

Spring 2009



# OFWIM News

## President's Message: Robin Carlson

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In these trying economic times, it is more important than ever to stay connected with our colleagues so that we can make the best use of our limited resources. How can we do that, you may ask, with travel budgets dramatically reduced? Your OFWIM committees have been hard at work developing new ways to network and learn, all without leaving your office. Here's what we've been working on:

**OFWIM Portal:** Keep up to date with OFWIM events, post content, and join in discussions with your peers about information technology topics of interest to you. All 2009 OFWIM members are encouraged to create an account to access the OFWIM Portal Community. To obtain log-in information, contact Lisa Zolly <lisa\_zolly@usgs.gov>.

**Trainings via Webex:** Your Training and Education Committee has been working on some exciting possibilities for Webex trainings. See page 10 for more information.

**Remote access to the 2009 Conference:** We are investigating the possibility of providing remote access to the 2009 Conference, via phone and Webex. Please help us gauge the level of interest in this option by participating in the survey described on page 2.

**OFWIM Newsletter:** In addition to keeping up with current OFWIM events, this newsletter is an excellent way to share your work and ideas with the OFWIM community. In this edition, don't miss Don Katnik's article on page 6.

Of course nothing beats networking in person, so we hope to see as many of you in Seattle in person as possible! In keeping with our emphasis this year on maximizing efficiency while minimizing cost, the name of the conference will be "Doing More With Less: Leveraging Resources and Technology Through Partnerships." The First Call for Papers in on page 3.

Stay connected and keep in touch – join us on the OFWIM Portal, in a Webex training, and in Seattle in September!

All the best,

Robin Carlson

2009 OFWIM President

## Conference Planning 2009

### Coming to Seattle?



Please help us to determine our conference attendance for Seattle 2009 by answering 6 quick questions :

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=3ysqvGNhg2Fldx3FgxU6oQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=3ysqvGNhg2Fldx3FgxU6oQ_3d_3d)

Thank you for your input!

Travel can be tough for all of us. This year OFWIM anticipates offering a limited number of remote access seats at the 2009 Conference. Participants will be able to see or even give their presentations and participate in some of the discussions with an Internet connection and phone bridge. Please indicate your interest by completing the brief survey mentioned above.



**New  
Conference  
Dates!**

**September  
14-17, 2009**

**Seattle, WA**

**Mark your  
Calendars!**

## Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers

## First Call for Papers

## OFWIM 2009 Conference

September 14-17, 2009

Seattle, Washington



## DOING MORE WITH LESS:

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

## Integrating Fish and Wildlife and Information Technology

- How different skills and expertise can be connected to support the agency mission
- Applications, products, or tools that help integrate fish and wildlife needs with information technology capabilities
- Partnership opportunities

**Deadline for submission of all abstracts (with speaker biography) is Friday June 5, 2009.**

## Emerging Technology and Applications

- Species modeling and validation
- Interactive web mapping
- Tools that improve efficiency

**Submit Session topics and abstracts for papers, panel discussions and symposia to:**

**Jennifer Carlino**

## Managing Regional Issues

- Fish and wildlife
- Invasive species
- Fire

**US Geological Survey—NBII Program**

**303-202-4260**

**[jcarlino@usgs.gov](mailto:jcarlino@usgs.gov)**

## Updating State Wildlife Action Plans

- Common themes or challenges
- Lessons learned

**This call is for papers, panel discussions, and poster presentations related to the conference theme or to fish and wildlife information management in general.**

Individual papers should be 15 minutes in length to allow time for discussion. Panel Discussions should fit in 1½ hour sessions. This year OFWIM anticipates a limited number of remote access seats will be available for members, so think about joining us virtually and giving a paper from your office!

Submit a poster presentation for the “Hacker’s Ball,” an OFWIM tradition that combines the poster session with live demonstrations of applications.

**OFWIM 2009  
Conference:**

**September  
14-17,  
2009**

**New Dates!!**

**Mark your  
Calendars!**

## OFWIM 2009 Conference

**ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM****Deadline for submission of all abstracts is Friday June 5, 2009****Name:****Organization:****Address:****Phone:****Email:**

I am submitting an abstract for a presentation.

I am submitting an abstract for a panel discussion.

I am submitting an abstract for a poster at the Hacker's Ball.

For posters only:

I will need internet access for my Hacker's Ball poster and/or presentation.

**Abstract (1500 chars):****Biography (750 chars.):**

Please see OFWIM web site for examples of previous biographies and abstracts. Please note all presentations will be made available on the OFWIM web site (<http://www.ofwim.org/>).

Submit session topics and abstracts for **papers, panel discussions, symposia, poster** presentations and requests for **Internet ports** at the Hacker's Ball to Jennifer Carlino: [jcarlino@usgs.gov](mailto:jcarlino@usgs.gov)

**Questions?****Contact****Jennifer Carlino****U.S. Geological  
Survey NBII  
Program****(303) 202-4260****[jcarlino@usgs.gov](mailto:jcarlino@usgs.gov)**



## Thank you for our OFWIM 2008 Raffle Donations!

*Did you know?*

**Raffle  
donations help  
support our  
Student  
Scholarship  
Fund!**

**We raised \$405  
in 2008!**

Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries

(Becky Gwynn):

Ornate buck knife

Virginia wildlife t-shirt

Virginia wildlife sweatshirt

Missouri Dept. of Conservation (Mark Brunner):

Missouri native plants book

Outdoor Missouri CD

Voices of the Hills CD

Missouri tote bags

Furbearers of Missouri DVD

Missouri wildlife calendar

Missouri Dept. of Conservation (Mark Brunner):

Missouri native plants book

Outdoor Missouri CD

Voices of the Hills CD

Missouri tote bags

Furbearers of Missouri DVD

Missouri wildlife calendar

California Department of Fish and Game

(Tom Lupo):

2 Atlases of the Biodiversity of California

US Geological Survey

(Lisa Zolly):

USGS notebooks & pens

USGS messenger bag

The Nature Conservancy

(Aliya Ercelawn):

2 TNC backpacks

TNC hat

TNC tote bags for all conference participants

SPECIEZnm (Janelle Harden and Anne Russell):

carved raccoon wall sculpture

carved ducks

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

(Stan Allen):

PSMFC messenger bag

PSMFC umbrella

PSMFC baseball cap

PSMFC shirt

Jennifer Carlino (personal donation):

Rocky Mtn. National Park fleece

USGS thumb drives

FGDC messenger bags

Barb White (personal donation)

FWS Mountain Prairie Region jacket

Beth Stys (personal donation):

2 carved wooden pens handmade by John Stys

Sabra Schwartz (personal donation):

Seattle t-shirt

Seattle coffee mug

## OFWIM: Wildlife Agencies Overrun by “Anti”Biotics

Not the antibiotics that fight infections, but the anti-*Biotics* wildlife biologists who struggle with the Natural Heritage database system. This year Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) had a minor mutiny over our how we store our wildlife observation data. Previously we used NatureServe’s *Biotics* software and Heritage methodology. Now we’re developing our own database using *ArcGIS* and *Microsoft Access*. I’m wondering if our story is one familiar to other wildlife agencies represented in OFWIM.

MDIFW biologists’ concerns were that:

*Biotics* is “inaccessible” both literally (because of the cost/headaches of maintaining multiple desktop installs) and technologically (because of the complicated user interface requiring special Heritage training and the outdated *ArcView 3.x* platform).

Heritage concepts like Element Occurrences and Inferred Extents are confusing and too restrictive to handle the variety of wildlife observations we need to record and the habitats we map for environmental reviews and conservation planning.

Needing Heritage staff to enter and access our primary wildlife data is inefficient and inconvenient (in Maine, the Heritage data entry staff reside in a separate state agency located 80 miles away in a different city from the wildlife staff).

Out of those concerns came a strong interest in developing our own in-house database as the primary store for our wildlife observation/habitat data and from which we could export data to populate *Biotics*. Our relational database model is less than 20% the size of *Biotics* with only 28 *Access* tables and two geodatabase feature classes (one point, one polygon). Six of the *Access* tables organize detailed information about each observation such as age, gender, number seen, and type of activity. Previously this data was piled in the *Biotics* EO\_DATA text field. “We” (meaning the Maine Heritage Database Manager) could have created user-defined fields and an extensible tab in *Biotics* for this, but that would not have made the information any more accessible to the end users. The geodatabase has a feature-level metadata table (I call it FLEM – no one else thinks that’s funny) that tracks the who/when/why of every addition, deletion, and modification made to each feature so we never have to scratch our heads over “what happened to...?” questions again. A spatial lookup table links each observation to a point feature and/or to one or many polygons representing habitat areas, EO representations, and environmental review buffers. One polygon can also be linked to multiple observations.

All this seems well and good, but I worry about wasting time and resources to reinvent the wheel. The lure of a standardized observation database still appeals strongly, yet I have come to believe it is a Utopian concept that will never be realized because of differences in specific needs across agencies and the inevitable mushrooming fate of trying to create a one-size-fits-all solution. So I’m wondering where that leaves MDIFW relative to the rest of the wildlife agency community and where that leaves wildlife agencies in general in this IT-needy age with shrinking IT budgets. Are most of you still using *Biotics* as a primary database. Were you ever? Are many other agencies creating their own databases? If out-of-state travel ever becomes possible again (we’re currently under tight restrictions on even in-state mileage), I would enjoy discussing this next September in Seattle at OFWIM 2009.

### Technical Trends

#### Committee

#### Article

#### Submitted by

**Don Katnik,**

**Maine**

**Department of  
Fish and Wildlife**

*Letters to the Editor: Follow/Join this discussion in the Portal! Or, if you have a response to this article that you would like published in the next newsletter, please send it to Viv Hutchison (vhutchison@usgs.gov) by June 5, 2009*

## **OFWIM: Wildlife Agencies Overrun by “Anti”Biotics**

Article Response: North Carolina

As you might expect, we have had a similar experience in North Carolina. As in Maine, the Wildlife Resources Commission does not use Biotics, and our Heritage Program does. In addition, we track species that do not fall under the interest of our Heritage Program (i.e., species that are not “of concern”). Currently, these data are contained in more than 15 separate Microsoft Access databases across the state, stored on individual biologist’s computers (most of whom work out of their home). This presents two major problems: 1. It is difficult to compile data across projects for data exchange with other organizations, and 2. Data are not very secure (i.e., a house fire could wipe out data since the last backup).

To solve this problem, we initiated a project called BIODÉ (Biodiversity Database) to convert these databases into a common framework stored on a centralized server. With the help of our IT department and field biologists, we are striving to strike a balance between building a standardized database that will fit all data collected (and that currently exists), and having separate databases with no commonalities. We started by identifying those data elements common across existing databases and built a central framework (the who, what, when, and where common to most field data). Any data that is not one of these common elements will be stored other tables specific to the dataset. Each of the 15 original Access databases will be incorporated one at a time into the centralized database. As each database is added, it will get a customized user interface that is unique to the data being collected. By storing common elements in one location and project-specific data in another, we hope to enable compilation of core data across projects while maintaining project-specific data in a centralized location.

This is a long term project that will not be completed for at least two years, but ultimately we hope to enable better exchange of data with other conservation organizations such as the Natural Heritage Program and the NC Museum of Natural Sciences.

-Scott Anderson, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission



**Technical Trends**

**Committee**

**Article:**

**Response**

**Submitted by**  
**Scott Anderson,**  
**North Carolina**  
**Wildlife**  
**Resources**  
**Commission**

*Letters to the Editor: Follow/Join this discussion in the Portal! Or, if you have a response to this article that you would like published in the next newsletter, please send it to Viv Hutchison (vhutchison@usgs.gov) by June 5, 2009*

## OFWIM 2009 Officers and Committees

### Officers:

President: Robin Carlson	rcarlson@dfg.ca.gov
President-Elect: Jen (Pollock) Carlino	jennifer_carlino@usgs.gov
Secretary: Lisa Zolly	lisa_zolly@usgs.gov
Treasurer: Kristin Rogers	kristin.rogers@MyFWC.com
Member-at-Large: Don Schrupp	hqwris@lamar.ColoState.edu
Past-President: Sabra Schwartz	sschwartz@azgfd.gov

### Committees:

#### Meeting Planning Committee

Chair - Jen (Pollock) Carlino	japollock@usgs.gov
Vice Chair - Viv Hutchison	vhutchison@usgs.gov

#### Communications Committee

Chair - Viv Hutchison	vhutchison@usgs.gov
Vice Chair - Lisa Zolly	lisa_zolly@usgs.gov

#### Elections, Nominations and Awards Committee

Chair - Beth Stys	beth.stys@MyFWC.com
Vice Chair - Robin Carlson	rcarlson@dfg.ca.gov

#### Data Standards and Technology Trends Committee

Chair - Scott Anderson	scott.anderson@ncwildlife.org
Vice Chair - Don Schrupp	dschrupp@ix.netcom.com

#### Membership and Outreach Committee

Chair - Kristin Rogers	kristin.rogers@MyFWC.com
Vice Chair - Lisa Zolly	lisa_zolly@usgs.gov

#### Training and Education Committee

Chair - Don Schrupp	dschrupp@ix.netcom.com
Vice Chair - vacant	—

#### Vision and Goals Committee (Ad-Hoc)

Chair - Mark Brunner	mark.brunner@mdc.mo.gov
Vice Chair - vacant	—

#### Bylaws and Organization Committee (Ad-Hoc)

Chair - Sabra Schwartz	sschwartz@azgfd.gov
Vice Chair - vacant	—



**Join an OFWIM  
Committee!**

**Help keep  
OFWIM going  
strong!**

## OFWIM Committee Updates...

### Conference Planning Committee:

The Conference Planning Committee confirmed the 2009 annual meeting dates from September 14-17, 2009 at the Talaris Conference Center in Seattle, Washington. The meeting theme focuses on “Doing More with Less: Leveraging Resources and Technology Through Partnerships”. This year, we anticipate offering a limited number of remote access seats to facilitate participation in these challenging times. As part of the planning, the committee members are developing timely and informative topics for the conference, locating fascinating speakers, and planning exciting field trips. Make sure you respond the call for papers in this newsletter issue; abstracts are due June 5th. Watch the OFWIM website for more information!

### Membership and Outreach Committee:

The membership and outreach committee held its first meeting on March 16th. The committee focused on indentifying avenues for spreading the word about this year’s annual meeting in Seattle, with the goal of reaching a broad spectrum of potential participants both locally and nationwide. The committee will be working closely with the OFWIM Regional Contacts to spread the word through appropriate outlets in the four OFWIM regions. We would also like to ask any members that know of a great place to spread the call for papers, either within your own agency or elsewhere, to please feel free to do so. If you are able to share the announcement, please notify your OFWIM regional contact so we can include your location(s) in our master contact list. A list of regional contacts is available on the OFWIM website at: [http://www.ofwim.org/org/regional\\_contacts.html](http://www.ofwim.org/org/regional_contacts.html). As we all know finances are tight this year, so the membership and outreach committee is working hard to actively promote this year’s meeting in an effort to attract as many potential participants as possible to help ensure a successful meeting in 2009.

### Elections, Nominations, and Awards Committee:

The (EN&A) committee has initiated review of the contact list for the student scholarship information. The list provides contact information for university staff affiliated with natural resource related departments as well as student chapters of wildlife and fisheries related organizations. The committee will be having a conference call in early April to finalize the list and mail out plans. We plan to have an initial mailout in April and at least two reminder mailouts. If you have any suggestions for contacts please send them to [beth.stys@myfwc.com](mailto:beth.stys@myfwc.com).



**Join an OFWIM  
Committee!**

**Help keep  
OFWIM going  
strong!**

## OFWIM Committee Updates...

### Training and Education Committee:

The Training and Education Committee held its first conference call of the New Year on March 04, 2009. The committee is making a concerted effort to evaluate the use of WebEx-based technologies for providing extended training opportunities to the OFWIM Membership. The various committee members are pursuing topics of 'The Protected Areas Database Design Project', 'Web-based Geospatial Applications Development' and possibly 'Species Habitat Modeling'.

Do let the committee members know of other topics that you think we should pursue. We're particularly interested in knowing of presentations that any of our OFWIM members would be willing to provide for their fellow OFWIMers. Also, let us know if you might be interested in providing any specific training workshops, at this year's annual meeting and conference in Seattle, Washington, in September. It's never too early to start preparing for such opportunities. Our committee encourages all OFWIM members to use the 'OFWIM Community' links (via the USBS/NBII Portal) to send us recommendations ( <http://my.nbii.gov/Communities/OFWIMCommunity> ).

\*\*\*\*\* **Register now for OFWIM Webinars** \*\*\*\*\*

### Protected Areas Database - Design Project (PAD-US) webinars to be offered at the end of March/beginning of April. Register now!

A proposal for improving the way that protected areas in the U.S. are inventoried will soon be released by a consortium of public agencies and non-profit organizations. Called the Protected Areas Database - U.S. (PAD-US) project, this effort proposes a system for integrating state, federal and national data about fee-protected lands into a comprehensive and current data structure. Download a project summary sheet and learn more at:

<http://www.protectedlands.net/design/home.php>

**Tuesday, March 31, 10am-11am Pacific time**

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=jAZ\\_2friCRlaHKIqbyWMBBKw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=jAZ_2friCRlaHKIqbyWMBBKw_3d_3d)

**Monday, April 6, 1pm-2pm Pacific time**

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1F9thgqgJvqaB7pPf6LQMA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1F9thgqgJvqaB7pPf6LQMA_3d_3d)

**Thursday, April 16, 8am-9am Pacific time**

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1F9thgqgJvqaB7pPf6LQMA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1F9thgqgJvqaB7pPf6LQMA_3d_3d)



**Register now  
for the first  
OFWIM webinar  
series!**

## 2009 Individual Membership Form

Use the form below to join OFWIM as a new member or to renew your membership for 2009. Individual Members are entitled to vote in the annual election and hold office. Current members are notified of new newsletters and have access to special OFWIM web content. Current members also receive a discount on 2009 conference registration.

If you work for an organization with 4 or more individuals interested in OFWIM membership, you may benefit from obtaining an Organizational Membership. Information about Organizational Membership can be found at: <http://www.ofwim.org/org/membership.html>

The 2009 OFWIM annual membership period is January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. To become a new member of OFWIM or renew your current membership, please complete and mail the form below with a check or money order for \$25 (in U.S. dollars!) payable to **OFWIM**, to:

Kristin Rogers, OFWIM Treasurer  
c/o FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission  
7922 NW 71st Street  
Gainesville, FL 32653  
(352) 955-3211 x106

### OFWIM 2009 Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax:(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



<http://www.ofwim.org/>

Your agency is invited to join the

### **Become an Organizational Member of OFWIM**

The Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers (OFWIM) is a non-profit professional organization whose goal is to promote the management and conservation of natural resources by facilitating technology and information exchange among fish and wildlife information professionals. An affiliate of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), OFWIM was formally established in 1993. In achieving its mission, OFWIM emphasizes coordination, outreach, technical assistance, and continuing education. Members of OFWIM include GIS specialists, database managers, biologists, web developers, programmers, researchers, and others who manage information and technology related to fish and wildlife resources.

Benefits include:

- ✦ Quarterly Newsletter
- ✦ Discount on registration for the OFWIM Annual Conference
- ✦ Access to the OFWIM content management system, an internet resource for sharing information and facilitating discussion among fish and wildlife information managers
- ✦ Access to the OFWIM-L e-mail listserv

Networking and professional development opportunities for fish and wildlife information management professionals

Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other groups whose mission involves management of fish and wildlife populations or habitat, are encouraged to become OFWIM Organizational Members. Each Organizational Membership costs \$100 and entitles the organization to 6 OFWIM Individual Memberships, with full member privileges. Individual Memberships are also available at the cost \$25 per year. An Organizational Membership form is now available on the website.

<http://www.ofwim.org/org/OrgMembership.html>

ORGANIZATION OF FISH AND  
WILDLIFE INFORMATION  
MANAGERS

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## Member Reminders

\*\*\*Renew your membership today!\*\*\*

**Thank you to all who submitted  
information and articles to this  
issue of the OFWIM news!**

**Article Deadline for Summer  
Issue:**

**June 5, 2009**



**Save the *\*new\** date...**

**September 14-17, 2009**

**Seattle, WA**

**OFWIM 2009**