



NWCC in 2012 – Transition for Wildlife Workgroup: Expanding Focus on Outreach and Communications

I. Overview

Background

Since 1994, the NWCC Wildlife Workgroup (WLWG) has provided a multi-stakeholder, neutral forum for discussing sustainable wind power development, including research needs and remaining questions about wind-wildlife interaction. It has also sought to compile accurate information and useful tools to facilitate responsible wind power development with the least possible impact to wildlife. Between 1994 and 2011, NWCC activities were generously funded by the U.S. Department of Energy.

The WLWG has existed as a collaborative body and been staffed by facilitators who are tasked with convening groups to approach wind wildlife issues through education, issue identification, and action. From 2005 to 2011, the WLWG was led by a Core Group consisting of two to three representatives from each of the sectors represented in the Workgroup. The intent of the Core Group was to add structure and continuity to the Workgroup, given the fluctuations in participation in conference calls, meetings, and workshops. As the American Wind Wildlife Institute (AWWI) has grown and made strides tackling some of the most difficult wind-wildlife issues, many members of the Core Group have focused their collaborative efforts related to wind and wildlife on AWWI activities. Additionally, the ability of any given Core Group member to devote time to the NWCC has varied over time.

Proposed Approach and Justification

In 2012, facilitation responsibilities of the NWCC Wildlife Workgroup were contracted to AWWI through the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). The current contract for facilitation of the NWCC WLWG relies on a cost share element and is designed to transition the NWCC WLWG to a self-supporting collaborative.¹

Once under contract to manage the NWCC, AWWI conducted a survey of all WLWG participants. The survey results concluded that what is needed most is a dependable resource where the public can access the best and cutting edge information on wind wildlife data, studies, tools, and strategies to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts of wind development on wildlife. As the NWCC WLWG has expanded over the years, the interest in a source for this information has grown (as indicated by the stable and growing active email list of over 900 individuals), but stakeholders seem to have less time, ability, resources, and/or expertise to generate this information. As an example, only 9% of parties on the NWCC email list responded to the survey seeking input on the NWCC. Of those who responded to the survey, only about half of the respondents indicated willingness to participate on committees to help plan events. Because AWWI coordinates with the bulk of “information generators” in the wind-wildlife sphere, AWWI does not want to overtax these individuals with too many requests. Therefore, AWWI proposes to focus NWCC activities on outreach of information on wind and wildlife issues.²

¹ Given the phase-down of government funding for NWCC activities, AWWI’s ability to continue NWCC activities in the future is subject to fundraising efforts; AWWI is dedicated to raising the funds to fully support NWCC activities but funding in future years cannot be guaranteed. Similarly, cost-share support from NREL is subject to appropriations and cannot be guaranteed for future years.

² That said, as facilitators of the NWCC, AWWI staff will continue to support the research efforts of the Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative and Grassland Community Collaborative.

In short, based on the results of the survey, AWWI proposes that the valued communication outlets provided by NWCC be available to all stakeholders interested in wind-wildlife issues. The NWCC would transition to outreach and education activities on wind-wildlife issues under the NWCC brand while continuing to support the ongoing primary research efforts currently occurring through the Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative and Grassland Community Collaborative. AWWI will continue the NWCC's commitment to fully engage with stakeholders interested in wind-wildlife issues.

II. Organization

AWWI proposes the following guidelines for the organization of the NWCC:³

1. Participants
 - a. Consistent with the NWCC's Wildlife Workgroup historical role, the NWCC will operate as an open forum available to all interested parties. The email list – the primary form of communication with the NWCC – will be open to all interested subscribers, and users may elect to change their subscription preferences at any time.
2. Committees
 - a. For specific NWCC activities, AWWI will maintain existing or convene informal committees to help guide the activity. Participation on committees will be open to all interested volunteers (who support the mission of NWCC & AWWI), and AWWI may solicit additional parties or narrow participation from a specific sector to ensure balance and a manageable committee size.⁴ Examples of committees that AWWI may form include:
 - i. Committee to provide input on planning the Wind Wildlife Research Meeting
 - ii. Committee to provide input on webcasts
 - iii. Committee to provide guidance on outreach and communications efforts

III. Operating Principals⁵

Ground Rules

Parties that participate in AWWI-NWCC activities will be asked to agree to abide by the following ground rules:

- Respect each other's various points of view.
- Avoid personal attacks and the use of intimidation.
- When making comments, be considerate of the time needed for others to share their perspectives.
- Follow through on commitments made to the facilitators and the rest of the group.

Decision Making

Final decisions will be made by AWWI staff in consultation with committee members, DOE/NREL, and scientific experts. When appropriate, consensus decisions may be requested from specific committees. Committee members may request the use of consensus decision-making for a specific question, but to ensure that work is able to proceed in a timely manner, AWWI reserves the final say in how decisions are made.

³ Because the NWCC is currently focused on wildlife issues only, AWWI proposes to phase out the use of the term "Wildlife Workgroup," and use NWCC only when referencing NWCC-focused activities. This transition will occur slowly to ensure that all stakeholders recognize that the current phase of the NWCC is solely focused on wildlife activities.

⁴ Participants in committees will represent a balance of the following sectors: consultants; wind energy industry representatives; conservation/environmental NGO representatives; state/local agency employees; federal/regional agency employees; utility representatives; academics (includes students; employees of institutions associated with educational bodies); tribal government; general public.

⁵ Note that the Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative and Grassland Community Collaborative Oversight Committees operate under separate sets of Operating Protocols.

Confidentiality

No party will characterize the position of any other party in public statements or in discussions with the press, even if that party withdraws from the activity. If approached by the press, participants in committee activities will speak on behalf of their organization but not on behalf of the committee.

Next steps memos, and as appropriate, meeting summaries, will be prepared by a facilitator after each conference call, meeting, and/or workshop. The meeting summaries will serve as a means of characterizing the business conducted at each meeting. The final meeting summaries will be made available to the public via the NWCC website.⁶ Meeting participants will not attribute discussion to any one individual, organization, or sector.

Open webinars will be recorded and made available via the NWCC website.

Attachment A: Work Plan

In 2012, NWCC work will include the activities outlined below. Work plans for future years will be customized based on funding availability and priority needs and prepared with input from NWCC stakeholders.

2012 Work Plan

Activity and Tasks	Expected Completion Date
<p>Wind Wildlife Research Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene Planning Committee to provide input on the program and logistics for the ninth meeting • Coordinate with meeting planner to handle logistics for the meeting • Develop a prospectus for sponsors and exhibitors and conduct outreach to secure sponsors/vendors. • Develop and distribute Call for Abstracts and convene expert review panels to review abstracts. • Conduct outreach for the meeting. • Coordinate meeting sessions based on abstract reviews and appropriate invited speakers. • Coordinate with U.S. FWS to organize Wind Energy Guidelines training prior to meeting. • Facilitate/Chair meeting. 	4 th Quarter
<p>Grassland Community Collaborative (GCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide facilitation and overall support for the GCC. • Maintain communications with Kansas State University researchers to update Oversight Committee on status of publications. • At request of Oversight Committee members, schedule, facilitate, and develop summaries for update calls with research team. • As appropriate, plan for public outreach on the GCC through the NWCC website and conference calls. 	December 2012
<p>Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative (SGC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide facilitation and overall project support for the Oversight Committee of the SGC and their engagement with technical experts. • Coordinate with the Oversight Committee to raise necessary funds for research. • Coordinate funding awards for research teams and contract development between individual funding entities and research teams. • Provide guidance to and track progress of sage grouse and wind energy research. • As appropriate, plan for public outreach on the SGC through the NWCC website and conference calls. 	Ongoing

⁶ Per the Operating Protocols of the SGC and GCC, meeting and call summaries will not be made public.

Conduct Regular Outreach Function	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically review outreach strategies for key NWCC products. Consider how to work with individual members to assist sector-specific information dissemination. • Respond to inquiries and conduct outreach to parties interested in getting more information about wind and wildlife issues. • If enough interest is found, hold one in-person meeting for the Wildlife Workgroup and consult various stakeholders to develop the agenda. • Develop a regular outreach email format and a forum to solicit stories for the newsletter from WLWG participants. • Convene a conference call with the WLWG to review Work Plan for 2012 and proposed new organization for the WLWG. • Track state and federal policy guidelines and make them available on the NWCC website. • Continue to update NWCC website with information and develop a proposed for a new website format. 	
Topic Specific Webinars	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a webinar briefing on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wind Energy Guidelines (DONE) • Hold at least one more topic-specific webinar; potential topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update on U.S. DOE/NREL Renewable Electricity Futures Study ○ U.S. FWS Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance ○ Briefing on Comprehensive Guide and how it can be used in conjunction with the U.S. FWS Guidelines ○ Presentations on wind-wildlife research (likely in coordination with the WWRM) ○ Research priorities ○ Results from the Greater Prairie-chicken research ○ Update on eagles and wind-energy or bats and wind-energy ○ Briefing on AWWI activities 	