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.