

CHARTER

Science Committee U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Background

Scientific excellence is the foundation of the Service's mission success. It enables and empowers Service employees to ensure that fish and wildlife and their habitats are protected and managed effectively and efficiently, and that those resources remain available for public use and enjoyment. Key means by which the Service maintains and expands its science excellence include:

- Providing employees with timely access to scientific information and state-of-the-art scientific tools;
- Meeting employee needs for scientific research and technical assistance;
- Meeting employee needs for peer interaction among scientists;
- Identifying science-based conservation strategies for habitat and population management;
- Maintaining and expanding the skills of employees in understanding, analyzing, applying and communicating complex scientific concepts, information and tools; and
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of the appropriate practices and procedures to use when engaging in science activities, such as conducting research, seeking peer review and using, publishing and disseminating scientific information.

Purposes of the Science Committee

Service employees are the means by which science excellence is practiced and maintained throughout the Service. The Science Committee is empowered to contribute to the overall attainment of science excellence by working in the six areas identified above to help ensure the Service has the infrastructure necessary to support and promote science excellence. The Committee is responsible for addressing specific charges from the Director, such as helping implement science initiatives and requirements. When charged by the Director, or upon its own initiative and with concurrence from the Directorate Oversight Council, the Committee is empowered to prepare draft policies, procedures and other work products; monitor science activities and prepare special reports and recommendations; and work closely with Service employees and external partners to promote science excellence in fish and wildlife conservation. Completed work products of the Committee will be transmitted to the Directorate Oversight Council for review, coordination and dissemination.

Committee and Council Roles and Duties

The Committee conducts its business in collaboration with the Service's Science Advisor and in close communication and coordination with the Directorate Oversight Council. The Committee

receives specific charges from the Director and subsequently vets its work products, findings and recommendations with the Directorate Oversight Council in advance of providing them to the Director.

The Committee has three roles:

1. Fulfill specific charges given it by the Director;
2. Identify and undertake other activities it deems necessary to support and promote science excellence in the Service, subject to prior approval by the Directorate Oversight Council; and
3. Coordinate and communicate regularly with Directorate members, through the Directorate Oversight Council, concerning its activities and work products.

Duties of the Committee include providing:

1. Findings and recommendations to the Director, through the Directorate Oversight Council, in response to charges received and initiative taken (with prior approval of the Directorate Oversight Council);
2. Written quarterly updates of its activities to the Directorate Oversight Council, for dissemination to the Directorate; and
3. Written summaries of its meetings to the Directorate Oversight Council, for dissemination to the Directorate.

The Council has three roles:

1. Provide support, guidance and oversight to the Committee, as it fulfills its roles and meets its duties;
2. Approve work products completed by the Committee, and coordinate their review, approval and dissemination with the Directors Office.
3. Function as a liaison between the Director and Committee, and between the Director and Directorate members, as concerns activities of the Committee.

Duties of the Council include:

1. Overseeing activities of the Committee;
2. Overseeing preparation, approval, coordination and dissemination of work products completed by the Committee; and

3. Providing the Committee's quarterly updates and meeting summaries to Directorate members, and keeping Directorate members apprised of Committee activities, accomplishments, and needs.

Committee and Council Memberships

The Committee is comprised of the following members:

- Three senior employees nominated by Regional Directors and CNO;
- Three senior employees nominated by Assistant Directors;
- A representative of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC);
- Science Advisor to the Director;
- Service Science Liaison to USGS;
- International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' [IAFWA] Science; and Research Liaison
- Three practicing FWS scientists.

Permanent members include the Science Advisor, FWS Science Liaison to USGS, IAFWA Science and Research Liaison, and the NCTC representative. Other members are appointed for three-year terms. One of the members recommended by the Regional Directors, one of the members recommended by the Assistant Directors, and one of the practicing scientists will be replaced each year in order to infuse new ideas without affecting the continuity of the Committee as a whole.

The Directorate Oversight Council is comprised of five members:

- Two Regional Directors;
- Two Assistant Directors; and
- Science Advisor to the Director.

The Service Science Advisor is a permanent member of the Council. Other Council members are appointed by the Director for four-year terms. One non-permanent member will be replaced each year to enable other Directorate members to participate on the Council.

All Committee members and Council members will represent the Service as a whole rather than their particular Regions or Assistant Directorships.

Committee and Council Structures

The Committee is chaired by the Science Advisor to the Director. The Committee may elect other members to serve as deputy chairperson or in other administrative positions, and may establish subcommittees to conduct its work. Communication and coordination with the Directorate and Director is to and from the Science Advisor. The Science Advisor, with prior approval of two-thirds of the members, may invite outside parties to attend Committee meetings as observers, assistants or participants, or serve on subcommittees.

The Council is chaired by a member of its choosing. Communication and coordination with the Committee, Directorate and Director is to and from the Council chairperson.

Committee and Council Meetings and Administration

The Committee meets every six months, or sooner if it deems it necessary or is asked by the Directorate Oversight Committee, to fulfill its roles and responsibilities. The Science Advisor arranges and manages all meetings of the Committee. This includes notifying the Directorate of upcoming meetings 60 days beforehand, through the Directorate Oversight Council. Meeting dates are determined by consensus of the Committee's members.

The Council meets every six months, or sooner if it deems it necessary or is asked by the Director, in order to fulfill its roles and responsibilities. Meeting dates are determined by consensus of the Council's members.

Members of the Service Science Committee

Member	Position	Region or Program
Teresa Woods	Special Assistant to Regional Director for Science and Landscape Conservation	Region 3
Bruce Rosenlund	Project Leader, Colorado Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Office	Region 6
Ed Christoffers, Ph. D.	Regional Research Coordinator	Region 5
Rick Sayers, Ph. D.	Branch Chief	Endangered Species Program Washington Office
Edgard Espinoza, DrPH.	Deputy Director	National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory Ashland, OR
Seth Mott	Chief, Br. of Science and Planning, Div. of Bird Habitat Conservation	Washington Office
Jewell Bennett, Ph. D.	Branch Chief	NCTC Shepardstown, WV
Dan Ashe	Science Advisor to the Director	Washington Office
Russ Mason, Ph. D.	Science Liaison IAFWA	Washington, DC.
Gary Frazer	FWS Science Liaison to USGS	Reston, VA
John K. Wenburg, Ph. D.	Director, Genetics Laboratory Anchorage	Region 7
Will McDearman	Fish and Wildlife Biologist	Region 4
Rex Johnson, PhD.	Leader, Habitat and Population Evaluation Team	Washington, DC

Members of the Directorate Oversight Council

Member	Position	Region or Program
Dave Allen	Regional Director	Region 7
Steve Thompson	CNO Manager	CNO
Tom Melius	Assistant Director for External Affairs	Washington Office
Paul Schmidt	Assistant Director for Migratory Birds	Washington Office
Dan Ashe	Science Advisor	Washington Office

Response to Frequently Asked Questions and Comments
About the Science Committee

1. Question/Comment: The Science Committee's charter should emphasize that the main role of the Committee is to support field employees.

Response: The Charter has been revised to emphasize this role more clearly and to include language that more explicitly identifies activities that will support field employees and meet their science needs.

2. Question/Comment Why does the Service need a Science Committee and how will it benefit employees in the field?

Response: The Service needs a Science Committee for two reasons. First, the Committee will provide a venue for multi-Regional and multi-program collaboration on science issues, needs and opportunities that cut across Service programs and Regions. It will provide the Director and Directorate with a vehicle for seeking advice and recommendations concerning science needs, especially those related to meeting field needs for research, technical assistance, and scientific information and training. Second, the Committee will provide employees with an efficient mechanism for participating in activities that would otherwise have to be undertaken less cohesively and would require establishing *ad hoc* work groups, like stepping-down the Department's peer review policy and OMB's code of conduct, developing a publications policy and process for Service science, and providing the Director with a short and concise annual assessment of ways of enhancing science excellence Servicewide.

3. Question/Comment: Won't the Science Committee create more work for the field by requiring field employees to provide data and information and possibly to help the Committee in other ways?

Response: Regional Directors, through members of the Directorate Oversight Committee and through their regular communications with the Directors Office and with Directorate members, will have ample opportunity to affect Committee operations.

The Committee will receive specific charges from the Director, and will fulfill those charges with support, guidance and oversight from the Directorate Oversight Council. When the Committee exercises its prerogatives to undertake activities under its own initiative, it will seek approval of the Directorate Oversight Council in advance, and then coordinate regularly with the Council as it undertakes approved activities.

The Directorate Oversight Committee will help ensure three things. First, it will ensure that if the Committee seeks information from or involvement of field and Regional personnel, such requests will be through the chain-of-command, with prior knowledge of Directorate Oversight Council. Second, when the Committee acts at the request of the Director or with approval of the Directorate Oversight Council, it will be *in lieu* of the Director establishing an alternative mechanism for meeting needs reflected in his charge to the Committee. The Director and Directorate Oversight Council will expect the Committee to meet such needs more effectively, more efficiently and less expensively than other *ad hoc* arrangements that would otherwise need to be made to address the Director's charges. Lastly, when the Committee receives a charge from the Director or undertakes activities approved by the Directorate Oversight Council, the Council will advise Directorate members of these activities. This will help ensure that the Committee's activities do not needlessly burden field and Regional employees.

4. Question/Comment: The Science Committee needs strong representation by field and Regional employees.

Response: Seven of the Committee's 13 members work in field or Regional Offices. Three other members, namely the Director's Science Advisor, the Service's Liaison to USGS, and the NCTC representative, have worked closely with field and Regional personnel for many years, and will continue doing so. The IAFWA Liaison has extensive field experience and contacts, as do the other two Committee members.

In addition, the Directorate Oversight Council, which provides support, guidance and oversight to the Committee, includes two Regional Directors.

Director Williams expects all Committee members and Council members to represent the needs of the Service as a whole and all its employees. Consequently, there will be no field, Regional or headquarters representatives *per se*, although field and regional perspectives will be in abundance among members of the Committee and Council.

5. Question/Comment: What will be the Science Committee's role in allocating funding and FTEs?

Response: The Director does not envision the Committee or the Directorate Oversight Council being involved in allocating funding and FTEs, and the Committee's Charter identifies no roles, responsibilities, or duties of this kind.