



## Standard Operating Procedures

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## **Standard Operating Procedures**

The Executive Committee of the Western Regional Panel (WRP) on Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) created this document to provide guidance for consistent operations of the WRP that are not described in the Bylaws. These Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) also serve to provide a record of process for actions that are taken by the WRP. The SOP is subject to change based on needs that arise and decision-making that guide future operational activities. The Executive Committee shall update the SOP as necessary and will review the document annually.

## **Membership**

### **Election Processes – Various Circumstances**

Voting members shall elect the Executive Committee by holding an election associated with the annual meeting. While most elections will take place electronically, if a member is unable to vote, a proxy can be designated by the absent member for that election only. A proxy designation is provided to the WRP Coordinator prior to the election.

If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices in races where voters elect one winner, that candidate wins, just like in a single-choice election. However, if there is no majority winner after counting first choices, the race is decided by an "instant runoff." The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as 'number 1' will have their votes count for their next choice. This process continues until there's a majority winner or a candidate won with more than half of the vote.

At the first Executive Committee meeting that follows the election of the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee will elect a chair and vice chair by voice vote. Executive Committee members who are interested in serving as chair or vice chair will declare their intent to serve prior to the first meeting.

If an Executive Committee member steps down voluntarily prior to the completion of their term, several options may be used to fill the vacancy. 1) If there is significant time remaining prior to the annual meeting, the membership can hold a special election and select a new executive committee member by electronic vote. 2) If there is little time remaining prior to the annual meeting, the vacancy shall remain and be filled during the regular election period. The Executive Committee shall determine which option is preferred based on the scenario presented.

### **Recognition of Member Participation**

The Executive Committee may determine whether a member may be recognized for service to the WRP. The following criteria are considered "recognition for service"; if a member has participated in the WRP for more than 10 years, and that member is leaving their work due to retirement or transfer out of AIS-based work. Other reasons for recognition shall be considered by the Executive Committee. Recognition of WRP members will be made verbally during the annual meeting or other suitable meeting with members present. If WRP has funding available, recognition may also include a framed certificate (and shipping to the recipient) or simple award plaque, as determined by the Executive Committee.

# Executive Committee Procedures

## Roles and Responsibilities of Chair, Vice Chair and Coordinator

The chair shall

- serve as the primary contact of the WRP
- fulfill participation requirements at ANSTF meetings
- *Coordinating the Coordination* (CTC) duties (which may include participation in regional meetings and panel discussions representing WRP priorities)

The vice-chair shall

- solicit and compile the annual member reports
- facilitation of ANSTF recommendation discussion during the annual meeting
- fulfill participation requirements at ANSTF meetings, if chair and coordinator are unable
- CTC duties

The coordinator shall

- serve as the operations contact for WRP activities
- manage list serv and provide WRP relevant information regularly on the list serv
- conduct annual audit of website
- conduct monthly updates to the website
- fulfill participation requirements at ANSTF meetings, if chair is unable

## Chair and Vice Chair Terms

The chair and vice chair are both one-year terms, but with no limit to the number of terms. During the history of the WRP there have been many chairs and vice chairs that have served terms as short as a year and as long as 6 years. Serving as the chair has primarily been a reflection of those who are able to dedicate time as they are professionally able, and therefore many have served multiple-year terms. A one-year term of vice chair prior to serving as chair is an ideal succession to allow individuals to familiarize themselves with WRP needs and ANSTF procedures.

## Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee meetings shall allow additional participation from non-Executive Committee participants as agreed upon by the committee members. The Chair or Coordinator shall provide advance notification of participation. Typically invited participants shall join at the start of the meeting and shall leave the meeting once the specified business has been shared or completed.

# **Committee and Workgroup Logistics and Procedures**

## **Guidelines for Committees and Workgroups**

Every committee/workgroup shall have a chair that will help complete the work of the committee. The chair serves as the primary point of contact, the person responsible for achieving committee/workgroup milestones, recording progress and completion of documents.

A committee/workgroup will have a scoping document that outlines the purpose, goals, objectives, frequency of meeting, milestones with a timeline and is referred to as a committee/workgroup template. In the fall of each year, the Coordinator shall provide the template to the chair for their completion. The template will be completed by the respective chair with feedback from the committee/workgroup members and reviewed/updated annually. The template will be submitted to the Executive Committee and Coordinator by January 1. The template will be approved by Executive Committee vote. The combined templates will assist in creating an annual action plan, as needed.

When a committee/workgroup is created by a need from the Executive Committee, then the Executive Committee shall outline the scope of the committee/workgroup in the template.

When a committee/workgroup is created by a need/request from the larger WRP membership, then the person who has requested the creation of the committee/workgroup shall outline the scope of the in the template. Committee/workgroup creation suggestions shall be at the request of voting members only.

## **Committee and Workgroup Composition**

The chair of each committee/workgroup may be a voting, alternate or participating member. Further, participants may be voting or alternate members or people with interest in the committee's goal.

## **Committee and Workgroup Progress**

Individuals who serve on the Executive Committee shall volunteer to serve on a committee/workgroup and act as the liaison between the committee/workgroup and the Executive Committee. The liaison is responsible for checking in with the chair of the committee. The schedule of the individual committee meetings will be at the discretion of the committee chair and may also reflect seasonal capacity to conduct work, deadlines for document completion or other scheduling circumstances. A committee chair shall provide a monthly summary of committee activities to the liaison. If monthly summaries are not provided consistently, the Executive Committee will evaluate the committee's scope. If monthly summaries indicate repeated committee member lack of participation (i.e. not attending calls, no one reviewing documents etc.), then the Executive Committee will evaluate the committee's scope.

## **Committee and Workgroup Funding and Products**

In most cases, committee/workgroup work proceeds via volunteer time without additional funding. In some cases, funding may be needed to complete aspects of committee tasks or products. Prior to the use of any funds to complete tasks or products, the committee chair shall note the amount of funds, the purpose of the funds and financial agreement of the funds; and share this information with the Executive Committee. Executive Committee will approve the use of any funds coming in for committee work. Use of funding to complete committee tasks or products will be considered on a case-by-case

basis. Where funding will be used to support the completion of documents, the Executive Committee will review the proposed document to be produced, the expectations for document use and distribution, the staff time needed to produce document and ensure that all parties interested in participating in the task or product are included. Products developed by a committee shall follow the process for “Finalizing a Document” detailed below.

## **Annual Action Plan**

An annual action plan may be created by spring of each year. This action plan will be the result of the committee’s templates with summary information. The action plan will be assembled by the Coordinator and provided to the Executive Committee for approval. If activities arise that do not fall into the annual action plan, the Executive Committee shall review and approve any next steps.

## **ANS Task Force and Other ANSTF Panels**

### **WRP Participation**

The WRP is a subcommittee of the ANSTF, rather than a voting representative. Therefore, subcommittees do not vote on ANSTF business. The WRP provides recommendations biannually to the ANSTF if needed, activity reports to the ANSTF annually and other information as requested by the ANSTF.

The ANSTF holds two meetings a year, typically May and November. Ideally the Chair or Coordinator will attend in-person to represent the WRP, but both will not attend. Attendance at the ANSTF meeting will be dependent on the ability for WRP to support this travel. The Executive Committee will review travel expenses and available funds for final participation. There are times when WRP members participate at ANSTF meetings representing their primary agency or organization. In rare circumstances if the Chair or Coordinator are unable to attend, other WRP member entities may represent the WRP. While at ANSTF meeting, WRP Chair serves as an observer and provides feedback during the meeting.

The submission of recommendations from the WRP shall occur prior to each ANSTF meeting based on submission requirements of the ANSTF Executive Secretary. Suggested recommendations should be provided to the Coordinator using the current ANSTF recommendation document outline. Proposed recommendations should be achievable for ANSTF member agencies and reasonable. Recommendations may not address specific legislation. See further information on developing recommendations under *Documentation and Communication*. The Executive Committee will vote to approve final recommendations to submit to the ANSTF. In some cases, the WRP will choose to submit recommendations with other panels.

The WRP Executive Committee will coordinate with other ANSTF panels to improve AIS information sharing and maximize ANSTF panel related mechanics. Whenever possible the Chair, Vice Chair and Coordinator will communicate with other panel leadership, share resources if appropriate and provide information to other panels when requested. Often at the ANSTF meeting, the panel principals from the other ANSTF panels will convene a separate meeting to share information.

# Membership Meetings

## Annual Meeting

The WRP has held an annual meeting since 1998. The WRP Annual Meeting provides a networking and information sharing opportunity for members and associated stakeholders interested in AIS. The location of the meeting is based on a host proposal from a member (See host proposal form) which is then approved by membership vote. Since 2011, the meeting has been held in either September or October depending on facility availability and rates. Typically, the meeting location alternates between inland and coastal areas, but will be based on host proposal. Selecting the meeting location 2 years to 18 months prior to the event, is preferred to allow sufficient time for appropriate venue, accommodations, logistics and other details.

The Coordinator will manage the majority of meeting logistics (i.e. hotel bids, hotel contract signing, on-site hotel details) with final approval by the Executive Committee. The Coordinator solicits financial sponsorships for the meeting, which includes private companies, agencies and businesses. Sponsor package materials are approved by the Executive Committee.

The Annual Meeting Committee, in conjunction with the host, is responsible for agenda development. The host is responsible for field trip logistics, host location recommendations and logistics. Often the host provides a financial or in-kind contribution to support the meeting.

Host locations should be able to provide reasonable airline flights, government rate hotel rooms, and unique opportunities to learn about local AIS issues. Venues for the meeting can be a variety of formats, however when the hotel and meeting space can be combined this is preferred. The location of the venue is preferred to be one that allows participants to access dining and other needs without the need of a rental car.

The Annual Meeting Committee will be determined by soliciting volunteers at the previous annual meeting and/or via the list serv. The committee shall assemble in January of that meeting year and meet monthly until the event occurs. The Coordinator shall solicit presenter abstracts and the Annual Meeting Committee will review and select based on consensus. Some meetings have used a theme to guide the agenda. The Coordinator will be the primary contact for all speakers and provide all relevant information.

Historically, the business meeting was held at the annual meeting. However, the Executive Committee may choose to hold the business meeting virtually at an appropriate time either before or after the annual meeting has occurred, or during the annual meeting. All business meeting decisions are captured in minutes. These minutes shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee.

There is no fee to attend an annual meeting. All are welcome to attend the annual meeting.

## **Mid-year Teleconference**

The WRP holds a teleconference or webinar in the spring to keep members and others with an interest updated on WRP activities. The purpose of the teleconference is to share information and provide some further continuity between annual meetings.

## **Documentation and Communication**

### **Finalizing a document**

Products developed by a committee/workgroup shall follow the process for document completion. The following steps for document completion include: a) committee input and review, b) committee chair provides the document for preliminary review by Executive Committee, c) the committee chair or Coordinator provides the document to the entire membership for review and feedback, d) the committee chair incorporates feedback and provides the document to Executive Committee for final review, and e) Executive Committee vote to finalize the document.

The most involved option for input into documents is to join the committee and assist in the development of the product or document. All members will have an opportunity to review or provide feedback on a proposed project or document prior to finalization. Finalized documents or products may be reviewed as determined by a committee in the future and will be based on new information.

All final documents or projects shall be housed on the WRP website, shared via the WRP list serv, and encouraged to be shared electronically.

### **Letters and Endorsements**

The WRP does send letters for a variety of purposes including but not limited to thank you letters for attending an event (i.e., NISAW), letters to leadership to encourage membership participation in the annual meeting or other event, and entities that may need additional education on AIS issues.

The WRP does not provide letters of support or correspondence for partners submitting grant proposals, endorsement of specific products or endorsing specific legislation.

Two specific policies have been adopted which further outline endorsement and letters of support: *WRP Endorsement Policy* and *Letter of Support Policy*.

### **ANSTF Recommendations**

The WRP may submit recommendations for ANSTF consideration in conjunction with ANSTF meetings (typically biannually), however it is not required to submit recommendations. The recommendations will adhere to any ANSTF provided format or guidance. Recommendations should be actionable by the ANSTF and its agency members, address relevant AIS issues that affect the West or have national implications.

To identify and approve recommendations, each committee of the WRP may submit recommendations to the Executive Committee for consideration and during midyear webinar or business meeting members may suggest recommendations. In some cases, additional information from the associated committee chair may be required. The Executive Committee will approve all recommendations for submission to the ANSTF.

## Website and List serv

The WRP website was hosted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service from 1999 to December 2019. The Invasive Species Action Network took over responsibility of hosting the WRP website in December 2019. The *Website Transfer Agreement* outlines the conditions of the website hosting relationship. Invasive Species Action Network shall provide administrative access to the website as directed by the Executive Committee.

The primary function of the website is to provide information to the members about WRP products, activities and events. Maintenance of the website is completed by the Coordinator. Upkeep such as membership information is completed regularly. The Executive Committee may review and direct the Coordinator to conduct changes to the website, as needed.

The list serv is hosted by the University of Georgia. The Coordinator maintains the list serv contacts and posts monthly updates on WRP activities. It is not the Coordinator's responsibility to post non-WRP information to the list serv. The Coordinator directs list serv members to post information. Those who are a member of the list serv may post to the list serv. Membership to the list serv is simply for anyone with an interest in the WRP and AIS in the West.

Moderating the list serv shall be the responsibility of the Coordinator, however the Chair and Vice Chair will have moderating capabilities. The following information is approved for posting: WRP documents, WRP activities and invitations, alerts on AIS species and emergencies, topics of broad scientific AIS interest, topics of query for management assistance, grant opportunities, and employment opportunities, and relevant AIS conference/webinar opportunities.

The following information is not approved for posting: general press releases not associated with the WRP, personal one-on-one conversations, and non-AIS topics.

Under no circumstances shall the participant list serv list be provided to any outside party for their use.

## Panel Support for Basic Functions and Fiscal Management

The WRP is not a legal entity and therefore cannot have a bank account. The USFWS has provided all panels with equally distributed financial support for the tenure of the panel existence. Since 2011, the WRP has elected to utilize this USFWS support for coordination of the panel. The WRP has the ability to select an entity or organization to provide coordination and utilize USFWS funds to do so. The WRP developed a scope of work for coordination and the membership annually confirms to continue to support coordination.

From 2011 - 2023, the coordination was provided by Invasive Species Action Network (a conservation non-profit 501c3 organization). ISAN is a non-profit, and is able to serve as the fiscal sponsor of the WRP. This allows ISAN to accept financial support for the annual meeting, manage funds, and assume financial responsibility for WRP annual meeting expenses. The WRP and ISAN have a *Fiscal Management Agreement*.

Beginning in 2023, Conservation Collaborations, LLC has provided coordination services for the WRP. Conservation Collaborations, LLC works closely with ISAN to maintain financial records and provide communication on fiscal transactions for WRP business.