NETWS Quarterly Board Meeting –Feb 2020

Old Chicago

24 Feb 2020, 6:00 pm CST

Members present: Shaun Dunn, Shelly McPherron, Jessica Jurzenski, Mel Nenneman, Erin Considine, Matt Steffl, Andrew Little. Board members not able to be present: Mike Gutzmer, Mercy Manzanares.

Meeting called to order at 6:31

Shaun and Erin met in the afternoon to work on the Strategic Action Plan, and have a draft done that the board will continue to work on.

Secretary’s report: Nenneman had sent out the meeting minutes from the board meeting on 15 Nov 2019. Board agreed that the notes were complete and no further discussion was needed.

Treasurer’s report: Jurzenski presented an abbreviated report. NETWS currently has $31,372.60 in the checking account, $4,756 in savings, the Joe Gabig scholarship CD. Jess said that there is some money from checking that needs to be deposited into the CD, but there is a narrow window to add money to the CD that has been missed.

Shelly asked about the chapters annual budget, and Jess said that in recent years, we’d spent around $3,000 for food and $1,500 for the annual meeting, so rounded the costs of the annual meeting to around $5,000. The registration cost for the annual meeting is set such that with ~80 members attending, the chapter breaks even on food/location costs. The auction held at the annual meeting brings in around $1,500, which is the chapters primary revenue. The amount of money made each year at the auction is highly variable.

There was some discussion about chapter policy on giving refunds for registration costs if a member was unable to attend the annual meeting. Steffl said that on Eventbrite this year, refunds were allowed if the refund was requested >7 days before the annual meeting. Refunds were not allowed for <=7 days before the meeting. This is immensely helpful for the program organizer to communicate with catering and hotel services to plan the amount of food requested for the meeting. Suggestion for policy: Allow for a full refund of registration fees if the request is made >7 days before the meeting. No refunds will be made after that time unless there is a documented family emergency.

Committee reports

Nominating: Steffl reported that he had been able to find people to run for all of the board positions, and had to do some arm twisting to get people to agree to run for President-Elect. Candidates are as follows: President-elect – Jason Clark and Will Inselman; Treasurer – Matt Gruntorad; Board Member at Large – Chad Christiansen, Jen Grauer, Sarah Nevison, Jenny Prenosil. Voting on Survey Monkey opened on 23 Feb, and will be open until 23 Mar 2020. Newly elected board members will be installed at the next quarterly board meeting.

Some discussion of how to get more members interested in running to serve on the board. Jess mentioned she had been working on Ritch Nelson for years. Shelly said it would have been helpful for her as Pres-elect to have a checklist/timeline of tasks to complete for getting the annual meeting set up (as chair of the programs committee). It was suggested that if all board positions had a good outline of duties as well as good documentation to assist the newly elected board members, we might be able to encourage more members to run for office.

Membership: Dunn reported that memberships were down slightly due to a smaller number of student renewals. He was going to download the member roles from the website and have the most up to date membership numbers to present at the annual business meeting tomorrow. There was discussion about the limiting factors for students to attend the annual meeting. Travel costs, time away from classes, relevance, and importance/benefits of being a member were all mentioned. Little mentioned that he was interested in developing a survey for students to identify things that would motivate students to attend the state TWS meeting. Dunn had sent an email to student chapter advisors to see if there was a way to encourage more student involvement; somewhat limited response from advisors. We have had student chapter committee, might be a good time to re-activate that committee and perhaps assign one at-large board member to each student chapter as a liaison (this would work out conveniently as we have 4 student chapters and 4 at-large board members….). Little mentioned that there may be a change in student interest as many students at UN-L are drawn to activities related to zoos and animal husbandry/care, with less interest shown toward wildlife management and research. Also a student perception of the annual meeting (is it just a bunch of talks? I don’t want to go to that). Need to find what is of interest/value in meeting attendance for students, and also show value of learning from other wildlife professionals are doing by attending presentations. Might also need to encourage more wildlife professionals to present projects that they are working on (successful wetland restorations, management lessons learned, how adaptive management is applied). This would probably benefit everybody in the chapter. Little said that at the TWS meeting, one of the things most students found valuable was the student-professional mixer and the chance to interact with others from across the country. Mark Hammer (Wayne State) was appreciative of the later start for this year’s meeting as it allowed for travel down the morning of the meeting, rather than night before. Jurzenski mentioned that one change was that in the past, NETWS used to pay for some student rooms, and that going back to this would perhaps get more students to attend. Dunn said that we might just need to take some of our past suggestions and make them more formal, and then act on them (e.g. student travel, reimbursement of application to become A/CWB, etc).

Write a paragraph or two for student members explaining the importance/benefit of being a NETWS member, and encourage students to join even if they don’t make it to the annual meeting.

Jurzenski mentioned that there is a discrepancy between the national web page and our chapter on the student cost of membership ($5 on TWS, $10 on NETWS). Jess moved to have the TWS amount changed to $10. Shaun said almost everybody that is a member either pays through TWS website or at the annual meeting, with very few renewals coming in to just the NETWS.

Programs: McPherron reported that everything had come together for the programs committee, and that we have an annual meeting with speakers, food, etc planned for the next two days. Thanks to all members that pitched in to make this work (Zach, Steinauer, Steffl, Jurzenski, not sure who else is on committee). McPherron mentioned asking members for input on locations and themes for the next annual meeting.

Conservation Review: Eric Zach compiled the following summary of activity in the Conservation Review committee. Many thanks to Eric for his efforts on this.

**April 2019** – Submitted a comment letter on “Proposed Rule on the “Revised Definition of “Waters of the United States.”

**LB126**, NETWS Opposes (The chapter submitted testimony when the bill was introduced in 2019) - This bill was amended during the last round of debate and moves forward for a final reading and vote. The amendment requires a $5 fee for landowner permits valid during a three day season, Saturday-Monday the week prior to the November rifle deer season. There is still time to contact your state senator to voice your opposition.

**LB1173**, NETWS Opposes- This bill would provide transferable deer, elk, and pronghorn permits to landowners. A letter was submitted on behalf of the chapter to be included in the hearing testimony. This bill has not been voted out of committee.

**LB1071**, NETWS Opposes- This bill would create the Wildlife Damage Recovery Act. A letter was submitted on behalf of the chapter to be included in the hearing testimony. The bill's sponsor, Senator Hughes, does not wish to move this bill any further this session and would like to try to work on a solution after the legislative session is over.

**Jenny Prenosil** drafted a letter regarding the actions the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board took at their February meeting, selectively zeroing out several projects that had been previously approved for funding by the Grants Committee. A draft letter is with the board for review.

We’re always looking for folks to help draft and review these letters. See me if you want to volunteer.

Awards: Andy Little has agreed to chair the committee, and has worked on this. Did get some nominations for awards. He mentioned that we need to educate members that sending in someones CV is not a nomination, nor is sending Andy someones name. There is instructions on the website that documents the items needed to submit a nomination. There is a need to update the website with the names and dates (year) of past professional of the year and career professional awards. Several people told Andy that they could think of people to nominate, but didn’t know if they had won in the past. Shaun has an Access database set up for tracking membership, and there might be a way to add tracking of Life/Legacy members to this, and maybe tracking award winners (?). Award winners and life/legacy members would have their names listed on the NETWS website.

Andy had a few questions about how the awards will be handled at the annual meeting. Posters will be set up in Ballroom 1 (where dinner/social to be held), and judging will occur during social after business meeting/before banquet dinner. Winners receive $200 for 1st, Wildlife Techniques manual 2nd, and Sibley’s Field guide 3rd. Photo contest winners receive $25 for category winner, and $50 for best in show.

Certification – chair Carl Wolfe didn’t have much to report

TWS Report – At least a few NETWS members were able to attend the Meeting in Reno, NV. Meeting next year is in Louisville, KY

Old Business: Dunn had a request for NETWS to reimburse a member for half of the cost of the application to become an Associate or Certified Wildlife Biologist. The chapter had discussed this at the 2019 annual meeting, but need to formalize and vote on a policy for how to accept applications from members seeking reimbursement, and the criteria under which the chapter will provide reimbursement. Suggested criteria for NETWS to consider providing these reimbursements: 1) application received from a NETWS member in good standing. 2) applicant must be a resident of Nebraska, or attending school in Nebraska. 3) NETWS will limit these awards to $1000 per year on a first come, first serve basis. Applicant would need to send the NETWS board a receipt indicating that they had applied to become an A/CWB with TWS to receive a reimbursement. NETWS would only provide this benefit once to each applicant, so we encourage applicants to work with currently certified members so that they can submit the best application possible.

Professional travel- the 2019 approved budget had a line item allowing up to $1000 to help a member of the NETWS board go to the national TWS meeting. Should formalize an application process to use these funds as well.

Discussion re: student participation in NETWS and renewing student interest in attending the annual meeting. The chapter already provides a discounted registration rate for students. It was suggested that NETWS consider going back to providing student hotel rooms to encourage students to come to the meeting. Suggestion made to provide up to 6 rooms for students, and then task the student chapter liason (preferably a student from one of our student chapters) with coordinating among the universities to determine the best way to share rooms among the students planning to come to the meeting and then coordinating with the treasurer to get students checked in at the meeting venue.

New Business: Updates to the Strategic Plan of Operation – Erin and Shaun were the only board members able to make the meeting at 1:00 pm to work on the plan. They were able to make some updates to the language and scope of the 2015 document. Mike Gutzmer had some comments and additions to the plan as well. The board will continue to work on the Strategic Plan of Operation. Jess mentioned that the APO is useful as it provides a mechanism to get committees more involved and active. There was a bit of discussion around the need to better document and improve record keeping to improve communication with membership. As an example, our current records for past awards winner (Professional of the Year, Career Professional, Gabig scholarship recipient) are incomplete, and lack information on the year the award was won. We probably have this information, but need to consolidate it and get it housed where it is available.

Need to seek ideas on themes and locations for the 2021 Annual Meeting.

Shaun brought up the idea of having a student knowledge test, with cash prizes for the best scores as a mechanism to increase student interest in the chapter and attending the annual meeting. He has seen this done at the Range Society meeting, and it is a popular event.

Reaching the end of any new topics for discussion, Nenneman moved to adjourn the meeting, McPherron seconded the motion, and passed by voice vote. Adjourned at 9:10 pm.