NEAFWA Quarterly Report – Period ending 12-31-10
Expert Panel Communications

Communication Nexus. During the first expert panel conference call it was felt that it would be beneficial if an on-line communications nexus could be set up to facilitate group interaction. The thought was that developing a collaboration node for panelists would enhance their work; allowing members to post and download important documents while exchanging ideas in real-time about what was being shared. After exploring several potential solutions server space was allocated on NWF's Microsoft SharePoint website and a site specific to expert panel communications was established by NWF's Internet Team.

Initial difficulties were experienced with coordinating remote access to the site from ≈forty-five different locations. Many of the panelists were accessing the site from various places of employment as well as from personal computers. As a result, many of the NGO, state and federal agency security networks hindered access to the site. Working with NWF staff and the NWF Internet team, these issues were resolved on a case-by-case basis over the course of a couple weeks.

The "Expert Panel" SharePoint site affords numerous means for interaction and collaboration including shared calendars, group announcements, individual task lists, full access document libraries, and discussion boards for "live" communications. These tools serve to increase efficiency and productivity by enabling expert panelists from across the region to work synergistically.

PROGRESS REPORT 3: OBJECTIVES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUTURE PLANS AND TIMELINES OF NEAFWA REGIONAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Objectives of the project. The overarching goal of the project is to provide vulnerability and adaptation information that will help the northeastern states to plan their conservation of fish and wildlife under a changing climate. It has five specific objectives:

1. To quantify the vulnerabilities to climate change of fish and wildlife and their habitats across the region and thereby identify those habitats and species that are likely to be more or less vulnerable, and how these vulnerabilities vary spatially.

2. To project how these habitats and species will change their status and distributions under climate change.

3. To identify potential adaptation options (including the mitigation of non-climate stressors) that can be used to safeguard vulnerable habitats and species.

4. To identify monitoring strategies that will help track the onset of climate change and the success, or otherwise, of adaptation actions.

5. To work with states to increase their institutional knowledge and capabilities to respond to climate change through educational and planning workshops and other events.

Accomplishments. Three major accomplishments were successfully achieved during this reporting period:

1. *Expert Panel*. The expert panel referred to in the second progress report to this project was finalized (see Attachment 1 for list of members) and held their first teleconference call. This was on October 25 and the main issue on the agenda was to familiarize the 27 participants with the objectives and scope of the meeting and to introduce the subject of modeling habitat vulnerabilities to climate change. Galbraith of Manomet alerted the expert panel members to be aware that he would be submitting to them a draft vulnerability model within a month or so. The role of the panel would then be to review this model (and the test runs that would be provided) to ensure that it was capable of accurately discriminating the comparative vulnerabilities of northeastern habitat types. Another goal will be for the panel members to suggest habitat types that the model should be applied to. We, obviously, cannot run it on all the hundreds of habitats that may occur in the Northeast and our aim will be to come up with a consensus set of the thirty or so most important.

   A report to NEAFWA on the formation and composition of the expert panel was submitted by Galbraith in late October.

2. *Draft Vulnerability Model*. As promised to the expert panel (see above), Manomet's Galbraith, in collaboration with John O'Leary of Mass, Div. Fisheries and Wildlife, prepared a draft spreadsheet-based model for evaluating the vulnerabilities of wildlife habitats in the Northeast to climate change. This model was then tested by Galbraith and O'Leary on three habitat types across three regions of the Northeast (northern, middle

and southern states). Once tested the model, together with text explaining how the model is constructed and its operation, the variables that comprise the model, how uncertainty is dealt with, and how transparency is ensured was submitted to the expert panel for review. The nine test model runs were also submitted to the expert panel to guide them in their reviews. The materials submitted to the expert panel are provided in Attachments 2 through 13. Thus far, three of the experts have provided detailed responses to the model (Tomajer of NY, Scanlon of MA, Byers of WV, and Limpert of MD). A second expert panel conference call has been set up for January 20th when the other members' responses to the model will be discussed.

It should be noted that the current draft model does not address habitats that may be affected by sea level rise. This will be the focus of an additional effort.

3. *Communication Nexus.* During the first expert panel conference call it was felt that it would be beneficial if an on-line communications nexus could be set up to facilitate group interaction. The thought was that developing a collaboration node for panelists would enhance their work; allowing members to post and download important documents while exchanging ideas in real-time about what was being shared. After exploring several potential solutions server space was allocated on NWF's Microsoft SharePoint website and a site specific to expert panel communications was established by NWF's Internet Team.

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3. *Additional*. In addition to the above achievements, Dr. Galbraith was invited by the Government of Madagascar and by World Wildlife to teach a course on modeling habitat vulnerabilities to climate change in Anantananarivo (the capital). This he did using the NEAFWA model as an example of a thorough and comprehensive model. Thus the NEAFWA model has made its "debut" on the world stage!

   Dr. Galbraith has also been working with the States of New Jersey and New York to help them complete state-specific vulnerability assessments. This work is relying heavily on the NEAFWA model.

Future Plans and Timelines. Over the next three months our main goals will be to apply the finalized model to actual habitats in the Northeast to estimate their vulnerabilities and likely responses to a changing climate. As soon as the model has been finalized, Galbraith will write a report on its structure, composition, and uses and submit to WMI. We expect to have a sample of a dozen or so habitats completed by the time of the next progress report.