

Western Regional Panel Executive Committee

March Conference Call

March 16, 2026, at 1:00 pm mountain time

Minutes

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

- A) Approval of February minutes. Stephen motion, John second. All in favor. Minutes approved.
- B) Panel Business
 - Tracking research needs (Golden mussel) – Dennis – This item will be removed from the agenda here as a specific item, as it is covered under golden mussel task team below.
 - Rapid Response Funds Discussion – AK and CA projects are in place and underway. HI need a proclamation by the governor to adjust their treatment method. Stephen and Leah are meeting with their team at 3 pm today and hope to learn how long it will take to get a proclamation. Compliance with federal requirements is secured.
 - Updates on EDRR Framework - no new information.
 - AFWA – Freshwater Invasive Species Eradication Database – Robert met with one of the leads on a project to compile all eradication attempts of freshwater species, primarily focused on fish. WRP members do have some of that information but more on plants and invertebrates. They modified their scope to take in information on animal eradication but not plants. Grey literature results is what they are seeking. All information to be compiled by April 15. Freshwater Life is one of the partners with AFWA on this project. Grayden will share solicitation and Leah will contact membership.
 - ANSTF Regional Panel Input Template (due April 1) – Reviewed the draft document and suggestions were made. Leah will reshare draft this week for final review and send to Susan by April 1.
- C) Legislative Update – Stephen Phillips
 - NISAW trip was successful during the last week of February. A group of western partners did office visits to specific congressional members, US ACE and DOI staff, and a congressional briefing. Next year he will encourage NAISMA to not overlap the NISAW fly in with the USDA Cooperative Forum in Annapolis.
 - i. Meeting with DOI included Hilary Smith, Eva Brana Dept Sec Policy Manager, Scott Cameron, Dave Miko where conversation was focused on mobilizing AIS state plan funding. Many contracts/grants from DOI have been delayed. State AIS plan funds typically come in fall. The FY25 funds will expire on September 30, 2026.
 - ii. Legislation – Whitehouse (RI) and Senator (MI) have initiated legislation to amend NANPCA/NISA and the bill is in draft form as AIS 2.0. PSMFC was given opportunity to comment. Of note in the draft bill reciprocity language; consultation with regional panels, ANSTF grant program for research and control; section on WID interagency certification to ensure reciprocity. Authorization levels increase panel and state plan funding.

- iii. State Boating Act – Senators Crapo and Welsh have been working to amend a conflict in state’s ability to charge AIS fees as part of boating registration. Bill is held up.
- iv. USACE meeting focused on the inability to charge an indirect cost rate to APC WID agreements. Multiple states and Nez Perce Tribe requests were submitted today to make indirect charges. Prioritization of future funding under APC WID was discussed. Once a golden mussel management plan is created, it may be used to help prioritize funding needs.
- v. Heidi mentioned she is tracking Secretarial Order 3446 which is intended to “cut red tape”.

D) WRP Standing Committee – Roundtable for Chairs/Liaisons

- Annual Meeting Committee - Leah Elwell – Many sponsors have been approached with several confirming including Istonish, Clean Wake and CD3. The planning team is brainstorming on the agenda. April 10th is the deadline for abstracts. Status update on mussel treatments in ND, CO and ID.
- Best in the West Committee – Chair Tom Woolf; Various updates on the guidance documents will be made. Tom will incorporate soon and once received Leah will update webpage and launch to the members. Leah is already getting questions about submitting. Still to be determined if only the winners or all nominations will be publicized.
- Coastal Committee – Chair Amanda Newsom, WDFW; Stephen Phillips/Leah liaisons. They are scheduling their next meeting.
- Decontamination Think Tank Committee – Co-Chair Chris Killian and Josh Wright; Robert Walters liaison – They are meeting 3/18 with a primary focus on dip tank protocols, a draft has been provided from Utah. In assembling the ANSTF document, it was discovered that ANSTF only adopted the inspection protocols, and the decontamination protocols were never finalized. The GLP panel wanted some different preface material for context, as of WRP May ’24 minutes stated that ANSTF would create the preface. Leah will reach out to Susan to advance.
- Education and Outreach Committee – Chair Sara Ricklefs; Barak Shemai Liaison. Short meeting last week where Sam Chan presented on non-motorized work. One detail shared was inspections identifying a lot of NZMS associated with kayaks.
- Field Sampling and Monitoring Committee – Chair Kate Dukette; Tom Woolf liaison. The WISCE discussed in February, and the document has been shared with CO monitoring staff for another review. Once that review is complete, it will go back to full committee for discussion.
- Membership and Communication Committee – Chair John Wullschleger. John will contact Leah to discuss next steps for 2026.

E) ANSTF

- ANSTF Activities
 - Strategic Planning Sessions – Many Ex Comm members have participated in at least one of the sessions. This planning session iteration has included significant external input. All information will be shared at the spring ANSTF meeting for additional discussion.
 - Golden Mussel Task Team – Dennis share that they are moving to create a national golden mussel plan. The goal is to have an outline by June and a draft by September.
- Standing and Ad-Hoc Committee Participation Discussion

- Prevention - Chair Joseph Kreiger, NOAA; Barak Shemai Liaison.
 - Early Detection and Rapid Response - Chair Wes Daniels, USGS; John Wullschleger Liaison.
 - Control and Restoration - Chair Ceci Wiebert, Michigan DWR; Dennis Zabaglo Liaison. NZMS Management Plan is in the federal register, and the public comment period opens until April 13th. Dennis will recirculate to the group.
 - 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)
- Nic and Justin facilitated an AIS panel at WAMPS.
 - Heidi and Keith presented at NW Hydro Power Conference on mussels
 - Reclamation launched the Halt the Hitchhiker prize challenge.
 - 3 projects were selected for USFWS Golden Mussel funding including the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation for monitoring on the Smith River; Cal Trout AIS Outreach Effort; and NDOW Topaz Lake WID,
 - HACCP course May 27-28 in New Mexico.
- G) Next call April 20th
- H) Mid-Year Webinar - No registration will be required. Specific topics were suggested including golden mussel update from Martha, research updates on golden mussel; legislative update, specific to GM. Double check if there is anything from Kansas meeting that needs follow up; ANSTF Recommendations. Mention the opportunity to host 2027. Find out if the treatment in Central Valley for GM – DWR could be shared. Leah will draft agenda and circulate for review.