

Conservation Committee

Committee Members: B. J. Bergstrom, (Chair), M.S. Barbour, J. Boyles, B. Blood, I. Castro-Arellano, T. J. Doonan, M. Hackett, K. Helgen, A. Joachim, R. W. Kays, A. Krevitz, C. Long, S. A. MacDonald, J. Moore, A. Morzillo, S. Nilz, J. F. Nugent, A. F. O'Connell, D. R. Rabon, L. Randa, R. Rose, M. Schadler, W. Sechrest, S. Sheffield, Q. Shurtliff, B. Swanson, B. Thiagarajan, S. Vignieri, and J. 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. Until 2006, the committee was 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:

Roland Kays finished his term as Chair, and Brad Bergstrom took over in January 2007. Justin Boyles, Thomas Gehring, Ginny Turner, and Michael Kreuzer rotated off the committee, and we thank them for their service, as we welcome new member Patty Ruback.

The committee has continued to make heavy use of its listserv (housed at Valdosta State University) to post messages, news items and alerts and to discuss issues and priorities among its 30 members.

At the 2006 ASM meeting, we decided to disband the former subcommittee structure and undertook a survey of members' area of expertise and interest so as to better and more quickly organize specific efforts (e.g. position letters) to fast-emerging mammalian conservation issues.

Early in 2007, we identified more than 10 potential mammalian conservation issues that could call for committee action and/or study within the coming year, and members ranked them in order of importance as well as personal knowledge and interest. Of the most important of these, four issues were deemed to be time-sensitive and efforts were undertaken to research them, with the following results to date:

- 1) Polar Bear listing under the ESA.—A Position Letter supporting the USFWS's proposal to list *Ursus maritimus* as threatened was researched and drafted by a subgroup, reviewed by the Conservation Committee and the Marine Mammals, signed by the President and submitted in March. A copy appears on the Committee's web page. *Note on a related item:* read the Marine Mammal

Committee's report item regarding the United States Russia Polar Bear Conservation and Management Act of 2006.

- 2) Proposal to delist the Northern Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf.—A subgroup recently finished drafting a letter in response to this USFWS proposal under the ESA at the time of this report. We will give an update at the business meeting and post the completed letter to the web page before the meeting. We argue that the proposed action is premature, because, among other issues, USFWS has not yet accepted the state management plan of Wyoming, one of the three states that hosts this Distinct Population Segment.
- 3) Collaboration with Resolutions Committee on draft resolution concerning regulation of cervid ranching and high fences in Western states.
- 4) Researching possible consultation or position letter on the management of prairie dogs in National Grasslands in the Conata Basin of S.D., currently the only viable release site for black-footed ferrets east of the "plague line."

Follow-up on Previous Issue:

Several committee members were interviewed by the media following submission of the ASM position letter in April 2005 opposing USFWS's proposed delisting of Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse. Two members of the committee joined other mammalogists and geneticists in co-authoring a paper in *Animal Conservation* critically analyzing a previous paper in that journal concluding synonymy of two or more subspecies (Vignieri et al. 2006, *Animal Conservation* 9:237–243).

An expert review panel convened by USFWS in summer 2006 agreed with our conclusions and judged the synonymy and delisting to be unwarranted. The decision is still on hold at DOI following the release of that panel's conclusions.

Action Items: None

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Bergstrom, Chair
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