

## **Minutes from "The SCB North American Chapters/Section Roundtable: A Conversation about Improving Communication and Coordination among North American Chapters and with the North America Section"**

Organized by Fiona Nagle with a healthy assist from Paul Beier, Eli Bernstein, Carlos Carroll, Dominick DellaSala, Jodi Hilty, and Aletris Neils (Minutes by Jane Packard and Fiona Nagle)

\*\*Please send comments or corrections on the minutes to Fiona Nagle\*\*

*Monday, October 5 2009, 12p-1:30p, Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel, Flagstaff.  
Facilitated by Fiona Nagle, SCB Board of Governors.*

### **Attendees (29):**

Paul Beier (BOG)  
Fiona Nagle (BOG)  
John Fitzgerald (Executive Office)  
Aletris Neils (Chapters Committee)  
Dominick DellaSala (Section)  
Kathy Granillo (Section)  
Carlos Carroll (Section)  
Sarah Reed (Smith Fellows Program/Berkeley Chapter)  
Debbie Groves (Central Arizona Chapter)  
Stephanie Mendoza ("")  
Kristi Holcomb ("")  
Lana Hall ("")  
Wasonttiosta George ("")  
Samantha Dorr (CO Plateau Chapter)  
Wanda Bruhns ("")  
John Toolen ("")  
Janet Lynn ("")  
Tabitha Graves ("")  
Brett Blum (Madrean Chapter)  
Matt Skroch ("")  
Geoffrey Palmer ("")  
Matt Clark ("")  
Jessica Pratt (Orange County Chapter)  
Riley Pratt ("")  
David Mahler (Sul Ross Chapter)  
Jane Packard (Texas A&M Chapter)  
Chris Grouios (Toronto Chapter)  
Terry Rolfe (Vancouver)  
Thomas A Loyd

### **Summary**

The first conversation on how to improve communication and coordination between the NA Section and Chapters was held in Flagstaff on Monday Oct 5 at noon. 29 people attended, representing the Chapters, Section, Committees, EO, BOG, and Smith Fellows. The discussion was lively and productive, with several positive outcomes. Many Chapter members were relieved to feel heard by members of the Section and others, and were interested to hear what the Section's priorities are and how they may contribute. A list of 6 guiding questions were posed to start the conversation; the dialogue ultimately centered around 4 emergent themes:

- 1) How to facilitate full NA participation in Section activities and in conservation;
- 2) Scale and scalability on policy activities;
- 3) 2-way communication between Chapters and the Section; and
- 4) SCB membership.

We looked at challenges, needs, and solutions for each of these themes. Several resources were identified, as were concrete actions to be taken in the next year and how to continue this conversation.

For ease and time, the following minutes are organized thus:

- 1) Key emergent points;
- 2) Next Steps/Actions
- 3) Reporting back;
- 4) Highlights on the 4 themes;
- 5) Resources.

### **Key emergent points**

- ◆ NA Section wants to be mindful of what happens locally
- ◆ The Chapters are an underutilized resource for the Section and SCB
- ◆ The Section must provide better leadership for the Chapters
- ◆ Chapters have been getting mixed messages from the Section and SCB-global about whether they are welcome to express their opinions or pursue their local policy priorities
- ◆ The relations within the network of chapters, subsection(s), and section in NA must be reciprocal
- ◆ Frequent & regular 2-way-plus communication and learning are critical
- ◆ Everyone is time-strapped and resource-strapped, so we need to help each other so no one person or group bears all responsibility for a project or activity
- ◆ The Chapters Committee must be expanded to facilitate Chapter-Section relations and activities – help will be needed and will make everything more fun!
- ◆ Feedback on each others' activities and efforts is critical for morale and relationship-building

### **Next Steps/Actions**

- ◆ Policy workshop (Edmonton) on how to write a position statement. May be adapted from Smith Fellows training course. (John Fitzgerlad, Sarah Reed)
- ◆ Chapters symposium (Edmonton) will include a portion on how to build social capital in support of the science behind policy, including how to identify policy needs. (Fiona Nagle, Aletris Neils)
- ◆ Proposal (Edmonton) to address the policy issues shared by Canada/US/MX
- ◆ Biannual reporting between the Section and Chapters, to be distributed to each other. (John Fitzgerald, Dominick DellaSala, Fiona Nagle) -- Need to consider best mechanism for gathering & distributing info
- ◆ Bimonthly "shout-out" of Section activities.
- ◆ Monthly or bimonthly calls between Section President and BOG Chapters Rep. (Dominick DellaSala, Fiona Nagle)
- ◆ Quarterly "Chapter Highlights" for SCB newsletter – all chapters contribute 1-2 sentences.
- ◆ Explore social networking sites to improve communication and updating.
- ◆ Expand Chapters Committee, new people needed to fill new roles so that the activities of coordinating don't fall on 2 people only. (Fiona Nagle, Aletris Neils)

### **Reporting Back**

- ◆ All participants need to go back to their respective groups and communicate this discussion
- ◆ **Chapter conference call, Tuesday October 13, 5pm PDT:** Discussion continued, all chapters should have at least one person on the conference call
- ◆ Organize another roundtable in Edmonton
- ◆ Others TBD

## Theme Highlights

### I. What are the goals of the NA Section?

- A. NA Section has 5 foci:
  - 1. Conservation Blueprint for NA
    - a) Needs to include Canadian subsection and possibly northern Mexico representation
    - b) Blueprint will be developed in 3+ sessions focusing on different continental regions
      - (1) 2009 Flagstaff Meeting, starts with SW region & will scale up
      - (2) 2010 Global Edmonton Meeting
      - (3) 2012 Joint Section Meeting with NA and ANA
  - 2. Endangered Species Act, regulations, and laws
  - 3. Climate Change Policy
    - a) SCB has a great opportunity to fill a climate change niche re biodiversity
  - 4. Roadless areas policy and action
  - 5. Internal organizational partnerships with chapters & other sections
    - a) Need to clarify ground rules of when to engage and when not to engage
    - b) Paul Beier emphasized partnership need, acknowledging some engagement and looking forward to more
    - c) NA section wants to be mindful of what happens locally
- B. Resources of the NA section are limited & stretched in human and financial capacity
  - 1. John Fitzgerald (JF), SCB Policy Director, needs support from Chapters and Section
  - 2. Some highlights re accomplishments are in annual 2008 report
  - 3. Policy initiatives fed by bottom-up process, by which issues are brought forward for review and approval by the policy committees of the NA Section and SCB Board of Governors

II. **Theme: Full NA Participation:** There are so many aspects of the NA policy foci that they cannot all be addressed by one small group of people. SCB's NA conservation work must draw upon all expertise distributed among the Chapters and Section members.

#### A. Challenges

- 1. How do Canada and Mexico fit into the NA Section's work? Do we need Canadian and Mexican policy coordinators?
- 2. How can Chapters better plug into and support the Section's work?
- 3. Transborder Chapters (Madrean Chapter is the first): how to address issues of representation and communication with multiple Sections/Subsections? What are the expectations of the NA section for such Chapters, and Madrean in particular?
- 4. A perceived lack of clarity between the Section and Chapters re each other's roles, functions, and approaches to policy and conservation

#### B. Needs

- 1. Better coordination among chapters in Canada/US/MX regarding transborder issues
- 2. Some Chapters are very project-focused, others require more guidance on what is expected of them by the Section and SCB
  - a) Re guidance: They would like to participate more but are unsure how to plug in. They would like a clearly defined issue or project that they can contribute to.
- 3. Guidance for Chapters on how to write a policy position statement ("In our chapter, we are all ecologists and do not know how to address policy issues, even though we'd like to")
- 4. Leadership from the Section on how new Chapters can channel their energy and resources to help the Section and SCB

#### C. Possible Solutions

- 1. Re how to write a position statement
  - a) Take a policy class

- b) Attend short courses and workshops
  - c) Network within your university, team up with law students or departments with experience and willing to help
  - d) Network with other savvy local conservation groups, draw on their experience
2. 1-page briefing document on Section priorities

**III. Theme: Scale and Scalability on Policy:** Chapters are interested in doing policy; however, "it is a huge thing to bite off". The Section leadership does not have the resources to do everything by itself and must draw upon local expertise, examples, and resources.

*A. Challenges*

- 1. How to scale up local/regional issues to national/continental levels
- 2. How to scale down Section concerns to local levels
- 3. How to enable the chapters to send "on the ground examples" to the NA section leaders so they can tell the compelling stories that will influence national level policy makers

*B. Needs*

- 1. A database of local, regional, national and international experts
- 2. Mechanisms to tap into regional levels of expertise
  - a) Regional outcomes bring credibility to national level testimony before congress
- 3. The EO needs to know what lobbying is being conducted, and to document that the activities of the Section and Chapters are more educational and scientific than political
- 4. Improved understanding and implementation of SCB's policy approvals process by both the Section and Chapters
  - a) The policy approval process does not discount what is important at local and regional levels. If a policy issue raised by a chapter does not scale up or is not approved by the NA Section, there are other channels to take it forward to the SCB board.

*C. Possible Solutions*

- 1. Specific calls to action by the Section or Policy Director (e.g., regarding roadless areas issues or the Obama recommendations)
  - a) Otherwise, chapters are unaware of issues where their input is needed

**IV. Theme: 2-way Communication between Chapters and Section:** Frequent and regular communication will enable each group to keep current and respond to each other. Communication must include needs, activities, concerns, ideas, and resources.

*A. Challenges*

- 1. Currently disjointed and mostly 1-way (from chapters/section to EO)
- 2. Chapters are unaware of section and global issues AND section is unaware of chapter issues
  - a) Disconnect happens at EO level, should be direct between chapters and section
- 3. Differing communication forums and accessibility
  - a) Some Chapters have individual websites/facebook pages, some have nothing online
    - (1) *Problem: Not all are current*
    - (2) *Problem: Section leaders do not have time to read them all*
    - (3) *Solution: newsletters, meetings*
  - b) Section website: not current, shows only end results and not projects in process
    - (1) *Problem: chapters don't know where they can plug into section activities*
  - c) Listservs (Chapters and Section): uncertainty on how well they're used and paid attention to
    - (1) *Problem: Section listserv may not reach Chapter members if they're not section members*

**B. Needs**

1. At least twice-yearly reporting by Chapters & Section to each other
  - a) *Problem: The annual report is not timely enough and directed at a different audience*
  - b) *Problem: The annual report does not capture all the Chapter and Section activities that each group should know about each other*
2. The Section leaders need to keep current on what each Chapter is doing relative to the 5 foci of the Section
3. All websites need to be kept current
4. Better use of social networking tools (e.g. facebook, twitter) to pull together the compelling stories about conservation activities and successes

**C. Possible Solutions**

1. Each of us can do something to increase communication, even if we're time- or resource-constrained, via:
  - a) Newsletter articles (new editor coming on board at end of 2009)
  - b) Postings to the Section, Chapters, & Policy listservs
  - c) Articles or news for SCB's "Policy Insider", a quarterly compiling by John Fitzgerald
  - d) Updating the Chapters & Section websites once a month
  - e) Give feedback on listserv postings and newsletter articles!!! (otherwise authors & moderators have no way of knowing if info is getting out there and/or being utilized)

**V. Theme: SCB Membership:** Chapter activities appeal to diverse audiences, including non-scientists. This grassroots outreach is important for SCB because it builds conservation science awareness at local and individual levels – one way to affect change at small scales that can then scale up. Chapters should not feel "squashed" in their activities by SCB's priorities.

**A. Challenges**

1. Chapter members do not necessarily recognize the value of belonging to the global society
2. How can we better market the tangible benefits of joining SCB to our local members?
3. In developing countries, potential members may not have enough \$\$ to pay membership fees

**B. Needs**

1. Materials that offer compelling reasons for scientists and others to join SCB

**C. Possible Solutions**

1. A mentoring network by which existing members mentor and pay for new members

**VI. Resources**

- A. A new book will provide scientific underpinnings for policy decisions along the MX/US border: *López-Hoffman, L., E.D. McGovern, R.G. Varady and K.W. Flessa, eds. In press 2009. Conservation of Shared Environments: Learning from the United States & Mexico. Tucson: University of AZ Press.*
- B. Suggestion for more engagement with Western Governors Association because there needs to be regional input as well as at the national level
- C. The Tripartite Committee established for migratory waterfowl and other species (contact Ernesto Enkerlin in Mexico City)
- D. SCB task forces are being created to respond with sound science to government queries
- E. Tools are on the SCB policy website and need to be used by the chapters
  1. Papers on how the federal process works
  2. What to do if keen on something and don't know where to start
  3. Networking with knowledgeable people
- F. SCB's "Conservation Magazine" is written to interest both scientists and non-scientists.