

The strategic plan makes it clear that the SCB is to focus on using its own sections and other resources to empower each other. We are also now focusing as an organization on the creative tension between local, national, sectional, and international initiatives. Therefore, we propose that we survey the sections to see which policy issues the EO cannot necessarily lead, that they may still want to pursue with guidance and help from the EO. One may well be, for example, the Marine Section and the combination of Marine Mammal Protection Act and Fisheries Management Act oversight and eventual reauthorization/amendment that is being undertaken by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife.

Other components of our work plan are found in the grant applications, agreements and the policy section of the strategic plan, all of which are summarized in appendices to this memo.

To begin our work under the guidance of the Board of Governors, the Policy Committee Chair submits the following list of potential priorities for evaluation and initial engagement. It arises out of a survey of Policy Committee Members, NA Section leaders, and the interview process for the Policy Director. It has been developed in cooperation with the Executive Director and NA President as well.

Toward a list of priorities for policy work

The Policy Framework recently adopted by the BoG (2006) and the Policy Guide (2002) and the Strategic Plan provide the background to assess the criteria SCB should use to identify the policy work in the near future. Appendices on the Strategic Plan's policy goal and the major grants funding the Policy Director's position are attached.

In addition to choosing top priorities among substantive issues, we will need to develop implementation plans that recognize the contributions that can be made by the EO and by the members. Such plans could be developed after the February meeting and well before the June Annual Board meeting for revision and approval there.

Constraints

Choosing the policy issues to work on should logically precede what we will do and how. However, there are a number of obvious constraints we will have to work with in the near future and this precludes us from certain activities. Involvement in the policy process can occur through a series of steps supported by increasing levels of resources and requiring increasing continuity of action:

- a) Position statements, letters, communications on the website and the journals on a case by case basis
- b) Commissioned published papers
- c) White papers
- d) Building institutional partnerships

- e) Mobilizing expert support to policy process (building connections, having charismatic voices, etc.)
- f) Participation in international conferences, treaties and policy processes
- g) Longer term strategic policy initiatives

The work of the Policy Director is also somewhat constrained as well as empowered by the terms of the major grant, for example, requiring a focus on North American policy for the work that those grants fund. (See appendix.)

Criteria for setting our agenda

Society involvement in most issues will be planned in accordance with the strategic plan and other guiding documents (see appendices). *Ad hoc* issues should be limited to those that meet the following criteria (not in order of importance):

- Global significance (worldwide, core issue, cascade effect, etc)
- Need for science to resolve issue
- Relevance of the values at issue
- Likelihood of resolution
- Timeframe or schedule
- Catalytic effect/Value added by SCB
- Partnership and other participants
- Fit with SCB strategy
- Clear objectives
- Compatible style
- General agreement on Society position
- Leverage (add value, leverage others to act, and acting jointly with others)

In particular, SCB should focus on what it can feasibly influence. We should not spend time and energies on reaching consensus and working on issues, no matter how relevant they are to conservation, that SCB as a scientific society cannot influence.

Policy Positions of SCB and Its Sub-Parts

SCB Groups have considerable influence in the policy arena as they represent regional groups and various interests of the overall SCB Membership. SCB endeavors to ensure that conservation science is included in the process by which “policy decisions of major international conventions, governments, organizations, and foundations” are made and reflected accurately in those decisions through our “counsel, analysis and recommendations.” In order to combine credibility and efficiency in the policy process, local, regional and

international efforts can be undertaken in parallel fashion, but policy initiatives by SCB Groups should be coordinated with the Policy Director in the EO and the Policy Committee of the Board or its Chairman in advance in a manner that allows for consultation that is appropriate for the scale and scope of the issue to be addressed and not initiated or significantly altered independent of the parent organization. The SCB Board will adopt a policy plan and review it no less often than annually.

A first list of policy issues submitted to the Policy Committee Chair by May of 2006

The following list incorporates policy issues proposed by the Policy Committee, members of the North American Section Board, and Policy Director. These are grouped under:

- the initial list of issues recommended for emphasis or
- the list of issues to consider during the first half of 2007, including workshops at the Annual Meeting, or
- initially in specific sub-groups of the SCB.

After reviewing the criteria of the Society, its strategic plan and grants, and making an early assessment of issues being taken up in Congress and Conferences of the Parties, we have grouped proposals recommended for adoption now under the five main policy areas. These five combine importance in conservation, the elements that SCB can bring to bear, and potential traction in the current policy arena. For the issues outlined below, we would initially choose one committee in each house, one agency lead, and one team of leading experts drawn from the SCB to work on each, to filter and gather information from others in a reliable manner for delivery to decision makers. The financing or green investing initiative would be most active outside of government, addressing the foundations, international agencies, and other targets as noted in our strategic goal on policy.

The Policy Committee and Director plan to continue to consider options in cooperation with each subgroup of the SCB. We will report through the newsletter and website and present a revised plan and list for review at the Annual Meeting.

Initial Areas of Emphasis

A) Climate Change -- State, Federal and International energy and greenhouse gas policies can reduce the forces driving climate change and provide massive funding for biological research and conservation and for the restoration of

ecosystems. A key question that the policy process must reflect developing legal and financial responses to climate change is the impact of different levels of greenhouse gases upon biological diversity, the likely costs of those impacts, and the costs and means of avoiding them. SCB is uniquely positioned to do that especially in partnership with other expert societies.

¹In sum, SCB and its allies should persuade the U.S. and other governments to include conservation biology throughout the range of responses to climate change. GHG limits, taxes and appropriations are just three key elements in that response.²

¹ Climate Change Background: The effects of climate change on biological diversity have been the subject of a wide range of estimates but an assessment and summary of scores of studies demonstrates that the serious and negative impact is undeniable (Annu. Rev. Ecol. Evol. Syst. 2006. 37:637–69o.) The perfect storm of actual hurricanes, and political and military “storms” has brought about a near consensus that security, equity, productivity and climate change are inextricably linked. The crowning factor is palpable public resentment of profits, procedures, and contributions of the major oil companies and utilities. In response, the new House of Representatives has voted to reduce subsidies for the oil and gas industry establishing a fund for renewable energy and conservation, and is inclined to go beyond that within the next year to include a tax and/or cap greenhouse gases. Reducing subsidies for energy forms that emit high levels of greenhouse gases, taxing and capping those emissions are just three of the many steps that can be taken to address climate change. Other steps include the conservation and restoration of forests, oceanfront ground cover and other elements that reduce greenhouse gases and mitigate the impact of climate change. Such work can be paid for with the budgets made available through reduced subsidies and carbon taxes. For example, the proceeds of a \$20 per ton tax on carbon alone would be on the order of \$37 billion per year in the U.S. France will be imposing a 10% tax on coal and on pollution from industrial transportation and will propose that Europe tax imports from countries lacking greenhouse gas controls.¹ The combined proceeds can be applied to a variety of needs, including not only energy conservation and renewables but also ecosystem restoration and scientifically sound assessments to ensure the best approaches in every area of our response to climate change. If living resources mitigate roughly 20%, and cause, in the case of livestock, as much as 18% of the greenhouse effect, conservation biology working with other related sciences should make up a significant percentage of the multi-billion dollar new investment that governments will undertake. A compensating tax or tariff could be imposed by not only Europe, but other countries on imports from countries that have lesser environmental controls or tariffs. The proceeds could be made available to the paying countries on favorable terms for climate change reducing technologies and biological conservation and mitigation.

The SCB could consider providing expert witnesses, co-plaintiffs, or amicus briefs in litigation or administrative actions such as the recent petition for ESA listing of penguin species threatened by global warming. The invasiveness of harmful exotic species is often promoted by global warming, as well. SCB can ensure that the problem of invasives is not ignored in governments’ responses to climate change. SCB can also team up with other scientists, such as climate change and ozone specialists, to ensure that new “solutions” for one problem, such as replacement refrigerants, do not make another problem, like the greenhouse effect, worse.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat is now beginning to press for a summit in the fall of 2007 to begin to outline a post Kyoto protocol to include global limits. The UNFCCC is an important but not exclusive avenue forward on this issue.

B) Re-enforcing the sciences in the Federal decision-making and environmental assessment processes. The past six years have seen much disregard for science and so much abuse of scientific and conservation whistleblowers. Oversight committees are poised to review these abuses for the next two years and begin to correct them. SCB can pursue across the board remedies that affect all agencies and specific studies or other requirements that have been ignored or mishandled.

As compared with specific responses to major problems, there are several on-going processes already established in law that form the foundation for the conservation of biological diversity and environmental health in the United States and most other countries. These key elements in U.S. and international law that are designed to ensure the incorporation of science include, among others:

- The Administrative Procedures Act (or equivalents thereof),
- The National Environmental Policy Act (required of CBD parties by Article 14),
- The “Pelosi Amendment” which sets requirements for US review of environmental assessments of proposals of the World Bank and the regional development banks, (largely adopted by most of the multilateral development banks),
- The Endangered Species Act (implementing CITES, some form required of CBD parties by Articles 6-8).
- There are also civil service, criminal law and other provisions that apply to the knowing use of false information or the omission of information that is material to a government decision.

Congress will conduct oversight on most of these elements, in search of examples of abuse and remedies. The use and mis-use of key provisions for science-based policy might be illustrated by examining northern spotted owl and salmon management, under the ESA and NEPA.

If time allows, SCB could assist with the oversight concerning the use of science under other laws based on conservation biology, such as biological diversity and forest health³ under National Forest Management Act as amended, whale or dolphin conservation under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, or fisheries management under the Magnusen-Steven Fisheries Management and

² The SCB might supply more scientific analysis of large agricultural developments driven by energy demands (*e.g.*, greenhouse gases, carbon cycles, and natural sequestration in agriculture) and wildlife-friendly efficient alternatives that are available.

³ Forest Management –One forest expert on the North American BOD has suggested a series of papers aimed at restoring conservation biology to federal forest policy. The Forest Subcommittee is likely to pursue the oversight of forest management and would welcome such contributions.

Conservation Act and the Pelly and Studds Amendments to the Fishermen's Protection Act of 1976.

Congress might also consider re-establishing the Office of Technology Assessment, which until 1994 produced studies of policy options on a larger scale than existing Congressional offices could. One such study was on the Conservation of Biological Diversity and what some call "blueprints" or other means of ensuring it in the U.S. in particular on a large scale.

More than one subcommittee with relevant jurisdiction and several conservation groups are currently collecting examples of suppression of science in federal procedures. SCB has been invited by key Subcommittee Staff Directors and leaders in Congress to contribute to these processes.

SCB is already a member of the Endangered Species Coalition and Steering Committee. Knowing of the centrality of these aspects of the issue of science in policy, the Executive Director and Policy Director have been contributing to these processes.⁴

- C) **Empowering Key International Treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.** This is a largely a longer-term issue but in the first year the Policy Committee and Director will need to assess the state of these conventions and opportunities for applying them effectively, with an emphasis on the North American delegations. The CITES COP occurs in June 2007. There is increasing momentum at the CITES Secretariat and Standing Committee and in the US for putting teeth into Appendix II and III listings with particular regard to valuable tree species such as mahogany from Latin America and ramin from Indonesia and

⁴ In addition to working with the Committee on Science and natural allies there such as Rep. Mark Udall (D-Co) who also serves on the Resources Committee, SCB could work with the government oversight committees' Chairmen Waxman and Lieberman and subcommittee chairs such as Carl Levin, who may want to report out legislation to strengthen the role of science and scientists in the regulatory, contracting, and research processes, and government whistleblowers in particular. SCB should be front and center with other scientific and medical societies, federal unions, PEER, GAP, POGO, and other NGOs on this, along with Republicans like Grassley, Collins and House Ranking Member Davis. SCB can also help guide this Congress as it aggressively pursues studies or programs pertaining to conservation biology and related issues that have been neglected or obstructed in recent years. For example, Representative Chris Van Hollen and Rep. James Moran will be pressing EPA to complete a program required by Congress in 1996 to test chemicals for endocrine disrupting effects that seem to be causing such responses as the feminization of some male fish, birds and reptiles.

Malaysia.⁵ The CBD is designed so that governmental decisions flow from the conservation biology studies, principles, and management steps laid out in the first several articles. It can be used in other contexts such as the WTO, for example. (See notes in Appendix on conservation laws.)⁶

- D) **Leveraging Investments and Spending – Controlling our Environmental Footprint. SCB has gained recognition for offsetting its Annual Meeting’s carbon footprint. It could follow that with a review of green investments and the extent to which SCB might inform the growing trend toward green investing and spending.** UNEP’s Finance Initiative has recently launched a biodiversity risk assessment “work stream” group led by WRI, Insight Investment, and Fauna and Flora International of the UK biodiversity@unepfi.org. Under a separate but related UN program, international investors with *six trillion dollars* under management have pledged to screen or review their investments according to the United Nation’s “Principles for Responsible Investment”. In late November 2006, the UNPRI office opened an initiative to encourage policy engagement by its investor (See, <http://www.unpri.org>.) SCB could increase its leverage by helping these and related initiatives in terms of scientific accuracy, measuring the economic value of ecosystem services and the costs of avoiding harm or restoring degraded habitat and populations.⁷

⁵ There will likely be a new head of delegation to CITES, who, as a member of the staff of former Resources Chairman, Richard Pombo, helped block a Senate-approved amendment that would have curtailed the importation of illegally harvested wood, an issue that the Secretariat has raised as a serious concern. Chairman Pombo was at odds with recommendations of the SCB and other scientific societies concerning the ESA. His former staffer now has a chance to develop a better track record in his new position with sufficient guidance.

⁶ Key considerations include shifting the burden of proof to require those whose actions are likely to deplete biological diversity to demonstrate compliance with applicable laws, including measures required by the major conventions. For example, as noted above, the CITES COP will likely consider recommending better chains of custody and proof of sustainable harvest levels for certain Appendix II tree species. The World Bank and the US Millennium Challenge Corporation might also be asked to require proof of borrowing nations’ compliance with the CBD before borrowing to increase natural resource harvests. We could also consider how better to use measures of progress toward the 2010 targets for protected areas, etc. and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, regionally and globally.

⁷ This can work on different scales. Simply raising the point at the right time can be very powerful. For example, the need to consider and disclose the relative value or costs related to alternatives under consideration for minimizing impacts or enhancing conservation. More specifically, SCB might help persuade the SEC to ensure the public disclosure by companies and jurisdictions that issue publicly-traded stocks and bonds of the risks they face due to their impact on biological diversity or declines in it. In one specific application, the companies now developing new anti-inflammatory and other drugs from “paradise grain” of Africa’s west coast may risk damage awards to local communities or loss of marking rights in some countries if they

E) **Biological Security – Controlling the importation of invasive species and illegally harvested plants and animals.** In addition to causing irreparable harm to virgin forests, logging overseas in violation of the most basic domestic laws such as timber poaching in national parks or in beyond permit limits is costing the U.S. forest industry over one billion dollars a year according to industry studies. This issue is given traction by the impending June deadline for fast-track consideration of free trade agreements with some of the very countries most central to the problem such as Peru and Malaysia. It would be most difficult for the Administration to veto legislation increasing the biological security of our country and our trading partners by improving laws and their enforcement to control the importation of stolen timber and harmful invasive species in the same process at our ports.⁸ This basic building block can form the cornerstone of better enforcement of CITES and other international conservation treaties and conservation laws of our trading partners. In this process we can use all of the often under-appreciated flexibility that exists within the WTO framework, as Congress did in the protection of threatened sea turtles once harmed by foreign shrimp trawlers who were required to use turtle excluder devices to ensure access to the U.S. market.

This issue area might also include:

Conservation biology and public health. Emerging infectious diseases are a high-profile concern, with avian influenza receiving the most public attention at present. What can the conservation biology community contribute to the public policy debate and the challenges posed by the full spectrum of EIDs? For example, can veterinarians, biologists, and public health professionals cooperate to reduce the vectors that carry *ebola* to various primates? We could cooperate on this with Harvard School of Public Health and the evangelical churches in their new initiative with led by E.O. Wilson, Peter Raven, and others starting with the teaching toolkit on conserving creation for pastors and lay leaders.)

Other Issues

The SCB should consider adding to these issues by soliciting ideas from its sections and Members between the February meeting and the Annual Meeting and beyond. We should coordinate our ideas with existing structures, treaties, and laws such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, and their North American implementing legislation.

and their host jurisdictions fail to comply with the applicable provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁸ Port inspections for nuclear weapons and contamination are now being improved. With a modest increase in resources and fairly simple improvements in the law, the Customs, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies could also both inspect and require proof of proper precautions against invasive species and proof of chains of custody and improved permits showing harvests in compliance with applicable laws for imports of living natural resources such as wood and fish products.

Long-Term Large Scale Issues

Long-term, large-scale proposals may take considerable time to assemble but could be considered in anticipation of a new Administration in 2009. Examples of such longer term projects that we could begin to plan now include:

Continental Conservation Blueprints - For North America - a general set of priorities/principles for sustainable management, restoration, and conservation of all ecotypes/biomes could be assembled under the mandate of the convention of 1940 on the conservation of wildlife in the western hemisphere and the various migratory bird treaties to which the U.S., Canada and Mexico are parties. Other continents have similar regional treaties as well as the broader ones such as the Berne Convention and the CBD that could facilitate such cooperation.

Issues Most Appropriate for Consideration by Regions or Sections

Conservation biology and small island states -- SCB could provide useful, science-based policy advice on the special issues affecting small island states (conserving endemic species, threats from invasive alien species, reliance on tourism, rising sea levels, etc.). This could be a project for Austral-Asia section.

The Africa Section might be the first to take on a white paper on the relationship between **poverty and conservation of biodiversity**, focusing on bush meat and deforestation due to their need for protein and efficient wood stoves, which could be addressed by aid programs with multiple benefits.

Marine Section Issues: *The House Fisheries and Wildlife and the Senate Ocean Subcommittee may be interested in both marine mammal and fisheries oversight projects.*

Marine Protected Areas: Review the evidence for the effectiveness of different approaches to establishing marine reserves. *If the focus is on effectiveness of the reserve network, we could pair with IUCN/WCPA.*

Issues Most Appropriate for Initial Consideration by Chapters

Urbanization patterns/Land Use Planning – Local or state chapters could consider papers on the relationship between the urbanization patterns (spatial and temporal) and the preservation or degradation of surrounding environments (i.e. habitat fragmentation, urban heat islands and climate change, water pollution, conservation capacity-building). These could be linked to certain Federal laws but initially are the purview of state and local law.

Valuable Scientific Information or Questions That Need Further Development Before Being Directly Applied to Policy

Cost effectiveness: We could develop a decision-making process/ risk analysis for recommending whether particular "hotspots" (or even smaller biodiversity areas) need absolute protection vs can survive with carefully managed, sustainable (however it is defined) economic growth. This allocation or designation is supposed to be done by each nation under the CBD. As we know better how to determine which designation is appropriate in which circumstances we can point that out and recommend wilderness and park designations as well as sustainable use area designations. This is an issue that IMOSEB might take up with SCB's help. Closely related is the question of measuring the success of conservation practices – both its relative importance in different situations and the way in which it could be achieved. This could bring together the Conservation Measures Partnership and the work done by on Evidence-Based-Conservation. Another way of putting part of the question is "How much is enough when it comes to conservation?" or "How much human activity and environmental destruction is enough?". There doesn't seem to be scientific consensus on how much land a nation or other political entity should conserve and that is because the questions above are as yet unanswered yet the precautionary principle does not yet control land use and other resource allocation and stress-allowance procedures.

Consistency or Quality Control: We could also consider the consistency of the ways some of the most popular conservation tools are applied with the principles of conservation biology. For example, we could review uses and misuses of the concept and application of protected areas, ecological corridors and networks, PVA, etc.