

White Nose Syndrome WBWG subcommittee conference call

Date: 5/12/2009

Attendants: Pat Ormsbee, Dave Waldien, Michael Baker, Diane Probasco, Eric Britzke, Katie Miller

Pat: Thanks to Dave, Eric, and Michael for making time in their schedules to be on this call. First, debriefing of the workshop.

Dave: Great proactive measure. The west has the luxury to refine as we move forward. There were good conversations and a strong sense of collaboration.

Pat: Where does this put us now? The workshop engaged members of WBWG and provided investment in the product. The products from the workshop need massaging and it will be a lot of work, but the brainstorming was great. Pat will compile the Action Plan and get it to the board for approval.

Katie: What is your timeline for the draft?

Pat: 1-2 weeks to the board. The research section needs work. The education section is in good shape, but the research action items weren't built within the context of the existing research which is occurring.

Dave: Suggested a framework. Make sure what the West is doing is integrated into existing research and efforts. We need to make an explicit link between western actions in light of existing eastern actions. How does the WBWG WNS workshop fit into the broader national work? Was it independent of existing efforts?

Pat: The research breakout provided more depth than the West is likely to take on, some material is likely applicable at national level. Wildlife Health organizations already have their finger on the pulse of existing disease issues and impacts. The big question is can people transfer WNS? I am seeing a push back on this question, since we don't have a clear answer, and since WNS is not near western states. West needs to tie back to what's going on back east and focus on what is important to the West.

Dave: This is an opportunity for the research group to identify specific western needs and incorporate those into upcoming science meetings.

Pat: Are people willing to help clean up the sections?

{LONG SILENCE AND AWKWARD PAUSE}

Pat: Laughs! I had a feeling that would be the response!

Diane: I can take a section on, but I don't know if it's appropriate since I wasn't there.

Katie: I can take on the cave/mine section if nobody else is willing.

Pat: I have people in mind. I will get it polished up and out for review. There was lots of energy generated from that meeting.

Dave: Who exactly is on the WBWG WNS subcommittee?

Pat: All who are on the call, Darek Hall, Toni Piaggio, Mark Hayes, Elaine Riback, and Paul Cryan.

Dave: I think we needed to make a distinction between those that were involved in the breakout session and those that are on the WNS subcommittee.

Pat: I want to keep the group small, but there is no shortage of help if we need it.

Pat: On to WNS in the West. This will be a moving target for us. Cori Lauson recently told me a story of one of Calgary's wildlife rehabilitators who got a number of calls about dead bats in the winter in backyards in Golden. The same area had bats with wing damage reported in the summer. Dr. Barclay and a student are going to check it out. We have to start paying attention to these anecdotes. Things are coming to surface. Another anecdote: there was a bat found in Colorado in a cave and it looked like it may have had white fungus on its muzzle. We will have to keep track of these incidences; they may or may not be cause for alarm yet. Education in the west is the biggest thing right now. I wrote a draft letter to states/provinces about the issue. Diane is making a brochure and WAFWA has invited us to present WNS at their meeting in July. We need to get the word out.

Dave: I will send you out a .ppt about a state level recording system where the public can make reports to capture anecdotes. Maybe this should be systematically implemented in the West to detect the early warning signs of WNS.

Pat: We are thinking of bringing a WNS forum to the website, maybe we should have a forum for anecdotal stories?

Dave: Would this be an online reporting system with GIS mapping capabilities?

Pat: Probably not now. Maybe we can incorporate it into the website.

Eric: Kentucky has added a reporting system to their website.

Pat: Is this a package deal? Who will get and manage the data?

Dave: Well, these are the questions. Right now, Natureserv is having an online demo. Vermont has it's own system because they want to retain state control. Wisconsin also wants something for the state. This would be good for the state level.

Pat: WBWG is probably the only entity willing to take ownership for it now. We can report the results to the state annually.

Katie: I agree. I don't see NV implementing and maintaining something like that right now since WNS isn't here yet.

Dave: Well, that may be the winning model.

Pat: Anything else from the workshop? Is the west missing anything?

Eric: What is really inhibiting us is that the East is already doing so much work, but not reporting what work is being conducted to others, so the West doesn't know what the East is doing.

Pat: Yeah, but the East is just slammed by this thing.

Mike: It's good for people to discuss this with fresh perspectives. A new group has new ideas.

Pat: We can look at the same question from a different angle and maybe get an answer.

Dave: And we can question to make sure that the work that is being done is being done in a manner that can truly answer the question.

Pat: Darek sent me a reference to a Dr. Porter at ASU. He can detect species using microcantilever technology. He's used it to detect everything from desert tortoises to viruses. He's willing to try to develop it for Geomyces. I forwarded this to Paul C and he responded favorably.

Pat: We need to be contacting states about collection permits. Is there a summer survey protocol in place?

{CYNICAL LAUGHTER}

Eric: No, but there should be.

Pat: Well, we can make a protocol. What are you requiring?

Eric: We are requiring individual bags for each bat, don't use the bags repeatedly in the same night. Clean all utensils nightly and nets nightly (or don't use the same net on consecutive nights). Clean everything with a 10% bleach solution or with alcohol. We are still allowing harp trapping, but that is essentially one big bag. That's something WBWG needs to consider.

Dave: Pat, are you going to recommend all decontamination procedures for the West?

Pat: Yes. They are most effective before WNS arrives, do you think we are being premature?

Dave: No, you should start now, but it may be a bit of a battle.

Pat: Well, part of our problem is that we don't know what WNS really is, so we're unsure of how to kill it.

Katie: Does microwaving it work?

Eric: I don't know. I can pass that suggestion on to the decontamination team.

Diane: How can we wash our nets without deteriorating them?

Eric: We recommend that you use bleach, and it will reduce the life of your net.

Dave: Who leads the effort on the decontamination group?

Eric: I think it's Hazel Barton, she's a cave microbiologist, but she doesn't want to bring *Geomyces* into her lab because she still wants to be able to go underground.

Dave: But that is research, is that a subcommittee, too?

Eric: I think that Hazel leads the decontamination team.

Pat: I see that there are two tiers here. We need somebody to take *Geomyces* and run tests on it and another group to communicate the results. One tier is the practical application and another is for formal research and studies. Is there a group doing practical tests? We need this group now.

Eric: I'll put it as a question on the document on how groups are organized and how they interrelate. Some groups may be missing. We need somebody to take that leadership at a national USFWS level.

Pat: But we aren't all saddled with those politics, not out West. Right now, we need results, not permission to test ideas from a committee.

Dave: We need both approaches. Where do we send ideas to? Right now we're sending them to Hazel.

Pat: Well, for this group, I'm going to draft summer survey recommendations. I'll get these out to this committee, especially Eric.

Eric: Kentucky has draft guidance and I'll pass that along to the group. Right now, there is a Georgia lab ready to get started on projects, but part of the problem is it takes a

month to grow *Geomyces*. My group identifies new ideas/needs, so pass any ideas onto Eric for the management.

Pat: We have some big questions for that group. Can people transmit it? Will a microwave be effectively lethal? Can nets go through the washer/dryer and that method be lethal?

Mike: Hazel thought it was important to use quaternary (quat) compound and then wash and dry. Quat is in Pure Green, but Pure Green is not considered effective anymore. Simple Green is cheaper and used for chitrid fungus. Antibacterial/microbial cleaners contain those.

Pat: Anything else? To review and assign tasks. I've sent the brochure and letter to this group. Please review it and send edits for the brochure to Diane and edits for the letter to Pat by the end of the week. Diane used the NSS brochure as a template to create this brochure, but I'm a little bothered by the use of a question mark after the statement on bat-human or human-bat transmittal. Is anyone asking this question? I think we have enough information on how fungi grow to answer this.

Eric: I think if it was easily spread by humans, we would have already seen a big jump to new states, and right now, there's not a lot of evidence. I think we should say that this is a possibility in the brochure and that we are being prudent.

Pat: This is a top question that needs to be asked.

Mike: I think we should use language that, because we don't know, we need to be cautious.

Diane: We can remove the question mark.

Pat: Katie, can you take the mining industry plan and put it in the same format as the education part of the action plan?

Katie: Yes.

Dave: Let's get back together in late June/early July

Next conference call is scheduled for July 8 at 2pm Pacific time.