

REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: 15 September 2015

REPORT TO: TWS Council

FROM: Maggi Sliwinski, Chair
Early Career Professional Working Group

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Early Career Professional Working Group

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

1) Attending workshops that take place before the annual conference is a fantastic tool for continuing education and professional development for early career professionals. Unfortunately, there is a rule that to attend a workshop, the participant must either register for the whole conference or pay the one-day registration fee along with the workshop fee. For many early career professionals, purchasing the full registration for the conference is out of reach due to costs and job obligations. The price of a one-day registration is less than full registration but still quite high at \$150; many may not be able to justify attending a \$30 workshop for \$180. For this reason, we recommend that TWS consider ways in which registrants might attend a workshop only for less cost, or perhaps workshops can be included as an option with a new tier of registration (such as was recommended in our Spring 2015 Report to Council).

We understand that the venue must be rented at quite a significant cost. It is likely that many workshop participants will also be attending the conference and paying the full registration fees, so this policy change is unlikely to create a financial burden. However, removing the requirement for a one-day registration for workshop-only attendees may open workshops up to many more people who could benefit that live near the conference city. It could also build the reputation of TWS with early career professionals and show them that TWS is a worthwhile organization that supports their needs through this type of policy. We hope that you will take this recommendation into consideration. We think that it dovetails nicely with the recommendation we made in our Spring 2015 report to council that you are now researching.

REPORT

We currently have 120 members; half of these are new professional members, and one third are student members. All of our executive positions are filled, and we have a substantial number of active members and ongoing projects. Our working group Facebook page is our primary mode of communication with membership. We use it to distribute activity information, promote discussion topics of interest, recruit committee members, and solicit feedback on projects. We also email updates directly to our membership periodically. We are happy to report that the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act has been enacted and will help to improve employment opportunities for wildlife professionals.

Project: Gather and distribute information on programs available to ECPs

Because ECPs are generally not able to participate in national conference activities, one of our goals is to gather information on programs for ECPs at section and chapter level as well as the national level. The survey requesting information has been sent to section and chapter leaders across North America. Responses thus far indicate that there is not a lot of programming geared specifically towards early career professionals. We hope to help change that by better understanding what early career professionals want from TWS, and how best to provide it.

Project: Develop scholarship proposal for AWB/CWB Certification

Many ECPs are interested in being AWB/CWB certified, but lack a single course to be able to secure the prerequisites. We are developing a proposal for a scholarship to be offered to early career professionals to provide funding for completing the last course to be able to qualify for certification by TWS. We have discussed this project with the certification board and they have requested that we create a program proposal. This proposal will be presented to the certification board at the annual conference in October.

Project: Survey of early career professionals

We are developing a survey to ascertain the primary challenges faced by early career professionals in the wildlife field in the areas of professional development, career advancement, peer interaction and networking, and home/work balance. The survey will be used to guide the ECP working group in program development such as chapter and national level in-person and online workshops, networking tools, and TWS membership advancement. We are currently seeking partnerships with other TWS working groups to develop and implement the survey.

Project: Environmental Conflict Management workshop

Our working group has been discussing a workshop with various chapters and sections that would provide training on environmental conflict management and consensus building through a 2- or 3-day workshop. The workshop would be facilitated by professionals in the conflict resolution field. The cost would be \$13,000 plus the cost of a venue. We hope to receive sponsorships from sections, chapters, and possibly outside of TWS through agencies or other professional organizations, so that participants only have to pay for travel and lodging. We have received positive feedback on this workshop and think that it will provide a needed service for many TWS members, especially students and early career professionals.