

REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: 7 September 2018^[1]_[SEP]

REPORT TO: TWS Council

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

SUBJECT: Fall Report of the Early Career Professional Working Group

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

(See details below)

- 1) In order to facilitate the ability of The Wildlife Society's units to host the most effective professional development opportunities, the Early Career Professional Working Group asks that the Council work with The Wildlife Society staff to create and facilitate an annual professional development grant. This grant will provide financial assistance to a working group to assist them in instituting a professional development opportunity for their memberships that they would not otherwise be able to provide. (Request from Spring Report to Council which has not been responded to)
- 2) Current administration fees at the annual conference, combined with the uncertainty of the professional-student ratio of registrants, have led to a consistent downward trend in the ECPWG finances. The ECPWG requests that, as a financially limited demographic, the ECPWG be exempt from, or have a more limited, overhead placed upon the professional development opportunities we host. (Request from Spring Report to Council which has not been responded to)

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, as of the August we have 1330 members, up from 1210 in February. 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.

2018 Conference Professional Development Opportunities

This coming October, the ECPWG is organizing a professional development opportunity in the form of a symposium at the annual conference of The Wildlife Society in Cleveland, OH.

The symposium, *One Size Fits None: Alternative Career Paths Can Benefit You in the Wildlife Profession*, was organized by ECPWG board member Emily Williams, past-chair Kris Boyd, and ECPWG member Lindsay VanSomeren. The symposium is also supported by the Ethnic and Gender Diversity Working Group. Early career professionals are not one-size-fits-all. Many follow career paths that incorporate transitions into, out of, and alongside the profession at any stage of life. These career transitions are valuable to the wildlife profession, and to the advancement of wildlife conservation in our broader communities. They can increase diversity, catalyze the exchange of ideas between disparate disciplines, and foster more personal fulfillment. But to those who experience them, they can also feel more disheartening and overwhelming than adventuresome and serendipitous. This symposium will address how to prepare for the possibility of a career shift and frame your experience to make the most of it.

In our first session, colleagues who have undergone career transitions will speak about their challenges and opportunities, and the vital transferable skills they used along the way. Three speakers will address their shift from a traditional wildlife profession to another career path, and three other speakers will address their transition from a different career into the wildlife profession. In the second session, three speakers will explore some key foundational knowledge that facilitates a successful alternative career path. To wrap it up, the final session will consist of a panel discussion among the days' speakers and will be open to questions from the audience. This symposium is a much for anyone in a position to mentor those entering or leaving the wildlife profession, as well as for those considering a career transition, undergoing one currently, or who had yet to consider the possibility.

Grant Development

This year the ECPWG announced a new grant opportunity for our members. This grant will focused on professional development opportunities. Members can apply for up to

\$500 to participate in a professional development opportunity (training, conference, etc.). A maximum of two grants will be awarded each year.

The first call for grants was sent out in May and closed on June 15, 2018. We received 7 applications for this first application period. A panel consisting of 5 ECPWG board members reviewed the applications and selected Jackie Gehrt as the winner of our inaugural Professional Development Grant. Jackie is a Research Assistant with the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. She will be presented with the grant and a certificate at the annual meeting of the Early Career Professional Working Group during The Wildlife Society conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

The ECPWG is also working on a second grant that is focused on members who have applied to their Associate Wildlife Biologist certification but did not meet requirements due to course inadequacies. Applicants can apply for up to \$500 to complete course requirements for their certification. A maximum of two grants will be awarded each year.

Depending on applicant pools for the respective grants, a maximum of two grants will be awarded each year. Should one grant receive no applicants, then two may be awarded in the other applicant pool.

The number of awards given each year will be subject to the ECPWG's current budget.

Elections and Charter

Elections for the ECPWG are held every other year. Elections for the 2018-2020 board were last held from August 15 – August 31, 2016. The election results are as follows:

- Chair: Emily Williams (previously Secretary)
- Co-Chair: Kristi Confortin
- Secretary: Justin Trudeau
- Treasurer: Sarah Clark
- At-Large Board Members: Paul Di Salvo (Returning), Ben Olsen, Anna Butler, Jason Matthews, Julia Nawrocki, Robert Lewis, and John Vanek

This year's elections also included voting on 5 changes to the ECPWG charter as follows:

1. The following would be inserted as Article IV, Section 3, Clause F.
Communications Coordinator – The Communications Coordinator shall be responsible for engaging the membership of the Working Group through regular

communications about relevant topics and Working Group news. Duties shall include posting relevant and timely content on social media accounts; writing articles about events and updates; publishing a newsletter twice a year; soliciting articles and news updates from Executive Board and members; taking photos at Working Group events) when in attendance. The Communications Coordinator shall be the Chair of the Media and Communications Committee and preside over all meetings.

Status: **Approved**

2. Rewrite of Article VII, Section 2, Clause E to reflect the new role of mentorship.
CLAUSE E. MENTORSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – When desired by the Executive Board, this committee shall be appointed to work with the Society and outside entities to facilitate and/or develop mentorship and professional development programs that are relevant and vital to early career wildlife professionals. This committee may also work with the Outreach Committee and Section and/or Chapter Annual Meeting Program Committees to develop a technical session, workshop, or other activity that addresses challenges and opportunities that early career wildlife professionals encounter in their ongoing professional development and involvement in The Wildlife Society. Additionally, this committee shall actively participate in developing a formal mentorship program with The Wildlife Society.

Status: **Approved**

3. Addition of a Removal from Office Clause, Article IV, Section 8
CLAUSE A – GROUNDS FOR REMOVAL – An officer, board member, or representative will be removed for failing to adhere to TWS Code of Ethics, failing or neglecting the performance of duties devolved upon an officer, board member, or representative, engaging in improper conduct or conduct contrary to the best interests of TWS, violating these Bylaws, or other causes, including failing to attend three consecutive regularly scheduled meeting of the Board or being absent from Board communications for six or more months without sufficient cause.

CLAUSE B – REMOVAL PROCESS – The Executive Board as designated in Article IV, Section 3, may consider removing an officer, board member, or representative upon written petition of the membership signed by 15% of the working groups voting members or a ¾ majority vote of the Board. Prior to voting on removal, the Executing Board shall provide the challenged officer, board member, or representative with written notice of the petition and the stated grounds for removal and an opportunity to appear before the Executive Board to

hear the allegations and present a response. The challenged officer, board member, or representative may waive such a hearing in writing and in lieu thereof submit his or her written response for consideration by the Executive Board. Upon receipt of a signed written waiver of a hearing, the Executive Board will consider the submitted written response, if any, and vote on the petitioned removal. The Executive Board's vote on the matter shall be final and will be communicated in writing to the subject officer, board member, or representative within ten days of the Executive Board vote.

Status: **Approved**

4. Remove all references to "The Parent Society" and replace with "The Wildlife Society" or "the Society" as deemed accurate by The Wildlife Society Council. See Article III, Section 1; Article IV, Section 3, Clause D.

Status: **Approved**

5. Replace "editor of the Working Group newsletter" with "Communications Coordinator" in Article IV, Section 4.

Status: **Approved**

In anticipation of the acceptance of the change in our Charter that created the addition of the Communications Coordinator position, our elections this year included voting on nominees to fill the aforementioned position. As such:

2018-2020 Communications Coordinator position: Yasmine Hentati

Communications

This year the ECPWG has focused on improving open communication with our members. Our board has been working hard on increasing our social media presence. Over the past year our outreach on Facebook has increased from occasional posts to daily offerings on jobs, tips, grants and scholarships, training opportunities, member highlights, and more. We have also created a new position that focuses on our social media and communications; the aforementioned communications coordinator. Through a request for interest placed in the eWildflier, our current Communications Coordinator is Taylor Runge. Taylor began running the ECPWG's social media as of February 1, 2018 and has been expanding our social media presence through the ECPWG's Facebook page. Our newly elected Communications Coordinator will take over as of the ECPWG's annual meeting at The Wildlife Society's conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

BACKGROUND FOR REQUESTS TO COUNCIL

1) Request for Council Action – Working Group Professional Development Grant

Each year, working groups, chapters, and sections of The Wildlife Society organize and host professional development opportunities for their members, and each year they have to factor in limited budgets to determine what opportunities they are able to provide. Very often, the smaller units of The Wildlife Society have to limit their offerings in order to stay within their limited income. Most working groups have lofty aspirations for what they would like to offer in order to meet the requests of their memberships but cannot possibly provide these opportunities due to limited budgets, inability to fundraise, and already overwhelmed boards.

In order to facilitate the ability of The Wildlife Society's units to host the most effective professional development opportunities, the Early Career Professional Working Group asks that the Council work with The Wildlife Society staff to create and facilitate an annual grant. This grant will provide financial assistance to a working group to assist them in instituting a professional development opportunity for their memberships that they would not otherwise be able to provide.

It is recommended that the applying working group be able to request up to \$1000, but requesting this maximum is not required. Funds could be appropriated as Council sees fit. This maximum is requested as fees for most invited presenters exceed this amount and would require some form of match from the working group themselves.

Considerations for arranging the aforementioned grant:

- A) The committee responsible for the grant work with the conference program committee to determine the appropriate time of year for a call for grant submissions so as to balance timing of submitting a conference proposal with knowing the funds available.

2) Request for Council Action – Exemption from Conference Administration Fee

The Early Career Professional Working Group (ECPWG) aims to host as many professional development opportunities as possible for our members. These opportunities are typically held at the annual conference of The Wildlife Society each fall. But, with a minimal budget, what we can offer is constrained by concerns of staying solvent. This past year, we realized that accurately predicting registration fees to account for the administration fee for any hosted workshop at the annual conference was difficult. Although we thought we had accurately balanced the registration fees, we ended up losing money due to uncertainty in the professional

to student registration ratio. Losing money on a workshop in a previous year means that we have to curb what we can offer the following year in order to rebalance. The importance of making money off of these workshops cannot be understated for a working group with a very strict annual appropriation, however the administration fees for the workshop have caused us to lose money on these offerings; a pattern that cannot continue if we are going to maintain a balanced budget while still providing effective and desired training to our members.

As a working group that serves a financially strained, and often under supported for travel, demographic, we try to assure that the sessions we offer are affordable and of high interest. The Wildlife Society's Council has previously recognized both this struggle and the importance for supporting the demographic by removing the financial strain of the New Professional member and making our membership dues free, while assisting in maintaining the ECPWG through annual financial support of \$1000.

The ECPWG greatly appreciates Council's support and although we understand the importance of the administration fees in keeping the conference viable, we ask that the ECPWG, as a financially limited demographic, be exempt from, or have a more limited, overhead placed upon the professional development opportunities we host. Current administration fees, combined with the uncertainty of the professional-student ratio of registrants, have led to a consistent downward trend in the ECPWG finances. This is a cyclic trend that further leads to a limitation in our offerings each successive year.

As increasing the registration fees will prevent new professionals and students from being able to attend, we are stuck trying to find other ways to continue to provide effective and desirable development opportunities while remaining fiscally sound. Reducing, or removing altogether, the administrations fees will greatly assist the ECPWG in doing so.