

SAMAB
Executive Committee Meeting – Gatlinburg, TN
November 4, 2014

Present: Judy Francis-NCDENR, Tina Guinn-TVA, Mike Wright-Cherokee NF, Tom Gilbert, Susan Schexnayder-UTK, Ian Johnson-UNCA, Adam DeWitte-CFAIA, Carlton Murray-CFAIA, Alice Cohen-Cherokee NF, Rick Durbrow-EPA, Jeff Troutman-GSMNP, Jamie Herold-ORNL, Neil Giffen-ORNL, Gary Peeples-FWS, Janet Mizzi-FWS

Meeting Lead: Alice Cohen and Rick Durbrow

Welcome

- Clayton Jordan, Acting GSMNP Superintendent, welcomed the group.

Pass the Torch

- Gary – motion to transfer the Chair position from Rick to Alice. 2nd by Janet. All in favor. None opposed.
- Alice assumed control of the meeting at this point.

Vice-Chair nominations

- Neil Giffen has agreed to step up as vice-chair.
- Rick – motion to make Neil Giffen vice-chair for SAMAB. 2nd by Gary. All in favor. None opposed.

Agency Roundtable

- *Janet:* Continued work on Endangered Species Act.
- *Gary:* Anyone can petition to have animals put on the list. A few examples are monarch butterflies, cave beetle and Northern long-eared bat.
- *Neil:* Management plan and updating planning documents to help other areas manage their resources. Oak Ridge bird document on historic and current avian research. Jamie Herold, ORNL Plant Ecologist, has taken on a lot of work on rare plants on the reservation.
- *Rick:* Main focus on climate change and cross agency strategies. Enhancing partnerships in many areas. Developing decision support tools.
- *Jeff:* 100 year anniversary in 2016 and PR focus. “Find Your Parks” is the slogan. New regulation to ban firewood from other areas. Lost 80% of Indiana bats.
- *Alice:* Restoration team is working on cranberry bogs. Revising botanical permits. 50th Anniversary of Wilderness Act. Hogs on Roan mtn. Recreation reservation systems for campsites.
- *Carlton:* One of the CFIA’s best years for management of our areas, but looking for new business. We’ll be taking on active management of the Cradle of Forestry in America historic site.
- *Adam:* Pisgah Field School has done fantastic for its first year. Could be a way to partner with SAMAB in conducting workshops, tours and getting out some of SAMAB’s work.

- *Susan*: Have a lot of partnerships that could align w/ SAMAB, although most are ag. based. Looking at the weight of wildlife viewing in relation to management. Benefits to youth in time spent outdoors.
- *Mike*: Short-leaf pine restoration due to regeneration problems. Possible mountain longleaf inclusion.
- *Tina*: New CEO, Bill Johnson, who supports TVA service mission and also has a stewardship component. Integration of resources, partnerships and data management. TVA has partnered with TDEC on a climate change and a temperature monitoring program. TVA is involved with Appalachian LCC. Plant stewardship funding and activities that for a booklet on stewardship activities that TVA working on. Also working on a natural resources plan that provided a strategy for guiding TVA in their natural resources management.
- *Judy*: Reorganization of agency. Regulatory is now separate from non-regulatory. Significant budget cuts have impacted the natural heritage program. Preservation and protection projects moved into clean water management trust fund. Working on a statewide aquatic nuisance species management plan. Emerald ash borer partnership and outreach strategy. There will be a meeting in Murphy, NC.
- *Ian*: Works with NEMAC, has presentation later.

Financials, Adam DeWitte, CFAIA

- Points of note for the financial statement and 2015 budget – Oak Ridge has not yet committed to another 5k for 2015.
- There was \$2,500 in restricted funds that came in through USFW for a Roan Mountain project (Gary was noted as contact).
- \$812 has been used from the designated 10K for NEMAC.
- An audit would be \$1,800 more than the financial review. Susan suggested that there could be potential changes with the audit budget line item, either up or down.
- Total for the co-op for 2015 is \$8,203. Total for the Foundation will be \$75,650.
- There was money allocated for travel to the LCC meeting that wasn't used. Rick suggested that the money stay in case there's a need for travel or a project pertaining to the LCC.
- Alice asked what has caused the lack of funding of SAMAB over recent years. It was agreed that money has not been coming in through various agencies as it has in the past.
 - Action item: Alice suggests that each agency consider ways for their agency to offer more support.
- The IA is actively looking for a new grant writer.
 - Action item: the CFAIA will work with SAMAB to figure out how a grant writer could help the group.
- The IA might be able to serve as administrative agent for grants/proposals.
- Susan would vote not to have an audit and save the cost. A vote was held off until after Tom's presentation due to a suggestion that he wanted to bring forward.

US MAB update, Tom Gilbert

- 22 U.S. Biosphere Reserves submitted their periodic reviews to UNESCO, but none of them met the UNESCO criteria to have clearly defined buffer and transition zones. A Department of State (DOS) letter to the UNESCO MAB Secretary, Qunli Han, committed the U.S. to

continued strengthened, and deepened U.S. engagement with MAB, and elaborated steps that would be taken to achieve this, including the formation of a U.S. MAB Committee.

- Paul Mungai, Science Officer, Office of UNESCO Affairs, said it would be a great idea to have someone from SAMAB attend the December 5 meeting. There was discussion on the value to SAMAB to engage in the national and international discussions during this time of revitalizing the organization. Tom reiterated the role of SAMAB over the past 25 years as a leader nationally and internationally.
- Jennifer Thomsen has proposed to conduct a research study on the "Opportunities and Challenges of Trans-boundary and Transnational Biosphere Reserve Cooperation in North America."
- Gary – Motion to send a SAMAB representative to the December 5th meeting in DC and set aside money to do so. 2nd by Judy. All in favor. None opposed.
- \$1,800 will be set aside in the budget for SAMAB to send someone to Dec. 5th meeting.
 - Action item: Alice will coordinate a follow-up discussion with Reserves on their plans and representation from their agencies, as well as who will represent SAMAB at the Dec 5 meeting.

DLiA, Todd Witcher

- Todd gave a slideshow presentation on the all-taxa inventory that is conducted in the GSMNP.
- TVA is partnering with DLiA for an inventory of their lands.
- DLiA is looking for an umbrella organization under which to operate in the future.
- Please contact Todd if you'd like a copy: todd@dlia.org.

CESU, Carlton Murray

- Started 10 years ago as a way to facilitate research and create partnerships through an annual meeting showcasing that research. Hosted by the U of T. The main office would like to see an overall plan through each CESU group.
- Working on a strategic plan to assure partners are engaged.

Biosphere Reserves, Jeff Troutman

- Jeff gave an update on how the Reserves can be a part of SAMAB. A new program is being implemented called Scaling Up, which will protect continuous corridors in five geographic regions. They are integrating existing efforts such as longleaf restoration. There could be a link to the Vitality Index. They are partnering with the Appalachian LCC.
- Please contact Jeff if you'd like a full copy of his slide presentation: jeff_troutman@nps.gov

Vitality Index, Ian Johnson

- Ian presented an overview of the Vitality Index.
- EPA is working on watershed database with approx. 100 metrics, including enviro/social justice data.
- TVA is looking for a comprehensive data set to help manage their fragmented lands.
- Rick noted that we are trying to work with two to four target audiences to get the VI idea out and possibly conduct workshops with specific audiences to identify core values. Judy

suggested that workshops may be too expensive to conduct and that our expertise may be enough to get the VI out. Audiences discussed include 1) agencies, 2) local decision makers.

- Phase 1- expand data beyond Western NC to the SAMAB region by end of June. Overlaying datasets will be an additional cost from the initial \$10k through NEMAC. Phase 2-funding will be \$5k and would include the map viewer. Phase 3-will include workshops and additional materials. SAMAB would identify topics for workshops and materials.
- Rick – motion to move forward with VI phase 2, including \$5k for GIS viewer and additional \$5k for other resources. 2nd by Gary. All in favor. None opposed.
- Please contact Ian Johnson for a copy of his Vitality Index presentation: ijohnson@unca.edu
 - Action item: Rick – motion to coordinate a VI work group to include Judy, Mike, Rick, Tina and Neil. 2nd by Gary. All in favor. None opposed.
 - Action item: 5k to be allocated to Phase 2 of the Vitality Index. Work group to include Rick, Judy, Mike, Tina and Neil.
 - Action item: Ian requested SAMAB members send him their various data sets for incorporation into the SAMAB Vitality Index. He will reference the Southern Appalachian Assessment data and expand from there. Include natural heritage data sets from each state.

Strategic Plan, Alice Cohen

- Brief review of the draft SAMAB 5-year Strategic Plan. 3 primary goals including 1) promoting communication on key issues by leveraging efforts with others; 2) promote information sharing and education on key issues with local government officials and relevant individuals; and 3) Promote coordination among biosphere reserve units.
- Email Alice with any additions to the Strategic Plan addressing each organization's efforts and needs from SAMAB.
- Adam suggested that the Pisgah Field School could be an outreach tool for both the Vitality Index and SAMAB through public workshops or other educational means.
 - Action Item: Email Alice with any additions to the Strategic Plan
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- Please contact Alice for a full copy of her Strategic Plan: acohen@fs.fed.us

SAMAB Revitalization Communications Plan, Gary Peeples

- Point of the communications plan is to reengage former partners and engage new partners into SAMAB projects and goals; input and involvement in the strategic planning process; and engagement with the Vitality Index expansion project.
- Please contact Gary for a full copy of his communications plan: gary_peeples@fws.gov

Other Business

- none

Next meeting: February 11, 2015 via conference call.

Meeting adjourned.