

MTSG Annual General Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2019 | Charleston, SC, U.S.A.

Hosted by: Paolo Casale & Roderic Mast, MTSG Co-Chairs

Minutes by: Brian Hutchinson, MTSG Program Officer & Morrison Mast, Volunteer

Attended by: Approximately 50 MTSG Members and Regional Vice Chairs

Venue: Charleston Marriott, Charleston, SC, U.S.A.

Date & Time: February 6, 2019 | 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Introduction

The meeting began at 6:17 pm with an introduction by Rod Mast and Paolo Casale (joining by teleconference) that included an overview of the meeting's agenda, a review of what the MTSG is and does, and its mission. See Rod's [PowerPoint presentation for details](#).

Group Brainstorm

At approximately 6:25 pm, Rod introduced a group brainstorming activity that sought to engage the attendees in discussing possible future directions for the MTSG by considering activities that MTSG members could undertake and accomplish with their volunteer time. Attendees were asked to organize into small groups and discuss the following question:

(Beyond Red List Assessments and Regional Reporting...) What activities/products can the MTSG pursue to better support global sea turtle conservation?

Each group was then asked to generate 1-3 specific ideas that can be accomplished with current resources (members' volunteer time) in the next 1-2 years. A few examples were offered based on recent suggestions from members (see [PowerPoint for details](#)).

A total of 9 small groups were formed, and spent approximately 15 minutes brainstorming. Each group was then asked to share their ideas one by one, starting with their "top" idea. The full list of ideas is available in Appendix 1, below, organized thematically. The "top" ideas presented by each group were:

- Group 1: Develop a series of 1-minute messages directed at new scientists, students and local public
- Group 2: Update Burning Issues – incorporate more data on trend analysis and other new research
- Group 3: Update 1999 MTSG Techniques Manual
- Group 4: See how MTSG might engage as an entity with the RFMOs (and conventions like CMS) on critical bycatch issues
- Group 5: Provide a better, more robust description of Red List on the website to clarify differences between country-level assessments

- Group 6: Update RMUs and strengthen spatial planning element to identify areas of importance for sea turtles (e.g. site network of important turtle areas) for countries to use to identify important areas for sea turtles
- Group 7: Have MTSG explore potential for dynamic protected areas / dynamic ocean management involving sea turtles
- Group 8: Develop sustainable use policy so that MTSG has policy on use / interact more with Sustainable Use Specialist Group
- Group 9: Strengthen and increase communication among members, e.g. regional meetings (Mediterranean, Oceania examples)

See the full list of ideas in Appendix 1, below.

Other discussion and next steps:

- Mark Swingle: I work with an aquarium that is part of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) – 132 institutions, many that engage with sea turtle conservation. AZA wants to be a conservation organization and has created a new program, called SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction). Zoos nominate species/group of species, sea turtles has been successfully nominated, then bring group of zoos together to decide how to make an impact. Working on conservation plan (focal groups are Kemp's ridley and East Pacific leatherback) – have had focal groups, will be talking to others for input – goal is to use our institutions to generate support for these critical conservation issues.
- Rod Mast: Thanks – next steps:
 - Include list in meeting minutes
 - Determine process for sharing list with current and new members to seek volunteer champions to take ideas forward

Regional Reporting Initiative Update

At 7:00pm, Rod Mast and Paolo Casale presented an update on the Regional Reporting Initiative. See their [PowerPoint presentation](#) for details.

Discussion:

- Jeff Miller: I was involved in 2 country reports
 - Suggest to add date to top of country report within compiled group, so that even year old, or two year old country reports could be incorporated into regional report each year
 - Where do submitted PDFs (e.g. gray literature) go? Can we share literature? Important to consider.
- Paolo Casale:
 - re: PDFs, Red List assessments require that we provide copies of grey literature in case the data need to be checked, so this is the spirit of the idea – to gather PDFs in case data need to be checked.

- Could develop way to store PDFs on MTSG website – but system is not in place and we need to figure out how to do it.
- Jeff Miller:
 - Better to use existing bibliographic resource. Will be happy to work with you to sort it out.
- Alexandre Girard:
 - The sharing with MTSG members part of the process was not properly followed in West Africa, we should work on improving process in this round.
- Aliko Panagopoulou:
 - When we submit country chapters to members (on timeline) – is it to entire membership or just regional membership?
- Paolo Casale:
 - Reports will go to all members. There will be just one phase of review that is global rather than regional and then global as we did last year

Red List Update

At 7:15 PM Bryan Wallace gave an update on Red Listing efforts. See the PowerPoint presentation for details.

Discussion:

Matthew Godfrey

- Just as a point of historical clarification, the last flatback assessment was done as endangered, but it was petitioned and became Data Deficient

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm

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Appendix 1: Ideas from Small Group Brainstorm Activity

The following ideas resulted from a group brainstorm activity at the 2019 MTSG Annual General Meeting on February 6, 2019 in Charleston, SC, U.S.A. Ideas have been grouped and consolidated under thematic subheadings. For more information, see the “Group Brainstorm” section of the 2019 MTSG Annual General Meeting Minutes (above).

Techniques Manual and Resources

- Update 1999 MTSG Techniques Manual
 - o Hub for existing resources; searchable by country and keywords
 - o Possible updates to existing chapters, new chapters to cover new techniques that have emerged in the past 20 years

Burning Issues

- Update Burning Issues:
 - o Incorporate trend analysis data, other new research
 - o Create timelines for updating RMUs, Burning Issues
 - o Seek IUCN financial support for updated priorities
- Update RMUs and strengthen spatial planning element to identify areas of importance for sea turtles (e.g. site network of Important Marine Turtle Areas).
- Seek funding to support priority actions identified through Burning Issues

Red List & MTSG Positions

- Develop MTSG sustainable use policy and interact more with SSC Sustainable Use Specialist Group
- State MTSG positions on key issues
- Hold regional meetings to address “down listing” of sea turtles and how to continue to manage turtles after status changes, e.g.:
 - o Legal “safety net” for species delisting
 - o Recommendations post-status change on Red List
 - o Recommendations post-status change at national scales

Engagement with IUCN-SSC & Others

- Learn about other SSC Specialist Groups / promote exchange
 - o How do they work? Draw inspiration and ideas.
- Reach out to industry and allies to talk about impacts to habitats
- Support/collaborate with AZA’s S.A.F.E. program (Mark Swingle)

Outreach and Communications

- Develop series of 1 min messages directed at new scientists, students, local public.

- Provide a better, more robust description of Red List on the website to clarify differences between assessments, e.g.:
 - Differences between Global, Subpopulation, Regional, and National assessments
 - Relationship to national-scale endangered species listing and protection laws
- Create a special session at the next ISTS meeting to focus on some of these topics (e.g. Burning Issues)
- Strengthen and increase communication among MTSG members, e.g. regional meetings.
- Educate communities and change behaviors
 - Turtle biologist “loaner program” to educate communities about turtle issues
- Develop citizen science app to collect crowd-sourced data
- Update MTSG website

More Clarification / Elaboration Requested

- See how MTSG can engage with RFMOs on critical bycatch issues
 - Using conventions like CMS (IOC), IAC, CITES, RAMSAR, etc.
 - Existing policy working group
- Explore dynamic MPAs (sea turtles and dynamic ocean management).
- Assist with promotion of multi-taxa projects
- Updating 1995 global strategy?
- Mainstreaming biodiversity