

Summary of AGM Certification Workshop

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Canmore, Alberta

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Chair CSTWS Certification Committee

The workshop was a great success with approximately 30 in attendance. The audience was a nice mix of CWB@s, wildlife biologists, and students. The agenda included the following:

- an overview of TWS certification process and the initiatives taken by the Certification Committee (Don Barnes)
- Dr. Rick Baydack, representing the University of Manitoba talked about how his university has developed curricula that conform to TWS certification standards.

NOTE: Favourable mention was given to Lakehead University, University of Northern British Columbia, and Lethbridge College, who have structured their curricula in a similar manner. Other colleges and universities are encouraged to have their curricula endorsed by the Certification Review Board (CRB).

- Dave Ealey, a member of the CSTWS Certification Committee and the Alberta Society of Professional Biologists (ASPB) talked about the possibilities of future collaboration with the Certification Committee.
- In the next section, 5 CWBs (Drs. Evelyn Merrill/Mark Boyce, University of Alberta, Dr. Glynnis Hood, Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, Dr. Winifred Kessler, retired from University of Northern British Columbia and Dr. Rick Baydack, University of Manitoba) gave testimonials about why/how certification has been important for them in their wildlife careers. A healthy discussion ensued in which the audience had a chance to interact with the presenters.
- The participants were divided into two groups and two discussion topics were dealt with: *What mechanisms can be initiated to promote and increase awareness of CSTWS Certification?* and *What needs to be done to cater to the cohort of wildlife biologists that are being deprived of professional status because of course deficiencies?* Each group provided a synopsis of their respective discussions. I have a record of these proceedings and will their recommendations in the future to affect change. For your information, I have included the results of these discussion sessions
- The workshop ended with a recap of the workshop.

Group 1 Discussion Topic: Need to think about mechanisms to promote and increase awareness of CSTWS Certification

- Need more brochures
- Best identified means to move forward would be to approach an MLA and to anchor the CSTWS certification into legislation in AB, BC, and to encourage such considerations in other provinces – that the legislation is the key
- Are there ways for this to occur at the Federal Level – discussions with Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada and the like – to recognize the importance of and to hire CWBs

- Largest challenge is the pragmatic translation of the certification to professional opportunities/employment – until this is a direct translation for folks, it will be difficult for students/young professionals to justify the cost/time to become certified
- Director's are identified as the one's to target
- If we are asking governments to promote and require of consultants, then it should be a requirement of our government biologists
- Comments on the three different levels of TWS (International, National, Provincial) – the idea of strength in numbers – potentially look at different membership models to pull our numbers all together under one
- Discussions around the benefits of having established local ambassadors – professionals and or students – that can deliver information presentations, that can be a contact for questions, who can promote and market the certification etc.

Group 2 Discussion Topic: What needs to be done to cater to the cohort of wildlife biologists that are being deprived of professional status because of course deficiencies?

- Get a list of acceptable courses to meet semester hours and therefore do not require an essay for each course
- Create guidelines/learning objectives document that could be followed when creating a course/workshop to help people meet requirements (e.g. ACTWS conference attendance is worth how many semester hours towards what category)
- Modify application form to have a place to describe experience under different educational requirement section
- Less onerous application
- Change educational requirements to more defined categories of general requirements that can be met. These categories should be what is in materials provided to applicants (similar to ASPB application)
- Application party sessions, starting with AEP (the regulations). Having mentors in the room to help strengthen applications before sending
- Make the flexibility of the CRB with regard to the application more well-known and that it's not a pass-fail application but a back and forth application with the CRB
- Redesign the course requirement categories based on a Canadian Academic template rather than a US based template that has had wildlife management programs for a long time
- Add possible mentors and contact information to the TWS to help with applications. First ensure the mentors are willing to help and release contact information
- Add a grandfathered application for cohorts with 10 or more years of experience. This means reducing the 20-year experience presently used.