



Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation



Meeting: Southeast PARC Meeting

Date: February 21-23, 2000

Location: Joseph Jones Research Center - Albany, GA

Proceedings

February 21

Welcome and Introduction

by **John Jensen**, Georgia DNR & Co-Chair of **SE PARC** Working Group --

The southeastern region, as defined by the USFWS, is well represented here today. Only Kentucky and Louisiana are not represented. Wide range of interested parties - state agencies, federal agencies, timber industry, pet trade, universities, conservation organizations, etc. There were many others who expressed interest in attending, but in order to ensure that this is an effective working meeting, and due to space limitations at the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center (JWJERC), we needed to limit attendance. One goal of this meeting should be to determine how to get everyone in the SE involved who wants to be involved. You are representing not only your organizations, but also all of the others who would like to get involved and are not in attendance.

Funding is becoming increasingly available through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), federal agencies, et al. [John read a note from Peter Stangel, director of NFWF, about getting working group projects funded quickly and encouraging ideas from the group.]

Frank Cole, JWJERC --

The mission of the JWJERC is to provide a program of excellence in ecology and natural resource management that includes integrated research, education, and conservation goals. The center is located on 29,000 acres of southern shooting plantation lands. We no longer are considered a plantation. The original owner, past long-term chairman of Coca-Cola, Robert Woodruff, was a generous individual who sponsored and funded many human health, education, and environmental efforts.

There is not an old-growth forest on-site. The longleaf pine forest was cut-over until the 1920's and may have had some timber removed until the 1980's. There are some 17,000 acres of longleaf pine forests. 12,000 acres remain in native groundcover. This system supports a tremendous diversity. A guide for the site is available and was produced jointly by the JWJERC and GA DNR. What you will see at the JWJERC is very indicative of Mr. Woodruff. He was very good to the animals and people who worked here, and he invited individuals like Herbert Stoddard and Aldo Leopold to the area. The center is an active ecological research center with a staff of about 30 individuals. The center is committed to outreach and education, research and conservation. We are very proud to host this first Southeastern **PARC** meeting. At the initial development meeting (about 12 people meeting in a hotel room in Tallahassee, FL) we were asked by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature - "Is herpetofauna in trouble in North America? And if so, why?" We did not have the information to

answer that, but those of you who have been out there working with herps and their habitats for years, did and could. However, there was no forum to bring together your efforts. The next meeting was held here. That group served as the initial steering committee and **PARC** developed from a regional effort to eventually a national and international effort. **PARC** is now represented by over 40 states and several other countries. We (JWJERC) are committed to your work.

Joe Mitchell, Univ. of Richmond, introduced the facilitator,
Henry Mushinksy, University of South Florida --

We have the following mission statement "(see **PARC mission**)". We are here partly as a reaction to what is going on in the United States, we are here partly because what we are doing isn't working. We need to identify what we want to do, who should do it, and when it needs to be done by. We have to identify common ground. I will attempt to keep us focused on developing that action plan. We have to determine what we think is important to amphibians and reptiles in the Southeast. We also have to decide how we want to work. We have a national model, but we may decide state-level planning is a better way to work. I get the feeling many of you know each other and so a working relationship may not be a problem. We have to decide where and how often to meet. In many ways, we are laying down a template for how we want to work. There are also a couple of people who had asked to say a few words about their groups before we get started:

Ernie Garcia, United States Forest Service --

Brief overview of Forest Service involvement. Nationwide a land base of 191 million acres, 11% of the national forested area. We have no experts in herpetology. We have committed biologists who conserve herpetofauna. We have \$700,000 for herp conservation dedicated this year. We are pretty well connected to private landowners who manage 68% of the forested land in the US. We have 8 conservation agreements to manage herps and prevent listings. We would like to carry out our "Land Manager's Guide" for herpetofauna in the Southeast. We would like to take it to the next level and integrate predictive modeling. We wish to share in partnership efforts (thru challenge-cost share program) and participate in the development of funding strategies and broad-based conservation strategies. We need information to improve management on our lands for herpetofauna. We need information on habitat relationships, riparian areas and monitoring techniques. We need your suggestions for species to include on our sensitive species list. We need help with education and outreach. We want to stem the nearly universal prejudice toward reptiles and amphibians. We also need information for the Southeastern Sustainable Forestry Initiative (Dr. Margaret Greek?).

Whit Gibbons, Savannah River Ecology Lab --

Thank you to those who organized and are facilitating this meeting. It's hard to know what to talk about, because as Henry said, all of you are familiar with **PARC**. All of you know amphibians have problems globally, but reptiles also have problems. **PARC** is the answer to the problems facing herpetofauna. I think we have to leave this workshop with some specific recommendations that can be identified for funding.

In a general sense, we also need to talk about general problems, one of the biggest of which is attitude. I challenge anybody concerned about reptiles and amphibians to determine how to change people's attitudes about these animals. [showed a 40 year-old slide showing snake harvesting/hunting] and pointed out "this is an attitude." The State of North Carolina is facing this (attitude) with the protection of venomous snakes. Partners in Flight has been so effective with birds. People love birds, they can look out their window and see them, they're pretty. We have to convince people that these animals (herpetofauna) can be abundant, colorful, et al. They can be in places we

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can't see and if you destroy these areas, you lose the animals – I'm talking about "hidden biodiversity." People have got to know what they have before they are concerned about losing it. They don't know they have marbled salamanders right next door to them unless they're outside on the first rainy night in October. A lot of the animals we deal with are nocturnal. There are four species of glass lizards in Georgia, and herpetologists don't even know anything about them. There are no ecology papers that I know of on them.

We also need to convince people that venomous snakes are not aggressive; they are defensive, but not aggressive. It's attitude - these are beautiful animals we deal with, most people just don't see them. That is the way art museums work - not everyone has seen the Mona Lisa, but it's nice to know it's protected in safe hands.

I think we all know what the major threats are to these animals, but we need to leave this meeting with specifics for the Southeast (what could be funded to help solve the problem?). We need more research and need to make it available to, and communicate with, land managers, industry, general public, other scientists, etc. We need to turn more attention to educating the public. Partnerships - we already have some projects funded and sponsored by our partners. We have different agendas, but we can help each other. **PARC** is different - we have a new way of thinking and doing things. We have to find cooperative ways to do things. We have to listen to what people need solutions for. We have to work with others to identify donors. How do we prioritize research? We have to identify specific regions, habitats, and species where problems have been identified. We then have to be specific in each area to identify how to make a difference. I hope we can get together at the North American next month and share the ideas from this meeting.

What is the difference between **PARC** and many other groups out there? **PARC** deals with ALL reptiles and amphibians. **PARC** is habitat-focused. **PARC** is about partnerships (agencies, conservation organizations, industry, etc.). We are committed to keeping what we have ("keep common species common"). Herpetofauna is not gone yet, its not all over. We need to go out in the Southeast, tell people who live along rivers that softshell turtles live in their rivers. There are people in Virginia who don't know there are only four known populations of tiger salamanders left there. If people knew about these animals, they'd be amazed! We need to convey that herpetology is fun. We also have to take opportunities. When we find something unusual, we have to share it. We've got some amazing things, we need to let people know about it, that's all it takes and I think this is the group to do it. Thank you.

Joe Mitchell introduces representatives to provide updates on the activities of the various working groups from the **PARC** National Organizational Conference and since:

Monitoring: John Jensen --

Summarized activities of the monitoring working group during the **PARC** National Organizational Meeting in Atlanta (see conference proceedings for details)

Erin Muths, United State Geological Survey, has since written and submitted a National Biological Information Infrastructure (program within Biological Research Division of the US Geological Survey) proposal to collect information and construct a database of inventory, monitoring, and research projects for reptiles on Dept. of Interior lands.

Management: Kurt Buhlmann, Conservation International --

Summarized activities of the management working group during the **PARC** National Organizational Meeting in Atlanta (see conference proceedings for details)

Since the Atlanta meeting, compilation of a database of management-related articles that are relevant to herps has begun.

Research: Mac Baughman, Westvaco Corporation --

Summarized activities of the research working group during the **PARC** National Organizational Meeting in Atlanta (see conference proceedings for details)

Policy, Regulations and Trade: Earl Possardt, US Fish and Wildlife Service --

Summarized activities of the policy, trade, and regulation working group during the **PARC** National Organizational Meeting in Atlanta (see conference proceedings for details)

Follow-up: Need to broaden the diversity of the group - more states, NGO's, ...

Develop policy related to release of captive animals

The next meeting will be in Arizona in May, 2000.

Education/Outreach: George Heinrich, Gopher Tortoise Council --

Summarized activities of the education/outreach working group during the **PARC** National Organizational Meeting in Atlanta (see conference proceedings for details)

Since the Atlanta meeting, Whit Gibbons and his group have steadily produced **PARC** educational materials, including proceedings from that meeting, a **PARC** website, a two-sided, color information sheet, and a Power-point presentation. In addition, Tony Murphy (Co-Chair, Education/Outreach Working Group) is working on developing a generic presentation from Whit's Power-point presentation. Tony hopes that it will be downloadable from the **PARC** website by the summer of 2000.

In September 1999, the Northeast **PARC** Regional Working Group met in Cape May, New Jersey. A Northeast **PARC** Priority List was developed that includes the need to popularize herp declines, educate policy makers on herp declines, and promote public awareness of conservation issues. That group is scheduled to meet again in March 2000 in New York to identify top regional priorities and clarify an action plan.

In December 1999, the **PARC** Midwest Regional Working Group met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Tony Murphy reports that the group is currently planning some projects.

The **PARC** Steering Committee has suggested that regional or state working groups begin by trying to identify one priority project in one or more of the working groups. The suggestion for the Education/Outreach Working Group was "for a species, habitat, or the

PARC initiative, and could also be directed toward a particular audience (school kids, hunters, general public, etc.).

Where do we go from here? A national **PARC** Education/Outreach Working Group meeting is scheduled for 14-15 April 2000 at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. It will be hosted by A Thousand Friends of Frogs Project, which will be holding its annual meeting at the same time. While an agenda has not yet been formed, the working group will examine ideas put forward by the Steering Committee and various regional groups on education and outreach and where we can go with action items. That meeting is open to all **PARC** members. Tony Murphy hopes to be able to cover some of the expenses for this meeting through sponsorships, but needs help in identifying potential donors.

In closing, there is an ongoing discussion within **PARC**, that any real work accomplished in regards to education will have to be done at regional levels. The development of regional working groups or committees within the larger Education/Outreach Working Group is imperative for our success. Recruitment of working members within

each region will make it possible to respond to existing regional needs and, maybe even more importantly, further strengthen **PARC** through increased diversity. I look forward to talking with others interested in educational aspects of **PARC** in the southeast region during the next few days.

[Discussion]

We began our afternoon discussion of the Southeastern **PARC** group's efforts here.

What are we going to do here in SE?? (Joe Mitchell's guiding question)

Henry Mushinsky--

One of the things I have come to believe is that old saying "Think globally, act locally." I think this is what we are here to do today. We need to start in our own backyards...

How should we structure SE PARC?

Do we want to maintain the issue-oriented structure of the national group, should we be more state focused?

Another issue is what are our goals?

Are we happy with the mission statement? Should we modify it?

Much discussion on this topic, but overall **PARC** mission statement was decided to be adequate

Do we include Caribbean in Southeastern **PARC** or include in International Working Group? -Ernie Garcia. Much discussion – for now, only SE US states.

Structure of PARC?

Do we set geographic boundaries? Ray Ashton-yes, need state working groups. George Heinrich - need regional working groups. J. Jensen – more appropriate to have state working groups in **PARC** than in Partners in Flight (PIF), since PIF concerns conservation of migratory spp. and therefore can't be as local as **PARC**. Kurt Buhlmann- South Carolina is already planning a state working group. Tony Melchoirs- how are we prioritizing species and habitats? On a state level or regionally?

Physiographical region? That is the way much of eastern Partners in Flight is organized. B. Means- SEPARC Meeting 2000

states that timber companies own lands in several states and focusing on state groups will confuse efforts. Need a more regional approach. Bob Herrington- as we get local groups interested, efforts will have to be on a scale smaller than regions.

At this point, attendees were asked to identify conservation concerns for herps in the SE
Concerns-

1. Need more money for research, e.g.
2. Better image of herps.

Bruce Means- MUST get the image of herps improved and myths lessened...mentioned TV commercials such as Coors, NorthStar, et al. that depict snakes in a very negative light. B. Means- rattlesnakes have rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!!! We need to focus on the intrinsic value of herps, not just the utilitarian uses or values.

3. Exchange of ideas.

John Alderman -Exchange ideas with other conservation minded groups - GAP, Land Trust programs

4. Habitat conservation issues.

John Alderman- NC has lost 1 million acres of wildlife habitat in last 7 years, habitat conservation is our most immediate concern.

5. Education resources- getting the PARC message into national magazines targeting hunters and fisherman. Newspapers, too.

6. Value of herps as Ecotourism "targets".

7. Liaison with other agencies/groups (SEAFWA - seek subcommittee status).

8. Foster cross-state cooperation and communication for amphibian and reptile conservation.

9. Identify state agency projects for CARA (Conservation and Reinvestment Act) funding.

10. Involve public to support conservation- local involvement.

11. Provide private landowners with incentives for herp conservation.

12. Connect PARC w/ national/local educational groups- provide product they can use.

13. Improve messages given at zoos, et al. PARC speaker at AZA meetings Use the herp societies... they are a workforce.

14. Develop group within SE working group to set research priorities.

15. Rattlesnake Roundups-- encourage conversion to wildlife-friendly festivals.

16. List of priority species -- use TNC/Heritage rankings to determine priorities.

17. Identify state/federal land holdings: Are they being managed beneficially for herps?; are herps being inventoried and are populations being monitored?

18. Develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for herps.

19. Education of developers; develop incentives to encourage more herp-friendly development (setting land aside for greenspace); involve herp concerns in Audubon Certification of golf courses.

20. Establish Farm Bill priority areas for herps.

21. Toxicity studies on amphibians and reptiles (golf courses).

Allen Robison-

National Wildlife Refuges - USFWS has set aside some money for use across the US to study (primarily) deformities in metamorphs and froglets. Southeastern Region will base its modeling on NE protocol. USGS- similar work nationwide in National Parks. He asks the group about potentially taking part in the surveys at NWR's and DOI lands.

-End Day 1 Session -

After the initial meeting that afternoon, the facilitator and others gathered to group the itemized list into categories. The lists were used as the basis for group discussion the following morning. The categories used corresponded to the working groups at the national level (Monitoring and Inventory, Management, Education and Outreach, Policy/Trade/Regulation, and Research).

The following section lays out the lists of action items identified by each group as priorities for Southeastern **PARC**.

Note: The Education items far outweighed those needs established for any other category, so the group was divided for an initial session to consider the other categories, then reconvened as a whole for the Education discussion.

Policy, Regulation and Trade

facilitated by John Jensen, GADNR

Foster cross-state cooperation and communication

1) Southeastern MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) between (including) cooperating groups/agencies/industry. Partners in Flight (PIF) did this at the national level. Creates a formal commitment to PARC.

Develop one for the SE and make recommendations to national PARC
(Pattern after established PIF MOA)

Lee Andrews, John Jensen, Jim Sweeny agreed to work on this and have a draft by
June 2000

2) Get PARC involved in Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife agencies

(SEAFWA) - presentation (action item-MOA) & PARC background

John Jensen will try to get SE PARC on the 2000 meeting agenda
(October 28-31), Jim Sweeney agreed to make the presentation at
SEAFWA

3) Uniformity in the way states consider species listed in more than one state (agreements)

Develop a summary of Southeastern Laws/Regsbrolicy

Erin Clark and Paul Moler agreed to work on this and use Florida review
as a framework

4) Establish recommended farm bill legislation (priority areas for herps)

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) of Farm Bill - most of \$ goes to Mississippi Delta- get
WRP to recognize the value of small, isolated wetlands and surrounding buffers.

Lee Andrews, John Jensen, and Steve Busack will work on this and have
a draft recommendation by end of June

Monitoring

facilitated by Laura Brandt, USFWS

Main problem: We do not have standardized or comparable methods for inventories and monitoring and, thus, we need to develop protocols. How this will be accomplished:

Develop questionnaires to identify protocols that are in place currently, where they are being done, and what techniques are being used. Focusing on large organizations, state and federal lands, etc. Questionnaire will be developed by April 1 and sent out by August 1.

Those responsible for sending out questionnaires:

National Wildlife Refuges - Laura Brandt

DOD lands – Dirk Stevenson

State agencies and heritage programs – Don Schwab

US Forest Service – Ernie Garcia

Reservations and other DOI lands – John Jensen

Take responses of questionnaires and compile and evaluate them. This will be done by next year's SE PARC meeting

Develop standardized list of protocols (focus on what's being used and what works)

Management

facilitated by Joe Mitchell, University of Richmond

1) Compile a checklist of all amphibians and reptiles native to the Southeast

Region. Prioritize these species for conservation action using The Nature Conservancy/Natural Heritage Program global ranks (G5-G1) and state ranks (S5-S1). Provide Federal and individual state endangered, threatened, or special concern listings as well. Provide this list on the PARC Website.

Kurt Buhlmann, Joe Mitchell, and others will work on this

Tony Melchoirs will work on a similar list of priority herp habitats

2) Compile a literature citation file of published journal articles and technical reports (gray literature) that contain management (pro and con) and conservation information relevant to herpetofauna of the Southeast. Provide the ability to sort the file by author, species, and keywords. Make the database available on the PARC Website.

Kurt Buhlmann and Yale Leiden will work on this and hopefully complete in one year.

3) Compile a PARC-sponsored document of Best Management Practices (BMPs)

for amphibians and reptiles in the Southeast. The target audience will include private landowners, industrial forest managers, and local planning authorities. The BMPs will be voluntary, will focus on species prioritized in Item #1 (above), and will be based on literature available in the database created by Item #2 (above).

We would hope to be able to obtain funding from the PARC Steering Committee, since these were deemed useful products and identified as priorities by the entire SE PARC Group. A pre-proposal will be submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Suggestions to the other PARC Regional Management Working Group chairs as they relate to the above items are as follows:

Present the above objectives within each working group and discuss whether a similar plan of action would be useful in each region. Compiling the checklist could be done by each regional group. The results could be merged into one large PARC database that could be assessed by all and sorted regionally, if desired. Second, the literature database is already being compiled regionally by the SE (Buhlmann) and NW (Krupka) chairs. The keywords file could include SE, NE, MW, NW, SW. A literature citation database program exists and would be suitable for our needs, although we have not looked into licensing agreements at this point. Adding international literature would also be useful to the PARC International Working Group which is getting organized.

Should the proposal for Item #1 and #2 receive funding, a technician would be hired to work out of SREL to enter literature into the database. SREL could also maintain the library of original reprints.

Research

facilitated by Henry Mushinsky, University of South Florida

1) Create a clearinghouse (Database and Information source) for current and recent research on website

Becky Smith and Mac Baughman will work on this

2) Identify funding sources for research on herps in the Southeast- list contacts and deadlines, send to all SE PARC members

Bob Herrington, Tracey Tuberville, and Jeannine Ott will work on this and hope to complete by June

3) Establish the methods to prioritize research needs in SE US (investigate strategies used by non-herp groups)

Mac Baughman, Bob Herrington, and Ray Ashton will work on this and hope to complete within 1 year

Education

1) Share the Power Point presentation about **PARC** by making it available on the website – SREL will handle this

2) Teacher education about Amphibians and Reptiles through Programs like Project WILD

Need to create the materials to educate. However, we should inventory what materials out there first. The following people agreed to take responsibility for this inventory in their respective state:

Rusty Garrison, Mark Patterson- GA
George Heinrich, Karen Moody- FL
Mark Bailey- AL
Tracey Tuberville- SC

Joe Mitchell and Don Schwab- VA
Dave Collins- TN

Still need contacts for Kentucky, North Carolina, and Louisiana

3) Revise existing herp activities Project WILD, Project WET and Project Learning Tree
- Rusty Garrison

4) Make presentations about PARC at environmental education conferences.

Georgia Environmental Educators Association Conference -Mark Patterson agreed to do this at March meeting.

League of Environmental Educators of Florida- Karen Moody will attend meeting and present PARC materials and information.

5) Create a PARC display poster to take to meetings- Tracey Tuberville will work on this and John Jensen will take responsibility for housing and shipping display.

6) Develop PARC position on environmental education as a component of teacher education - this is a national issue. Ray Ashton will take responsibility for this.

7) Evaluate SE zoos to determine if they are optimizing their resources specific to SE herp education and outreach. Dave Collins will represent SE PARC in an effort to network w/ American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

8) Frog call website- Craig Guyer (Auburn U.) and Tony Murphy (Hamilton U.) have begun development of separate websites. Once developed, PARC site should link to these.

Wrap-up

Dave Collins agreed to arrange the 2001 SE PARC meeting at the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga.

Chairs and Co-chairs were established for the various SE working groups:

Education and Outreach

George Heinrich and Erin Clark

Management

Kurt Buhlmann

Monitoring and Inventory

Laura Brandt

Research

Henry Mushinsky

Policy, Regulation and Trade

Paul Moler

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| John Alderman | Yale Leiden |
| Lee Andrews | Bob McCollum |
| Ray Ashton | Michael McCoy |
| Mark Bailey | Bruce Means |
| Mac Baughman | Tony Melchoirs |
| Laura Brandt | Joe Mitchell |
| Kurt Buhlmann | Paul Moler |
| Steve Busack | Karen Moody |
| Erin Clark | Henry Mushinsky |
| Dave Collins | Jeannine Ott |
| Ernie Garcia | Mark Patterson |
| Rusty Garrison | Earl Possardt |
| Whit Gibbons | Allen Robinson |
| Ghislaine Guyot | Donald Schwab |
| George Heinrich | Rebecca Smith |
| Bob Herrington | Phil Spivey |
| Fred Huber | Dirk Stevenson |
| Dale Jackson | Jim Sweeney |
| John Jensen | Tracey Tuberville |
| Robert Jones | |