

Conservation Committee

Committee Members: B. J. Bergstrom, (Chair), M. S. Barbour, B. Blood, N. Dawson, T. J. Doonan, K. Helgen, R. Hoyt, A. Joachim, A. Krevitz, C. A. Long, S. A. MacDonald, D. McCullough, J. Moore, A. Morzillo, S. Nilz, J. F. Nugent, A. F. O'Connell, S. Prange, D. R. Rabon, L. Randa, R. Rose, M. Schadler, W. Sechrest, S. R. Sheffield, Q. Shurtliff, S. Vignieri, J. A. Wilson, 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. 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 Natalie Dawson, Reg Hoyt, Suzie Prange, and James Wilson in 2007–08. Roland Kays, Jake Goheen, and Ivan Castro-Arellano rotated off the committee in the past year, and we thank them for their 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 (housed at Valdosta State University). Our listserv continues to serve as both bulletin board and sounding board for mammalian conservation issues, and the first point of discussion for potential action items for the committee.
- (3) During 2007–08, ASMCC researched and developed position letters on the following:
 - A. Letter to the managers of the Nebraska National Forest, urging adoption of “No Action” alternative on their DEIS to reduce black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) populations in the Conata Basin, the only major prairie dog release area outside of the plague zone. Letter was signed by ASM President and sent in July 2007. Response was received from USDA Forest Service that, due to 60,000 public comments, decision would be phased, with management decisions for the ferret release area of the Conata Basin to be delayed for an unspecified period.
 - B. Letter to USFWS criticizing their claim of exemption under ESA from developing a recovery plan for the jaguar (*Panthera onca*). Letter was signed by ASM President and sent in Feb. 2008. This followed a 2007 ASM Resolution on the jaguar, and an accompanying letter sent in October 2007, to which USFWS never responded.

C. Letter to the Secretary of Interior urging support for designation and protection of “Path of the Pronghorn” migration corridor in Wyoming (Grand Teton NP through Pinedale Anticline), which already has support of Western Governor’s Association and the superintendents of Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and the National Elk Refuge (but not the BLM). Ongoing gas leasing and development threatens parts of this narrow corridor. Letter was signed by ASM President and sent in May 2008.

(4) ASMCC members also discussed and provided comments and references on wildlife impacts of wind-energy development (see report of Resolutions Committee).

(5) As of this writing, we are still discussing possible action in response to the culling of large numbers of bison this winter as they left Yellowstone National Park. We are also discussing the ongoing culling of wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, following the recent delisting of this putative Distinct Population Segment, in light of the committee’s drafting in 2007 of a position statement strongly opposing this action by the USFWS and the state management plans that would be implemented following the delisting.

(6) We are beginning discussions of ways to disseminate information and facilitate study of critically endangered but little known species of mammals worldwide; this will be an agenda item for discussion at our committee meeting in South Dakota. Visitors welcome.

(7) Follow-up on Previous Issues:

On July 20, 2007, the Interior Department announced it would review and probably overturn eight decisions on wildlife and land-use issues made by a senior political appointee [Julie McDonald], who was found to have improperly favored industry and landowners over agency scientists. The Preble’s meadow jumping mouse delisting was one of these 8 decisions; ASMCC was heavily involved in this issue in 2005–06.

A federal judge has ordered USFWS to make a decision by May 15 about listing the polar bear as threatened under the ESA. This follows a 2nd major delay in the expected decision, which controversially followed an announcement by the administration to open vast areas of the Chukchi Sea to oil and gas leases. ASM sent a strong letter of support for the listing in April 2007, drafted collaboratively by Conservation and Marine Mammals committees.

Action Items: None

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Bergstrom, Chair
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