



## Meeting: National Steering Committee Meeting

**Date:** September 9, 2003

**Location:** Madison, Wisconsin

## Proceedings

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**Moderator:** Tom Akre

**Under Old Business/Updates**, Rick Bennett reported that Alison Haskell, Federal **PARC** Coordinator, has taken disability and he will advertise for her replacement as soon as paperwork permits. In the meantime, Ed Christophers will function as the Fed coordinator.

Bruce Taubert reported that he has begun to advertise for the State **PARC** Coordinator. He distributed a list of the states that have contributed to support the position (attached).

Tom Akre reported that he will continue to act as part-time National **PARC** Coordinator but said that there is no funding for a full time national coordinator. Both Bruce Taubert and Rick Bennett expressed the need to fill the National Coordinator position because the job is too big for just the state and fed coordinators. There was consensus among the JNSC members present that this should be a priority. The discussion which followed covered the need for more industry and NGO participation as the academic members cannot fund a National Coordinator. Also, the future of **PARC** and its need for strong leadership in both outreach and products were discussed.

Concern was expressed by several members that **PARC** has no consistent message and its products are also not consistent. Rick Bennett gave members copies of a book that Alison had put together which has every **PARC** product to-date in it, for comparison purposes. Members noted the differences between the drafts of the SE and NE Habitat Management Guidelines. Another concern is that available money is not being leveraged to best advantage and funds that could be used are missed. There was consensus on developing an updated PowerPoint presentation. Bruce Taubert offered to have his staff work on this.

### Meeting Reports:

Tom Akre gave a report from the SE Education Meeting. He related his positive experience there and Bruce Taubert, who also attended, related the same. They also identified key players such as Erin Clark and George Heinrich, who ran the meeting, and Joy O'Keefe of Touchstone energy and Rebecca Christoffel, Michigan State University doctoral student. He then summarized the process and products which can be seen in the minutes on the website. Some highlights were 1) a traveling display stand, 2) the intended preparation of a **PARC** handbook of guidelines for the use of reptiles and amphibians and reptiles in the classroom, and 3) the intention of having a herp education symposium in Norman, OK summer 2004 – in conjunction with SSAR.

Tom also reported on NE **PARC**. He related that the NE **PARC** meeting was well attended with many new members. He indicated that it was very well run with a lot of enthusiasm and progress. An

agenda can be found on the NE **PARC** website and the minutes should be posted soon. Priya Nanjappa (USGS Patuxent Research Center) reported on the NE **PARC** risk assessment by taxa initiative via conference call. Details on this endeavor should be available on the NE **PARC** website very soon.

Tom also announced the joint SE **PARC** and Gopher Tortoise Council meeting in Apopka, FL, October 6, 2003. He will attend and represent the JNSC by giving a talk entitled "A Report from the **PARC** National and futures directions for **PARC**."

Tom presented a proposal to the Society of Northwest Vertebrate Biologists to let the JNSC piggy back on their Spring 2004 meeting and give a PNARC/**PARC** integration talk or workshop. The meeting is scheduled for 24-27 March, at Central Washington University, Ellensburg, WA. JNSC members expressed concern over two issues. There was concern that the Pacific Northwest Amphibian and Reptile Consortium may not effectively represent all stakeholders in A&R conservation in the Northwest. There was also some discussion that people would not be willing or able to make a meeting that was not piggybacked on the National Wildlife meeting which coincidentally will also be in Washington (Spokane).

### **Products Discussion:**

An in-depth discussion about the **HMGs** revealed many of the same concerns expressed during the discussion of the National Coordinator. The lack of consistency, the struggle for funding and the tendency for areas to function separately from national **PARC** were discussed. Also, there was consensus that the HMGs should be **PARC**'s first priority and the first funded. Ernie suggested that we need an editor to oversee all the products for consistency.

A discussion about other **PARC** products followed, including the **USGS ARMI and PARC database**. Rick Kearney said the work on the ARMI database is ongoing. Bruce Kingsbury asked about the gray literature database that SREL had been compiling. Rosemary Forrest said she would ask David Scott the status of the database and report back. The need for a searchable database is important.

Some suggestions for getting the database done included leveraging available funding, making efforts more cooperative, having some partners do this on their own time, and getting grad students to do the work cheaply.

NE **PARC**'s effort to determine **research priorities** was also discussed. Of 30 topics identified at [NE **PARC**?] three were chosen as the top items: Road mortality and management for mitigation, technology of repatriation and baseline distribution and abundance studies. Whit reported via conference call that there is some interest at the U.S. Department of Transportation in providing funds for research into road mortality mitigation. The interest may translate into money for the HMGs. This will need to be developed further. The two people who are contacts for this are Bill Reudiger, USFS and Paul Garrett, USDOT.

The **NE PARC HMG** is currently out for review and Joe Mitchell told Tom that efforts were made to keep the language palatable for landowners. Peter Dratch said efforts also have to be made to keep the language consistent from one HMG to the next. He said **PARC** should strive to hit the middle ground in both the HMGs and the Inventory and Monitoring documents.

The problem of funding **the PARC website** was discussed. Currently SREL continues to maintain both the website and the listserv though not funded to do so. Ernie Garcia suggested that a breakdown of the costs associated with the website be done by SREL so that the JNSC members could

decide how to proceed. He also asked for a cost/benefit analysis, which Whit promised to produce. Whit had asked for about \$30,000 to manage the website, which Bruce Taubert pointed out was a half-time position. He said he thought the amount is reasonable while some others thought the website might be managed for less. In light of David Scott's other responsibilities, a suggestion was made that the listserv be shut down temporarily, both to alleviate the cost and to gauge how important the rank-and-file membership of **PARC** consider it. The members concluded that the website is a critical tool for communication among members and outreach.

Rick Bennett led a discussion about **listed species**. He said he thought **PARC**'s role was not to influence the listing but to provide expertise. He said there is a process in place for defining "endangered" by both federal and state authorities. Bruce Taubert agreed, saying **PARC** should provide guidance generally, but not have input into the regulatory process. Bennett also expressed concern that **PARC** not drift from one of its stated concerns, "to keep common species common."

An **expert database** was discussed briefly with the general consensus that a good **database of the literature** avoids what could be a dicey problem if a separate database of people were created. The authors would be available within the literature database. Bruce Kingsbury brought this up as point to drive the discussion about databases and the need to consolidate efforts. He asked "whatever happened to an expertise database?" In fact there is an expert database and questionnaire on the website. [[questionnaire](#)]

Stan Austin reported that the EPA is still considering revision of its **wetlands protection** in light of the SWANCC decision that left isolated wetlands vulnerable to development. He said the letter submitted by **PARC** was helpful and he was encouraged at the good comments received. He said he would let the group know when there are developments. He also said there were some favorable court decisions in the Midwest recently and that the EPA is still in the rule making process.

As recommended by the Academic Committee, Crother et al was adopted as the preferred **nomenclature** for scientific names and common names in **PARC** publications.

Rosemary said she had been contacted by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation general counsel. A total of about **\$60,000 is available for reptiles and amphibians**, with pre-proposals due in October. She said there was a matching requirement, which would be different for part of the money. In a general discussion about the money, the consensus appeared to be to try to get the money to help fund the HMGs.

Rosemary then brought up four requests for use of the **PARC logo**. She reminded the group of how the issue had been handled in the past, with approval routinely granted unless a requester appeared to want to use the logo in a manner inconsistent with our published guidelines. One of the three requests was turned down as the requester did not fit the logo usage guidelines.

Ernie gave an update on the FS Herp Conservation Initiative. [see attached for details] He presented 6 FS focus areas for this coming year: **1.** Contribute to the development and testing of a training module; **2.** Move forward on Inventory and Monitoring documents; **3.** Support to HMGs; **4.** Support to Fed. Coordinator; **5.** Establishment of a \$50 K conservation challenge grant to support herp habitat restoration, enhancement or protection in the SE (He will soon be soliciting proposals for on-the-ground projects through various channels including the **PARC** website); and, **6.** Hosting a critical **PARC** organizational meeting (for soul-searching and priority-setting). An Organizing Committee consisting of Bruce T, Rick B, Mac Baughman, Marshall Myers, Peter Stangel, Bruce W, Whit/Tom, and Ernie as chair, was designated. Whit and Ernie will plan a pre-meeting meeting, possibly at Ichuaway.

Ernie stressed that the Forest Service needs to see buy-in on the FS Initiative, and more substantial commitments to **PARC** from other agencies, if it is itself to continue to contribute meaningfully. He said we need adequate funding to produce the excellent conservation products that will "sell themselves" to those agencies and organizations who need and will use them. Future FS funding is contingent upon our ability to leverage funds to help produce these products, and to support the development of a herp conservation endowment.

**Box turtles leaving Texas** and entering the pet trade is becoming a problem. Tom is to work with Mike Smith to get a petition to ban the commercial trade of these animals. Bruce W. cautioned against advocacy and will assist Tom in advising Smith. Rick Kearney and Bruce Taubert both know Jim Herron of Texas Parks and Wildlife well.

The JNSC decided to have a **conference call** monthly to enhance the progress of **PARC**. Some of the questions to be addressed include: What is **PARC**'s business plan? What are **PARC**'s core elements? What are the priorities?

It was agreed that **the development of tools**, such as the HMGs, I & M, and Risk Assessment and conservation status documents, and the ARMI database, is a core element. It was also agreed that the website is a critical tool for both communication and outreach. It was proposed that an editorial committee be formed to provide oversight for the products. The web searchability of the documents was also discussed.

A need for **better communication** was noted. There was a call for a commitment to dialogue. Tom and Rosemary are to track communications.

**Fund-raising** is a constant need.

**Outreach and Education** need attention.

**Training** is another priority noted.

Rosemary distributed a number of hand-outs.