

**Minutes – SOPN Board of Technical Committee Meeting
via teleconference, July 12, 2004**

Attending: Paul Eubank, Chair of Technical Committee (LAMR), Steve Burrough (CHIC), Fran Pannebaker (BEOL), Brian Quigley (CAVO), Felix Revello (FOLS), Steve Linderer (FOLS), Marten Schmitz (PECO), Alexa Roberts (SAND), Dusty Perkins, (SOPN Network Coordinator), Heidi Sosinski (SOPN Data Manager), Brian Carey, (LYJO), Jason Lott (LYJO Interested Party).

1. SOPN FY04 current progress

- Scoping and information gathering is now complete at all SOPN parks.
- D. Perkins has been tracking and reviewing completed inventory reports and reviewing draft final reports as they come in. FOLS is the only park that has been finalized this fiscal year. Draft final reports are in for FOUN, WABA, LAMR and LYJO, principal investigators are working on revisions. CHIC was due May 31. The PI misunderstood the deadline, thinking it was the end of the summer. He is currently working on it now and should have a final report in soon.
- The webpage is now complete and is scheduled to be updated this week. A section for posting items such as draft reports will be available in the near future.
- The NPSpecies MOA has been signed by all SOPN park superintendents designating H. Sosinski as Point-of-Contact for items regarding NPSpecies. She is also available to conduct NPSpecies and/or NatureBib training sessions (possibly at the annual board meeting.)
- The LYJO-SOPN administrative agreement was completed and signed. Details will be discussed at the annual meeting.
- Highlights from the May 2004 BOD meeting were discussed.
 - The plan is to present the prioritized inventory list to the technical committee for addition/review/revision. The BOD would then approve the finalized list. The process will be used for the plan to complete the conceptual models.
 - Note on SAND inventories – Initial thought was to place a higher priority for SAND, since we have very little information for this park. From B. Bingham through S. Fancy: I+M prefers not to spend current inventory money on parks that were not in the original “270” parks. The money we have received to date was for the original 10 parks, not SAND. At some point (not date determined) we will receive additional

funds for inventories at SAND. If there is unused money from the original 10 parks, then money may be reallocated to SAND.

- Another thought is that the network doesn't want to give the impression that we have enough funds for the 10 original parks and have commenced spending on SAND. There are holes in all the inventories, it is Dusty's opinion that we should fill these holes, and then commence work on SAND.
- There is currently \$30K left in FY04 inventory funds. We are slated to receive full funding in FY05, however we don't know if this will happen. The current plan is to forward fund the grassland conceptual model by spending the remaining inventory funds, and then re-pay our inventory funds when we get full funding. When we receive full funding we will then begin funding the highest priority remaining inventories for the original 10 parks and the inventories that are essential for developing vital signs at SAND. We should receive additional funds for inventories at SAND in the future. A prioritized inventory list will aid us in determining when and where to pursue opportunities outside of our base funds.

2. Plan for spending remaining inventory dollars

- D. Perkins presented a list of inventory needs that were developed from scoping meetings and reviewing the completed inventories. The list had three categories: highest priority; mid-level priority; and lowest priority. Perkins opened the floor to discussion.
- A. Roberts – Question regarding how the list coincided with completed inventories. Perkins answered by saying some on the list are gaps from inventories already completed (example: wetlands at BEOL) and others were not started due to the expense involved and were thus held off (example: bats). Roberts then asked if higher priority would go towards filling gaps or filling new needs. Perkins stated that our remaining \$30K has an advantage in that it has “no strings attached”. In the future we could use monitoring funds towards inventories as long as what is being inventoried has a high probability of being used as a vital sign.
- S. Burrough – Commented about how CHIC exotic mapping is listed as high priority. He thinks that filling the large hole in SAND's inventories should be higher priority than the smaller holes across the board. B. Carey mentioned that nationally, the program is now focusing on monitoring and that the holes are now up to us to fill. However, a plant inventory for SAND is an obvious place to start. Perkins said that SAND

should receive funds in the future, but it may take a while. Some inventories can wait (i.e. amphibians and reptiles). But if it takes a while, we may need to use monitoring funds and/or remaining inventory funds to do inventories at SAND that will be essential for the vital signs monitoring process at SAND. We do not want to give the impression that we have an extra \$30K, because we don't!

- F. Revello – Comment about conceptual models. These apply to all parks, thus this should be a good place to start building a foundation. Perkins stated that this is why there was a recommendation to forward fund conceptual models with inventory funds.
- A plan was proposed to use \$25K out of the inventory funds to begin a cooperative agreement towards a grasslands conceptual model (see below in conceptual model item). We can pay ourselves back the inventory funds when we are fully funded.
- A question was raised regarding possibly unknown park specimens in various museums. There is a national effort to perform data mining of museum collections in order to see if unaccounted park specimens exist. However, there is some reluctance to dig too much because museums may have invested in these collections, and they may a) not want to acknowledge NPS ownership of specimens collected on NPS land since they have cared for them for a long time and/or b) museums may want to pass on the cost of maintenance of specimens collected in NPS land to the NPS.
- B. Carey – Question about the low priority status of reptile and amphibian inventories. Given that they are a sensitive indicator, they possibly should be rated higher. Perkins responded by saying that they indeed are a sensitive indicator; however, this is used more often in eastern temperate climates where rainfall is less variable. Rainfall is much more unpredictable across the southern plains ecosystem, thus causing reptile and amphibian populations to be highly variable.
- The prioritized inventory list was discussed. A question was raised if we want to continue using a general categorization (i.e. high, medium and low priority), or if we want to have an actual ranking. It would be possible to send out a survey ranking our inventory needs. **Action Item: A general consensus was reached to leave the list in its current format.**
- The committee was asked if they wanted to make any changes to the prioritized list. It was mentioned that Alberta arctic butterfly was on the list even though it is only relevant to one park. Perkins responded by saying that Steve Fancy wants a large list of possible inventories to draw upon.

We may only have funds for the top 5-6 inventories, but we are still prepared should an opportunity to fund any other inventory arises.

- **Action Item: The technical committee did not recommend moving any of the inventories into new categories. The list was approved as presented.**

3. Plans for Conceptual Models

- Conceptual models will be developed via cooperative agreements with a university or academics. These can then be presented at vital signs meetings and used to help us determine what would be good vital sign indicators.
- An excel spreadsheet listing the major ecosystems at each park was presented. In a perfect world, we would be able to fund all the models.
- D. Perkins presented the technical committee with a list of needed conceptual models and a plan for completing them. Currently there are 6 possible models on the list. Three models in particular are shared by several parks (short/mixed grass prairie, prairie streams/riparian zones and landscape vulnerability). The short/mixed grass prairie model can be developed by potential PIs: Drs. Hild and Tinker at University of Wyoming. This could be completed in a 4-6 month timeframe.
- The prairie streams/riparian zones are currently next on the priority list to be developed. For the pinion-juniper, oak savannah, and eastern deciduous forest models, we may be able to adapt models from other I+M networks. Question was posed as to whether the committee liked the idea of a landscape vulnerability model, and if so should it be moved up the priority list or left where it is.
- The floor was opened for discussion to review and approve the list:
 - S. Burrough – Suggested that the landscape model be moved up because it is relevant to many parks and outside landscape effects can affect park resources. **Action Item: The committee approved moving the landscape model to the third position.**
 - The committee was asked if it was okay to borrow other network models or if they wanted to spend extra funds for custom pinion/juniper, oak savannah and eastern deciduous forest. B. Carey stated that LYJO does not need an oak/savannah model. **Action Item: The committee stated that borrowing models was acceptable.**

- **Action Item: The committee approved proceeding with the grassland model with Dr. Tinker and Dr. Hild at University of Wyoming.**

4. Natural Resources Issues Overview

A list of important natural resources and stressors has been compiled from the network. This was done using an access database Sosinski developed. Using this database, results can be viewed for all parks across the board, or for an individual park. All the results have been received and compiled. To determine the highest priority issues, all were ranked on a scale of 4 points for high priority, 3 for priority, 2 for issue but low priority and 1 for not an issue. These results were then averaged across the board to determine the highest priority issues. Exotic plants were the highest priority stressor and grassland communities were the highest priority resource.

- The highest priority stressors and resources were presented to the committee. It was noted that the vital signs goal is to monitor a combination of resources and stressors that are important network wide, as well as the most important ones for each park.

5. SOPN plans for the remainder of FY04

- D. Perkins briefly discussed the budget worksheet detailing the budget status and plans for the remainder of FY04.
 - a) Perkins will be attending the North American Prairie Conference. This conference occurs once every four years, and will provide a good opportunity to promote the SOPN.
 - b) \$1000 was reallocated towards a 2% national re-assessment.
 - c) SOPN will soon begin the NPSpecies certification process.
 - d) H. Sosinski has been working on cataloging SOPN's library and will soon be assigning a numbering system.

6. August meeting agenda items:

- We may want to revisit the SOPN charter at our next annual meeting for several reasons. Currently, our charter calls for the technical committee to meet in person twice a year. Due to current travel restrictions, we may want to revisit this. The charter also calls for the technical committee to take on numerous duties. Now that Perkins and Sosinski are on board, we may want to reassign some of the duties. The charter states that it should be evaluated every 3 years; however, changes can be made at any time.

- WABA is currently slated to be the next chair of technical committee and the technical representative on the board of directors. Due to their staffing situation, we may want to change the rotation.
- Re-evaluate current operational structure and SOPN-LYJO agreement.

7. Other Committee Concerns

- The idea to have a separate board and technical committee meeting was raised. The SOPN Charter states that any member of the SOPN parks may attend a board meeting or a technical committee meeting. However, there may be times that the board might want to discuss sensitive issues at an executive session. **Action Item: It was decided to hold a separate technical committee meeting at our annual meeting. This committee is likely to start to play a larger role as we get deeper into the vital signs development process.**
- Carey asked about the status of the multipark prairie restoration proposal. Perkins stated that it is still on. A pre-proposal will be presented at the funding meeting.