



Patuxent Wildlife Research Center - Partnerships in Natural Resource Science

Background

The USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is finding innovative ways to develop effective science partnerships. Patuxent has a world-wide reputation for high-quality, leading-edge scientific work in the field of natural resources management. The Center's mission is "to excel in wildlife and natural resource science, providing information needed by federal, state, and other agencies to better manage the Nation's biological resources." This can be accomplished only through strong partnership with natural resource management agencies that use the Center's products. Our partner linkage is emphasized in the Biological Resources Division mission "to work with others to provide the scientific understanding and technologies needed to support the sound management and conservation of our Nation's biological resources."

Objectives

To address science needs of partners, Patuxent focuses on:

Quality and Relevance - Conduct projects and programs that result in the delivery of high-quality, relevant scientific information;

Prioritization - Improve mechanisms for collaborative approaches to identifying and prioritizing information needs and projects;

Scientific Collaboration - Promote scientific partnerships, within the USGS, and with agencies, universities and other external entities, to develop scientific information addressing information needs of resource managers. Current projects to address these information needs are listed on the USGS Science Information System web site:

<http://biology.usgs.gov/science/currproj.html>

(continued on back)



Patuxent Wildlife Research Center - Addressing Science Needs of Partners - *Continued*

Methods

Patuxent's science is linked with the information needs of Department of the Interior (DOI) and other resource management agencies through several processes.

Thematic Forums - Patuxent facilitates interaction among natural resource managers and scientists by hosting a diverse array of workshops, symposia, training sessions, and site visits, usually targeted to specific topics of mutual interest. The most important of these is the Annual Science Meeting, in which Patuxent scientists, agency biologists, and natural resource managers develop mutual understanding about resource information issues, Patuxent's scientific capabilities, and the national and regional priorities of their agencies. Interactions begun at such forums translate into research plans by Patuxent scientists and partner biologists.

Formalized Partnerships - Patuxent has formalized its partnership with several resource management agencies. These partners prepare statements of priority scientific information needs, often based on a request they issue to their resource management biologists. Pre-proposals are typically the combined effort of management agency personnel and Patuxent scientists. For each such partnership, an interagency committee prioritizes the work proposed. Annually priority pre-proposals from the several partners are reviewed by Center management for further development based on availability of Center resources, and USGS priorities.

Joint Planning - Scientific plans to meet information needs are developed jointly by Patuxent scientists and agency resource managers. Participation in this work by other scientists within the USGS, other agencies, or universities is encouraged. After scientific peer review and revision, scientific plans are considered by Center Management for funding from Center base or for submission to Regional or Bureau programs or to other funding sources.

Collaboration with Managers - Patuxent scientists continue to involve their resource manager and scientific partners in all pertinent phases of the research and to conduct their research and communicate results in ways that strengthen usefulness to resource managers.



Results to Date

Taking a partnership approach has improved the value of Patuxent's work.

Determining Priorities - Patuxent's annual science workshops and focused thematic meetings have successfully brought DOI resource managers, scientists and science managers together exploring mutually selected themes, becoming mutually acquainted with needs and capabilities, and finding innovative approaches to issues. We supplement these thematic workshops with more focused meetings with resource managers at the regional and national levels to prioritize information needs and optimize approaches to deal with issues.

Personal Initiative - Individual scientists are expected to collaborate with DOI and other resource managers in developing project plans. Plans developed jointly that address high-priority resource management issues are given preferential consideration. It is most productive that individual scientists and DOI resource managers communicate at the earliest possible stage of planning. This bottom-up approach to science planning tends to increase its relevance to management.

Programmatic Priorities - By broadly communicating Departmental, Bureau and Center priority programs and themes, scientific information needs are identified and projects are developed that support these themes. Also, science needs are developed that feed into Bureau budget initiatives.

Products - Products derived from the scientific work include peer-reviewed scientific papers, electronic media, and summaries and fact sheets. Products are made available through the world wide web to provide end users ready access to the Center's work.

Results - Virtually all of Patuxent's current research projects relate directly to information needs of high priority to DOI resource managers at the local, regional, or national level. Interactions facilitated among scientists and resource managers result in a high level of technical assistance to resource managers.