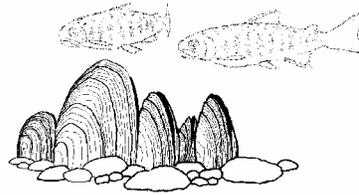


Pacific Northwest Native Freshwater Mussel Workgroup



September 14, 2005

Minutes

Attendees were as follows: Kevin Aitkin, Molly Hallock, John Fleckenstein, Al Smith, Christina Luzier, Michelle Steg, Rob Plotnikoff. Nancy Duncan and Tom Burke were on the conference line.

Purpose: This was a regularly scheduled meeting of the Workgroup.

2005 Symposium: All comments from workgroup and participants were very positive. Evergreen worked out well as a venue. Suggestions for next time: use a sergeant-at-arms to move people into sessions on time, have only one hallway to session rooms to keep people centralized.

2006 Symposium: Theme ideas: 1) habitat; 2) aquaculture; 3) what is killing the mussels? (Bear Creek). Venue ideas: 1) Seattle aquarium; 2) American Malacological Society/Western Society of Malacologists meeting, Seattle July 29 – Aug 3, 2006

Issues with theme and venue ideas:

1) Can King County and Water Tenders help with a Bear Creek session?

Nancy stated – there are so many things affecting/killing mussels that Bear Creek seems limited; however, Water Tenders may fund it.

2) Maybe we should take a year off and coordinate with Seattle malacology meeting. We could have a session at the meeting: (a) advertise our group and awareness of NW mussels; (b) have talks on cultural importance, distribution, or perhaps incorporate our theme ideas (above) into the session; (c) have a table at the meeting with guides, poster, bookmarks, etc.; (d) can we even fill a session?; (e) people are limited in how many meetings they can attend. Is the Seattle meeting too expensive? Could we arrange a one day attendance fee?

Plan: 1) Kevin will ask Terry Frest about possibility of getting a session at the Seattle meeting.
2) Do we want to consider a field trip to Bear Creek?
3) Find out logistics on separate Bear Creek session with Bear Creek and Water Tenders taking the lead on organization and funding.
4) Plan a conference call in November to discuss final plans and delegate responsibilities.

Database: Jeff Adams and Christina Luzier attended StreamNet steering committee meeting. Jeff gave a presentation on our workgroup and NW mussels. StreamNet steering committee members from WA, OR, CA, MT and ID were in favor of including mussels in the StreamNet database. Great GIS potential with existing salmonid, native fish, and fish barrier data.

Most existing fields are already compatible with mussel data. Jeff and Nancy worked on fields to make them compatible with other databases. The overall design is simple. Idaho and Montana already starting to collect mussel data. WA and OR have not started.

StreamNet funding is uncertain each year. We need to keep our own backup data and make sure that the information is transferable. Is there a conflict with the Heritage Collections? John Fleckenstein says no.

Our group will need to be responsible for rating the data, verifying specimens, housing voucher specimens. Permit issue was raised. Molly stated that WDFW needs permits if officially collecting data. Does every person that collects a shell need a permit for the collection to be legal? Molly, Kevin and John will talk with enforcement officials about legality of collecting.

Vouchers: need a place to house vouchers. Photo vouchers are good but not as good as shells. Legality of collecting may force photo vouchers. Nancy asked if Terry Frest could be the verifier and specimen houser. Kevin suggested that we wait until Terry has started his non-profit/mini-museum. California Academy of Sciences has agreed to take Nancy's specimens when she leaves.

Resignation of Workgroup Members: Al gave background on history of guide preparation and events leading up to and through resignation of Jeanette Howard, Jayne Brim Box and David Wolf.

Al Smith, Ethan Nedeau, Jen Stone and 12 other people reviewed the mussel guide in its draft form. Experts such as Art Bogan, Kevin Cummings and Jayne Brim Box were three of those 12 outside reviewers. Art and Kevin contributed many good comments within the deadline for review. Some of these comments were used. Jayne also gave many good comments but after the deadline for review had passed. Regardless of the late arrival of Jayne's comments, many of them were used to modify the guide. Not every comment from every reviewer was used. Jayne expressed concern that more of her comments should have been used by the authors and editor, Al Smith. All reviewers were treated equally. No other reviewers expressed the same concern. Wendy said that she had asked to be included in the editorial committee in the beginning, and this was not heard. As a result, she was not able to give input until much of the Mussel Guide was already decided. The feedback she did give was definitely heard and acted upon, with one large exception: there were no photos of Washington State streams. The whole guide seemed to be oriented toward Oregon, yet was labeled Northwest. She was not given time to properly submit an acceptable photo, even though the ones she did submit were taken by a professional photographer, who has published his own book (and happens to be her son-in-law). They were not accepted, and no suggestions were made to include Washington State streams.

At the May 4th meeting in Seattle, Jeanette was on the conference call and expressed concerns about the scientific content of the guide. In particular, she was concerned about the naming of Anodonta species. This meeting was within days of the guide going to the publisher for final printing. The group listened to Jeanette's concerns and decided as a group that a disclaimer included in the Anodonta section was adequate in describing the ambiguity of naming Anodonta species. The group agreed to follow Turgeon, the most recently peer reviewed published work on classifying this genus. The group made a decision not to make major last minute changes and to keep in mind the audience this guide would reach and the guide's original purpose.

One day before the symposium, Jeanette, Jayne and David resigned from the workgroup due to differences over the field guide. Al read the resignation letter to the workgroup.

August 4th, the three were asked to rejoin the group via a letter written by Al Smith on behalf of the workgroup. No response has been received.

In response to the above mentioned letter, which was copied to the workgroup, Wendy stated that Al should have been more open to their concerns as well as concerns from others in the group. Cynthia Tait stated that Al's letter to rejoin was a gracious gesture and the group is already open to its members concerns.

Feedback from Workgroup:

Rob – Early discussions on guide said only previously published, peer reviewed, literature would be used. Mussel guide followed these guidelines.

Al – Turgeon has all species listed. We followed published level of knowledge.

Al and Molly – Ethan effectively stated disclaimer and difficulty of naming Anodonta species.

John – David Wolf had previous problem with position of workgroup regarding the influence of funding and usurping Tribal rights.

Al – Al and Jen made it clear at that time that USFWS was not in charge of the group or funding decisions.

Kevin, Christina and Al – Met with Scott Aikin, Tribal liaison for USFWS, and cleared up misconceptions about the workgroup. He was under the assumption that USFWS had a leadership role in the group and that funding decisions were being made by the group. Tribal trust issues were brought up and discounted based on the true organization and purpose of the group.

Alienation of Workgroup Members:

Wendy has serious concerns about alienation of workgroup members. Al read Wendy's emails to workgroup. Her first concern was the date of the fall meeting. Al offered to change the date

upon hearing her concern. Her second concern was the alienation of members. Al put this issue on the agenda. The workgroup discussed alienation but agreed that Wendy should personally voice her concerns at the next meeting.

Michelle – Had a positive experience working on the field guide.

John and Christina – Group dynamics? Individuals in a group need to work as a group realizing that compromise is essential.

Michelle – Never felt that opportunities within the workgroup to lead were exclusionary.

The workgroup agreed again that Wendy should voice her concerns at the next meeting.

Field Guide Distribution: About 2500 guides have been sent out to various people, organizations, museums, etc. We are saving 1000 for the meeting in Seattle next summer. If we decide to join a parent group, the funding for the next printing will be much easier to get.

Christina will ask Donna to put an image of the guide on the website – done!

New applicants to the Workgroup: Two applications have been received for membership on the workgroup. What is the procedure for accepting new applicants: consensus of the group. Email responses: Wendy – Yes; Cynthia – Yes. Jason Dunham (USGS – Corvallis, OR) and Kathryn Barko (Army Corps – The Dalles, OR) were unanimously voted into the workgroup. Al will notify them. Christina will put the new members on the roster and send a new version to the group.

Parent Group to Oversee Workgroup: Is it a good idea or not? Email answers: Wendy – No; Cynthia – Yes. Jen Stone and Al met with Scott Black, director of Xerces Society, last year to see how that organization runs and fits with our group.

Rob – benefits include donors and monetary.

Kevin – biggest benefit – eases movement of money.

Al – Jen spent lot of time on money issues, no one on the workgroup has this time anymore.

John – Is there an agency conflict with Xerces Society?

Nancy – Are there other groups besides the Xerces Society?

Al – Jen talked to AFS and Mollusk Conservation Society on becoming a chapter.

Rob – What about the International Benthological Society?

Michelle – asked how does it work to be under a parent group?

Rob – Board edits and reviews mission and work that is done.

Michelle – becoming our own chapter may ease the agency conflict issue.

The group decided to list our needs and what we could offer a parent group:

Needs: business/money

Offer: publications, website, symposia, broaden scope of their business, membership, money from sales of field guide or other products

Nancy – Do we risk losing members who are not comfortable being part of a larger group?

Xerces may be a good fit because it is a smaller organization versus AFS, etc.

Al will contact Mollusk Conservation Society, Rob will contact Intl. Benthological Society, Jeff Adams is in contact with Scott Black of Xerces. Christina talked with Scott Black before today's meeting and suggested that a separate conference call be planned with Xerces if we decide to pursue their organization.

Critical Needs Document: Purpose is to delineate biological needs of mussels. It is an outline of required study areas. Rob last worked on the draft a year ago. Al and Cynthia made comments. What next – what is done with document? Kevin suggested that it be sent out to the workgroup for final comments and approval at the next meeting.

New Items:

Nancy – described multiple observation stations for neo-tropical birds, volunteers monitor trends. She suggested that this would be a great idea for mussels. Set up a permanent array of mussel plots to collect trend data. Everybody thought this was a great idea. The protocol needs to be worked on. Data collected: counts, length, weight, condition. Nancy will work on getting funding. Perhaps a subcommittee will be formed.

Next Meeting: November 8, 2005 in Olympia, WA. 10am – 2pm.