

Western Regional Panel Executive Committee February Conference Call

February 17, 2026, at 1:00 pm mountain time

Minutes

Attended by: Stephen Phillips, Robert Walters, Tom Woolf, Vanessa Salazar, Barak Shemai, Dennis Zabalgo, Heidi McMaster and Leah Elwell.

- A) Approval of January minutes. Stephen moved to approve, Robert seconded. All in favor.
- B) Panel Business
 - SOP Revision Discussion – Leah reviewed the final minor changes. Stephen motioned to approve and Barak seconded. All in favor. Approved. Leah will circulate to members and post to the website.
 - Budget Update – Leah provided information on transactions in 2025, and current balance. Sara Ricklefs, ISAN made the deposit for the Sacramento hotel contract. Leah will post the budget information in Sharepoint.
 - Listserv moderator updates – The list serv is moderated by Leah for message approval. In the off chance that Leah cannot be available to approve messages, Robert and Josh will be added as moderators.
 - Tracking research needs (Golden mussel) – Dennis connected with Martha regarding identified research needs. That list was compiled in 2025 and has not changed. Dennis will share it again. Of note, CA Dept of Water Resources research considered the temperatures outlined in UMPS as sufficient for UMPS.
 - Rapid Response Funds Discussion – Pending the final project with Hawaii. The compliance elements are nearly done. The ESA consultation is complete which showed the proposed action not likely to adversely affect T and E species or critical habitat. We are awaiting response from HI. Should be able to move to contract with PSMFC very soon.
 - Updates on EDRR Framework – Merideth Bartron, USFWS who is part of the Molecular Lab Network at U of Auburn, does have funding for processing.
 - ANSTF Regional Panel Input Template (due March 9th) – QZAP items, WID protocols, E&O, Coastal, share via email for review. UPDATE – now due April 1.
 - AFWA's Alexandra Schwab approached Robert with the possibility of WRP contributing to a new "Freshwater Invasive Species Eradication Database". The Ex Comm agreed that contributing information to this would be good. Robert will follow up on any next steps.
- C) Legislative Update – Stephen Phillips -
 - A group (Steve Bollens, Justin Bush, Dennis Zabalgo, Julie Regan) will be going to DC for Hill visits. Specifically, with Dept of Interior and US Army Corps, which will include discussing indirect cost rates (this year no indirect will be allowed in APC-WID funding requests). PSMFC is seeking a legislative correction to this. Other key items will be to bring up that NOAA does not have an AIS office, and state plan funding.
 - Interior is looking to set up a Golden Mussel Action Plan or alternatively pulling all invasive freshwater mussels into a singular group plan. Potential funding may be \$5 million for QZAP and \$5 million for GM or \$10M for both.

- State Boating Act would allow the states to charge fees for AIS work. Senator Crapo and others are going to reintroduce the SBA but others are pushing back on this correction.
- Golden Mussel Act – Harder (CA) this bill calls out ANSTF to determine the risk to states, tribes and local entities. Rather than restrict this bill to just CA, it should consider the entire US.

D) WRP Standing Committee – Roundtable for Chairs/Liaisons

- Committee template completion – Waiting for one last committee profile (Membership) and then Leah will compile and upload to Sharepoint.
- Annual Meeting Committee - Leah Elwell - The Holiday Inn Downtown contract and deposit have been completed for September 23-24. Leah has launched save the date. Leah has been in discussion with the AV company to ensure that those needs are robust for the meeting. Leah has also invited some sponsorships. Martha has specifically reached out the CA Invasive Species Council for a sponsorship.
- Best in the West Committee (renamed from Award Committee) – Chair Tom Woolf – Tom shared an updated outline of process and a ranking rubric for submissions. Ranking will be important, and the idea is to keep it simple and similar to an RFP process. Discussion included posting nominees and winners on the website. All will review the documents prior to next meeting – Leah will send a reminder. In review consider the descriptions to be as broad as possible. Send comments to Tom.
- Coastal Committee – Chair Amanda Newsom, WDFW; Stephen Phillips/Leah liaisons. No news.
- Decontamination Think Tank Committee – Co-Chair Chris Killian and Josh Wright; Robert Walters liaison. Met in January, Leah joined to hear thoughts on timing of an UMPS revision. There is a new company that is producing an out of the box on demand system for purchase. Chris is looking into the product to understand if this is a good fit for WID stations broadly. The discussion also included enclosed boat trailers, pontoons etc. Their priority is to develop a protocol for dip tank decontamination with a draft ready in March. Also, CO has dip tank going in at Highline.
- Education and Outreach Committee – Chair Sara Ricklefs; Barak Shemai Liaison. The last meeting was in January with most of the discussion focused on multi-lingual materials. These are being collected for shared use. Their next meeting is in March.
- Field Sampling and Monitoring Committee – Chair Kate Dukette; Tom Woolf liaison. Discussed at the WISCE meeting, needs another revision to improve the document for finalization. Specifically, a river plankton tow protocol needs to be more formalized “do the best you can” needs to be improved. There is a small group outside of WISCE/WRP with CO and UT looking at river sampling. Utah has been working on a formal river protocol for '26 season and CO part of those discussions. Are there other existing river protocols, Reclamation? Heidi will check. *Heidi update post meeting: Reclamation does not have specific river protocols but do attach a flow meter to the net when they collected to help with calculations.* Are there eastern river partners or protocols that could be looked at?
- Membership and Communication Committee – Chair John Wullschleger – No news.

E) ANSTF

- ANSTF Activities
 - Strategic Planning Sessions – Seven break out sessions for each major areas of interest. Each of the subcommittees is putting together a list of goals with accomplishments of what has happened in the past five years and as a starting point for next five years.

- Status/quick check in of previously submitted recommendations
 - Golden Mussel Planning Development Team – 2/27 next meeting. Will focus on development of the plan structure.
 - All Panels Discussions
- Standing and Ad-Hoc Committee Participation Discussion – all subcommittees are reviewing past work in preparation for the strategic planning sessions.
 - Prevention - Chair Joseph Kreiger, NOAA; Barak Shemai Liaison.
 - Early Detection and Rapid Response - Chair Wes Daniels, USGS; John Wullschleger Liaison.
 - Control and Restoration - Chair Kim Bogenschutz, Iowa; Dennis Zabaglo Liaison. Will be meeting this week. Ceci Weibert will be the new chair, Kaitlyn from National Aquaculture Association has replaced Paul Zajicek.
 - Research - Chair Susan Pasko, USFWS; John Wullschleger Liaison.
 - Education and Outreach – Chair Tim Campbell, Wisconsin Sea Grant; Monica McGarrity Liaison.
- F) Coordinating the Coordination Update (including tribal activities)
 - Call Before You Haul – Lisa talked to WISCE about a survey directed at haulers that she recently completed. The surveys indicate issues that could be addressed concerning industry. A small working group will outline improvements to the CBH. Many of the issues come down to reciprocity.
 - MRBP Prevention and Control Committee met and is developing their workplan for next year. Robert and Ben Holen attended and suggested more communication with equipment and boat haulers.
 - ISAN is doing a survey with WID coordinators to understand programs across the West.
- G) Announcements – ALL
 - CRB will meet in Missoula 6/23-24
 - March call – 3/16 @ 1pm
 - Mid Year Webinar – 5/6 @1pm