

Conservation Committee

Committee Members: B. S. Arbogast, M. S. Barbour, B. J. Bergstrom (Chair), N. Dawson, T. J. Doonan, K. Helgen, D. Howell, A. Joachim, R. J. Larsen, C. Long, S. A. MacDonald, A. Morzillo, S. Prange, L. Randa, R. K. Rose, M. Schadler, W. Sechrest, S. R. Sheffield, S. N. Vignieri, and J. K. Young.

Mission:

The Conservation Committee was established by the ASM in 1927. First known as the Conservation of Land Mammals Committee, the name was changed to the Conservation Committee in 2002 to reflect the fact that it dealt with conservation issues that included all mammals. Currently, the committee is subdivided into seven subcommittees: Position Letters, Conservation Education, Coordination with other Organizations, Monitoring State and Federal Legislation in the USA and Canada, Monitoring International Issues, Special Projects, and Resolutions. In 2002–2003, the Aldo Leopold Conservation Award subcommittee was moved to full standing committee status.

Information Items:

(1) The committee welcomed new member Adam Ferguson in 2009-2010. The following members rotated off the committee in the past year, and we thank them for their service: Brad Blood, Reg Hoyt, Alex Krevitz, David McCullough, Shannan Nilz, Jill Nugent, Allan O'Connell, David Rabon, Brad Swanson, James Wilson.

(2) The ASM Conservation Committee (ASMCC) continues to communicate and collaborate with other committees, especially Marine Mammals and Resolutions, including chairs of the latter two committees on our ASMCC listserv. We invite all ASM members to visit our page on the ASM website, where you will find committee member contact information and a record of recent years' activities:

<http://www.mammalsociety.org/committees/index.asp>

(3) Activities of the ASMCC during 2008-09 included the following:

- (a) Researched and drafted a position letter opposing the logging of rosewood and ebony trees and the poaching of lemurs in critical reserves in Madagascar following the military coup of 2009; as of this writing, responding to worldwide pressure, the government recently has agreed to halt the logging and export of these trees, but we are proposing to send a letter urging them to uphold this commitment.
- (b) Discussed the issue of funding and authority of Wildlife Services, some of whose activities are counterproductive to other federal conservation efforts and arguably wasteful of tax dollars. We have not drafted a position letter as of this writing.
- (c) Worked with President McLaren to submit a public comment in favor of the proposed rule change by the Secretary of Interior to rescind the Bush-era suspension of Section 7 consultations under the Endangered Species Act.

- (d) Worked with the Resolutions Committee on a proposal for a symposium on strategies for success in mammalian conservation efforts, for the 2011 Annual Meeting in Portland, OR.

(4) Follow-up on Previous Issues:

On 8 September 2009, U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy refused to stop the impending hunt of Gray Wolves in Idaho and Montana, but he may have telegraphed an intent to overturn the 2009 delisting in these two states by the Obama Administration, describing the two-state delisting (excluding Wyoming) as “arbitrary and capricious.” The Conservation Committee has been involved in this issue for several years, and we had prepared a position letter opposing the delisting rule, which President Sue McLaren sent to the Bush Administration in November 2008, and also to the Obama transition team.

On 21 September 2009, Judge Molloy overturned the 2007 delisting of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, citing an unenforceable conservation strategy and failure to adequately consider the effect on grizzlies of the decline in whitebark pine due to global warming. ASMCC had monitored and discussed this issue prior to the 2007 delisting.

In October and November 2009, President Sue McLaren received two rather non-committal responses—from the Deputy Director and Regional Director of the Forest Service—to ASM’s August 2009 position letter (drafted by Resolutions with input from Conservation) urging several action steps to improve the recovery of Mexican Gray Wolf, particularly relating to livestock management. They mention the intent to begin a 4-year EIS for Mexican wolf recovery.

In November 2009, federal officials issued a prairie dog management plan for the Thunder Basin National Grasslands in Wyoming, which focuses on nonlethal management, bans shooting in several areas, promotes prairie dog restoration in core areas, and promises reintroduction of the black-footed ferret. In January 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that they would stop funding the use of Rozol, which had been used to poison prairie dogs. ASMCC drafted a position letter, sent by President Bob Timm, in 2007 that asked for these reforms.

Responding to a U.S. District Court Judge’s April 2009 order to reconsider its 2008 decision not to designate critical habitat and develop a recovery plan for the endangered jaguar, the USFWS announced on 12 January 2010 it would indeed do both. ASM’s 2007 resolution and a follow-up letter (drafted by Conservation and Resolutions) both urged USFWS to draft a recovery plan and designate critical habitat.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Bergstrom, Chair
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