state agencies/organizations
 - Federal agencies
 - NGOs who have already submitted data during the E&L public comment period
 - Additional NGOs
 - Universities
 - Industry groups
- Members also recommended that data responses be sent directly to NatureServe, with a cc to the relevant state agency representative. Then NatureServe would provide a table of the data they have received for states to review. States could also ask to review all or some of the data submitted before NatureServe begins their analysis.
- STG members are responsible for coordinating the request among all relevant agencies in their state.
- Quality Assurance/Quality Control on data from outside states will be performed by NatureServe and the state agencies, with input from E&L.

Outcomes:

- WGA redrafted the data request based on members comments, members were given until the following day to submit additional comments, and the revised draft was sent to the WGWC for consideration and approval.
- The WGWC reviewed the revised draft and made additional edits, including:
 - Moving ecosystems of concern under the section for State Wildlife Action Plans
 - Stating that all data for each state should be sent directly to the STG member. The STG member will review the data and pass on relevant data to NatureServe and WGA.

Discussion Items – Categorization Criteria Strawman

The group spent a significant amount of time discussing the categorization criteria strawman, for the purpose of providing a revised version to the WGWC for consideration at their January 9 meeting, and for the WREZ Technical Committee to consider for inclusion in the WREZ public comment package. Key discussion on the strawman included:

- Categorization should be a tool to let people know what they might expect to encounter in a particular area if they try to develop there.
- Categorization should be a recommendation based upon the best scientific data we have to date.
- The categorization process is not for project-level evaluation, but to guide development into the best areas based on resource and environmental considerations.

- Achieving a category of “preferred areas” might be difficult and will require more discussion amongst the group. There was discomfort with determining preferred areas based on the results of identifying exclusion, avoidance and high sensitive areas.
- States may not have the data to confidently identify preferred areas.
- Additionally, there will be some instances where states have insufficient data to confidently categorize an area within a REZ, so the last category should be “insufficient data.”
- The language used in developing criteria should match the language in the data request so that the criteria can be effectively applied. Conversely, the criteria should not pre-suppose how particular data types will be categorized before that data is fully reviewed.
- The criteria themselves should reflect a gradient of risk or sensitivity.
- Having criteria will assist the STG/E&L in their decision-making and will also keep the process transparent.
- Some states were concerned with categorizing data in the WREZ timeline when they have not yet done the assessment in their own state, or are starting the process of assessing their data.

Action Items/Outcomes:

- The group agreed to five categories:
 - Exclude – based on statute or regulation
 - Avoid – based on purpose, policy, restrictions, conflict/controversy
 - Higher sensitive – relative to the other categories
 - Lower sensitive – relative to the other categories
 - Insufficient data
- The purpose of separating avoidance areas into exclude and avoid is to clearly identify those areas where development is legally precluded from the areas that this group recommend should be avoid. There is no regulatory backing for precluding development in “avoid” areas, however both categories will be mapped in a way that removes them from consideration within a REZ.
- The categorization criteria is still in strawman form. Specific members volunteered to draft a narrative explaining each of the five categories and will attempt to further define existing terms. Their edits, and any from other members, are due to WGA **by January 2**.
- E&L and STG will review the revised strawman on their next conference call and will prepare a new version to submit to the WGWC and WREZ Technical Committee for comment.
- Ultimately, the categorization criteria will be posted for WREZ public comment on February 1 as part of a larger public comment package.
- The WGWC reviewed the categorization criteria strawman and did not have any initial comments.

Discussion Items - Exclusion/Avoidance Areas

E&L and STG members spent time discussing the current list of “avoidance areas” and “sensitive areas” and decided the lists needed to be reorganized based on the new categories of “exclude” and “avoid.”

In addition to separating out those areas where development is legally precluded, the group added some additional statutory/regulatory lands to the list including:

- BLM Visual Resource Management Class 1
- BLM Additional designated land use restrictions and special management areas
- BLM Variety of land use restrictions and special management areas on public lands
- BLM Wildlife Management Areas and Sikes Act tracts¹
- USFS designated primitive areas
- Lands designated through a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that are legally protected
- Lands acquired through federal funds either in fee title or conservation easement
- State-held conservation easements where policy precludes development (can only map if data individually submitted by states)

The group then discussed the avoid category, and based on purpose, policy, restrictions, conflict or controversy, recommended adding the following areas to that list:

- BLM lands managed for wilderness characteristics (awaiting formal approval from BLM)
- Lands proposed for designation in federal legislation (Omnibus bill)
- Lands inventoried by BLM and found to have wilderness characteristics (awaiting formal approval from BLM)
- State Wildlife Areas
- State Parks (check with WA?)
- Existing Conservation Mitigation Banks
- Habitat Conservation Plans and NCCPs

The group discussed other areas as well but could not come to a consensus recommendation. The following areas will require additional discussion prior to finalizing the maps on April 1:

- State Forests
- Lands inventoried by citizens and proposed for designation
- National Forests

Action Items/Outcomes:

- WGA developed new “exclude” and “avoid” lists and sent them to the WGWC for their review.
- On their next conference call E&L and STG will have one more opportunity to revise the list before they are sent to WGWC for final approval.
- The final lists will be sent to Black & Veatch and NREL for incorporation into the WREZ qualified resource area maps that are presented to the WREZ Technical Committee in mid-January. The exclude and avoid areas will both be excluded from a qualified resource area.

¹ BLM is reviewing additional areas to finalize list of BLM lands that are excluded by law or regulation.

- WGA has renamed the list that E&L previously titled “sensitive lands” to a “parking lot” list. This renaming more appropriately reflect the intent of the list and shows that there are many land designations and wildlife areas that E&L and STG will discuss prior to April 1.
- The WGWC reviewed the “exclude” and “avoid” lists and did not have any initial comments.

Discussion Items – WGWC/STG/E&L schedule

At the end of the meeting E&L and STG members reviewed a proposed schedule for WGWC, STG and E&L conference calls, meetings and activities between now and finalizing the wildlife maps in early April. Members scheduled specific times for calls, webcasts and meeting and forwarded the revised schedule to the WGWC.

Action Items/Outcomes:

- WGA has revised the schedule based on the E&L and STG discussion, adding specific dates and times for future conference calls and meetings.