

Future Meetings Committee of the Waterbird Society

2012 Annual Report

Membership:

Chip Weseloh, Chair (chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca) and Susan Elbin (selbin@nycaudubon.org)

This committee welcomes new members; those interested in serving should contact the chair.

2011-2012 Committee Activities:

This committee meets (by email) whenever new ideas emerge.

At the time of this writing (July), we do not have any additional firm proposals for future WbS meetings beyond what was announced at Annapolis. Germany is our meeting place for 2013 and we are working on others for 2014 and beyond. Felipe Chevez-Ramirez is working on a proposal for Baja, California, for 2014 and we have been assured that it will be ready for discussion at Vancouver. The potential meeting site in North Dakota has been essentially withdrawn due to lack of local support. The Florida Keys and Alaska are still potential sites where local contacts/organizers have not yet been located.

Beyond looking for potential sites and local organizers, the Future Meetings Committee has conducted two surveys during 2012 -- one of Council and a second of a smaller focus group -- to address where we are headed with future meetings (please see attached report).

2012-2013 Proposed Work of the Committee:

Objectives: To secure a meeting site and proposal for 2014 and for 1-3 years beyond that, if possible.

We meet by email whenever new ideas emerge.

Requests for Council Action:

1. Approval of our decisions on recommendations in Vision 2020 (see below).
2. Purchase of necessary software for registration and abstract submission.
3. Vote on proposal for 2014, if submitted as promised.

2013 Actions Approved by Council:

- no additional action items at this time

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The Future Meetings Committee has conducted two surveys during 2012 -- one of Council and a second of a smaller focus group -- to address where we are headed with future meetings:

What actions should be taken, with respect to future meetings, that were recommended in our Vision 2020? How, if at all, would those actions be impacted by the formation of the proposed SFO? Another question of discussion was what determines whether a member participates in a WbS conference? Among those factors listed were: first and foremost, cost was often the major consideration (are outside funds available?) but location, field trips and the potential for seeing new birds, likelihood of seeing colleagues and size of the meeting (just our society or a joint meeting) were all considerations discussed. Reduced registration costs for the growing number of retired members was also a consideration.

How are future meeting locations selected?

LOCAL COMMITTEES AND HOSTING

Two methods of choosing locations for future meetings have been employed over the years. The more reliable and time-tested method is to have members come forward and offer to host a meeting at or near their home/work location. This has worked well. The other method is to pick a desirable location, Cape May, the Florida Keys or Alaska, and try to find a member(s) who would organize such a meeting. This is often a slower process. It was felt strongly that in this regard a meeting proposal from a member is better/easier than selecting a location and the actively soliciting a proposal from local members.

There was also considerable discussion about North American vs. non-North American locations and of meetings outside the core area of our membership, i.e. eastern North America. Many potential meeting locations outside of these areas have been mentioned lately. Because we are an advertised International organization, opinion seemed to favour meeting internationally as often as possible.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND VISION 2020

The Society's master plan for the next decade or so, Vision 2020, made several recommendations for the Future Meetings Committee. Kathy Parsons asked that we discuss these in a small subcommittee and bring forth our deliberations. The recommendations and prevailing thoughts were as follows:

- 1. Have at least 1 Non-North American member on the Future Meetings Committee – Difficult to do and probably not really necessary.**

2. Find person to host non-North American meeting every 3-4 yrs. – Try to do this as often as possible, even more than once every 3-4 years, but don't force a meeting if no organizer is available.
3. Maintain Meeting Handbook and make sure it is available to potential hosts. - Agreed.
4. Translate pertinent sections of the Meeting Handbook into Spanish & other languages. - Felipe Chavez-Rameriz will oversee the translation into Spanish. Are there any volunteers for any other language?
5. The Vice President and Future Meetings Committee Chair should investigate joint meetings, especially for non-North American meetings. - Joint meetings often get too large; be careful. Perhaps this suggestion is more pertinent for non-North American meetings.
6. Maintain Abstract deadlines, etc. – yes, but be realistic. Students need time to get data analyzed.
7. Assist local meeting committees to reduce time and cost of hosting meetings, e.g. The Waterbird Society should have their own software for registration and abstracts. – Overwhelming support. Yes, we should do this.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND THE SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY (SFO)

Our understanding of what the SFO is proposing for future meetings is that there would be an annual general meeting (AGM) of SFO, as most societies have had to date. Taxonomical or Topical Sections (e.g. shorebirds, colonial waterbirds, long-legged waders, etc.) could be organized and meet within the SFO AGM. Alternatively, they could hold their own separate meeting at a different time and place if they generated the necessary funds. We were uncertain if this meant we could encourage “our” members to skip the SFO AGM and just come to, for example, a waterbirds-oriented meeting in the Sep. – Nov. time period as we have been holding. Hopefully, we can get some clarification on this in Vancouver. Holding separate meetings such as this seems counter-productive to SFO goals.

Finally, we were asked to analyze the retention of new members recruited at North American vs. non-North American meetings. The Membership Committee Task Force is currently working on this.

Respectfully submitted,

Chip Weseloh, Chair

Susan Elbin, Member