

Conservation Committee

Committee Members: B. S. Arbogast, M. S. Barbour, B. J. Bergstrom, (Chair), B. Blood, N. Dawson, T. J. Doonan, K. Helgen, D. Howell, R. Hoyt, A. Joachim, A. Krevitz, R. J. Larsen, C. Long, S. A. MacDonald, D. McCullough, A. Morzillo, S. Nilz, J. F. Nugent, A. F. O'Connell, Jr., S. Prange, D. R. Rabon, Jr., L. Randa, R. K. Rose, M. Schadler, W. Sechrest, S. R. Sheffield, S. N. Vignieri, J. A. Wilson, 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 members Brian Arbogast, Daryl Howell, and Roxy Larsen in 2008-09. Quinn Shurtliff rotated off the committee in the past year; we thank him for his service.

(2) The ASM Conservation Committee (ASMCC) has enhanced its communication and collaboration with other committees, especially Marine Mammals and Resolutions, including chairs of the latter two committees on our ASMCC listserv (which marked its 5th anniversary this February). 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 activities:

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

(3) During 2008-09, ASMCC researched and developed position letters on the following:

- (a) Letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) opposing proposed rule changing “Section 7” consultation procedures under the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA). This rule would have allowed various federal agencies to make their own determinations whether their projects would have impacts on listed species, without consulting endangered-species experts in USFWS and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which had clearly been the Congressional intent. Letter was signed by President McLaren and sent in October 2008. Copies were later sent to the Obama Transition Team and key committee chairs in Congress. Letter posted on ASM website.

(b) Letter to USFWS opposing delisting of the Montana and Idaho portions of the Northern Rocky Mountain (NRM) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the gray wolf. Opposition based on: 1) current lack of genetic connectivity between Yellowstone Area wolf packs and packs elsewhere in the DPS, 2) excessive culling called for in state management plans, which would place long-term population persistence and genetic health of NRM gray wolves in jeopardy. Latest in series of gray wolf delisting rules under Bush administration, all of which were overturned by court order. Letter signed by President McLaren and sent in November 2008. Copies were sent to the Obama Transition Team and key committee chairs in Congress. Letter posted on ASM website. *Note: On 6 March 2009, new Interior Sec. Salazar approved the late-Bush-era rule and finalized it 2 April 2009. ESA protections are due to expire for Idaho and Montana wolves on 4 May. Several environmental NGOs filed 60-day notice of intent to sue, but lawsuits will not begin before June.*

(4) ASMCC continued to monitor the annual winter culling of bison leaving Yellowstone National Park; this past winter only 2 bison were killed, whereas > 1,600 were killed the previous winter.

(5) As of this writing, ASMCC is researching, among others, the following issues: 1) recovery plan for jaguar (see below), 2) monitoring what appears to be a stalled recovery program for the Mexican gray wolf (in collaboration with Resolutions), 3) reduction of critical habitat designation for the peninsular bighorn sheep, and 4) continuing and escalating programs of predator control by the home state of this year's ASM meeting hosts, the great state of Alaska. Visitors are welcome at our committee meeting in Fairbanks.

(6) Follow-up on Previous Issues:

(a) On 20 July 2007, the Interior Department announced it would review and probably overturn the proposed Preble's meadow jumping mouse delisting. ASMCC was heavily involved in this issue in 2005-06. In July 2008, USFWS finalized its rule re-affirming endangered status of the subspecies in Colorado, but, surprisingly, de-listing the mouse within its Wyoming range.

(b) On 14 May 2008, Interior Secretary Kempthorne announced he was listing the polar bear as Threatened under the ESA, but he also explicitly said the administration would do nothing to protect the bear against immediate threats related to the proposal to open vast areas of the Chukchi Sea to oil and gas leases, nor would Threatened Status require the government to address global warming as a specific threat to polar bear survival. ASM sent a strong letter of support for the listing in April 2007, drafted collaboratively by Conservation and Marine Mammals committees.

(c) On 1 April 2009, a U.S. District Court judge in Tucson ordered USFWS to reconsider its 2008 decision not to designate critical habitat and develop a

recovery plan for the endangered jaguar; he gave the USFWS until 8 January 2010 to report back. ASM unanimously passed a resolution at its 2007 annual meeting urging USFWS to develop a recovery plan, including border crossing issues, and to designate critical habitat for the jaguar. Conservation and Resolutions committees collaborated on drafting a position letter that followed up on these issues in 2008.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Bergstrom, Chair
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