

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**DATE:** 20 February 2018<sup>[11]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

**REPORT TO:** TWS Council

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

**SUBJECT:** Spring 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.
- 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.

### **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 February we have 1210 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.

## **2017 Conference Professional Development Opportunities**

This past fall, the ECPWG organized two professional development opportunities at the annual conference of The Wildlife Society in Albuquerque, NM; a workshop and a panel discussion.

The workshop, *Managing Wildlife Conservation and Management Conflicts through Formalized Conservation Action Planning*, was organized by ECPWG board member, Jennifer Murrow. This workshop presented the fundamentals of the Open Standards for the practice of conservation planning process, with emphasis on identifying and addressing differing project pressures in the conceptual phase. Attendees were introduced to the concepts and planning steps that the framework entails and became familiar with actions to proactively address potential conflicts during the conceptualizing and planning process. Attendees included 17 professionals and 18 students and was well received overall.

The panel discussion, *The Generation Gap: Opportunities for Five Generations to Work in Harmony*, was organized by the ECPWG Chair, Krysten Zummo-Strong. To better understand one another and allow for an open dialogue, a panel of wildlife professionals from each of the generations discussed values, career goals, their experiences interacting with other generations, lessons learned, and thoughts on how to bridge differences to become better conservationists. Panel members included members of the: Veteran, Baby Boomer, Generation-X, Generation-Y, and Millennial generations, ranging from retired biologists through the up and coming student.

## **2018 Conference Professional Development Opportunities**

The ECPWG is in the process of planning two professional development opportunities for the 2018 annual conference in Cleveland, OH. Board members are planning to submit for consideration a symposium, focused on the experiences and tips of the non-traditional wildlife professional, and a workshop providing hands-on training for improving science communications.

## **Grant Development**

The ECPWG is in the process of developing two new grant opportunities for our members.

The first grant 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.

The second grant will be 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.

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; 2017 was 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

The ECPWG will be holding elections for the 2018-2020 board this coming summer, July of 2018. We are actively reminding TWS members of elections and encouraging all nominations.

### **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 few months 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 communications coordinator. Currently this is a non-elected position, but we plan to have members vote on creating an official board position

through a bylaw change in the coming months. 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 plans to expand our social media presence through the use of Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms.

The ECPWG is also in the process of developing our very first newsletter. Once the format is finalized, we plan to provide a newsletter at least biannually, but more often depending upon board time constraints.

## **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.