

WNTI Steering Committee meeting notes
February 18, 2016

Present: Jon Sjoberg (NV), Julie Meka Carter (AZ), Roger Wilson, Craig Burley (WA), Larry Phillips (WA), Bruce McIntosh (OR), Dave Jepsen (OR), Roger Harding (AK), Dan Duffield for Scott Spaulding (USFS), Melissa Dickard (BLM), Therese Thompson (Project Coordinator).

Guests: Kirk Patten (NM), Karin Eldridge (USFWS), Jess Newton (USFWS), Bill Rice (USFWS).

Absent: Warren Colyer (TU), Jeff Dillon (ID), Bob Clark (USFWS), Lee Nelson (MT).

Summarized Action items:

1) Meetings notes from December 15, 2015 were approved. Therese will upload them to the SC login page of the WNTI website.

2) Therese was asked to inquire if WNTI can have a representative sit on the NFHP Board's Science and Data Committee moving forward.

3) The Steering Committee also asked Therese to ask the NFHP Science and Data Committee to see the disclaimer being put in the national report this year before the report is published.

3) Therese will send out written notice to the SC today of the proposed Bylaws amendment to start the 60 day written notice. The proposed amendment is to add one additional At-Large WAFWA IMFC Member position to the WNTI SC, bringing total SC membership up to 15. We will put this agenda item on our March meeting agenda (with exact wording) for discussion and on the April meeting agenda for a vote. If approved, the SC would still have to decide which of the nominees fills the At-Large position and which of the nominees fills the Middle and Northern Rockies position.

4) Therese will offer "Know Your Native Fish" Rio Grande CT posters to AFS western and state chapter meetings raffles/silent auctions.

5) The small grants timeline is similar to 2015 – WNTI will announce the RFP in April, with proposals due by late June, and SC review/ranking at the July WAFWA meeting. Therese needs to make some minor tweaks to the RFP as she and Julie discovered last year that some of the evaluation criteria on the SC ranking spreadsheet were not actually requested in the small grants RFP, so we had to remove those criteria from the ranking process last year. Therese will run her edits through the WNTI RFP sub-committee before releasing the RFP.

6) Therese will send the updated edits to the WNTI strategic plan to the WNTI Strategic Prioritization subcommittee for review (WNTI regional representatives are Julie, Jon, Roger Wilson, Craig, and Roger Harding) and determination about next steps.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm (mountain). Chair Julie Meka Carter asked for additions to the agenda. Therese and Jon asked to add an update on the Steering Committee call with Ed Schriever (WAFWA representative to the NFHP Board) on Friday, February 12 regarding WNTI's letter to Kelly Hepler expressing concerns with the NFHP 2015 national assessment datasets.

1) Meeting minutes from December 15, 2015 were approved. Therese will upload them to the SC login page of the website.

2) Project Coordinator's Report (update on activities): Therese provided a verbal update on her activities since December 2015. A written copy of her report is attached to these minutes.

An update was provided regarding the SC call on February 12th with Ed Schriever to discuss in more detail concerns with the datasets used for the 2015 NFHP national assessment. Per our December 2015 Steering Committee meeting decision, a letter was sent from Julie Meka Carter to Kelly Hepler, Chair of WAFWA's Inland and Marine Fisheries Committee, expressing WNTI's concerns that the 2015 NFHP national assessment again over estimates the quantity and quality of fish habitat in the arid west because of inconsistent hydrologic data throughout the U.S., particularly in the western U.S. where water is often scarce and intermittent. Copies of the letter were sent to Tom Champeau (NFHP Board Chair), Ed Schriever, and the western state fish and wildlife agency fish chiefs. Similar concerns were formally expressed from WNTI and the Desert FHP back in 2010 when the first NFHP national assessment was completed. Ed Schriever understands our concerns and committed to us that he will keep this issue in front of the Board. Ed asked for a commitment from WNTI to work with the NFHP Board and the Board's Science and Data Committee to add a disclaimer to the 2015 report and to improve the assessment in the future, which WNTI agreed to. Tom Champeau also reached out to Therese, but they have not been able to connect yet. The SC expressed frustration that there was recognition of the problem after the 2010 report but no action and no outreach to the western FHPs during the intervening five years to strategize how to fix the problem. Question: Is it possible to insert ourselves into the process earlier for the 2020 assessment – and get involved upfront – instead of having to react to the assessment once it is near completion when we have no opportunity to provide input or request changes (as happened in both 2010 and 2015)?

Action Items: Therese was asked to inquire if WNTI can have a representative sit on the NFHP Board's Science and Data Committee moving forward. The Steering Committee also asked Therese to ask the Science and Data Committee to see the disclaimer being put in the national report this year before the report is published. Further conversation on this issue focused on how WNTI can work with Ed Schriever to ensure that the national assessment results are not used as a "first cut" criterion by the NFHP Board to allocate funding in the future. If the national legislation passes, the Board will have to devise an allocation methodology and there is concern that if they use the national assessment as the primary tool to drive the allocation, that

all the western FHPs will be underfunded. There is also concern that the new 501c3 National Fish Fund will be using the 2015 national assessment report to fundraise, also potentially negatively affecting the western FHPs. Ed Schriever committed on the call with the Steering Committee that he would work with us to make sure the western FHPs are not penalized in any future funding allocation methodology that involves the national assessment.

3) Steering Committee Governance – membership nominations and request for consideration of changes to WNTI Bylaws.

Recapping Steering Committee (SC) changes since November 2015:

- In November 2015, the SC voted to approve Jon Sjoberg (NV) as Vice Chair (does not require WAFWA IMFC approval but our bylaws state we have to notify IMFC)
- In December, Kirk Patten (NM) was approved by his director to join the SC in At-Large position being vacated by Lee Nelson (MT). This will require IMFC approval.
- A request to the Middle and Northern Rockies state agency fish chiefs who do not already have representation on the SC brought us 3 candidates to replace Roger Wilson as the Middle and Northern Rockies representative on the SC in July 2016. This decision will also require IMFC approval.

Wyoming Game and Fish nominated Paul Dey. Paul currently serves as Aquatic Habitat Section Supervisor.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources made two nominations: Drew Cushing who is the new Fish Chief, and Paul Thompson who manages the northern region aquatics program for Utah. There are resumes on both candidates if anyone on the SC would like to see them.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife also expressed interest in nominating someone, but are unable to provide a nomination until their fish chief position is permanently filled. There she assured them that a nomination would be welcomed, but that the pressure was off since we already have three nominations for one open position.

Julie, Jon and Therese discussed the multiple nominee situation last week during the WNTI leadership call. This is unprecedented for WNTI – we have never had more people willing to serve on the SC than positions available. Wyoming has never nominated anyone and we would like to get them more active and engaged, but also recognize the importance of having fish chiefs on the SC (sidenote: WNTI bylaws actually state that “Steering committee members should represent the highest level of their organization as feasible. This representation should be at the administrative level, so that Steering Committee members have some authority to commit WNTI financial resources, and recommend the use of respective Agency staff resources, or other types of organizational support”). We would prefer to not turn any state agency away from SC membership if there is interest – our success depends on active state involvement and

an active SC. WNTI Bylaws currently state that there are four “regional representatives” plus Alaska from WAFWA’s IMFC and three “At-Large” WAFWA IMFC representatives on the SC:

Article IV. STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SECTION 2. Steering Committee structure. The WNTI Steering Committee will not exceed 14 Members. This will include representation as follows:

- 8 - WAFWA State Members– One per the four WNTI geographical groupings and Alaska- and three At - Large WAFWA IMFC Members
- 3 - Federal – selected from WAFWA participating federal agencies (FWS, FS, BLM)
- 1 - Conservation organization representative
- 1 - Tribal Nation or organizational representative
- 1 - Canadian Provincial representative

The Steering Committee will be staffed by the WNTI Coordinator, whose responsibilities are identified in Article VI, SECTION 5

Julie, Jon, and Therese are requesting that the SC amend Article IV Section 2 to add one additional At-Large WAFWA IMFC member to the SC. This would bring our At-Large positions to four and our total SC membership up to 15 people. The rationale behind the request for amendment is that 15 SC members is still very manageable and lets more state agencies participate. We have also had the Provincial and Tribal positions open for more than two years so our SC is not currently operating at full capacity. The WNTI SC has the authority provided in the Bylaws for the SC (not IMFC) to amend our Bylaws:

Article VII. AMENDMENTS

SECTION 1. *Amendments.* After sixty (60) days' written notice to the members, the Steering Committee may amend these Bylaws at any meeting of the Steering Committee. Any number of amendments or an entire revision of the Bylaws may be submitted by members and/or the WNTI Coordinator, and voted upon at a single meeting of the Steering Committee. Bylaw amendments will be adopted at such a meeting upon receiving a 2/3 majority yes vote from the Steering Committee voting on each amendment.

Bruce McIntosh and Craig Burley support the request for amendment.

Action Item: Therese will send out written notice to the SC today of the proposed Bylaws amendment to start the 60 day written notice. The proposed amendment is to add one additional At-Large WAFWA IMFC Members position to the WNTI SC, bringing total SC membership up to 15. We will put this agenda item on our March meeting agenda (with exact wording) for discussion and on the April meeting agenda for a vote. If approved, the SC would still have to decide which of the nominees fills the At-Large position and which of the nominees fills the Middle and Northern Rockies position.

4) Grants programs updates:

- USFWS/NFHP allocation update: USFWS Regional NFHP Coordinators are in the process of reviewing the FHP allocation applications. Their goal is to send their recommendations up the chain of command by the end of February. Everyone is hopeful that the final funding allocation decision can be made earlier this year – maybe by April or May.
- 2015 small grant project completion update: Know Your Native RGCT poster and trail head signs are done. Our small grant contribution helped fund 2,500 posters (24 x 36) and 10 trailhead signs. The posters are beautiful and would be a really good project for other WNTI species teams/partners to emulate. Distribution is mostly through Colorado Parks and Wildlife and New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish outreach programs; Trout Unlimited also received a large number for their classroom outreach efforts. Therese got about 150 copies for WNTI exhibit booths and other uses. Therese can mail a poster to SC members who want one. Suggestion was made to donate the poster to AFS western division and other state chapter AFS meetings – Therese will make sure that happens.
- 2016 Small grants RFP: We budgeted 15K for the small grants program this year. SC confirmed that the timeline patterns 2015 – WNTI will announce the RFP in April, with proposals due by late June, and SC review/ranking at the July WAFWA meeting.
Action Item: Therese needs to make some minor tweaks to the RFP as she and Julie discovered last year that some of the evaluation criteria on the SC ranking spreadsheet were not actually requested in the small grants RFP, so we had to remove those criteria from the ranking process last year. Therese will run her edits through the WNTI RFP sub-committee before releasing the RFP.

5) Strategic Planning and WNTI species assessments update:

1. **Therese has finished the updated edits to the WNTI strategic plan and will provide it to the WNTI Strategic Prioritization subcommittee for review (WNTI regional representatives are Julie, Jon, Roger Wilson, Craig, and Roger Harding).** It looks good and mostly needs just a couple of small clarifications. Then we need to start work on setting regional priorities and implementation plans.
2. So far Therese has received an updated WNTI trout status report from the Apache Trout team. Arizona Game and Fish Dept. was not able to get tribal input on the Apache Trout update. Arizona is in process of updating the Gila Trout status report, with input from New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish. We gave the other teams until April 1 to get theirs completed. Several teams have checked in with Therese on their progress, while others we have not heard from at all. Some of the northwest species, in particular, will likely need interim status reports as their conservation planning processes are either just beginning or are more fluid right now.

6) Misc:

Therese asked WAFWA if they had a GoTo Meetings account as it would be nice to have meetings with a video component so Therese could share her screen. WAFWA just subscribed to a service called SmartMeeting that WNTI can use and will take the cost of us using the service out of our monthly overhead that we already pay them.

Friday, July 22nd meeting at WAFWA : The draft agenda and lodging information was sent out to WNTI SC members on February 5th. Do not wait to book a hotel if you are coming in person. We will have the ability to have SC members participate in the meeting remotely for those who cannot attend.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm (mountain).

Next WNTI Steering Committee teleconference call will be Thursday, March 17, 2016

WNTI Project Coordinator Jan/Feb 2016 Report

Projects/activities for this time period

Steering Committee Governance:

1) Jon Sjoberg was voted in as Vice Chairman at the November 2015 Steering Committee meeting to replace Roger Wilson who retired on January 1, 2016.

2) In December 2015, Kirk Patten was approved by his Director to join the Steering Committee as an “At large” member to fill the seat being vacated by Lee Nelson.

3) In January 2016, I sent out a request to the Middle and Northern Rockies state agencies that did not already have a representative on the WNTI Steering Committee to replace Roger Wilson in July 2016 as the Middle and Northern Rockies representative on the Steering Committee. Mark Fowden (Wyoming Game and Fish) nominated Paul Dey from his staff and Drew Cushing (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources) nominated himself and Paul Thompson from his staff. The Steering Committee needs to discuss these nominations on its February 18th teleconference.

The Steering Committee will need to request a vote to approve all our Steering Committee member changes from WAFWA’s Inland and Marine Fisheries Committee.

Foundation for Western Fish and Wildlife: I’m happy to report that WNTI received \$2,100 in online donations in December. (!)

USFWS/NFHP allocation application: WNTI's 2016 allocation application report was turned in to USFWS on December 18, 2015 (due date was January 5, 2016). A PDF copy is available on the SC Login page of the WNTI website (or I can email it to you). It is my understanding that the USFWS Regional NFHP coordinators are in the process of scoring the applications and will meet sometime in February as a group to make a final recommendation. That recommendation then moves up the chain of command. Everyone hopes we hear back by April/May this year.

NFHP National Assessment: Per Steering Committee direction, WNTI sent a letter to Kelly Hepler, WAFWA Inland and Marine Fisheries Committee Chair on February 5, 2016, expressing WNTI's concerns with the NFHP 2015 national assessment results for the western U.S. (particularly the intermountain states) and requesting that IMFC discuss our concerns at its July meeting. Tom Champeau, NFHP Board Chairman, was copied on the letter, as were the western state agency fish chiefs.

National Fish Habitat Fund (dba Beyond the Pond): Per Steering Committee direction, I consulted with Deb VonDeBur (WAFWA's CFO) regarding the request from the National Fish Habitat Fund Board for all FHPs to sign a Chapter Agreement. They are *not* defining chapters in the formal sense (like Trout Unlimited or other nonprofits do). Deb concurred that she needed to sign the Agreement as the Treasurer for the Foundation for Western Fish and Wildlife (WNTI's 501c3 fiscal agent). I also signed the Agreement as the Project Coordinator. The Chapter Agreement *does not* affect our ability to fundraise under the Foundation for Western Fish and Wildlife, it is only to document our official relationship with the new Fund so that they may disperse any funds raised on behalf of WNTI to us. The Fund's new website is almost complete and should go live sometime in February.

Western-wide Native Trout Challenge: In response to WNTI's request to the western state agency fish chiefs in early 2016, we now have a functioning sub-committee of 14 individuals who are assisting us in developing the Western-wide Native Trout Challenge. We did not get sub-committee nominations from Montana, New Mexico, or Wyoming. The sub-committee has held its first conference call and was able to reach consensus on some key concepts. The second conference call will occur in early March. Our goal is to have a proposal for the state agency fish chiefs in advance of the summer WAFWA meeting (for discussion at the summer WAFWA meeting) and a late 2016/early 2017 launch.

Ongoing habitat project updates:

Bear Creek (CO): The Cheyenne Mountain Chapter of Trout Unlimited requested a meeting between WNTI and the USFWS Region 6 on February 5, 2016, to update us on the project. This is another WNTI funded project that has been held up due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. Project funds were to be used to fix High Drive culverts, plus restoration of instream and pool habitat for the only remaining pure population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout. Project proponents brought us up to speed on developments in the project area. To summarize, the damage from major floods in the area in 2012 and 2013 is bringing a slew of FEMA money

into the project area to fix/move roads and trails that currently parallel the creek and have been the main cause of sedimentation that is threatening the population of Greenback CT. Project proponents requested that the WNTI/NFHP funds be used in a slightly different manner that does not alter the scope of the project but gets key tasks finished and the project closed out (the project was originally supposed to have been completed in April 2014). There is a work crew being funded with the FEMA funds this summer/fall that can include the WNTI work as part of their work plan if we get on their schedule by the end of February. New trails are being put in by August 2016 but there is no funding from any sources to obliterate the old, problematic trails. WNTI funds will still be used for instream repair and pool habitat as originally proposed, plus now will also be used to for trail obliteration. USFWS Region 6 is ok with the proposal, as is the USFS. There is no change necessary to the contract agreement nor the scope of work. The project should be wrapped up by next Sept/Oct and two Trout Unlimited chapters are planning a community Greenback Festival in Colorado Springs in October to celebrate the species and the work finally being completed.

Rio Hondo (NM): As you may recall, with Scott Spaulding's help, I have been working with Michael Gatlin from the Carson National Forest and Yvette Paroz USFS Southwestern Region Fisheries Program Leader to move WNTI's 2012 Rio Hondo project forward. Sequestration, lack of a fish biologist on the Forest staff for two years, and delays from the New Mexico DOT held up this relatively small (\$20K) project to improve capability of barriers on tributaries of the Rio Hondo by modification of existing road culverts to secure populations of Rio Grande CT in Yerba Creek, Manzanita Creek, and Italianos Creek. Michael was finally able to secure a meeting with the NM DOT to discuss the possibility of modifying the culverts to create fish barriers. DOT is okay with us moving forward with that plan and will do a flow analysis of the proposed culvert insert to ensure it will carry the required flow. Unfortunately, DOT does not have anyone on staff that installs inserts. The cost for the materials for the culvert inserts is \$12,200 per culvert (\$24,400 total). Michael and I met with Toner Mitchell (TU) and four other gentlemen from local TU chapters and the NM Trout Unlimited Council while I was in Taos for the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout team meeting in January. The Enchanted Circle Chapter of TU committed to covering the additional cost of \$4,400 for the culvert inserts. So between WNTI and TU we have the initial materials cost covered. Toner has been discussing the project with the new owners of the Taos Ski Valley and they are very interested in contributing to this project to get it done. Michael will get cost estimates for installation so we know what kind of additional costs we are looking at. At that point we will again talk to TU and the Taos Ski Valley and determine if we have the funds to complete the project. If the costs come in astronomically high, or we just cannot raise the money quickly, we will move to plan B, which was to move the funds to benefit Canadian lineage RGCT in the Carson NF. The really good news was that this project still falls within the maintenance realm and does not require a NEPA decision. USFWS Region 2 has been kept up-to-speed on project developments.

Outreach

WNTI Website: I have been working with the Southern Rockies LCC Coordinator and their GIS specialist to finish the new species range maps started by Melissa Dickard's BLM GIS person in December and to also create a project map for the WNTI website. I cannot thank the Southern Rockies LCC enough for their technical support – they were able to take my project spreadsheet and create a project map for WNTI, which is now live:

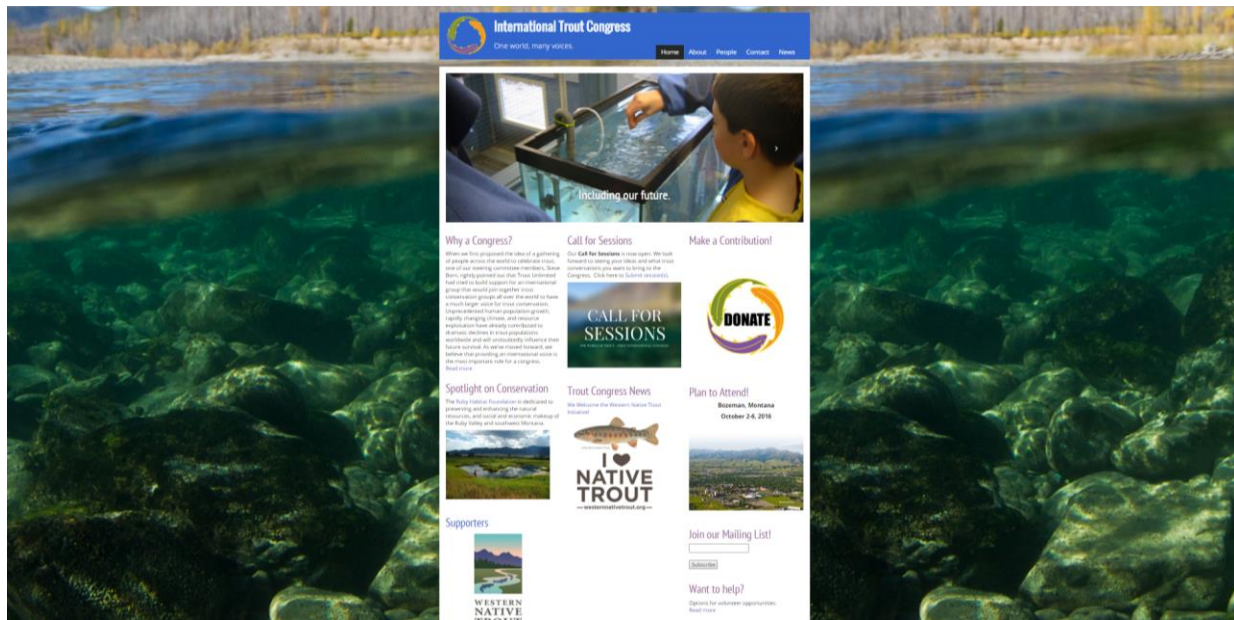
<http://www.westernnativetrout.org/projects-map>. Species maps to follow soon.

Events

Flyathons: I have been working on WNTI being the beneficiary of two Flyathon events in 2016 – one in Colorado and one in northern Idaho. The northern Idaho team has selected a location and date of July 31, 2016. We are working on the USFS permit and finding sponsors for the Idaho event. Special thanks to Scott Spaulding and Dan Kenney from the US Forest Service for volunteering in their off duty time to assist in the planning of this event. Also special thanks to Jeff Dillon for IDFG being supportive of us holding it in Idaho. All proceeds raised will be used in Idaho to support a native trout project. The Colorado event is more established and does not require as much planning or participation on our end. It will take place in Saguache, CO on August 13th, and WNTI and Colorado TU will be the joint beneficiaries. Last year, participants in this event raised \$23K for Rio Grande CT projects in Colorado. A Flyathon is mainly a trail running event, with a native fishing element and a focus on local beer. The events are small – 40 to 60 people each. Event participants pay an \$80 fee which covers the event expenses and are then asked to crowdsource additional funds to donate to the nonprofit (WNTI) beneficiary. “Winners” are given prizes donated by corporate sponsors. If you are interested in reading more about Flyathons, you can find their website at: <http://flyathlon.com>. Denver's 5280 magazine ran a nice story on the Colorado Flyathon last August: <http://www.5280.com/taxonomy/term/37484>. More information on registration to follow soon. Maybe some Steering Committee members who are runners would be interested in becoming “flyathletes”?

International Trout Congress: WNTI will be a sponsor/participant at the First International Trout Congress. They are currently featuring WNTI on their home page:

<http://troutcongress.org/> and sent out an enews note focused on announcing our participation. The event is October 2-6, 2016, in Bozeman, Montana.



Upcoming presentations

- I am scheduled to present at the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Symposium as part of the Western Division AFS conference in Reno, Nevada, in March.
- I have been invited to present at the Wild and Native Trout conference in Phoenix in April.

Other administrative activities

- WNTI's January e newsletter went out on Tuesday, January 26.
- I presented at the following meetings:
 - Lahontan Cutthroat Trout team meeting, Reno (NV), January 2016
 - Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout team meeting, Taos (NM), January 2016
 - All Alaskan FHP meeting, February 2016
- I have requested a conference call between western LCCs and western FHPs, which will likely take place in March/April 2016. Great Basin LCC and Great Northern LCC have already reached out to me to start working on how we can better interact. The Coastal FHPs are discussing inviting the Coastal LCCs to hold a joint coastal workshop in 2017.
- Coordination with WAFWA financial staff on WNTI's end of year financials and grant close outs for our 2012-2014 NFHP/USFWS operating grant and our 2014 AFWA Multi State grant.
- Jon Sjöberg agreed to present WNTI's report at the winter WAFWA meeting in my absence; his Director Tony Wasley gave our report. A written version was submitted to Larry Kruckenberg on January 12.