

PENNSYLVANIA BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP
Executive Board Meeting
29 March 2001
Rachel Caron Building, Harrisburg, PA

Board members in attendance: Bill Adams, Tom Buzby, Joan Clippinger (for John Oliver), Calvin DuBrock (for Vern Ross), Cindy Adams Dunn, Tom Ford (for Pete Colangelo), Randy Gray, Paulette Johnson, Tom Kerr, K.C. Kim, Patrick McDonnell (for Robert Barkanic), Jen Novak (for Andrew McElwaine), Tom Pauley, Peter Pinchot, Blaine Puller, Ann Rhoads, Larry Schweiger, Joseph Sullivan, Richard Whiteford. Also present: Jacqui Bonomo, Dessie Severson, Sue Thompson. **Excused:** Jim Brett, Cliff Jones, Brad Nelson.

The meeting was called to order by Randy Gray who welcomed new members attending for the first time: Bill Adams (Pennsylvania Farm Bureau), Patrick McDonnell for Robert Barkanic (DEP), Jen Novak for Andrew McElwaine (Pennsylvania Environmental Council), Peter Pinchot (Pinchot Institute), and Joe Sullivan (Wildlife Society, PA Chapter).

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without modification. Treasurer Tom Kerr reported receipts of \$170,401.65, expenses of \$13,705.36 for a total cash on hand of \$156,696.29. Proposals are pending for an additional \$458,835. The treasurer's report was approved as submitted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PBP will be represented at the Conservation Awards Banquet to be held 24 April 2001 in Harrisburg.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Sue Thompson made presentations on the Partnership at the Pennsylvania Game Commission's statewide conference and to the Joint Interagency Workshop for Natural Resource Boards and Commissions (PGC, PFBC, and DCNR). She also spoke about biodiversity and the Partnership at the Community College of Allegheny County.

A proposal for \$383,835 in additional funding for the preparation of a strategic plan for biodiversity conservation in Pennsylvania was submitted to DEP's Growing Greener program in March.

TASK FORCE UPDATES

Bioinformatics – Tom Pauley reported that the task force has not met since the last Board meeting. They are awaiting Board action on a proposal to develop a database of biodiversity databases.

Education – Joan Clippinger reported that work is progressing slowly on the Pennsylvania middle school supplement to the World Wildlife Foundation's Windows on the Wild curriculum. A pilot workshop is scheduled for late June to introduce the material to teachers.

A packet of materials is being pulled together for Earth Day 2002 which will have the theme "Biodiversity". Another packet of biodiversity materials is available to Board members to pick up at the end of the meeting.

Funding – Tom Ford reported that he, Sara Nicholas, and Sue Thompson had met to discuss the Partnership submitting a proposal for funding for the "state of the state" portion of the strategic plan to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account (WCRA) program.

Randy Gray, Tom Kerr, and Sue Thompson had a preliminary conversation with the William Penn Foundation regarding funding for the Partnership in which they were encouraged to make an application.

Policy – A follow-up letter to the PGC on deer will be revised as suggested by Ron Ramsey and sent.

Recognizing a need for guidelines, the task force submitted a draft policy on policy for consideration by the Board. The following criteria were suggested during the discussion: all policy statements by the Partnership should relate to our mission statement, must deal with a statewide issue, must relate directly to biodiversity, must be timely, and must be approved by the executive board. The consensus was that as our ultimate goal is to effect policy, there will be situations in which it will be desirable for us to make a policy statement, but we should limit our exposure to major issues. We don't want to risk fragmenting the Partnership or "tainting" the Biodiversity Conservation Plan by taking on an advocacy role prematurely.

Public Relations – Frank Felbaum is the new task force chairman. A draft brochure on the Partnership was circulated. Board members felt that more work was needed on the logo. Scott Anderson at TNC and Julie Lalo at PGC, as well as other task force members, will be consulted.

Science – The Science Task Force has not met since the last Board meeting. Joe Sullivan commented on the request for endorsement of the Important Mammal Area Proposal (IMAP) which was referred to both the Science and Stewardship task forces for a recommendation. Discussion which followed focused on several points: Is a taxon by taxon approach good? How does it relate to the totality of conservation needs? PBP should be the coordinator, but until we have a plan in place to provide a framework we are not in a position to endorse a specific project.

Stewardship – Jim Thorne is now the chair of the task force. Blaine Puller reported that the task force is awaiting Board action on the RFP they submitted to conduct an inventory of best management practices.

BIODIVERSITY PLAN COMMITTEE REPORT

Randy Gray reported that the committee met briefly just before the Board meeting. The ultimate goal is a plan for biodiversity conservation in Pennsylvania which will take 2-3 years to complete.

Step 1 is a status report we are referring to as a "State of the State" (SoS) report documenting the existing state of biodiversity in Pennsylvania, including policies, programs, and funding streams that affect biodiversity conservation. Randy stressed that it is important to keep this strictly factual and non-controversial to achieve buy-in from all concerned at this early stage in the process. This phase is targeted for completion by December 31, 2001.

Two task forces have prepared RFPs to begin gathering information that will be part of the SoS. The Policy Task Force RFP which deals with an inventory of existing laws, regulations and policies, and the Stewardship Task Force RFP which addresses an inventory of relevant best management practices (BMPs) were both approved with a cost cap of \$25,000 each. A no-cost proposal from the Allegheny Institute of Natural History to develop a database of biodiversity databases in response to an RFP from the Bioinformatics Task Force was also approved. The database project will also consult the Science Task Force in terms of potential overlap with their proposed inventory of inventories.

K.C. Kim stressed the need to be sure we have qualified groups to do the work on these projects in order to assure that the products will be credible. Cal DuBrock suggested that the RFPs should have a consistent format and that a common process for evaluation should be defined. However it was stressed that we have a tight time frame if the work is to be done before the end of the year. The task forces will screen the applicants, but the board will make the final decisions.

Sue Thompson has been in touch with Edward W. Wilson, consultant of Wrightsville, PA who might be of assistance to us in pulling this part of the plan together. Wilson has proposed a "Stakeholder Needs Assessment for Biodiversity Conservation Planning" which would consist of

telephone interviews with partnership members and selected others. Action on this proposal was deferred until a future Planning Team meeting.

Next meeting of the Board will be on 28 June 2001.

Respectively submitted,
Ann Rhoads, Recording Secretary