

REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: 21 August 2017^[L]_[SEP]

REPORT TO: TWS Council

FROM: Krysten Zummo-Strong, Chair, Early Career Professional Working Group

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Early Career Professional Working Group

REPORT

Membership

The Early Career Professional Working Group has a membership structure that is different from most other working groups. All New Professional members of TWS become automatic members of the working group as opposed to having annual dues; thus, we have over 900 members. Other TWS members may still join the working group for \$5 if they wish. We would like to reiterate our thanks Ed Thompson and Mariah Simmons for facilitating this new membership structure, as we think it will be a huge benefit to TWS, and particularly to new professional members.

2016 Conference Workshops

Our group organized a workshop on Environmental Conflict Management at the annual meeting in Raleigh, NC. We worked with the Natural Resources Leadership Institute to provide this workshop to interested society members. We provided a \$20 subsidy to the first 10 new professional members to register for the workshop.

We also supported a workshop being organized by Susan Rupp to discuss a mentoring forum, and a symposium on linking science and management being organized by Jerod Merkle.

2017 Conference Workshops

The ECPWG also held an annual meeting during the conference in Raleigh where plans for the upcoming year were discussed. The ECPWG was asked to take part in the planning of one of the plenary sessions for the 2017 annual TWS conference in Albuquerque, NM. More specifically, we assisted in the organization of the “Paradigm shifts, diversity, and inclusion, and feet in several worlds” Plenary to be held on the Tuesday of the conference.

The ECPWG also be planned a panel discussion and a workshop for the upcoming annual conference in Albuquerque, NM. The panel discussion is entitled “The Generation Gap: Opportunities for five generations to work in harmony” and is set to open up dialogue between 5 generations of wildlife professionals in order to bridge the gap in communication and learn from one another. The workshop is titled: “Managing wildlife conservation and management conflicts through formalized conservation action planning”, and will present the fundamentals of Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation Planning process with emphasis on identifying and addressing differing project pressures in the conceptual phase.

Elections and Charter

Elections for the ECPWG are held every other year; 2017 is not an elections year for our working group. Elections were last held from September 26 – October 10, 2016. This was the largest show of interest in the working group’s leadership since our founding in 2011. The election results are as follows:

- Chair: Krysten Zummo-Strong
- Co-Chair: Mark McConnell
- Secretary: Emily Williams
- Treasurer: Kristin Shaw
- At-Large Board Members: Jennifer Murrow, Lorelle Berkeley, Paul Di Salvo, Rachel Conley, Matthew Moskwik, Michelle Losee, Heather Shaw

We also updated our Charter to reflect the new membership structure.

New Initiatives

Over the past year, the ECPWG has been working on creating a new opportunity for ECP’s and those looking to apply for Certification. We are aiming to create a scholarship for TWS members who have previously applied for Certification, but were found to be short by one course. Many ECPs do not have the funding available to take an additional course in order to fulfill the requirements for certification. The scholarship will provide financial assistance of up to \$500.00 for a TWS member to fulfill the missing requirement for certification. Final approvals of the scholarship will be discussed and determined at the ECPWG annual meeting at the TWS Conference in Albuquerque, NM.

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SUBJECT: Request for Council Action

Dear Members of The Wildlife Society Council,

Thank you for consideration of the initial mentorship proposals in February 2017.

In response to your questions, we have revised our proposals and provided further details for a multi-faceted mentorship program.

One of the main goals of the Early Career Professionals (ECPs) Working Group of The Wildlife Society (TWS) is to “advocate and provide for professional development opportunities that are relevant and vital to early career wildlife professionals.” As such, ECP Working Group members have identified the need for greater mentoring opportunities and career coaching from seasoned wildlife professionals. Mentoring allows new professionals to explore a diversity of career paths, develop communication and interpersonal skills, and build connections with relevant organizations and professional networks.

Through discussions with TWS staff, Council, and wildlife professionals, the ECP Working Group has identified several opportunities to increase mentorship:

1. Launch of the new TWS Members Directory
2. Student and ECP motivation in building a network of connections and continued professional self-improvement
3. Increased visibility of the Certified Wildlife Biologist and Professional Development Certificate programs

4. Publication of Becoming a Wildlife Professional handbook
5. Creation of the new Professional Development Coordinator position
6. Increased visibility and connection with TWS membership through weekly eWildlifer emails and bi-monthly Wildlife Professional magazine
7. Greater visibility of TWS Parent, Section, and Chapter awards

Additionally, the ECP Working Group has identified several challenges to implementing a mentorship program:

1. Lack of engagement in prior mentorship programs within TWS
2. Inadequate software technologies to match mentors and mentees and track progress
3. Lack of mentor commitment and incentive to participate
4. Overwhelming number of mentees seeking mentors
5. Time, staffing, and funding to support management of mentorship program
6. No clear guidance on how to conduct productive mentor-mentee meetings
7. Lead-time required to incorporate mentorship program into TWS operational plans and strategic directions

Given the opportunities and challenges of increasing mentorship within TWS and establishing a mentorship program, the Board Members of the ECP Working Group request further consideration of the following proposals for ways to increase mentorship within The Wildlife Society.

1. Add a Mentorship Sub-Category to the Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) Renewal Application.

Persons consulted: Harriet Allen, Caroline Murphy, and Keith Norris

Currently, the renewal application for CWBs does not include a location for recording contact hours related to mentorship. The purpose of CWB renewal is the “commitment to excellence through continued learning and professional development” and to encourage “the maintenance and advancement of high technical and social skills”. We believe that

mentorship satisfies the intent of the CWB renewal process for both the mentor and the mentee.

Based on the August 2017 revision of the CWB renewal requirements, only “Category I” activities, such as attending seminars, college courses, workshops, etc. count towards the required 80 contact hours. However, we feel that being a mentor or mentee is a form of continued learning and advancement of technical and social skills. Through the mentoring process, both the mentor and mentee will choose topics to explore such as technical writing, oral communication, leadership, problem solving, or academic knowledge. These sources of learning directly relate to those listed in the “Category I” description.

Therefore, we propose the split of “Category I” into two sub-categories:

“Category I(a): Participation in Organized Activities” (the current “Category I”) and “Category I(b): Mentorship”.

While the mentorship activities would fit in “Category I(a)”, we feel that greater emphasis needs to be placed on mentorship, hence the need for its own sub-category. Additionally, being a mentor or mentee is not for everyone, and therefore “Category I (b)” would be an optional category which could contribute up to 20 contact hours towards the total of 80 contact hours required in “Category I” for renewal. Contact hours would be awarded for “Category I (b)” at the same rate of 1 contact hour per 1 hour of classroom contact hours as is currently being implemented for “Category I (a)”. For mentorship activities, “classroom contact hours” would be defined as those hours spent engaging with a mentor or mentee over the phone/video-calling/in-person meeting. The meeting must include substantive discussions that detail strategies for self-improvement or explore technical/academic knowledge topics. Preparation of materials, such as drafting a resume, reading an article, or planning for a mentoring session, do not count towards the contact hours requirement, and could be considered similar to homework for a formal academic course, which is not considered “classroom contact hours”. Both the mentor and mentee could claim contact hours for the meetings. The mentee is learning

self-improvement technical and professional skills, such as exploring a new topic, leadership, or communication. The mentor is also learning self-improvement and leadership skills, such as how to be an effective mentor, exploring new avenues of familiar academic/technical topics, and sharpening their skills in communication or professional skills. A CWB could list both being a mentor in one instance and being a mentee in another on the same CWB renewal application, up to the maximum of 20 contact hours.

2. Add a Mentorship Sub-Category to the Professional Development Certificate Application.

Persons consulted: Harriet Allen, Caroline Murphy, and Keith Norris

Similar to the CWB renewal application recommendations above, we propose the addition of a sub-category for mentorship (“Category I (b): Mentorship”) on the Professional Development Certificate application. While being a mentor may fit into “Category II or IV”, depending on if it is viewed as ‘Instruction of Organized Activities’ or “Self-Improvement”, we feel that consistency between the categories of the CWB renewal and Professional Development Certificate is needed. Additionally, mentorship is more of a “Participation in an Organized Activity”, as substantial planning and outside of the “classroom” learning and commitment is needed for both the mentor and mentee. Both the mentor and mentee are actively learning.

For the Professional Development Certificate, we propose that there is a maximum of 30 contact hours allowed in Category I (b), contributing to the total “Category I” maximum of 120 contact hours. Similar to the CWB renewal application, “Category I (b)” would be optional. Requirements for logging contact hours and allowing one person to list hours for being both a mentor in one instance and a mentee in another would also apply.

3. Create a Mentorship Workbook for Natural Resource Professionals.

Persons consulted: Harriet Allen, Keith Norris, Laura Bies, and Michael Morrison

The ECP Working Group would like to set up a system within TWS that encourages mentorship. After discussions with TWS staff, we recognize that previous, formal mentoring matching programs were limited by staff time and software challenges. Fortunately, with the advent of the new TWS Network Online Directory, the ECP working group sees the possibility for a self-sustaining mentorship program.

The Online Directory allows those interested in being a mentee to look up professionals willing to be a mentor. Mentees can email potential mentors that match their professional interests, geographic location, or potential employer. Greater advertisement and encouragement to use this resource could increase the Online Directory's use and help connect mentees with seasoned professionals. However, one of the challenges to creating a productive mentor-mentee relationship is maintaining regular contact and determining what areas to discuss and work on. Therefore, the ECP Working Group proposes to author a Mentorship Workbook for Natural Resource Professionals, similar to the TWS Leadership Institute workbook by Morrison et al. (2007). The workbook would be a free PDF on the TWS website that anyone could download or print. Minimal time would be needed of TWS publication staff to assist with formatting the workbook to meet TWS standards and create fillable fields in the PDF so that users can type in their responses (in addition to being able to print and handwrite in responses).

Currently, it is proposed for Paul Di Salvo, EPC Working Group Board Member, to lead the writing and coordination of the workbook. We also plan to solicit the TWS membership via the eWildlifer newsletter and/or separate emails for one or two volunteers that would want to assist with the writing project. It is anticipated that the project would take 12-18 months to complete, including time to write, edit, send out to reviewers, and publish.

Reviewers could include Council, Working Group members, TWS Staff, or other professionals. Additionally, a test run between a few mentor-mentee pairs would also be encouraged to allow for revisions based on the application of the workbook to a real mentorship partnership. The goal of the workbook is to ease mentors and mentees into thinking about their personal goals and vision, where they need to improve or grow, and

how to best achieve those objectives. We recognize that mentoring can be a daunting task and few are trained in being a mentor. Therefore, the workbook aims to provide independent, interactive, write-in exercises that can be used in any order and chosen based on the interests of the mentor and mentee. The workbook will also provide topics for discussions, ways to promote accountability of both parties, and ways to increase the value of mentoring to both parties.

While a formal outline of chapters would be developed once a writing team was in place, a sample outline of what the workbook could contain is described below:

- Chapter 1: Introduction (methodology, how to use the book, what is mentorship, why mentorship is important)
- Chapter 2: Values of Mentorship (values to mentor, values to mentee, how to get most out of mentorship, value of diversity)
- Chapter 3: Understanding Your Needs (determining what you want to get out of mentorship as a mentor or mentee, understanding your vision/goals/values, listing your weaknesses and strengths, embracing diverse needs)
- Chapter 4: Finding a Mentor or Mentee (TWS Directory, networking, what to look for in a mentor or mentee, how to align mentor and mentee goals)
- Chapter 5: How to Begin a Mentorship Partnership (steps to set up before first meeting, expectations of mentor and mentee, defining goals and benefits for each partner, informal “contract” to set duration of mentorship relationship, tips for a successful mentorship relationship)
- Chapter 6: Defining Your Progress (how to track progress, Mentorship Session Summary Sheet with next steps, how to maintain accountability)

- Chapter 7: Meeting Exercises (10-15 worksheets with different topics to discuss/work-on during mentorship meetings. Worksheets could include fill-ins, questions to discuss, tips for the mentor or mentee, etc. Topics could include resume writing, mock interviews, academic/technical knowledge topic exploration, career exploration, exploration of mentor's or other organization's culture, technical writing, public speaking, assisting mentor with a project, etc.)
- Chapter 8: Wrap-Up (tips for ending formal mentorship relationship, assessing progress made, next steps for continuing personal growth, exit interview form, additional resources)

4. Create a "Star Mentor" Award.

Persons consulted: Keith Norris and Art Rodgers

While many see mentorship as a rewarding and worthwhile pursuit, few feel empowered to participate. This may be due to time constraints, feeling unqualified to be a mentor, or lack of incentive to participate. Therefore, we propose to create a TWS award to be presented at the TWS Annual Conference to recognize one TWS member for their excellence in being a mentor.

Mentors would be nominated by a former mentee. The mentee would submit a 1-page recommendation describing the mentor's capacity as a mentor, dedication to mentee success, techniques used to achieve improve the mentee, and personal/professional growth as a result of this mentorship experience. In addition, the mentorship relationship must have occurred over a minimum of 6 months (1 year recommended) and have had 6 or more substantive discussion meetings (phone, video-calling, in-person). A minimum of 6 Mentorship Session Summary Sheets from the Mentorship Workbook for Natural Resource Professionals (or other standardized form) should also be submitted. Preference would be given to mentors that are AWBs or CWBs, but all TWS-members are eligible. Use of the Mentorship Workbook for Natural Resource Professionals would be encouraged, but not required.

The award would be non-monetary. However, to provide further incentive, a small cash prize (i.e. \$100) or other prize (such as a textbook, plaque, or reduction in TWS Membership dues) could be incorporated. Funding sources for an award, if desired, could be explored with TWS Staff, such as solicitation of donors or contributions from the working groups. A volunteer award committee would be established, similar to other award committees, by the TWS President at the same time other award committees are solicited via email. The award recipient can be highlighted in The Wildlife Professional magazine, TWS website, and eWildlifer newsletter to further encourage mentorship and emphasize its importance and impact.

Alternatively, the ECP WG could consider presenting the award. However, we feel that a National-level award may have greater impact in getting members enthusiastic about participating and have a higher level of awareness to promote mentorship, potentially resulting in more participants.

While these four proposals can be accepted separately, the ECP Working Group suggests that all are accepted to create a multi-faceted mentorship initiative and compound the benefits that each proposal provides. Mentorship is of great important to TWS since it directly invests in the professional development of wildlife professionals at any stage in their career. Our initiatives will better prepare ECPs as the next generation of conservation professionals to continue to provide a future for wildlife and their habitats. Additionally, established professionals will sharpen their talents in advising, increasing their capacity to lead at the highest levels of our profession. Lastly, one of the greatest values from investing in mentorship is the ability for seasoned biologists and leaders to keep institutional knowledge alive through the next generation of conservationists.

Sharing and learning from past successes and failures between all levels of the TWS membership allows the Society to grow and evolve to meet modern wildlife conservation challenges. The ECP Working Group greatly appreciates the Council's consideration and feedback on our mentorship proposals. We believe that mentorship can benefit both

ECPs and seasoned professionals of The Wildlife Society and is of great importance for building a highly skilled network of wildlife professionals.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Early Career Professionals Working Group

Chair: Krysten Zummo

Past-chair: Maggi Sliwinski

Co-chair: Mark McConnell

Secretary: Emily Williams

Treasurer: Kristin Shaw

At-large Board Members: Lorelle Berkeley, Rachel Conley, Paul Di Salvo, Michelle Losee, Matthew Moskwik, Jennifer Murrow, Heather Shaw