

NCPARC Inaugural Meeting Afternoon Session Minutes

The afternoon portion of the Inaugural Meeting of NCPARC (North Carolina Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation) involved facilitated break-out sessions where groups of 5-10 attendees discussed specific topics related to the herpetological needs in North Carolina. Designed to solicit ideas for research, education, and policy initiatives from all attendees, break-out discussions revolved around three questions: 1) *What needs to be done in North Carolina to educate appropriate audiences about amphibians and reptiles?* 2) *What are North Carolina's needs for herp regulations and issues regarding trade?* 3) *What research/ inventory/ monitoring/ management needs do we have in North Carolina, and how can we meet these needs?*

During the session, facilitators posed these questions to their groups, then allowed each member to write their personal brainstormed responses of ideas on cards. These responses were then read aloud and discussed among the small groups. At the end of the allotted time, each group roughly prioritized the responses to each question by deciding on three ideas that seemed to be the most commonly submitted. The entire body of attendees then reconvened in the auditorium, and the facilitators each presented their group's ideas to the NCPARC members.

Below are the prioritized lists of brainstormed ideas as submitted by the facilitators at the meeting. These lists have not been edited for duplicate responses or for content, and are presented as submitted by each group. Duplication of response ideas for a particular question reinforces that an idea was viewed as a priority by multiple groups. In addition, complete lists of all the ideas written on cards by attendees have been compiled and are available as separate files. These are grouped by question and are further organized under sub-headings within a particular question as appropriate. Exact duplicate responses were removed from these lists, but ideas were recorded as written where possible to preserve the spirit of the submissions. Both the list of prioritized responses to these questions as well as the lists of individuals' brainstormed ideas will serve as frameworks upon which volunteers on the respective technical working groups can build plans for future initiatives that will address herpetological needs as perceived by the NCPARC membership.

NCPARC Inaugural Meeting Break-out Group Summaries of Priorities

1) What needs to be done in North Carolina to educate appropriate audiences about amphibians and reptiles?

- Make ecology/natural history a required part of school curriculum for all grades
- Develop a message that includes the importance of habitat and de-mystifying herps (i.e. not all snakes are venomous) and accomplish this through hands-on opportunities
- Get herp info (including benefits of herps) to private landowners
- Cultivate good relationships with the media
- K-12 curriculum/ lesson plans- herp conscious curriculum and good teacher training
- Landowner guidelines for 'herp friendly' private land management
- Mass media communication/ outreach- news, radio, written materials, TV
- NCPARC as clearinghouse for research/education, etc.
- Target the universe (pre K- ancient)
- Target these audiences: decision and policy makers, school, public
- Developing materials such as posters, magnets and easy-to-read field guides that would allow people to understand the herps in their communities
- Develop educator programs for all age groups (scout badges, interactive web-based field trips)
- Use outreach to reach all corners of society with conservation issues- educate to inform
- Develop statewide list of educators based on location/ specialty
- Standardized curriculum for schools/ youth- to promote a standard message
- Printed information (kiosks, posters or products available to educators across the state)
- Nontraditional educational outreach- PARC presence at herp shows, etc.
- Target age: K-3 for teaching
- Develop teaching modules appropriate to a range of grade levels
- Organize a network of herp experts to provide presentations with live specimens
- Develop science project ideas/ guidance appropriate to a range of grades

2) What are North Carolina's needs for herp regulations and issues regarding trade?

- Improve effectiveness of penalties (very important)
- End all commercial collection of herps for direct sale. Must use biological data (i.e. demonstrate sustained yield) for exceptions
- Permit guidelines/ regulations need to be stricter
- Improve effectiveness of law enforcement
- Make destruction of habitat illegal if collection of critter that needs that habitat is illegal
- Educate officers
- Educate/ cultivate/ influence legislators
- Communicate with and educate pet shops- don't alienate them...
- More enforcement personnel/ training
- Add the sensitive species to the actual hunting/ fishing regulations digest
- True ecological cost should be paid for degraded/ destroyed habitat
- Need good research to ID the value of a salamander
- Review the existing regulations, make sure they're sensible, that they result in good herp conservation
- Encourage and enable the enforcement of the regulations
- Review other states policies in terms of how effective/ ineffective they've been; coordination of protected species enforcement
- Permit system with different levels, different costs, etc...
- Determine how to enforce the laws
- Find a way to keep captive bred animals from being released into the wild- educate about proper ways to get rid of animals?
- Better monitor the exotic species trade
- PARC should act as a facilitator between those who make policy and those affected by it
- Need more data to guide regulatory decisions- PARC could put inventory groups together to do this- where are the information gaps?
- State licensure for the keeping of venomous reptiles
- Education of the current regulations
- Greater penalties for violators
- Restrict trade of wild herps through captive breeder registration
- Better habitat protection, especially associated with new construction projects. Emphasize restriction of construction not mitigation
- Restrict possession of exotic species

3) What research/ inventory/ monitoring/ management needs do we have in North Carolina, and how can we meet these needs?

- Could safe harbor model be used?
- Questions of feasibility, particularly for uplands
- Focus on wetlands first
- Have peer review of research/monitoring projects among experts to maintain rigor (NCPARC research and monitoring study review committee)
- Improve cooperation and communication
- Among researchers
- Between researchers and land managers to encourage herp-friendly mgmt
- Need good population and natural history studies for most species
- Need good baseline data everywhere- 'fill in the gaps'
- Standardized data collection and database
- Quality control of the data being collected by various groups around the state
- Inventory/ create atlas/ more citizen science as well as more professionals
- More *Micrus dorcai*
- NCPARC could showcase projects and organize events (via website)
- Act now!
- Comprehensive herp atlas of the state (historical and present)
- Database of relevant herp studies
- Critical research needs: habitat fragmentation/ relocation studies/ true ecological cost when herps are lost (as well as habitats)- encourage an ecosystem approach to the research versus a species specific approach
- Local inventory programs – involve communities in their local herps
- Involving landowners in the management of their properties
- Identifying funding sources for inventory/ management/ research- clearinghouse for funding information
- Post research needs on a website
- Use surveys/ baseline data collected across the state to share with agencies so that everyone has access to the same information
- Research needed on impacts of fire ants on herp communities– exotics/ invasives in general
- Develop monitoring programs for species and for habitats/ watershed/ landscape scale (e.g., flatwoods salamander)
- Herp atlas (again!)
- More emphasis on surveys and inventory of species we know little about
- More research on the effect of human disturbances/ wetland mitigation/ habitat fragmentation
- Involve public in survey/ monitoring
- Better connection between funding agencies and funding needs- database about available funds and necessary research projects
- Work with TNC, TLC, and other conservation orgs to survey potential sites for herp related protection as well as other flora and fauna