

NCPARC

Education and Outreach Working Group Meeting

December 13, 2005
12:00-3:00 Wildlife Resources Commission Headquarters, Raleigh

Introductions: (who we are and why we are here)

Opening remarks: (Sarah then Jeff)

Welcome: I'd first like to say thanks to each of you for coming to join us here today! I realize that many of you are taking personal time away from work to participate in this working group (WG), so I sincerely am grateful to you for your willingness to help us improve the North Carolinian awareness of the amphibians and reptiles in NC. I will do my best to see that our collective progress for herp conservation in NC is well worth the time and expense of your travel to join us here today.

I'd also like to thank the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) for hosting us here at their new headquarters. These facilities are great, and the logistics of parking and travel to this site worked very well, I think. In a few months the state-of-the-art education center should be open downstairs, so I look forward to when we can hold our WG meetings down there and see the strides this facility will be able to make for reaching the masses with the conservation message!

What is PARC: Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), is a multi-sector partnership dedicated to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles and their habitats. The key to PARC's success has been the inclusion of **all** individuals, organizations, and agencies with an interest in amphibian and reptile conservation and an interest in the conservation of the habitats they occupy. PARC's strength is its ability to increase communication and cooperation among these many diverse groups. PARC enables each person and group involved to become more aware of national, regional, and state issues confronting amphibians and reptiles. PARC also gives individuals a better idea of how their agency or organization can contribute to conservation of herpetofauna and their habitats. The diversity of participants makes PARC the most comprehensive conservation effort ever undertaken for amphibians and reptiles.

What is the intent of the E&O Working Group: This WG is one that I have been really anxious to get up and running. I have been in this position for a couple of years now, and so we have slowly been making small strides for NCPARC and slowly get our feet wet with a few NCPARC initiatives.

Over the last few months, NCPARC activities have really begun to snowball, with 1) initiatives for updating the herp regulations in NC through the Policy, Regulation, and Trade (PR&T) working group; 2) the initiation of the NCPARC Calling Amphibian Survey Project (CASP) which will involve volunteers statewide in determining frog distributions in the state; 3) the development (through Mike Dorcas and Steven Price of Davidson College, Jeff Beane of the Museum, and a few of us at the WRC) of a CD and guide to the calls of the frogs and toads of NC which should be released shortly; and 4) the planning of our winter meeting, which will take

place March 15th and 16th and involve a 2-day workshop-style format with sessions on techniques for sampling herps, herp ID training, appropriate data collection, and how to manage land for herps. And these are just some of the BIGGER things going on!

Obviously, with this much brewing, it is certainly time for the Education and Outreach (E&O) Working Group of NCPARC to officially form. We've got lots of work to do to make sure that these initiatives get the publicity and participation they deserve, plus there are many projects that WE need to initiate ourselves, since the members of this working group have expressed many ideas of ways to improve the awareness of herp issues among the citizens (young and old) of the state.

This working group has, perhaps, the most critical role of any working group in NCPARC. If we do not publicize the science our Research, Inventory, Monitoring and Management (RIMM) Working Group learns, or get the word out to herp enthusiasts about the regulations our PR&T Working Group proposes, then the effectiveness of those groups is minimized. And if there is to be any appreciation for herps among future generations, it will be because someone reached out to the children and showed them that reptiles and amphibians are amazing creatures worthy of conservation. Therefore, your dedicated participation on the E&O working group is something I hope that you will thoughtfully consider. Feel free to suggest to me other interested and dedicated parties to include in the working group, as we will need many minds with unique ideas to make our group a success. As with all NCPARC activities E&O is open to everyone, so please forward this email along

The need for the Working Group chair(s); How Sarah's position coordinating NCPARC and also working for the Commission necessitates other leadership: I am in the somewhat odd position of representing both the Wildlife Resources Commission and NCPARC in this undertaking. Since the WRC is typically the body that drafts new rules and regulations regarding the state's native wildlife, and since the Dangerous Animal "study" to be undertaken by DENR requires consultation with the WRC (among other entities), it could be difficult for me to fairly represent the WRC in these responsibilities while also representing the varied membership of PARC in developing herp policy recommendations to present to the WRC. Therefore I would like for us to elect a WG chair that can be the official NCPARC voice in policy issues, since the WRC's stance could potentially be slightly different from that of the NCPARC membership.

Realizing this, I asked Jeff Hall to serve in this chairperson role in preparation for and during the meeting today. Later today, we can decide on elected chairs for the committee. But in the meantime, I'll let Jeff take over with the agenda, which you have before you and which we developed collaboratively...although I may pipe up and steer our discussions if I feel that we are straying too far from where I had hoped this meeting would go. Jeff runs a pretty tight ship, though, and has a great insight into the needs for herp E&O. He has a great compromiser's personality, and also he has a nice strong backbone to stand up for issues when necessary, so I am pretty pleased to have coerced him into taking on this role for now. SO, Jeff do you want to take it over from here? ...

Learning from NCPIF: Mark Johns describes successes/hurdles in E&O:

A good starting place is to hear how other groups have succeeded, what has worked well for them, think about how what they do has worked or not worked

Partners in Flight (PIF) is set up similarly (started in 93 and here in NC since 96. We've been fortunate to have a lot of gung ho folks on committees. We began with the website too, it works well for getting the word out, also do a newsletter, also a newsgroup to get the word around. Check out our website for info on the following:

We have 3 committees, things to think about to get your discussion going: management plans through PIF: we could do those at a state level

A document Research and Monitoring doc: summarizes all the things going on: a contact list is what it ends up being

Citizens guide to Migratory bird conservation: gives ideas and gets them up to speed on birds, and have a kids version...appeal to general public

Teacher's activity guide kits

Species profiles are up there

Birding NC book...could do a herping NC book...what can you find at this state park, this WRC spot, etc but don't give up protected species spots

Speakers bureau...folks might be interested in giving talks on topics, and put a downloadable PowerPoint on the site so that folks could use the slides and stick to message...make it pretty general

Volunteer section of the website: list ways folks can get involved can funnel volunteer hours to the program

Bird ID workshops: id, management, etc and could do with public or with research management professionals there's plenty of demand among professionals

Calendar from forest stewardship could do one for herps through them perhaps

Info sheets (how to tell a venomous from a non-venomous snake, etc. geared toward public. Most short and non-technical.

All on the site is not copyrighted so anyone can use it and volunteers produced it all

A statewide PARC plan would be great to come up with like PIF has done

Most of this stuff comes along slowly since all volunteer run. But folks usually feel pretty good when they are able to contribute.

JH: When you worked on the state plan were all the working groups involved?

MJ: Gives us a vision, mission and a drive: all working groups participated, and E&O was most involved.

JH: So many of those things are very applicable, obviously lots to work toward.

Mike Dorcas and Central Carolina Amphibian & Reptile Initiative (CCARI) update:

MD: CCARI: a way of saying a regional western piedmont of NC, Catawba river valley, generally we've used ccari as an umbrella so that lots of outreach and education can be integrated with the research from our lab

Lots of outreach to classrooms, in April we have a reptile day, like a small version of the Museum's day.

A couple of specific programs that we developed (brochures)

Citizen science: Catawba River Coverboard Way of involving folks in monitoring herps and providing those data to places that can actually use them. 15 sites, each with coverboards, some also with PVC, requirements that we ask that they monitor them several times a year. Documented 40 spp. of herps in just 3 years. Have to be careful with ID and who is running the routes. ccari.org has a link to the coverboard program.

Another we began when I first started was that since I am from Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) had a compulsion to mark every turtle I see...now "DC box turtle conservation program" have gotten several pubs out of the data from this program. Over 8 years have had over 200 different families bring in box turtles. Starting to get 20% recapture rates now, so good return on the investment. An easy one to get folks involved in, easy way to bring folks into conservation and educate them on issues around box turtles (don't keep them, if on road move off the road, then put into woods close by, etc). Also working with various partners Catawba Lands Conservancy, Duke Energy, etc

JH: How often do you give talks?

MD: A talk every 2 to 3 weeks. So pretty frequently. Over 400 students participate in the coverboard project too, so it builds with a positive feedback loop of talking to more and more groups. Hopefully this group will think of itself as how to integrate people in the conservation of herps. Frog call routes are a good way.

MJ: Back-yard bird surveys are our way of doing that.

JH: Citizen Science is becoming more common

Overall Goals for this Working Group (as Sarah and Jeff see them):

- 1) Officially form the E&O Working Group: become ACTIVE with regard to education and outreach initiatives for NCPARC
- 2) Be the voice of NCPARC: the E&O working group will bring to the public understanding of the efforts of the PR&T and RIMM working groups :

To share the info is critical, and one of the things we need to figure out is the best ways to do that---probably need many approaches, maybe website, maybe ads, who knows.

- 3) Multiply our flock to protect our herps

If you know people that should be here, then please let us know, the more folks we have, the more we can do

- 4) Promote initiatives of NCPARC and PARC

Visit parcplace.org to look at materials there, maybe link and glean from it

- 5) Facilitate herp education

Set up a network of who is doing education, who is available for talks, etc. especially regionally set up a good network for facilitating outreach

VC: may want to talk with Margaret Martin about running a long story maybe joining with PIF with an extended story for NCPARC. She has slated a story on the green building, and since PIF and PARC are initiatives if the WRC, they would fit nicely

Can we put the next meeting info in there...yes! In the calendar section

We really lack that kind of photos...of workshops and of people DOING herp stuff; we have an intern Austin Dowd who is very good at candid shots so we might want to utilize him for candid shots

Dave Stephan: Jeff has good photos from cool springs on its website...lots of active groups and classes doing stuff with herps.

JH: so it might be that we could get some of these things together with some text for publications, etc.

MD: I teach a conservation course this spring that the students could do PowerPoint as their project...

Meeting Goals (action items):

- 1) Further develop goals for the WG (see above)
- 2) Brainstorm and air the big-picture issues and initiatives in need of outreach attention (see the brainstormed ideas from the Inaugural Meeting)
- 3) Prioritize these as topics for future meetings or topics that need to be addressed TODAY
- 4) Current initiatives of NCPARC that E&O needs to address ASAP:
 - a. CASP: planning and coordinating it, training folks on frog calls, promoting/publicizing it
 - b. Upcoming Annual Meeting: promoting/publicizing, planning and coordinating it
 - c. Habitat Management Guidelines (HMGs): promoting/publicizing, and HMG implementation training sessions
 - d. New herp regulations proposed by the PR&T working group.
- 5) Schedule future meetings
- 6) Outline WG structure for voting on the issues do we: involve the entire NCPARC membership in planning our initiatives, re-issue invitations to the general NCPARC membership for future WG meetings, require a quorum of this body on decisions, or chose another decision-making method for this WG?
- 7) Officially elect a chairperson

Some general E&O Issues, as we (Sarah and Jeff) see them (compiled from the input of the NCPARC general membership at the Inaugural Meeting; the working group will undoubtedly pinpoint others):

Themes:

1) Curriculum development

- Make ecology/natural history a required part of school curriculum for all grades
- K-12 curriculum/ lesson plans- herp conscious curriculum and good teacher training
- Develop educator programs for all age groups (scout badges, interactive web based field trips)
- Standardized curriculum for schools/ youth- to promote a standard message
- Develop teaching modules appropriate to a range of grade levels
- Develop science project ideas/ guidance appropriate to a range of grades

2) Herp educational program development – consistency and conservation

- 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
- Developing materials such as posters, magnets and easy-to-read field guides that would allow people to understand the herps in their communities
- Use outreach to reach all corners of society with conservation issues- educate to inform
- 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

3) Work with landowners

- Get herp info (including benefits of herps) to private landowners
- Landowner guidelines for ‘herp friendly’ private land management

4) Work with media

- Cultivate good relationships with the media
- Mass media communication/outreach- news, radio, written materials, TV
- Target these audiences: decision and policy makers, school, public

5) NCPARC “hub” of activity

- NCPARC as clearinghouse for research/education, etc.
- Target the universe (pre K-ancient)
- Develop statewide list of educators based on location/specialty
- Organize a network of herp experts to provide presentations with live specimens

Brainstorming today:

1) Curriculum development:

JH: thinks we should glean from things already done instead of re-invent wheel. Don’t turn it loose: good example. Feels like that is going to be a better type of deal for us than trying to ramrod something into the classroom. Maybe a PowerPoint we put on the website “conservation of NC herps” that could be taken into the classroom. Did one at herp show that could be modified and put on the website.

Ranger Rick’s lets hear it for herps: elementary

NSTA Hands on Herpetology available as a PDF now: middle school

To me it would be good to have a group of folks willing to review the material already out there and then pull from them not re-invent wheel.

Dave Wojnowski Project SAVE saving amphibian vital environments: through the project WET. Has nice activities specific to NC. It was set up to use it through workshops. Think that it is geared to various ages.

MD: Other things out there include lots of stuff from SREL like amphibians eye-view of wetlands; Is it a cottonmouth? and others.

TT: Standards: would like for us to develop the last bullet and gear to ways that students can get involved. INQUIRY—science inquiry is not developed in the classroom. Ways that students can get involved in science through our groups, and others.

JH: Another kind of thing for the website: a how to for teachers. Like Terry’s how to set up some things around your site, and take some of Mike’s ideas, If you want to do something in your backyard, here is how, here’s where you may be able to send that data so that it can be used. And it might be neat to let kids see what others are finding

MD: Pam Clark runs a summer camp where she uses the box turtle project and submits that info to us...she came down in May, a student spent a day showing her how to process turtles, and now she is doing this on her camp. UNCG has put together a doc on how to do this work, and it is educating educators.

2) Herp education programs:

JH: Valuable outlets for outreach, wildlife of NC, American Biology teacher, educational journals, we need to reach out to organizations in NC that do environmental outreach. Use their newsletters, emails, etc.

MC: Have a place where folks have a place to collect a lot of species. Need to know of places where we can have adult workshops where we can teach biology, habitat, conservation, etc. and build a network of these locations. Need restrooms close by, etc. but need to have a page on the site where we show educators folks where they can go to do talks

MJ: There may be grant \$ available through partners USFWS for developing printed docs on education and outreach...through matching we were able to get the \$\$ up pretty good on these. Particularly for targeted to private landowners...John Ann Shearer on an annual cycle.

JH: What is the best way to reach the person not interested in herps?

DR: flyers/brochures available at the park s to give them

JH: So what would be the info to give them?

GB: How to tell is it a copperhead

DR: Don't kill that snake!

JH: But why do they want to know that? So that if it is a venomous one, then they will kill it.

Sasser: Why conserve reptiles? Topic

MD: What do I do if I have an animal in my yard and it is a copperhead and I have kids? People killing a snake here and there is obviously not a good thing, but urbanization is far greater a threat. I think we need to focus on this issue if we want to make a difference. The big issue is habitat destruction, the way it will be addressed, is education.

MJ: Prepare kid and parent handouts for talks. How can you (parent) get involved...?

MD: Ron Sutherland's 10 things you can do to save a herp. Not the obvious ones. More global conservation issues. We have to partner with land conservancies, etc to accomplish these things.

JH: What about, then, Mike's proposal for having his students work on these sorts of things for projects...

MD: E&O could give an outline of the top 10 brochures/PowerPoint that students could do
VC: So shouldn't we have a list of who is getting these things? Who all would be the recipients?

MJ: Team with agriculture extension,

MD: Can usually find folks willing to sponsor.

JH: A poster could also be a good outreach tool.

MJ: Lots of grants exist that facilitate posters.

MD: Students can get their ideas and go with them, and then if we in E&O want to use them, we can put them on our website, if not, then we won't.

3) Work With Landowners:

(HMGs Sarah introduced)

TT: Pull the most important things out of this and put it on the website, tone it down for the 1 acre landowner, the backyard owner. How can I improve the habitat I have in the fragmented suburban landscape. Keep this info on the website so that average citizens can get that info.

DS: How about getting landowners to consider conservation easements on their lands.

JH: Is that info in the HMGs?

MD: We can provide a service to those conservancies in 2 ways: 1) giving talks and educating regarding herps 2) directing their conservation toward lands that benefit herps ---wetlands, contiguous tracts, etc.

MJ: I steer land trusts regularly.

MD: In turn, we have potential study sites for the research of our students.

4) MEDIA

JH: One we spoke of was WNC, website too, N&O periodically does things highlighting a conservation center, an article for them focusing on PARC is good.

MJ: Once you have a reporter friendly with you on an issue, then they are a good source for you, Jodie: We pitch topics to them, send them news releases. If we have a specific message we want to get out, then I'd be happy to pitch it to them.

JH: So if the dog and pony show arrives in NC might be a good thing to pitch them this.

SC: So how much space, etc?

Jodie: Can go out with you and look at the work you do...maybe get them to go along, and you hope for the best with the size of article they do for you.
PSAs are not a good option.

Lee: Good way to do this is also to get other sites to link to you. Get the word to others

Jodie: Compelling things work well for TV...they love it when kids are there. So if at cool springs, the museum, etc. A bit more difficult...must be visually compelling. Also it is 30 seconds, etc. and reporters are unreliable. If something big happens in the news, they will not show up. But the TV market reaches the greatest audience

DS: Reptile and Amphibian day? Does a news release go out to publicize it?

JH: a PARC presence at the Amphibian and Reptile day. And at other events. Herp shows, etc. be cautious that they don't snowball. Maybe develop a traveling PARC display.

MJ: Conservation education helped PIF develop the traveling display.

DR: The NC Science Teachers Association show would be a great place for these things.

JH: Absolutely: maybe do a break-out session too. Usually in mid-November.

Jodie: State fair. Had huge number of questions about snakes so maybe a booth there for PARC and other PARTNERS. Museum, NCSU, Wake Parks, etc.

MD: Dixie Deer Classic. Reaches the audience that matters.

JH: Hunter groups would be a great group to target. Most have a conservation mind-set.

VC: It would have to be VERY visual, live animals, etc.

JH: Advantage of this group is that we have easy access to live animals.

DS: Be sure that you let folks know that we have the same goals as hunters and fishermen: improve public perception of conservation.

How to develop the list of presenters:

Do we want to screen the presenters?

JH: most folks that will be out giving talks are already out there doing it already, so

SC will send email, put on website the Q would you like to give talks so folks can sign up.

Sasser: How about PARC partnering with environmental education centers and educators already providing herp programs. EE list serve, if there are already folks doing herp stuff, then could you incorporate PARC in the talk.

JH: Maybe a list of educational centers that you could visit to see herps and herps presentations. Compile this list too. Kristin, would you be willing to talk to Marty to see how we could do some work with those folks to get these networks? Yes.

TT: Will begin work on curriculum development type of stuff...review what exists and see what among their stuff we want to incorporate. And Cathy will help.

JH: anyone interested in working on the pamphlets, PowerPoints, etc.

Jodie-yes. But would need guidance.

Mike and Jodie will work together with the potential student projects. So from my minutes they will see the ideas we came up with today. And Mike's students could do some. Deborah will also research into what already exists in the way of outreach materials.

JH: And the synthesis of the HMG to a more digestible form: table until we see what the HMG includes, and perhaps what it includes.

JH: Will help me with working on the annual meeting

Meeting: in Aug so we can have something ready for the exotic animal reptile show.

Aug 16.....

Working group structure ... like PRT

Jeff elected as chairperson.