

Waterbird Society Council Meeting Minutes

Virtual call, Zoom via DRYFTA conference platform

Monday, November 8, 2021

9:00-13:00, 18:00-22:00 (ET/New York/GMT-4)

Officers and Councilors in attendance (voting): Dave Moore [President], Patty Szczys [VP, Recognition], Chris Custer [Treasurer, Bylaws], Kate Shlepr [Secretary, Archives], Erica Nol [Past President, Publications, Nominating], Terry Master, Miyuki Mashiko, Clay Green [Past President, Nominating], Caroline Poli [Student Council Rep], Danielle D'Auria, Gail Fraser [Student Activities], Gopi Sundar, John Anderson [Archives], Don Lyons, Jim Lyons, Caz Taylor, Terry Master

Voting members unable to attend: Andy Kasner [Journal Editor]

Committee Chairs in attendance (non-voting): Kate Sheehan [Research Grants], Juliet Lamb [Student Activities, Diversity], Sean Murphy [Conservation], Jim Fraser [Membership, Finance & Investment], Jonathan Cohen [Conservation], Liz Craig [Diversity], Chip Weseloh [Future Meetings], Jeff Costa [Publications member], Woody Woodrow [Texas Local Committee], Anna Vallery [Communications and Outreach], Marisa Martinez [Diversity, oncoming Councilor], Ricardo Zambrano [Finance & Investment], Jeff Spendelow [Bylaws, Ornithological Council], Susan Elbin [Ornithological Council, Future Meetings], Pat Baird [Membership], Amanda Haverland [Communications and Outreach]

Visitors (non-voting): Paige Byerly [Managing Editor], Sara Schweitzer, Michelle Stantial [oncoming Councilor], Aliya Caldwell [oncoming Councilor], Alison Koccek, Jorge Correa-Sandoval, Kiah Williams [oncoming Councilor]

09:06ET Dave Moore calls meeting to order (23 participants)

Land acknowledgement

MOTION: Accept today's agenda. Chris/Patty PASSES unanimously. [Note: Voting today took place via Zoom Chat, results verified by at least 2 people/motion.]

MOTION: Approve the minutes from the last Council meeting (23 Apr 2021) with minor corrections (typos). Erica/Gopi PASSES unanimously.

09:13 Strategic Plan - Dave Moore (23 participants)

Presentation on Strategic Plan (SP) overview

- What has changed since our last SP (2011)? Lots of examples:
 - Outreach and communications - identified as a gap, needs a strategy
 - Student Activities - scope has broadened from activities/events-oriented to “engagement” in a broader sense.
 - Diversity - committee did not exist in 2011
 - American Bird Conservancy, Ornithological Council - restructure our approach?
- Context - why update SP?
 - Last done in 2011. Time to review which recommendations were implemented and what the outcomes of those changes were. Also an opportunity to ask how we should address new issues/opportunities (e.g., advancing technology)?
 - We are a volunteer-based society with turnover. Having a formalized SP and Handbook helps with continuity and saves people from having to reinvent the wheel. Opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive.
- What is involved in updating the SP? SP is two documents:
 - 2011 Plan
 - Manual (last updated 2005-2009) - potential to be a great resource. Update/add:
 - Major deliverables for each officer and committee, and annual timing
 - Formalize linkages to other committees
- Update these two documents in parallel. How? Crowdsourcing, break down into small chunks, let people who are most familiar with that area do the work.
 - Last time, 3 themes were identified: Sustainability, increasing international participation, increasing our impact.
 - For each, pick out committees that could contribute to that theme, and then used criteria to assess and make recommendations
 - Keep same themes? Opportunity to revise priorities.
- Proposed way forward: roles
 - Ad hoc steering committee to synthesize and edit small pieces, keep us to a schedule. Include a diversity of experiences in the planning process.
 - Committee Co-chairs and Officers: priority setting, small piece recommendations.
 - Councilors: input into priorities, volunteer for ad hoc support work or tackle specific issues.
 - Membership: need a diversity of perspectives, so make good effort to recruit volunteers to give input.
- 3 main tasks to accomplish:
 - (1) Define shared values and priorities: survey membership, including committees, officers, councilors in a workshop.
 - (2) Assess committee function and define priority actions for moving forward: identify strengths, weaknesses, risks, opportunities.
 - Working group, independent assessment, SDM workshop
 - (3) Draft SP, finalize, implement.

09:35 Q&A, Discussion on SP (25 participants)

- Can/should we use Structured Decision Making (SDM)?
 - Jim Lyons, Michelle Stantial and Dave Moore have been involved with them before. SDMs require that the group frames the decision, then start with values and core concerns before analyzing options.
 - Practical option: Can be done virtually in a few multi-hour sessions (e.g., Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network recent SDM).
 - Professional facilitator or done in-house? Jim's experience is with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service curriculum which allows for either. Facilitator is most useful if they are familiar with the SDM process. For WbS, we have enough people who know the SDM process that we could probably do facilitation ourselves.
- Do we want to start from scratch when revising the SP, e.g., mission statement onward?
 - Yes, would be helpful to be clear to help us move forward together.
- Timeline
 - Suggestion: Have SDM workshop soon because it helps define problem and core values.
 - Survey to membership in next 1-2 months.
 - Poor voter turnout generally, so offer open Zoom forums (~town hall) or something more deliberate. Use as many outputs as possible to give people multiple chances to contribute.
 - Reach out to members for help on Steering Committee, not just blanket mass email. **Patty is volunteering to do that this month.**
- **Dave will email today's SP presentation to the new Steering Committee.** People can comment on the general framework and start to tweak where some of these ideas fit into a timeline. Start town halls ASAP.
 - Steering committee volunteers? Need ~5 organized people that will reach out to Co-Chairs/point members to keep things on track, do outreach, share the final products.
 - Gail can start in Jan. Oncoming Councilors? Patty will reach out.
 - Will they lead workshops? They could, but another option is they could find a point person to be in charge.
 - Suggestion: Give a preamble at the Business Meeting & Committee Fair (this meeting) to advertise.

10:08 Nominating Committee Report (27 attendees)

- Discuss membership changes and diversified Council.
- Thank you Gopi, Miyuki, Caroline, and Danielle (outgoing Councilors) for your work on Council!
- Voter turnout was low (as usual). Of 493 members in the system, 110 responded (22% overall; 27% of regular members, 16% of student members).
 - Low student turnout partly explained by the timing of the influx of new student members following the free membership initiative.

- Historical perspective: 22% is ~normal from when Clay was Secretary (mail-in). Chris Schneider (Schneider Group) sent multiple emails and we extended the deadline by 3 days to encourage full participation.
- Thanks to all those who ran and congratulations to this year's winners!
- Councilors, think about who you might want to nominate in the future!

Secretary Report

- Discuss use of Survey Monkey. Consensus is that it is good.
- Virtual meetings: Email vs. live votes - need to agree on a policy/practice. Concerns over time zones ~ participation, logistics of the online platform.
 - Consider difference between substantive vs. standard "accept minutes" votes
 - Voting is an opportunity to engage, so work to be inclusive on even small matters.
 - Reminder: Anyone can move to postpone a motion or move it online, or designate a proxy for procedural matters.
 - Don't overcomplicate it, be consistent.

10:54 Student membership motions - Caroline Poli (26 members)

- Background
 - Cost is a barrier to membership. Students are engaged but don't get full membership benefits.
 - We have been adding, losing students a lot over the years. Membership is sometimes included in registration, other times not.
 - Student membership has been dropping since 2011.
 - Free student memberships starting in Apr 2021
 - Student presenters vs student members - mismatch.
 - Increased membership is not the same as increased retention and engagement - need to be addressed by separate policies.
- 3 motions were shared with Council via email prior to today's meeting. In summary:
 - Grant 1 year of free membership to every student and early career person who registers for meeting starting in 2021+
 - In perpetuity
 - Reimburse those who paid
- Discussion
 - Q: Why would a student need a paper copy of the journal? Unsteady internet or non-academic affiliation - few students do this (~5)
 - Debate: Is cost a barrier to membership?
 - Schneider Group data show that student *retention* is the problem. \$10-20 membership fee is not too big an ask, data indicate that recruitment is not the issue.
 - Might vary between U.S. and Canada vs. rest of world.
 - Suggestion: Adjust motion to target non-North American rather than students?

- General agreement, but \$10-15K/year graduate student salary is not livable so \$25 is actually a big deal for a lot of students even in NA/Canada. Their membership will be beneficial to WbS, as it could lead to publications in our journal, etc.
- Small fee is good to encourage engagement (e.g., online courses that are free go unfinished because there's no initial investment on student's part).
 - Counterpoint: Consensus has not been reached in published studies on whether paying for something increases engagement.
 - Counterpoint: Meeting attendance *is* a form of investment.
- Other societies:
 - BOU: \$20 pounds for students, \$10 pound for non-NA/EU (which is more than ours).
 - AOS: providing free membership to students.
- Logistics:
 - Students could request a coupon number from [Membership Committee] and sign up for free.
 - Avoid third-party signups - the action of signing up is an important part of the kind of engagement we're seeking.
- Lot of countries don't have professional organizations, so students may be very shy to reach out (cultural barriers).
 - COVID has helped in this regard - bump in attendance (virtual) from people who might normally be unable to attend
 - Keep it open, expose to professional society, and engagement may follow
 - Global: seed members b/c of communication preferences (e.g., not email)
- Suggestion: Grants are 50/50 students/professionals; could offer free memberships to everyone that sends in a grants application, etc. Could also target non-North Americans.
 - Likewise, some committees have student representatives who are not members. Make them members for free! Benefits communications, etc.
- Define Early Career or lump in with students as self-defined, honors system
- Complex but many solutions, critical issue.

MOTION: Table the 3 motions to resume debate later. John Anderson/Kate Shlepr. FAILS (no formal vote because no additional support voiced.)

MOTION 1 [from email] *minus* electronic-only part. Patty/Kate

With the Friendly amendment (from Patty): I move that the WbS grant 1 year of free membership to every student and early career scientist who registers for the annual meeting, beginning in 2021 and lasting in perpetuity or until the program is terminated by a vote of council. These memberships will be electronic-only. Patty/Kate 11/1 PASSES.

Non-US, Canada:

MOTION: I move that the WBS grant 1 year of free membership to all scientists outside the US and Canada who register for the annual meeting, submit a grant proposal, or submit a paper to *Waterbirds* beginning in 2021 and lasting in perpetuity or until the program is terminated by a vote of council. These memberships will be electronic-only. Patty/Erica 10/0 PASSES.

Caroline will follow up by email on the remaining 2 motions. Thanks for your work on this issue, Caroline!

12:12 Treasurer's Report - Chris Custer

- WbS is not in great financial shape after COVID. Expenses less than revenue, but that gap is closing quickly. Not confident that we'll end this fiscal year in the black (depends on *Waterbirds* journal issues, other bills that are coming in).
 - Caution us to be conservative about spending/cutting out membership revenue.
 - BioOne JSTOR is the biggest source of income but has been dropping and will continue to in 2022. May/not rebound. Page charge revenues have also fallen during COVID - those who routinely pay page charges have stopped doing so.
 - Editorial office expenses are down because of the journal's backlog, but charges will be coming in.
 - Possible to tap into endowment to cover costs. Philosophical issues we need to address doing this (e.g. Cooper's Ornithological Society).
 - We have been skimming the endowment over time for special projects, grants.
- Ornithological Council - AOS stopped paying for it. What value are we getting? (\$6,000/yr):
 - E.g., IACUC - national revamp of guidelines. Laura Bies is a representative there, and she offers critical outreach on our behalf.

MOTION: Accept the Treasurer's Report. PASSES unanimously.

12:32 Finance and Investment Committee - Ricardo Zambrano

- Kushlan, Nisbet, and Waterbird Society endowment accounts update.
- Total portfolio has performed very well through COVID with the help of our financial account manager (+9% since 2015 with major gains reported in last year).

MOTION: Accept the F&I Report. Patty/Don PASSES unanimously.

12:40 Membership Committee Report - Pat Baird

- Issue with Schneider Group - cannot easily measure membership retention.
- Membership on the committee itself is down. Pat would appreciate new help!
- Society membership is dropping. Why?
 - Poor communication with other committees, e.g., Grants Committee, has led to poor retention. Hope to work on this moving forward.

12:45 Recognition & Awards Report - Patty Szczys

- Erica Nol endorsement.

- Get very few nominations outside this core Council+ group when issuing call in late spring.

12:48 Student Activities Report - Gail Fraser

- The meeting's (2021 Virtual) activities: student-mentor meet-up, early career panel. No travel awards.
- Discussion
 - How are we sitting for travel funds for the next meeting (2022) since the last 2 meetings (2020-2021) have been virtual?
 - Dedicated student travel fund is fed by meeting proceeds and silent auctions. Approximately \$38,000 available. Had been spending \$5,000-6,000 per year and adding \$2,000-3,000 per year in meeting proceeds
 - This year's auction is doing well!!

Archives Report - Kate Shlepr

- Developed a timeline for guidance on annual Archives maintenance (e.g., file away annual meeting materials).

13:00 BREAK [Scheduled as such to accommodate different time zones.]

18:00 RESUME

Outreach and Communications - Amanda Haverland and Anna Vallery

- Social media: Followers are increasing!
- Would always like to post more, so if there are volunteers to post campaigns or ideas or articles let Anna know! Reach out via email or Slack.
- Updates to the website: Email Amanda/Anna if you/your committee want anything added.
- Use of Slack in future? Anna happy to help set this up if we decide we want to use it.
- Discussion
 - Boundaries of topics: Waterbirds in general, or specific to WbS society, or.... ? PSG takes a pretty general approach. Don't get hung up on gate-keeping - encourage content
 - Suggestion: Generate timeline so that not everything is last-minute. E.g., Jan 1 Council changeover, so update website **Committee will follow up with new councilors and anyone who posts material.**

18:22 Diversity Committee Report - Marisa Martinez and Liz Craig

- Lots of participation after Panel discussion in the last meeting (2021) which drove most of this year's work.
 - DEI Action Plan was accepted by Council.

- Note: Many actions require inter-committee collaboration.
- Free student memberships (part of Action Plan).
- Proposal for DEI consultant did not pass. In summer after Council meeting, committee received feedback and a revised request is in the works now. The committee's hope is to share it with the new Council in early 2022.
- Career Panel is happening at this meeting (2021 Virtual), as well as Committee Fair.
- Drafting a Council Inclusiveness Guidelines document for new Council members.
 - Suggestion: Add these to the Handbook.
- Proposed 2022 activities: Consultant proposal, develop events for international representation and LGBTQ for Texas 2022.
- Discussion
 - Make sure we're dovetailing with Membership Committee. **Marisa will reach out to Pat Baird.**
 - Collection of addresses and contact info for historically black colleges [in Action Plan] - remind us why? This was an outcome of the 2021 Panel. The goal is to increase the directory of venues WbS could be targeting for engagement.
 - Discuss NSF and other funding we could target.

18:38 Publications Committee Report - Jeff Costa and Erica Nol

- Paige Byerly = new Managing Editor. Welcome Paige!
- Andy's term has come to an end. Thanks, Andy, and thanks to Stephanie Jones for her help this year!
- The Editor-in-Chief advertisement is out, hire will be completed soon. Thanks to members of the search committee for their time on this issue!
- BioOne is still a big source of revenue, no major changes in that regard.

18:45 Ornithological Council (OC) Report - Jeff Spendelow

- Laura Bies took over as executive director and sole employee of the OC (8 hr/wk). Looking for ways to get support from other societies to increase her role.
- What does OC do for you? Lawyers by profession, so unique expertise to deal with some of these issues. Consortium of societies. Responsive to research permitting issues, policy issues. Additionally:
 - Guidelines for Use of Wild Birds in Research.
 - Digest (every 2 months) sent to membership.
 - Ornithology Exchange is the web platform.
 - Animal Care and Use guidelines (under revision).
- Debate: Co-Chairs would like WbS to consider increasing our contribution.
 - Suggestion: Option instead of or in addition to cash: add a \$2 or \$5 surcharge to annual memberships.
 - WbS already provides \$6,000 annually. What's the benefit of \$2 extra/member? Co-Chairs are asking for \$9,000/yr on behalf of the OC but there are alternatives like the surcharge without WbS dishing more cash outright.

- Sympathetic but hesitant to provide more money given this morning's budget. Like the idea of a surcharge as a way to give more money without it coming out of Society.
- Some of the disconnect might be in how well we boil down/emphasize the value when they need it.
 - Work we/they could do to improve OC's communications?
- Why are other societies dropping out? Those societies thought they could do the same work in-house and wanted more control, but Co-Chairs don't believe those societies will find much success.
- Are there data on members' use of OC services?
 - Caution: Don't just consider individual service use, but Congress watch, and other less tangible services.
 - Jonathan Cohen is in touch with Laura 3-4 times per year. Other people/organizations use OC services a lot more frequently.
- Long-term outlook of the OC? They're working on ways to make it sustainable, but ultimately not sure.
- Premature to ask for more money (motion). Go-fund-me or social media posts... more buy-in from a wider group of people. Go to bird observatories, bird banding council...
 - Reaching out could be a recruitment tool also (for WbS). Suggest Co-Chairs work with Outreach and Communications to do this. OC is a benefit to being a member of the Society.

19:20 Research Grants Report - Nellie Tsipoura

- Since 2012, Grants has been getting 20-25 proposals per year but got 46 this year. Quality of proposals has been improving, so selection has been difficult. Council increased spending last year, so the committee was able to award more research grants.
- Are education/social type grants ever funded? Interesting category that's periodically been funded (e.g., 1 this year).
- Black-listed research groups with fake proposals - caution! Committee is aware.
- Follow-up needed on whether publications happen. Don't want to create more work, but welcome new volunteers.
- Update submission process (instead of by email)? Google Form or similar.
 - High front-end investment for a "real" platform like DRYFTA. **Patty will follow up.**
 - Member Clicks w/ Schneider? Might have applications.
 - Only 50 proposals - not worth investing a lot of money.
- Q to Council/Chris Custer: Stick with same maximum award amounts in 2022? The amount changes every 3 years - take 3% of the 5-yr running average. Stick with the same amount this year and it will be re-assess in subsequent years.

19:40 Bylaws Report - Chris Custer

- 5 inquiries, 1 request to change bylaws (2nd student rep).
- Second Student Councilor will be elected in 2022 (so rotates with other Student seat).
- Discussion

- How do we handle a suite of bylaw changes? No quick way - do it by membership vote.

19:45 BREAK

20:05 Resume

Conservation Committee - Jonathan Cohen

- 2021 Publication Award - Carle et al. 2019! Lead author agreed to be the speaker at our awards ceremony this year.
- Advocacy - a lot of the committee is in a position where they're not allowed to advocate because of conflicts of interest with their job. Committee also lost the help of Ellen Paul (OC). Need to identify a new approach in order to continue to be effective.
 - Scout for issues or wait for outsiders to ask for issue? In the past the committee has done a bit of both. There have been some massive campaigns (multi-society e.g., through Laura Bies (OC)), but smaller scale ones too.

20:12 Off-agenda conversation about hybrid meetings

- Cost is an issue when hosting meetings. We're currently using DRYFTA because Dale Gawlik's institution recommended it.
- Ideally we wouldn't just have a camera where you can observe live talks because that's not very engaging. However, that's the limit of what we can handle organizing as a band of volunteers, so we'd need a facility and technical support to do anything more ambitious.
 - Hybrid option is important for sustaining international engagement.
 - E.g., Danielle invested 20 hr/wk for many weeks to make this current meeting happen.
- Suggestion: Incentivize students (e.g., lower travel costs) to arrive a day early to train them on the systems so they can volunteer on tech teams.
- Some are concerned for a potential drop in face-to-face attendance with hybrid option.
 - Travel authorizations might not get approved by employers if there is a cheap virtual option. Keep virtual component relatively minor.
 - Suggestion: Continue to plan meetings in places that people want to visit anyway.
- Future Meetings Committee has started considering options going forward.
 - Suggestion: Have regional sessions as a stand-alone virtual meeting (time zone appropriate) within the in-person meeting.
 - Suggestion: Let other societies go first. Hybrid meetings are a way to grow the organization, but hosting them is entirely unfamiliar to us (and not a small ask).
- This year (2021 Virtual): 200 registered, 75 presentations.
- Next year (2022 Texas): Consider having a virtual component so that we don't alienate people who can't travel, but at a low technical level, e.g., 1-2 sessions that are virtual (Zoom synchronous).

- Local Committee (Dale Gawlik) will share an updated Proposal with Council. Let them suggest what they think is possible in terms of technology rather than prescribing it to them.
- **Kate - Update the Handbook to include guidance on hybrid meetings**

20:45 Future Meetings Report / 2022 Meeting Update - Chip Weseloh and Dale Gawlik

- Dale Gawlik and Woody Woodrow are moving forward despite lingering COVID risks. The Texas meeting has been pushed back 2 yrs now and Dale will now take the helm in Corpus Christi.
 - **Patty will work with Dale to survey members through Schneider to get a sense of willingness to travel.**
- Hybrid range of options - anything is possible with money and time.
 - Council (see conversation above) guidance: Preserve the in-person atmosphere and encourage people to travel when they can, but incorporate hybrid/virtual options. No desire for fully integrated hybrid meeting (no ground-breaking moves).
- Overview of Corpus Christi, Texas meeting as currently proposed:
 - Dates: Between Oct 31-Fri Nov 8 (not set in stone).
 - Location: Slideshow from Omnii Hotel about Corpus Christi and venue. The Harte Research Institute (HRI; Dale's home institution) has a relationship with the Omni and can get a good rate.
 - Local Committee: Woody, Clay Green, 3 people who Woody had reached out to in 2020-2021 (Dale will follow up), and Dale's institutional contacts.
 - Subcommittees: social media, student services (through HRI), fundraising, tech, field trips (1-2 people each)
 - Fundraising - short turnaround to get requests in before agency budgets get settled (late Nov). Dale thinks he has some good leverage (local interest in birds).
 - Joint meeting with Texas Colonial Waterbird group? Seems possible, Dale will follow up.

21:21 2022 Budget - Chris Custer

- Expected revenue
 - Membership dues - free membership means this revenue line will go down
 - Page charges - Number is estimated, and it's shifted lately with COVID.
- Expected expenses
 - Meeting software become \$0.00 in the table as this cost (\$2,632/yr) will be paid from the Meeting Proceeds account
 - Looks like we'll have enough proceeds from this year (2021; \$6,555) to cover next year's costs
 - Cost of mailings could change because the rate assumes we are sending out 4 issues (might be different in 2022 as editors play catch-up).

- On balance, the Society is predicted to enter a deficit but that estimate is within the margin of error.

MOTION: Accept the 2022 Budget. Kate/Clay PASSES unanimously.

21:34 Editor's Report - Dave Moore (for Andy Kasner)

- Journal has been struggling for some years now. Hopeful that new hires will reverse these trends.
- We've been behind on Journal output since mid-2020. In 2020, Issues 3-4 were published. In 2021, first 2 volumes sent to printer.
- Stephanie Jones stepped in and did copy editing for the behind issues. We need to do something to honor. (She's only claiming expenses.)
 - Pay for her travel to next meeting?
 - Service Award? Yes!

Patty makes the recommendation of Stephanie Jones on behalf of the Awards Committee for the WBS Distinguished Service Award.

MOTION: Accept Awards Committee's recommendation. Chris/Don PASSES unanimously.

- Last two issues: copy-editing stage for vol. 3. Paige is helping now, Andy thinks it will be to Printer in mid-Nov (ambitious). Vol 4 2021 would normally come out in Dec, but Andy only has 10 submissions in good enough state to be included in that last issue. Andy is saying Dec but not sure that's realistic.
- Dave proposes combining Vol 3-4 in a single printed issue so that we start fresh in 2022 with new editors.
 - Revenue ramifications
- Thanks Pubs Committee for your work on hiring our new editors!
- Editorial process relies heavily on volunteer Associate Editors. To ensure new team hits ground running, get started on a list of people for them to contact.
 - Database of papers in progress? No.
- White paper on editorial publication to be submitted to journal for when we're lean on content
 - Not a good idea right now. Pipeline problem, not content problem, and concerns about integrity of the journal
 - Review papers maybe in new year
- Table this issue for this week to discuss trade-offs after we understand options and revenue. Dave will follow up. Authors have been very patient and understanding.

22:09 Motion to adjourn. Kate/Gopi PASSES unanimously.