

MINUTES OF THE PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

21 August 2023 Conference Call

10:00am-11:00pm (Pacific Standard Time – UTC-8)

Approved



Present: Dick Veit (Chair), Juliet Lamb (Chair-Elect), Rachel Sprague (Past Chair), Lara Brenner (Secretary), Lindsay Adrean (Vice Chair for Conservation), Sarah Ann Thompson (Northern California Regional Representative), Amelia DuVall (Washington/Oregon Regional Representative), Kerry Woo (Canada Regional Representative), Pamela Michael (Treasurer) [9].

Absent: Jaime Ojeda (S. California, Latin America, Hawaii Regional Representative), JB Thiebot (Asia/Oceania Regional Representative), Tegan Carpenter-Kling (Europe/Africa Regional Representative), Karen Lau Alarcon (Student Representative), Julia Gulka (Non-Pacific U.S. States Regional Representative), Alexis Will (Alaska/Russia Regional Representative) [6]

Others present: Wieteke Holthuijzen (Communications Committee Co-Coordinator), Kirsten Bixler (Former Treasurer), Justine Miller (Luana Events), Anna Vallery (Communications Committee Co-Coordinator), Virginie Ternisien [5].

REVIEW MAY 23/JUNE 30 2023 ACTION ITEMS

1. EID committee, HELPS committee, LoCo committee, and Rachel will work to identify indigenous speakers for annual meeting and identify routes to fund expansion of indigenous, student, and international participation in PSG. **Keep.**
2. Communications Committee should contact folks with expertise to help update sections of the website. **Done.**
3. Everyone should encourage PSG friends to serve on membership committee, Ornithological Council reps, North-East Asia Seabird Conservation Committee co-chair, communications committee members, Pacific Seabirds committee members, and local committee (especially Spanish-speakers for Costa Rica). **Keep with a modification that Dick will reach out to folks specifically about the membership committees.**
4. Everyone should email Anna if they want to join the ad-hoc committee to revive Pacific Seabirds. **Done.**
5. Pam will follow up with Nacho to ensure that Justine gets paid a bonus for her work at the 2023 annual meeting. **Done.**
6. LoCo committee and Justine will work to fill in gaps in annual meeting budget and submit for approval at next meeting. **Done.**
7. Juliet will move forward with floating the finance manager position. **Done.**
8. Wieteke and Amelia will work together to test out a Slack channel for the WA/OR region. **Keep.**

9. Pam, Kirsten, and Rachel will meet with Justine and Roberta, review proceeds of Annual Meeting Auction, & determine capacity for student travel awards at the 2024 meeting. Done.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, & APPROVE AGENDA

Motion to approve the Agenda, moved and seconded.

Abstentions, 0: Nays, 0: Yays, 9, motion passed unanimously

1. APPROVE 23 May 2023 MINUTES

Motion to approve the 23 May 2023 minutes, moved and seconded.

Abstentions, 0: Nays, 0: Yays, 9, motion passed unanimously

2. 2024 MEETING BUDGET AND REGISTRATION

- We had a larger budget discussion on Friday just pre this and no decisions were made.
- The 2024 meeting budget had an original projected loss of a little over \$20,000. We were discussing ways that we could bring that loss down.
- We have a potential proposed amendment to the budget:
 - Estimate of transaction fees for Wild Apricot to process payments changed from just an estimate to 3% of the registration costs. That gets us savings of about \$1500.
 - We propose charging \$50 per person for banquet tickets.
 - The local committee was hoping to be able to provide the banquet for free, but we don't know that PSG is prepared to take a giant loss on the meeting in order to do that.
 - The other change would be to charge \$25 more for regular member and regular non-member registrations.
 - Wouldn't change anything to students registration
 - Early member rate of \$500 and early non-member of \$575 going up to \$525 and \$600, respectively.
 - In total that only gets us another \$5500, but when added to everything else it would balance the meeting budget
 - After a discussion with the Treasurers, we removed the restricted funds from the local committee budget.
 - This resulted in a savings on the meeting budget itself, because right now our income for student and International award travel is only about \$4500, and we would like to spend at least like \$11,000 on travel.
 - That would put that potential discrepancy and financial loss into the ExCo budget where it is anyway, because apparently it was making the accounting a little bit confusing.
- All of those changes would result in a balanced budget for the meeting.
- COMMENT: The transaction fees associated with Wild Apricot are currently linked to the registration, but it might be better to have it linked to registration plus merch unless you would like that to be put into the general fund.

- COMMENT: How much the banquet tickets have been in the past?
 - ANSWER: They've ranged between \$75 and about \$125 over the last couple of years.
 - This is a little bit of a compromise. We were estimating \$30,000, which was 150 guests at \$200.00 per person. So we just estimated the income at \$50 per person by 150 guests, which offsets it just a little bit, but we would still be covering most of that banquet ticket.
- COMMENT: The food and beverage minimum at the Grand Hyatt is \$80,000. Were all of these other items going to be at the Grand Hyatt?
 - ANSWER: The food and beverage minimum is \$90,000.
 - We were looking at doing the welcome night somewhere else, and we had also originally been talking about doing the banquet night somewhere else, depending on if it's going to be a cocktail award type of event and not necessarily a full-on sit-down dinner.
 - Mentor night and poster session will for sure be at the Grand Hyatt.
- COMMENT: That just puts us at a little over \$80,000, so we might have to change again
 - These are the food and beverage are estimates based on 300 as a registration count. If our count is higher, our food and beverage minimum doesn't go up.
 - If our attendance is lower than our food and beverage minimum, we're going to have to increase what we're spending there.
- COMMENT: Are we going to have an event of some sort at the aquarium?
 - ANSWER: That's one of the venues we were looking at for the award banquet night. If we were to do it there, we won't be able to fit everybody that is registered for the conference because their reception setup is around 175 to 200 people.
 - That's why we're looking at possibly doing more of a cocktail reception with just high and low tables for just a couple of hours to do the awards program.
 - They could manage more than 175 people for a cocktail hour.
- COMMENT: We wanted to help the local committee figure out ways to offset costs so that it wasn't all on them to decide how to reduce the projected loss.
- COMMENT: I think it's extremely helpful having the Student Travel awards taken out of the local budget just because the local committee is not in charge of giving out the travel awards.
 - It's hard to keep track of what's being given out and what we need to make sure is kept in the budget.
- COMMENT: It's difficult to keep raising registration rates, but cost for the conferences keep going up. It's hard to put on something so large & inclusive of all the activities we're trying to have, including four days of different types of meetings for a very low cost.
 - Trying to balance where the Members might be comfortable with the registration cost and still being able to keep us not going into the red would be ideal.
 - The local committee can move things around within those numbers if they need to, and if sponsorships go up, they can afford to pay for some additional stuff.
- COMMENT: Although the registration fees as listed now are higher than what we charged in the past, they're not out of line with other similar scientific meetings these days.
- COMMENT: Have we thought about adding an additional registration rate for nonprofits or small businesses? May be something to implement this year or to think of in the future.

- A lot of government or university employees can get it covered through their work, but that's not necessarily the case for smaller businesses.
- COMMENT: We had a lot of people last year asking for reduced registration, but we didn't have a have a good way of consistently applying any kind of policy.
- COMMENT: In my mind there is a distinction between those that can easily get paid for through their jobs and those that can't, but don't qualify as a student. I don't know to what degree we're losing representation from that group.
- COMMENT: Even at the current registration rates, we're not making money for the conference. The registration as it is now just covers the must-have needs for the conference.
 - If we're looking at giving additional discounted registration rates as one of these line items, we should keep in mind that if we have a lot of those, we're going to need to increase the regular registration even higher to cover the discounts that we're giving.
- COMMENT: Maybe this is something we consider putting in a post-meeting survey to try and get her information, although obviously that would be biased towards those who did attend the meeting.

Motion to approve the 2024 Annual Meeting Budget as written & amended, moved and seconded.

Abstentions, 0: Nays, 0: Yays, 9, motion passed unanimously

3. TREASURER'S REPORT & REVIEW OF FY24 BUDGET

- We have two items to discuss:
 - It might be time for membership rate increase to cover our costs.
 - I'd like to go through the budget line by line and then open it for discussion
 - Next month we can vote on both membership increase and finalizing the budget for fiscal year 2024.
- Starting with the membership, I'm showing a table with the individual membership cost per year, and then the change in costs for the individual membership, along with 3% inflation.
- It has not been an unusually short period of time for us to bump up the price for individual membership. The last time we increased the membership was in 2019.
- We are proposing a \$65 individual membership cost, \$45 for students and \$2000 lifetime membership. The two-year membership is \$10 less than twice the individual membership, and \$15 less than twice the student membership cost.
- This table shows what we expect for the number of membership renewals in fiscal year 2024.
- The third and final table shows the revenue that we would expect in this next fiscal year.
 - Almost \$13,000 with the current pricing, and with the proposed pricing it's almost \$17,000.
- COMMENT: Could you talk about how this change impacts our overall budget and what these increases will do to the bottom line?
- With the current membership pricing, we're expecting an overall loss of \$8700.
 - This is split into unrestricted funds and restricted funds, where membership goes just to the general Fund.
 - For this portion, we are expecting a loss of \$14,000, but we expect a surplus of \$5670 in restricted funds.
 - It's a pretty big loss with the current pricing.
- If we change the membership price, we're not going to come out in the black, but we'll be losing less money.

- QUESTION: Does that include the updated meeting budget that we just approved, or was it the originally proposed budget?
 - ANSWER: I took the liberty of changing the budget, so it now includes the amounts from the amended meeting budget that was just approved.
- Unrestricted income includes the following:
 - The general fund donations that I have on line 4 for fiscal year 2024 is the average of the last five years.
 - The annual meeting amount in Line 6 is from the meeting budget, as well as Line 7 for sponsorships.
- Restricted income include the following:
 - We're expecting \$3500 in donations for student travel from the meeting budget.
 - Publications are nearly \$10,000, which is equal to the publications expenses.
 - Lifetime conservation former chairs funds are all based on the average of the last five years.
 - The HELPS fund income in line 14 is the average of the last three years, which is as long as the fund has been active.
 - Total expected income is almost \$237,000.
- Expenses, starting with administrative operations, which are paid from unrestricted funds from the meeting, donations to the general fund and our membership.
 - Insurance is a little over \$1500.
 - Our website and listserv hosting charges are now under publications which can be paid for from the endowment fund.
 - We use SurveyMonkey for elections and the cost of this service is about \$660.
 - QuickBooks Online. The price just keeps going up and is now about \$1100.
 - We did try last year to use a nonprofit version of QuickBooks, but we were unable to transfer our data from our current QuickBooks Online subscription.
 - If we can do that in future years, we may be able to have a massive cost savings.
 - Postage charge of \$54 is the average of the last five years.
 - Zoom subscription is \$149 a year.
 - A post office box rental is about \$280.
 - Accountant fees: If the books are completely clean and she's just filing taxes, it would cost us \$3000.
 - That is what we would expect because we will be hiring a financial manager shortly.
 - The cost of the financial manager that was previously voted on by EXCO is \$9100 in Line 35.
 - A couple of the people that we interviewed for the position of financial manager would be able to complete our taxes as well.
 - In that case they would probably want the accountant to review their work before the submission was final.
 - So we may be able to get this \$3000 estimate down even further; however, note that the total cost of our accountants/bookkeeping has gone up for FY24.
 - Wild apricot membership-related transaction fees: this includes the contract, which is \$8976 charged every two years. That total amount will be due in this coming fiscal year.

- In addition we have transaction fees for the membership related transactions.
 - The total from both of those costs are \$9359.
- Bank fees are about \$300.00, which is the average of the last five years
- The government registration fees for the California Secretary of State and Attorney General will be \$95 in fiscal year 2024.
- Our total administrative operations expenses from unrestricted funds is \$25,664.
- Next is society services, which are meetings, publications, etc.
 - The amount in the meeting line item here is from the new meeting budget.
 - The wild apricot fees were updated in the budget so this will need to be altered slightly.
 - We expect to have \$850 of Square fees, which is an average of the last five years.
 - We may be able to get rid of this account if we don't use it this year. The main purpose is so that we can accept donations by credit card, but if people are able to provide donations through wild apricot as a general fund donation, then we could get rid of the Square account.
 - Financially it doesn't make much difference.
 - Ornithological council are requesting \$5000 again this year
 - It might be good to have a conversation about what the benefits of this is for us, because it is a large grant that comes from our unrestricted funds.
 - Is anyone aware of the history of the of the increase that happened in fiscal year 2020?
 - ANSWER: There was a big group (the AOS, American Ornithological Society) that pulled out of the Ornithological Council, so the burden then fell more heavily on the smaller organizations that are part of the Ornithological Council. The amount that we contribute doubled at that point.
 - QUESTION: Is this just a straight-out donation to the Ornithological Council or is there some justification for that specific amount?
 - ANSWER: It's a specific amount that they requested, but it's not like they're providing a budget or something.
 - ANSWER: They requested \$5000 from us because that is what the Water Bird society contributes.
 - The Ornithological Council has an annual report where they say how much each of their sponsoring organizations contribute. We are on the mid to low end.
 - They have asked for us to increase our donation and we didn't.
 - Pat Baird and Doug Forcell are currently the reps. They do send out updates on the listserv, and some of it is related to permitting, imports, and laws regulating take or permits needed related to migratory bird laws.
 - QUESTION: Why did the AOS stop contributing?
 - ANSWER: It was a coalition of ornithological societies. They looked at the services that the Ornithological Council was providing and decided they could do it all in-house. They didn't really get any benefit from being part of the Ornithological Council and decided to pull out.
 - Doug Forcell and Pat Baird made a list of the things that the Ornithological Council does.
 - Last year this was only approved for one year, with the expectation that we would revisit & discuss in the following fiscal year.

- I assumed we might provide another \$200.00 award for the Twitter Conference winner – is that the case?
 - ANSWER: We didn't do one this year. Last year it was in June or July and they didn't reach out to us this year. It was a lot of work for like a small amount of money.
 - The Twitter Conference is on hold for this coming year. They're trying to reevaluate what the future of that will look like.
 - We're going to zero this out for now.
- Student travel grants: We are expecting to be able to provide \$5948. This is in the meeting budget.
- Conservation grants, former chairs, and HELPS funds are all equal to the anticipated donations.
- Publications include an honorarium that was approved by EXCO in August 2022 for \$8500.
- The listserv and website hosting fees through Bluehost have doubled this year.
- We have website transition and maintenance services through Anne Francis that is equal to about \$850, which is the average of the last five years.
- Our total society services expenses are \$219,937.
- If we change the membership fees as previously discussed, the total expected outcome is a loss of \$4700, which is made of a loss of \$10,000 from the unrestricted funds and income of \$5600 from the restricted funds.
- COMMENT: So we're still not able to balance this budget, which is concerning. One way that we could balance it would be to expect a surplus from the meetings, if we don't want to raise the membership by quite a lot.
- COMMENT: If I saw it correctly, FY2023 was more expensive than anticipated. Was that due to the meeting primarily or were there other factors?
 - ANSWER: Yes, the meeting primarily, but also our vendors, like QuickBooks and SurveyMonkey, have been raising rates in the last fiscal year across the board.
 - That was the plan for the meeting last year - that it was probably going to end up losing some money, but as the first meeting back after a couple years of virtual meetings, it was accepted as a hit that we could take. But it seems like moving forward would be probably should be trying to balance the budget
 - We also intentionally spent more on some things because it was the 50th anniversary and we had more speakers than we would have had otherwise.
- COMMENT: I am for raising the membership cost, but maybe we could think about having early career scientists also qualify for student membership, or pay some intermediate cost.
- COMMENT: \$15 increase in membership rates would be the biggest single jump thus far.
- COMMENT: In light of the persistent failure to balance the budget, even with the relatively reasonable increase in membership costs, it would seem to me we ought to go ahead and make the increase and then consider different rates for different categories.
- If we're going to be introducing other discount rates and so we're just going to be, if we're looking to increase.
- **We will need to vote on both the budget and a membership increase of the next meeting.**

4. COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE – REPORT #4

- I wanted to give everybody an update on the status of Pacific Seabirds, which is the publication that used to come out twice a year. PS is where we publish some things that are required by nonprofit law, including like the budget.

- No issues of Pacific seabirds have come out in a couple of years. We have formed an ad hoc committee to address getting those back issues out, but also looking forward to find a more sustainable way to continue to engage with Pacific Seabird Group members and to publish those requirements.
- We want to remove the intensive lift of formatting and collecting regional reports and everything that was part of the requirements for PS in the past.
- We had a couple of group meetings and we've developed an outline for what we think Pacific Seabirds should look like going forward.
- We propose taking what was formerly a very heavily formatted PDF and making it more of a blog style online publication.
- The goal is still to come out twice a year around the same time that Pacific seabirds was coming out in the past, and still include the budget and everything else required.
- We want to put together a group of people to help revamp this website twice a year with information that's relevant to membership, including pieces about current members, gear reviews, book reviews, articles, and regional reports.
- The big update for regional reports is that we're going to remove the scary nature of regional reports that we think was causing a lot of people to just not send reports in or require a lot of badgering.
 - We're going to make everything simple with a Google form, and anybody can submit a regional report.
- We're starting to put together the committee, and we are looking for one to two more people who might be interested in helping.
 - We've talked to Laney, who does the HELPS program to see if we can get any of the people who have received funding via HELPS to step into one of those roles,
- We are hoping to get the first issue or the first website update out in November.
- If you have ideas for articles or anything too, we're all ears.
- If anybody is familiar with Living Bird Magazine by Cornell, that is mostly online now and that is more or less the layout we are shooting for.
- We have already talked to Anne Francis, who helps with our website, and that is ready to go as soon as we start getting articles.
- It will be searchable, nicely archived, and all in one place.
- In the past, it's been one editor and maybe an assistant editor, so this time we're really trying to make it an easier lift by having a committee of three to four people. Sounds good.

5. MARBLED MURRELET TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

- A Marbled Murrelet survey protocol is used to survey proposed timber harvests for marbled murrelets before a timber harvest can happen.
- This revision has been underway for a couple of years now.
- They convened a working group consisting of folks from the timber industry, researchers, Fish and Wildlife Service, and various managers.
- They have almost completed the document, which is the draft we were sent a few weeks ago.
- I am the current Co chair with Bill McIver of the Marbled Murrelet Technical Committee. I was not involved in the update of this protocol document, but I am on the subcommittee that's currently putting together a companion document, which is habitat recommendations.
 - Identifying the next steps after you've figured out you have murrelets on your land.
 - That document will be coming out pretty soon and EXCO will be reviewing that as well, but for now, it's just the protocol.

- One of the big changes between the old protocol and this revision is that they now have two different tracks that you can choose for determining occupancy.
 - Right now it's not clear to me when you would choose one track versus the other, and what were the benefits of each one. Protocol could be more user friendly.
- I would also like to make the protocol more user friendly, because you have to choose which method you're using before you start surveys.
- The marbled Merlot Technical Committee is asking for a vote of approval from the EXCO, because this is a PSG technical publication. It has gone through peer review, and they sent it to us to approve because they are hoping to publish it on the PSG website as one of our technical publications ASAP. They were hoping to not wait until the late September meeting.
- COMMENT: Lindsay, as a member of the MM technical committee and as the Vice Chair for Conservation within ExCo, is it your recommendation to approve the publication with a clarification of when to employ one or the other of those survey techniques?
 - Answer: Yes, I don't see any reason why we would not approve this document.
- COMMENT: The Canadian Marbled Murrelet Recovery team provided input. This is a very US based document because Canada approaches habitat identification in a different way, but this is really important for our US colleagues. If they're looking for an expedited approval, we would just defer to Lindsay.

Motion to Approve the Marbled Murrelet Survey Protocol with a clarification

Abstentions, 0: Nays, 0: Yays, 8, motion passed unanimously

REVIEW OF NEW ACTION ITEMS

1. Three action items from the last meeting are carrying over into the next meeting:
 - a. EID committee, HELPS committee, LoCo committee, and Rachel will work to identify indigenous speakers for annual meeting and identify routes to fund expansion of indigenous, student, and international participation in PSG.
 - b. Dick will reach out to encourage members to serve on membership committee.
 - c. Wieteke and Amelia will work together to test out a Slack channel for the WA/OR region.
2. New action items from this meeting:
 - a. Lindsay will respond to Bill McIver and Kim Nelson about the Marbled Murrelet Document and let them know it was approved with some requested clarifications.
 - b. Everyone should reach out to Anna Vallery if they are interested in serving on the Pacific Seabirds committee OR have ideas for articles for the new website.
 - c. Pam and Kirsten will submit an budget for approval at the next ExCo meeting, including proposed increases to membership rates.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Motion to adjourn: moved and seconded.

Abstentions, 0: Nays, 0: Yays, 8, motion passed unanimously