

Pacific Northwest Native Freshwater Mussel Workgroup

6/5/2023

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Al Smith, Alexa Maine, Alyssa Bangs, Brittany Beebe, Paul Benton, Ryan Blackadar, Monica Blanchard, Bob Derber, Josh Boyce, Brandon Weems, Kristin Cook, Benjamin Cross, David Stagliano, Emilie Blevins, Ann Gannam, Linnea Gullikson, Craig Haskell, Jeffrey Petersen, Jens Hegg, Kevin Aitkin, Lauren Kong, Andy Lawrence, Laura McMullen, Graham Mytton, Nathaniel Neal, RD Nelle, Courtney Newlon, Patty Morrison, Ralph Lampman, Jessica Saenz, Joel Sauder, Sean Gibbs, William Simpson, Vince Butitta, Christina Wang, Michele Weaver, Molly Webb, Marie Winkowski, Sarina Jepsen, Christopher Hooley, Gena Lasko, Rob Plotnikoff

Agenda:

- A recap about the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society symposium in Portland in April (Emilie Blevins, Xerces Society)
 - 299 people registered, of which 38 were virtual. Participants spanned 35 U.S. states (including Washington, D.C.) and 2 Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec), as well as 8 countries (including the US and Canada, as well as Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden).
 - The program included 3 plenary speakers, 134 platform talks across three concurrent sessions, 14 lightning (5-minute) oral presentations, and 50 posters.
 - A total of 16 sponsors contributed more than \$14,000 to support the event, which goes to fund student and early career travel awards.
 - Great feedback from attendees
 - Thank you to the local planning committee and volunteers, especially Michele Weaver, Patty Morrison, Alexa Maine, Monica Blanchard, Ron Constable, Kevin Aitkin and others!

- An update on the availability of a draft visual survey protocol for western freshwater mussels
 - Visual mussel survey protocol intended to provide straightforward, standardized methods for collecting visual observations of freshwater mussels in western North America. Does not replace rigorous methods where people are able to collect more detailed information but intended to fill a gap for people new to conducting mussel surveys and to improve the quality and usability of mussel data moving forward.
 - Version will be available for testing this summer; get in touch with members of the interagency group developing it: Emilie Blevins (Xerces Society), Alexa Maine (CTUIR), Courtney Newlon (USFWS), Barb Adams (USFS), or Emily Johnson (BLM) to receive new version of protocol.
 - Final version to be completed in 2024.

- Dave Stagliano: Report on western ridged mussel length:age regression study funded by FWS, shared with the workgroup after the meeting
- An overview of a proposed USFWS-facilitated Western Freshwater Mussel Conservation Strategy (Courtney Newlon & Christina Wang) - recorded
 - PNW workgroup history
 - Existing efforts
 - Proposal
 - Benefits
 - Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative model; many elements of a FWS led Mussel conservation initiative could be borrowed from a successful Lamprey Conservation Initiative
- Draft structure
 - Steering committee that interacts with management units & fw mussel workgroup
 - Management units would have participation from tribes, federal agencies (FWS, USGS, USFS, BLM), state agencies, NGOs (Xerces, Watershed Councils), academia, co-leads from organization reps
- Next steps
 - Convene Steering Committee (Nov, 2023 likely)
 - Steering committee develops plan
 - Draft strategy
 - Outreach to stakeholders
 - Implement strategy
- Questions:
 - How will this group change if mussel species become ESA listed? -unclear but there's a precedent for this in other regions
 - Role for DOTs or Federal Highways? - yes
 - Is this group intended to cover other mollusks beyond freshwater mussels? -no
 - Can this recording be shared with partners who should be engaged? -yes
- Next workgroup chair discussion - Emilie proposes a process of open nomination period over next two months - submit nominations by 8/5/2023. If more than one candidate is nominated, hold a vote, the new chair will begin their term at the September 2023 meeting. Emilie will follow up with an email regarding this process.