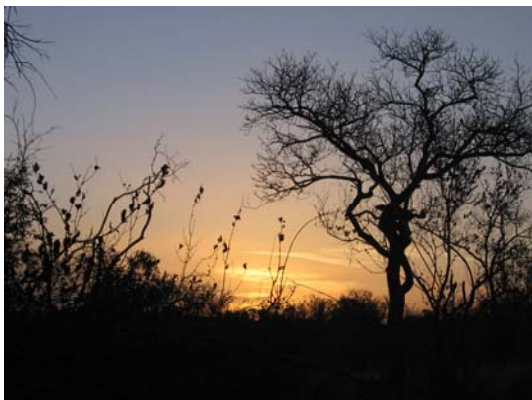




SCB Policy Insider

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2007 CLOUT OF AFRICA: POLICY EMPOWERED BY ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS, HIGHER PROFILE



South African Sunset

Policy played a prominent role at SCB's 2007 annual meeting. In addition to two workshops, policy was featured during meetings of SCB's membership, Sections, and working groups.

The most important decisions made by SCB's Board of Governors concerning SCB policy process were

1. To reconstitute the Policy Committee by seeking at least two nominations from each Section President by 1 September 2007. One representative will be selected to serve on the committee from each Section. Subsequently, the committee chair will select a comparable number of members at large to complement the skills, gender, and regions already represented on the committee.
2. To adopt a general guideline that we ask five experts to review proposed policy positions before making policy decisions, while allowing the chair to proceed without that review in cases that require more immediate responses.

In two policy workshops held on 2 and 4 July, Section leaders and chapter liaisons summarized their policy activities and plans. Information on these activities may appear on the Sections' Web sites or SCB's policy Web site.

Representatives of the **Africa Section** noted that a critical mass of members is needed to influence policy on the continent. In part because of its size, di-

versity of languages and cultures, and uneven infrastructure, Africa faces substantial challenges in communications and education. As a result, the Section cannot easily develop unified, top-down position statements. Instead, the Section hopes to work from the bottom up, strengthening grassroots engagement with policy.

The **Austral and Neotropical America Section**, and SCB at the global level, may become involved in a series of workshops that Mexico is hosting in 2008 to develop better guidance for applying the key requirements for trade in Appendix II CITES species. The Section also is compiling lists of endangered species according to the IUCN system and working with the federal government of Mexico to brief policy makers on conservation issues.

Primary policy interests and projects of the **Australasia Section** are global climate change, livestock grazing and other land uses in arid lands, and invasions of non-native species. The Section intended to develop a stronger policy statement at its meeting in Sydney, Australia in mid July 2007. Further, the Section is working to promote education and awareness, and to provide scientific advice to governments. In addition, the Section hopes to work with Pacific Island Nations, which have essentially no legislation on environmental issues.

The **Europe Section** aims to deliver scientific expertise -- characterized as information and facts, not value judgments -- to inform legislation. The Section currently is focusing on the European Habitats Directive, Natura 2000, Water Framework Directive, and marine and fisheries issues.

The Marine Section is in the process of developing a statement on fisheries policy. The



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Section expects to focus on international policy issues and to convene an International Marine Conservation Congress in Washington, D.C. in 2009. The Section is building relationships with other societies and the editor of *Marine Wildlife Law Journal* has just joined its board.

The **North America Section** is working to increase involvement of representatives from Canada and Greenland in Section and SCB activities. The Section is making an effort to take a more global perspective on its policy priorities and to become more proactive in informing legislation. The Section has written a number of reviews or critiques, including but not limited to a critique of proposals to remove populations of wolves and grizzly bears from the U.S. Endangered Species list, and a comprehensive review of the management of fire-prone forests of the western United States. The Section is emphasizing development of policy related to climate change, endangered species, invasive species, and a policy blueprint for North America. Also, the Section intends to send expert representatives to testify at government hearings.

Although the **Asia Section** did not brief the policy workshop attendees, it has an ambitious policy agenda that includes issues of international as well as regional significance, many falling within SCB's five global priorities. The Section will consider hosting a technical regional meeting every two years. The Section plans to assess

-- Means of providing payments for forest conservation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

-- The impact of different forms of energy production, such as increased production of oil palm, on biological diversity (SCB's Executive Office also plans to develop short papers on this subject and will be working closely with the Asia Section in the process).

-- Trade in endangered and threatened species
-- Improving scientific input to the Convention on Biological Diversity

-- Enhancing support for the Global Environment Facility

-- Zoonotic diseases

-- Human-wildlife conflicts

Jon Rosales briefed attendees at the second policy workshop on the long process of developing an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB). This mechanism would complement major wildlife treaties by serving as an active, objective body to deliver scientific information independent of political influence (see SCB Newsletter 14(1):20 for more information).

The Freshwater Working Group presented five priority policy issues or considerations (see related article).

Mike Scott, a member of SCB's Board of Governors, emphasized that our Board and members want SCB to increase its visibility and relevance in the policy arena, becoming a trusted source of unbiased information. To achieve this goal, Scott suggested that we ask more forceful policy questions, be aggressive about the relevance of our scientific work, be careful to articulate uncertainties in our research, and convey information clearly to non-scientists. Scott distinguished between policy prescriptions and policy directions. He suggested that while SCB might endorse policies, draft our own policies, write white papers, and evaluate options, we should articulate clearly the nature of each paper we undertake and the objectives of our activities.

A representative of Flora and Fauna International (FFI), Annalisa Gripp, presented a summary of the United Nations Environment Program's Finance Initiative and its biodiversity workstream. FFI is co-hosting the biodiversity workstream along with U.S.-based World Resources Institute. Gripp noted the large and growing sum of money managed by pension funds and others committed to consideration of social and environmental impacts in investing according to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Investing (for more infor-

mation, see www.unepfi.org/).

Tom Sisk, Chapter Representative on SCB's Board of Governors, reported on efforts to establish new chapters and maintain strong connections with Sections and the global organization. Chapters typically work to inform and influence policy at a local level. The potential is increasing for policy activities by Sections and the society as a whole to strengthen policy work by chapters. Both educational programs and policy initiatives are likely to strengthen the bonds between chapters and SCB as a whole.

Aletris Neils reported that several chapters have been particularly active in informing policy. For example,

-- The Montana Chapter developed an initial draft of comments, submitted by the North America Section, on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to remove Rocky Mountain gray wolves from the list of species protected by the Endangered Species Act

-- The Minnesota Chapter has developed a set of recommendations on the Farm Bill that also were adopted by the North America Section

-- The Florida Chapter has engaged in policy activities related to biological security, particularly invasive species

Note that SCB's Web pages on policy provide chapter representatives with templates or guidelines for policy comments and activities.

News from Washington, D.C.

While SCB was meeting in South Africa, the U.S. Congress was developing its first energy bill, an amalgam of measures produced by several committees in each house. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives prepared, and in late July passed, a farm bill with some increase in conservation assistance but not the more fundamental changes some hope that the Senate will adopt. The House Natural Resources Committee continued its investigation into political manipulation of science in the natural resource agencies with a hearing on 31 July. The hearing focused on the impact to threatened and other salmon of water diversions from the Klamath River to farms before the 2002 elections.

Article published in the SCB Newsletter

General SCB Policy Update

Introduction

This policy report includes only the highlights of a very busy period.

Perhaps the most important development for our work has been the opportunity provided by the U.S. Natural Resources Committee staff in preparing for and following up on hearings into political interference with integrity of the scientific conclusions reached by career agency experts in the application of wildlife laws, and the Endangered Species Act in particular (www.house.gov/resources). Other groups are also working with the Committee, providing background information and testimony. So far in this series the Committee has held two hearings in Washington and one in the field in California. This work involves identifying potential witnesses through our SCB's network of experts, helping witnesses get to the hearings well prepared to testify and to answer questions, suggesting questions that committee members may want to ask witnesses, working with witnesses in preparing their initial testimony and their additional or supplemental statements for the record, and suggesting ways in which the committee might follow up through future oversight or other actions. Little of this aspect of our work involves policy statements, as such, but it can be effective, as timely brainstorming can bring out useful ideas. The committee is now considering what reforms to recommend over what time frame, and what additional investigative steps to take in overseeing the application of these laws by the main resource management agencies within their jurisdiction.

Reconstituting the Policy Committee

After consultation with new SCB President Georgina Mace, Chairman Boitani has asked each section president to nominate at least two members by September 1, 2007, from whom one will be selected to represent that section on a newly reconstituted policy committee. The committee will also have a comparable number of at large members so that a balance of expertise, gender, and regions can be achieved.

Volunteers for Issue Teams

The policy workshops at the Annual meeting, in spite of direct competition with the two hot lunch days, drew a nearly full room the first day and enough the second day to give us twenty volunteers for policy issue work across all five issue priorities and more. The August U.S. Congressional recess should give us time to contact them and to be in touch again with those who volunteered earlier in the year from

NA and DC meetings. In the meantime, interested members should check our ever-changing policy website for updates or contact the Policy Director (jfitzgerald@conbio.org). If we do not have time to follow up on a suggestion from a member to the Executive Office or if the issue is not within the core areas of emphasis, members can work with their section presidents or policy chairs or chapter leaders to develop proposals to be considered by the policy committee.

Global SCB Policy Priorities Advance

1) Scientific Integrity – Salmon Hearing, Owl Follow up.

The Natural Resources Committee held its second hearing into political interference with the integrity of scientific findings in wildlife programs on July 31st, 2007. The news release issued by the committee is listed on its home page at <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/>. The testimony of witnesses, including that of Mike Kelly, the biologist who blew the whistle on what was later ruled in the courts as an illegally permissive biological opinion that allowed water diversions apparently responsible for the die off that year of 40,000 to 70,000 salmon, including significant numbers of the threatened coho and economic hardship for the Native American, commercial and sport fishing industries. Kelly's draft opinion and alternative plan which would have continued the successful conservation regime in place for the salmon since its listing in 1997 had been swept aside and the final opinion dictated by the Assistant Regional Administrator, who also skipped both normal internal agency reviewing officers after the diversion of water from threatened salmon to farmers was sought by Vice President Cheney and White House political director Karl Rove in advance of the 2002 elections. That official was found later by the Commerce Department I.G. to have skipped similar requirements concerning the central California water system. The official was then promoted to run the protected species program (covering both endangered species and protected marine mammals) of the Commerce Department. The testimony of Kelly and that of the other witnesses at the July 31st hearing is posted at http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com_jcalpro&Itemid=32&extmode=view&extid=85

The hearing also raised the questions of:

- Why the Interior Department's Inspector General missed basic flaws in the process

that were later flagged by the Commerce Department's I.G.;

- Why the National Academy of Sciences assembled a panel and issued an interim report in time for the water to be diverted but did not include the warning issued with their final report that their interim report did not use the precautionary standard required by the Endangered Species Act and did not have sufficient data to conclusively support either a diversion to farmers or the increased flows recommended by the agency biologists;
- Why the NAS and its team leader did not distinguish in their statements between the water flows needed by the threatened coho salmon in the spring and the affect of additional water in the summer on other species and runs of salmon;
- What the agencies can do now to protect the integrity of its scientific findings as applied in management programs and to correct the errors that have been made. The Deputy Inspector General recommended a process similar to one recommended by Mike Kelly that would require any official who changes the recommendations of career scientists to sign that change and provide the reasons for it for the record of decision.

These questions are being considered by the committee now.

Spotted Owl Follow Up

A featured story in the May 9th hearing was that of the spotted owl as presented by North America Policy Chair, Dominick DellaSala, speaking on behalf of his employer, the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy, and himself, rather than on behalf of the SCB. His statement detailed the process by which the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, led by former timber industry lobbyists now in office, directed the Fish and Wildlife Service and its recovery team of which he was a member, to write a recovery plan that would help make available for clear cutting areas of mature forest protected to for nearly twenty years under Federal wildlife laws since the threatened northern spotted owls depend on that habitat.

In the July 31st hearing, Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Washington) recommended that every Member of the Committee read Dr. DellaSala's supplemental testimony responding to assertions made by the agency officials at and after the hearing of May 9th.

At the request early this year of the Fish and Wildlife Service, SCB and the American Ornithologists' Union provided a peer review of the two spotted owl recovery plan options produced by the Administra-

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tion. These reviews were coordinated by Dr. Michael Reed of Tufts University and submitted on July 5th. They were not seen by the SCB EO during that process nor by Dr. DellaSala until after they were submitted to FWS. The Wildlife Society also performed an independent peer review that included some of the most experienced owl biologists in the country. Both of these sets of reviews contained a long list of substantial criticisms consistent with Dr. DellaSala's concerns, including the need to protect larger amounts of older forests for owl survival as well as taking other steps to conserve and recover the owl. SCB is now consulting with these societies concerning how to submit formal comments and how and whether to announce our findings.

In the meantime, a U.S. district court citing peer-reviewed and agency scientific determinations, on August 1st, 2007 issued a preliminary injunction in the case of the Seattle Audubon Society, *et. al. v. Douglas Sutherland, et. al.*, forbidding Weyerhaeuser, a timber and paper company, from cutting certain areas of its private forests inhabited by spotted owls as it would be likely to violate the Federal Endangered Species Act:

“The Court finds that removal of suitable habitat below forty (40) percent of the median annual home range area risks harming spotted owls by removing resources necessary to their essential behavioral functions. Although the 40% threshold is a guideline, rather than a bright-line rule, it is a guideline that is supported both by peer-reviewed science and by usage by the State and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.”

2) Climate Change – U.S. House Passes Two Major Energy Bills –

Seeking Common Sense in the Economics of Energy –

In a rare Saturday session lasting most of the day Saturday August 4th, 2007, the House finished its business before adjourning for the August recess and passed two major energy policy reform bills. The first was as Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi called it, “the Speaker's bill, H.R. 3221, New Direction for Independence, National Security, and Consumer Protection Act, which passed the floor by a vote of 241 to 172”. It is a combination of titles from ten different committees. This measure includes many provisions, from funding for research on wildlife adaptation to climate change to pilot projects for different forms of renewable energy on public lands. One of the key elements not approved at the Federal level before by either House until its adoption on the 4th was the Renewable Portfo-

lio Standard, or renewable energy standard, requiring most public utilities to have 15% of their generation from renewable sources such as wind, solar or biomass over the next several years. Four percent of that can be achieved by increasing efficiency of operations.

The second the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2007 (H.R. 2776), overhauled tax incentives as recommended by the Ways and Means Committee, to discourage consumption of oil and gas and to increase incentives for the adoption of efficient technologies and for renewable energy production.

For the Speakers' summary of the energy package as it was considered on the House floor, see <http://www.speaker.gov/legislation?id=0076>.

President Bush indicated that he is considering vetoing the measures if they remain largely unchanged after being combined with Senate-passed legislation in a conference with the leading Senators on these issues.

The Senate passed an energy reform measure earlier in the year that included an element missing from the House bill – a requirement that auto companies gradually increase their combined automobile fleet's efficiency --- that is, the fuel economy of the vehicles they sell.

Conferees are expected to decide this September which elements from the these bills to keep and each house will then vote on what to present to the President for his signature or veto.

The actual bills were not fully available to the public until fairly late in the process as portions were adjusted in an attempt to gain sufficient votes to ensure their passage. The traditional legislation process which has been eroded over the last 12 years or so, would normally have seen bills reported by committees, published in the Congressional Record, then brought to the floor for further amendment if necessary. One factor in the unusual process is that Speaker Nancy Pelosi directed all committees with any jurisdiction over climate change to report legislation on it by July 4th. The combination of so many elements required an unusual mini-conference committee before House consideration of the two final bills.

While we have reviewed earlier pieces of the legislation, we will be studying the hundreds of pages in these bills as adopted in the next week or two in part to determine the extent to which they included ideas and adjustments that SCB recommended the committees consider in our statements from March to June in response to invitations from committees. (To review the SCB statements, go to www.conbio.org/resources/policy and click on

“climate change”).

The Congress will return after the U.S. Labor Day to address the harder questions of what kind of limits to place on greenhouse gas emissions and what other tools should be brought to bear in the global effort on climate change.

Over the Break and Beyond - Domestic and International Policies to Limit Greenhouse Gases

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep.”

- Robert Frost

We may be on vacation in beautiful woods like those that tempted Robert Frost to pause on his way one evening. Washington has begun its recess. Work does take on a different rhythm, but it does not stop. Members of Congress are usually at home during the August recess where their constituents – and SCB leaders and members -- may ask them directly what they have done and plan to about important issues, and ask how we can help.

The most important question considered by any legislature in a very long time will be before Congress when it returns. That is “How will the largest developed country control the emissions of the six major greenhouse gases that its citizens bring about?”

Chinese officials have suggested that developed countries take some responsibility for the greenhouse gases emitted in the production of goods and services ultimately imported or enjoyed by the developed countries. French and other officials have recommended that the EU impose a tariff on pollution attributable to import and flights from abroad to adjust the prices of these imports to reflect the costs that European manufacturers must assume as they control their emissions of similar pollutants.

Hundreds of voices are speaking out on climate policy while senior government scientists like Jim Hansen use their own list serves to publish studies and commentary urging the most rapid reductions possible (to subscribe to his listserve email jhansen.giss@gmail.com). SCB's voice cannot determine policy but it can suggest creative ideas in useful form and at the right times. (*The descriptions of the bills in this article are not necessarily endorsements of these above others but illustrate the some of the important issues that are now being considered and that SCB members may want to address in their own communications.*)

In our detailed responses beginning in March 2007 to Chairman John Dingell of the Energy and Commerce Committee and its testimony submitted to the

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Leopard in a tree

Ways and Means Committee, SCB recommended, in addition to numerous other pollution limits, conservation, mitigation, adaptation, and conversion measures that these committees consider studies that had found taxes on greenhouse gases if implemented in the right sequence and levels could make fossil fuels less attractive and help consumers, businesses and governments, etc. pay to switch to low carbon operations in a way that would actually save money quickly.

In order to help developing countries do the same, SCB also recommended that the committees consider cutting subsidies for fossil fuels in foreign aid and export credits and imposing tariffs on greenhouse gases to reflect the difference in costs our producers face due to controls or taxes and those faced by foreign producers. We suggested that the proceeds be made available to help developing nations acquire the technologies to clean up their production methods quickly and to conserve the forests, grasslands, and other natural features that convert or sequester carbon and otherwise mitigate and buffer the effects of climate change. At the time, one Member of Congress, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) planned to introduce a carbon tax bill and none had proposed a tariff adjustment to control greenhouse gases and to fund green foreign aid. Since then some think tanks, such as the Institute for Policy Studies, have taken up this call, and others, such as the Economic Policy Institute are debating these ideas. Now Chairman Dingell is editorializing in favor of a carbon tax and Senator Jeff Bingaman, his counterpart as chair of the Senate Energy Committee has included a form of a carbon tax and carbon import policy in the energy bill he introduced with a bi-partisan group July 11th. The bill was referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works, chaired by Barbara Boxer. His news release describes these provisions:

The proposal also includes a Technology Accelerator Payment (TAP). Technology payments, at \$12 per metric ton of carbon

the first year, could be made by regulated entities in the event that it is too difficult to reduce emissions. This would prevent undue shocks to our economy and help industry “tap” into technology resources that need more investment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The cost of the TAP would rise each year thereafter at 5 percent above the rate of inflation to provide business with certainty moving forward. All of the TAP funding would be put toward the development of low- or no-carbon technologies.

Conversely, if technology improves as rapidly as expected in response to the caps set in the bill, the Technology Payments would not be necessary.

The bill also would require exports to the United States to be subject to rigorous low-carbon standards.

Congress has also begun to address international negotiations, funding and aid as they affect climate change and SCB continues to be involved in some of those discussions as well as groups attempt to coordinate their approaches and recommendations.

We’ll see how these questions are answered this Fall.

3) Biological Security

With the recent introduction of Senator Ron Wyden’s bill, (http://wyden.senate.gov/media/2007/08012007_logging.html) legislation to control the importation of illegally harvested plants and wood products have been introduced in the House (Rep. Earl Blumenauer’s H.R. 1497) and Senate. A move to incorporate similar provisions in an appropriations bill was blocked at the last minute by Republican leaders in the Senate despite support for the provision from other Republicans. Supporters, including conservationists, wood industry groups and the Society of American Foresters, plan to spend part of the August recess explaining to these Senators how the provision would work to protect legal operators, forests, and wildlife in the U.S. and abroad. (See <http://www.conbio.org/activities/policy/BiologicalSecurity.cfm> for more detail.)

4) Investment & Procurement

The presentation at the policy workshop in South Africa by Ms. Annalisa Gripp of Fauna and Flora International introduced attendees to the United Nations’s Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and the United Nations Environment Program’s Finance Initiative and biodiversity workstream. On August 8, 2007 FFI held a Natural Value Initiative Workshop in London, in a similar joint venture with

UNEP. SCB leaders interested in this approach, and particularly those in the UK, Brazil, China and South Africa may want to follow this work and subscribe to the UNEP FI Bulletin, which noted:

“The Natural Value Initiative aims to develop a benchmark tool for companies with agricultural supply chains – food and drink growers, processors and retailers - and companies with operations in China, South Africa, Brazil, USA and UK. The tool is aimed at raising awareness of the links between biodiversity, Investment value and the finance sector.”

The objectives of the workshop are to identify the business case for managing biodiversity impacts and risks within the food & drink sector, identify best-practice approaches to controlling biodiversity-related risks, and review the revised benchmarking methodology and its application.

A similar workshop will be held in Sao Paolo, Brazil in early September. One of the outcomes of the workshops will be a conference report which identifies the business case and presents a draft framework for evaluating risk for piloting by financial institutions.

For further information, please visit:

http://www.unepfi.org/events/2007/london_biodiversity/index.html

Contact: biodiversity@unepfi.org

Section Policy News

All of the sections presented policy plans at one or more venues during the South Africa conference and annual meeting. These are summarized in the August newsletter. Section leaders are urged to send summaries of their plans and work as they evolve to the Policy Director and Committee Chair and to send us materials they would like to post on the SCB website.

North America

Farm Bill

Before the Annual Meeting in South Africa, the Minnesota Chapter led the North America Section in developing a fairly sophisticated but concise set of recommendations for conservation requirements and incentives that they believe should be included in any reauthorization of farm subsidies in the U.S. Their research drew upon that of a variety of conservation and wildlife organizations and prairie conservation specialists. They conveyed their material to the staff of the House Agriculture Committee, its

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conservation professionals*

Policy Cont.

Chairman and other leaders. This issue is being taken up by the Congress as it addresses the overall question of whether to end the general system of subsidies and install a system of emergency assistance and insurance for losses along with broader help for a wider range of foodstuffs instead.

House of Representatives passed a bill to authorize continuing large subsidies for major U.S. grain producers but agreed to include increased land and wildlife conservation incentives. The Senate is expected to adopt a measure with further reforms in the fall.

**Look for the next
issue in October**

