

A Guide to Starting and Running a SCB Chapter

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(with thanks to Paul Beier, Lisa Delissio, Cristian Olivo (Chapter Advisors Committee); Adena Rissman (Berkeley Chapter), Alejandra Domic (Bolivia Chapter), Ingrid Hogle (Davis Chapter), Brenda Saunders (Kingston Chapter), Kelly Paulson (Minnesota Chapter), Tracy Rittenhouse (Missouri Chapter), Susan Hall and Carissa Wong (Toronto Chapter); Alan Thornhill, Kathryn Powers (SCB Executive Office); and all those who took the time to answer the chapter survey of Spring 2004)

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Section I: What is a Chapter?

Local Chapters are local affiliates of SCB that serve areas like a state of the US (such as the Missouri Chapter), larger regions (such as the New England Chapter), or ecoregions (such as the Colorado Plateau Chapter). The purpose of Local Chapters is to provide a way for SCB members in local areas to organize and network around the mission of the Society. Think of Chapters as a way of “acting locally” while the parent society is a way of “thinking globally.”

Chapters provide a number of great benefits to members and conservation, such as: a professional resource for finding jobs, funding, and projects; facilitation of continuing education lectures or classes; support for community and regional conservation projects and education; avenues for public and political advocacy for conservation; opportunities for members to share local information and resources; and moral and social support for professionals and students.

Since SCB started chartering chapters in 1993, many charters have been issued, mostly in North America but interest is growing on other continents. A list of chapters can be found on the SCB website (<http://www.conbio.org/chapters>). If you know about a chapter that is unlisted or of unknown status, please let the Chapter Advisors know (“Section VI: Resources”). We appreciate your help in keeping abreast of chapters and their activities!

With the development of the SCB Executive Office in October 2001, chapters have access to new resources and are becoming more integrated into the society as a whole. To help with this integration, the Chapter Advisors Committee was formed in summer 2003. Our committee’s mission is to support, facilitate, and advocate local chapter growth, inter-chapter communication, and increased support for local chapters from SCB's central office. We help local chapters establish and grow, exchange ideas and information, become more visible within SCB, and facilitate a network of chapters across the globe.

Section II: How to Form a Chapter

The process of forming a chapter can take up to a year of concentrated effort, and is best tackled by a core group of about five people (although as few as two have been known to successfully initiate a chapter).

- 1) **Form a Game Plan** This is your strategy for forming your chapter. This can include a timeline, list of potential resources, a preliminary focus and structure of the chapter, and an outline for the first meeting.
 - a) Review structure, activities, and mission statement of active chapters by visiting their websites. Also check the templates for chapter bylaws and charters on the SCB Chapters website.
 - b) Contact the Chapter Advisory Committee (Section VI) or the SCB Executive Office for assistance and advice.
 - c) Check to see if a chapter existed previously in your area. It may simplify your start-up process to reactivate an old chapter rather than beginning a new one (check with the chapter advisors if you need help with this one).

- 2) **Gauge Local Interest** Survey local and regional interest in forming a chapter to confirm that there is likely to be a large enough group (at least 20) to make the chapter viable. Recruit from a broad pool of conservation biologists and practitioners, including those from agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academia (students and faculty). In addition to asking those surveyed about their interest in a potential chapter, it might be interesting to get an idea of their priorities for such an organization; for example, would they rather see the chapter sponsor face-to-face networking events or communicate primarily through a newsletter?
 - a) If you wish to contact all current SCB members in your geographic region, the Executive Office is happy to broadcast a message on your behalf. Your query could list Board positions and committees (based on your Game Plan), and ask respondents to indicate their willingness to serve in various capacities. SCB has promised members not to share its mailing list, so the email will have to be generated from the EO, but the responses will come directly to you. Contact the Heather Decaluwe (Executive Assistant) at hdecaluwe@conbio.org for assistance on this.

- b) Do not limit your canvassing to current SCB members. Contact graduate and undergraduate departments, conservation-related agencies, NGOs, and other nonprofits. Non-members can be solicited and when the Chapter is forming may join the parent Society for a nominal fee (www.conbio.org/join). Non-members in developing nations can apply for subsidized memberships with the Society; however, these memberships are not guaranteed and are granted on a first-come first-serve basis.
- c) Graduate students are the work-horses of most chapters, and provide energetic and capable leadership. However, we strongly encourage University-based chapters to have several persons likely to remain active participants beyond the duration of a typical student career, such as a faculty member or conservation professional. Overlapping officer terms of 2 or 3 years can also provide better continuity than Boards that have 100% turnover each year. We do not have a special category for “student chapters” – a chapter is a chapter, regardless of the occupations of its members.
- d) Chapters vary in geographic scope from an individual city or campus to large ecoregions. If your chapter wishes to stake out a large geographic area, your officers should not all be from one city, and you should make conscious efforts to avoid being identified with the “capital city”, as this can marginalize “non-city” members from chapter activities.

3) **First Meeting** The first meeting of the nascent chapter is an opportunity to meet interested individuals, define the chapter’s goals, and perhaps conduct the first elections. This meeting should be well-planned and well advertised! Offering refreshments usually increases turnout. The purpose of this meeting is not to decide whether the chapter will incorporate, but to take substantive steps towards ensuring the chapter’s legitimacy and viability. If you’re ready for elections, they can take place at this meeting with a written ballot, and when the announcement of the meeting is made a protocol for absentee voting ought to be included (i.e. attach a PDF file to an e-invitation and provide an address to which the written ballot can be returned). Elections can be carried out with a “slate” of approved candidates or by running individuals for each position. Committees, for example the membership, conservation, and finance committees, can be formed at this meeting and given assignments. Temporary committees can be formed to carry out a specific task and then dissolved: for example, a committee to work on the Charter and Bylaws is a good idea.

- a) Typically, the core activists (those who generated the initial momentum for starting the chapter) and enthusiastic supporters put together the list of candidates for the first election. These founding members should not feel embarrassed about the appearance of a “power grab”—most members will be grateful for the initiative, and the chapter will benefit from the quick start. As soon as possible, hold an election to establish the officers. New members can be encouraged to become involved in the fledgling chapter by being active on the various committees listed in the chapter’s by-laws.

4) **Charter/Bylaws/Mission Statement** Download the drafts of a Chapter Charter and Chapter Bylaws from the SCB website. Review the charter and bylaws drafts with the group, and if they are acceptable, return both documents to the contacts specified below with the various “blanks” filled in.

- a) If the wording in the documents needs to be changed, briefly describe the changes in a cover letter to the Liaison. Most by-law changes are approved after review by the SCB President. In rare cases the Board of Governors may need to review the requested changes.
- b) The signed and ratified copies of the new Chapter's charter and bylaws constitute your authorization to have a local chapter.
- c) Charters often designate the rights and responsibilities of members. For instance, the UC Berkeley chapter requires members to pay dues, and allows all members to vote on chapter business. Membership may be terminated by the member or upon the determination of the chapter’s executive board that the member has engaged in conduct materially and seriously prejudicial to the interests or purposes of the chapter.
- d) A chapter Mission Statement articulates the values, purpose, and goals of the chapter. It should express the chapter’s *raison d’etre* in a way that inspires interest and commitment by members and potential funders. The statement should be short, strong, easy to understand, free of jargon, worded with active verbs, and answer three key questions:

- I: What are the opportunities or needs the chapter exists to address?
- II: How does the chapter address these needs?
- III: What principles or beliefs guide the chapter's work?

Chapters should also consider reviewing their mission statement every five years.

Where to send your documents:

Copy all parties below electronically and attach your document (emails can be obtained at www.conbio.org/chapters):

Chapters Liaison to the Board of Governors

Chapters Advisory Committee Chair

Executive Office Representative to Chapters (Membership Coordinator)

OR fax documents to 1-703-965-3358 Attention, Membership Coordinator

Section III: Membership

Acquiring members is one the first tasks of a new chapter; maintaining members, especially active members, is equally important once your new chapter is established. The parent SCB can support your chapter by emailing members in your area, referring inquiries from prospective members to you, and linking your website from SCB's site <http://www.conbio.org/chapters/>.

Acquiring members requires lots of positive energy and often occurs through word of mouth. In addition, articulating how membership benefits the new member, the chapter, and conservation is helpful in recruiting, because potential members are given specific reasons to join. Other ways to recruit members include sending emails to relevant listserves, posting signs, and advertising events on listserves, in local newspapers, or in the quarterly SCB Newsletter.

Chapters are encouraged to charge dues. Many current chapters charge between \$5 and \$15 per year, some vary the amount for students and non-students, and some only suggest a yearly donation. To ensure high participation; however, most chapters encourage everyone (both paid and non-paid) to attend events and activities. A benefit often given only to paid members is the ability to vote for chapter officers. Chapters need to keep records of financial transactions, most easily done by maintaining a bank account. Some chapters, such as the New England Chapter, allow members and organizations make donations via the web using Paypal. SCB can also accept donations from funders for your chapter for tax purposes, and then transfer the funds to you. There are strict reporting requirements associated with this transference to maintain financial accountability (see more on this under "Section V: Logistics").

Membership demographics vary between chapters. Many are affiliated with universities and thus contain primarily students and faculty. Others are comprised of people from agencies and nonprofits. Being affiliated with a university provides many benefits, such as energetic faces as new students arrive; however, non-academics can often provide valuable input into local conservation issues the chapter can address. Most chapters recommend membership consisting of a variety of people. The public can be a great source of members too: local schoolteachers, local government employees, or your next door neighbor may be interested in conservation as well.

Maintaining members is a vital step in establishing a successful chapter. Ensuring members are able to reach officers (e.g. via phone or email posted on a website) establishes communication between officers and members. However, our best advice is to establish one or two main projects/activities per year for your chapter to sponsor. Members will remain members if your chapter provides them the opportunity to participate in conservation efforts.

Section IV: Activities

Every chapter has similar goals, generally expressed as "promoting development of skills needed to conserve biodiversity, providing a forum for awareness of regional issues, articulating positions on matters of public policy, and fostering high standards of professional integrity." Each chapter needs to translate these laudable general goals into *One or Two Things Our Chapter Wants To Do Well*. Please avoid the temptation to take on too much! Instead, identify one or

two vacant niches that your chapter can fill or key services that you can provide. Do one or two things well and consistently provide that service year after year.

The main activities of successful chapters are:

An Annual Conservation Biology Symposium

This can be a stand-alone event, such as offered jointly by the Berkeley and Davis chapters in California's San Francisco Bay Area, or a session of papers on Conservation Biology offered as part of an existing annual regional meeting, as is done by Missouri and Colorado Plateau chapters. In both cases, conservation biologists in a region get a regular opportunity to learn about ongoing projects in the region, meet each other, and form a network. With high-quality programs, these soon become annual "must attend" meetings not only for students but also for conservation practitioners. A chapter-run symposium also generates revenue, especially if you find donors willing to contribute food and drinks for session breaks, the evening mixer, and the poster session. A lunch break of 90-120 minutes during the annual symposium is an ideal time for your annual meeting. The Bay Area Symposium costs about \$5,000 to produce, but generates a profit with registration fees of \$20 for students (about 200 attend) and \$35 for non-students (about 100 attend) for the all-day event (held on a Saturday). The honorarium and travel costs for a big-name plenary speaker are a major expense, but are worthwhile investments. Take advantage of locally prominent persons by having them serve as session chairs. Advertise the event several months in advance, listing those big names prominently. If you do not get a few complaints about too much publicity, you probably are not advertising aggressively enough.

Seminar Series

A monthly or quarterly seminar series on Conservation Biology is another excellent service that your Chapter can provide. A reception for the speaker before or after the talk should include food (make sure it is consistently good food!). Do not charge admission, but the introducer should always encourage the audience to join the local chapter and support the series. Try to arrange a big name speaker for the first event of the season, and be aggressive with publicity.

Educational Outreach

Educational programs for schoolchildren and for interested adult groups are a good way to teach community members about the principles and practice of conservation. Several chapters have developed successful hands-on programs that have been taken to local schools as well as traded with schools in other regions. Other activities have included conservation projects for kids (such as tree plantings) and guided nature walks. See "Section VI: Resources" below for more information. The "Kids Do Ecology" website (<http://www.nceas.ucsb.edu/nceas-web/kids/> -- in English and Spanish) is also a good resource.

Websites and Electronic or Paper Newsletters (2 to 4 issues per year)

These are helpful for alerting members to special talks of interest, important hearings on projects affecting biodiversity, and the like. The newsletter of at least one chapter (Missouri) includes short research reports from ongoing projects and fun columns on local flora and fauna. The website is worthless if it is not updated at least every 12 weeks - seek an energetic webmaster! A most helpful feature is an electronic Bulletin Board that allows members to post and read announcements. The Executive Office is offering new and innovative ways to assist Chapters in website development. While capacity is limited it is highly recommended that Chapters contact the Executive Office Representative to find out what features are available.

Other activities that have been successful for some chapters include *field events* such as oak restoration or road-ripping and *advocacy* in the form of written and oral comments on proposed projects and initiatives that affect biodiversity. Typically, a field event or advocacy position statement is driven by the interest of one crusading member, and thus changes from year to year. Facilitating the success of your local activists can be one of your most important functions! But remember that without some regular and reliable high-profile service (such as the main activities listed above), these activists won't find your chapter and your chapter probably won't live long. Some year-to-year tradition of providing an important service is essential.

Sister Chapters

A sister chapter is a formal relationship between two chapters that allows for the exchange of information and resources, as well as the coordination of projects and activities. A sister relationship can exist between two active chapters, or between an established chapter and one that is developing (the established chapter can then act as a mentor). Being sister chapters is a great way to strengthen both chapters' activities and resources, generate enthusiasm among members, and expand the reach of your conservation efforts.

As of January 2005, there was one official sister chapter relationship, between Davis and Bolivia. Davis and Berkeley have also acted as (unofficial) sisters for several years, working together on projects and activities such as their highly successful annual regional symposium. The experience of one of the sisters, Bolivia, is shared below.

Alejandra Domic, Bolivia Chapter President, says: *“Bolivia’s SCB chapter was founded in 1998. Since then, we have been carrying out several activities. The way we got in touch with the Davis chapter was in 2003 when Cristian Olivo, our Local Chapter Advisor, met Ingrid Hogle, then-President of Davis, during the SCB meeting in Duluth, Minnesota. They talked about issues concerning our chapter (like memberships and journal subscriptions). They came up with the idea to become sister chapters, thinking that this would be one of the best ways Davis could help Bolivia grow larger. Ingrid then got in contact with Alejandra Domic, our current President, about formalizing this idea. We were happy that Davis was so interested in supporting our growing organization because we had been wanting to meet more SCB members and get more involved with SCB activities for a long time. By becoming sister chapters with Davis, we believed this could be the way to accomplish this goal.*

“After several contacts with Ingrid we started to share our experiences and realized we had a lot of things in common, such as our mutual interest in environmental education (both chapters work with children). We have also talked about developing some possible projects. For example, we are planning their visit to Bolivia during summer 2005 after the SCB meeting in Brazil. Another project we are developing together is the design for a conservation biology study in one of Bolivia’s many protected areas. Finally, we’ve discussed the possibility of coordinating environmental education workshops as well as sharing our mutual experiences as SCB members.”(January 12 2005)

For more detailed information on any of the activities listed above, please contact your Local Chapter Advisor or the chapter mentioned with the activity.

Section V. Logistics Reports

Annual chapter reports are used to advise the SCB Executive Office on chapter status and activities, which is important for maintaining chapter funding and other resources from the EO. Each chapter, therefore, is requested to file an annual report **by June 30 of every year**. This report should list chapter composition, officers, and activities. It does not have to include financial details unless funds have been received from the Executive Office. An on-line report form is available at <http://www.conbio.org/Chapters/AnnualReports/>. In lieu of a formal report, the Chapter Liaison on the Board of Governors is happy to accept an up-to-date website that includes contact info on current officers, major recent activities, and a summary of membership.

Financial Management

Each chapter maintains its own accounts, and both the treasurer and president are typical signers on the accounts. Annual budgets and amount of money in savings vary considerably among chapters. Chapter savings accounts may contain between \$100 and \$3000, depending on the focus, longevity, expenses, and fundraising efforts of the chapter. For Example, Missouri estimates that they need about \$1000 a year to cover their operating costs, most of which goes to the publication of their newsletter at \$400 per issue.

Chapters may support an audit committee to audit the chapter’s financial records independent of the treasurer/chief financial officer.

Fundraising

There are several ways for your chapter to acquire funds:

- **Membership fees:** Don't expect someone else to give your chapter money if your own members don't think the chapter is worthy of their support. Some chapters survive solely on membership fees.
- **Annual meeting and symposium:** For most chapters, this is the only member service for which it is practical to charge money beyond the membership fee. Registration fees not only pay for the meeting, but are the main source of revenue for some SCB chapters. The key is having a consistently high-quality program, including events designed to build community, so that people come back year after year.
- **Fundraising events:** Raffles, rummage sales, t-shirt sales, and banquets can also serve as social events for the members. Most chapters engage in these activities only in conjunction with their annual meeting.
- **Competitive Grants:** For North America, the best directory is *Environmental Grantmaking Foundations*, updated in odd-numbered years (print or CD, ~\$120, <http://www.environmentalgrants.com/>). Given the cost, you may prefer to borrow a copy from a local NGO. Many of the 1000 foundations listed here do not have websites; the directory explains the funder's mission and lists recent grants and grant sizes. We welcome suggestions for similar directories for other regions of the globe. Some paramount rules: (a) Apply only to those foundations whose statements indicate they are a good match – you will NOT fool a funder by putting a spin on who you are! (b) Before you apply, telephone a program officer at the foundation, honestly explain your needs, and ask if it is worthwhile to apply. Program officers are friendly people who will give you frank advice to save your time and theirs. (c) Follow their application instructions to the last detail!
- **Informal Local Grants:** Approach local membership-based environmental groups, sporting good stores, manufacturers of outdoor equipment, or local eco-tourism industries, and ask them for support. In addition to money, they may provide food or raffle prizes for your annual symposium.
- **Monies from the SCB Executive Office:** The SCB Board of Governors has approved pilot programs to run for 3 years (2005-7). Check the SCB Chapters website for details. Please contact the Executive Office Representative for additional information.

Websites, Newsletters, and Member Communication

Many chapters have active webpages. Some are updated only a few times per year, while others are updated regularly by designated webmasters. New England maintains an active website that provides news, job listings, and links to important conservation sites and to the online journal "Conservation Perspectives." UC Davis' webpage is maintained by their secretary and is updated with the minutes from each meeting. Several chapters maintain websites on the SCB server with the assistance of the Executive Office, while others use affiliated university servers to host their webpages. Chapters are encouraged to be linked to the SCB main website (if not directly hosted by the site) so that they can be easily found by potential members and other interested parties.

Local chapters are invariably run by volunteers, and volunteer burnout is a leading cause of CDS (Chapter Death Syndrome). As your chapter matures, and especially if you can generate revenue from an annual meeting or other source, we encourage you to consider hiring a part-time webmaster and administrator to maintain membership records, handle e-communication, and alert the officers when they are delinquent. This is a good way to organize the volunteer energy, and to free up officers for creative work. Find a well-organized person with a full time job and hire them for an additional 2-4 hours a week. Perhaps an academic or other professional on your Board can have someone on their staff assist with the work.

The SCB quarterly newsletter, which goes to the general SCB membership, contains articles about chapters written by the Chapter Advisors Committee, and offers reports written by one or more local chapters that highlight their activities. Announcements and other contributions are also encouraged. Contributions should be sent to Erica Fleishman, the newsletter editor, at efleish@stanford.edu.

Many chapters also publish their own newsletters. For example, twice a year Missouri produces a publication called "The Glade." It typically has 2-3 research articles that cover work going on in the state, announcements, a

“critter corner”, and a “nature corner”. For the latter, they recruit a local naturalist/nature lover to write about a favorite geographic spot in Missouri. The editor and contributors are all volunteers.

Communication with members relies primarily on email listserves and posting information on chapter webpages. UC Davis has one listserv for paid members who can vote on chapter business including position papers and spending chapter money, and a separate general listserv with a large subscription of interested parties. In addition, SCB maintains a general listserv of officers from *all* chapters as well as other interested persons.

Meetings

Frequency of chapter meetings also varies considerably. Missouri, for example, is a statewide chapter and holds one annual business meeting in conjunction with the Missouri Natural Resources Meeting. Typical attendance is about 10 people. In addition, they hold 2-3 officer meetings each year. In contrast, UC Berkeley and UC Davis meet once or twice per month, offer pizza and drinks, and have a typical attendance of 15-20 people. Wisconsin meets occasionally, but conducts most business at chapter events rather than holding regular chapter meetings.

Non-Profit Management Issues

Obtaining non-profit status helps confer tax advantages and can make it easier to manage financial donations. An excellent on-line resource regarding non-profits is at <http://www.nonprofits.org>. Also check with your state for its specific laws regarding local non-profit issues. Something to keep in mind is that if a chapter is 501c3 (non-profit), it must be careful about any advocacy it carries out in order to maintain its non-profit tax status. There are two different laws that refer to this issue: one says that 501c3 corporations are allowed to lobby as long as it does not constitute a 'substantial portion' of their spending; the other gives a percentage of spending that must not be exceeded. A good explanation can be found at <http://www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/11/08.html>. **(The above applies to U.S. chapters only. Other countries will likely have other rules or customs.)**

Another way to provide acknowledgement of donations from kind-hearted souls is to go through the SCB Executive Office. SCB is a US non-profit organization, registered with the US federal government as a 501.c3 tax-exempt entity. Not all Chapter donations must come through SCB, only those for which 501.c3 status is needed for acknowledgement (unless the Chapter has been approved for this status on their own). Receipts which need tax-free donation acknowledgement must come directly through the SCB Executive Office. All accounting and tracking is the responsibility of the Chapter. All monetary donations sent to the SCB EO on behalf of the Chapter must be submitted in United States dollars. All documentation must be submitted to the Executive Office Representative to Chapters for tracking and issuance of receipts. This is necessary for payment and tracking information reported by SCB to the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS). When all information and payments have been received and processed by the Executive Office, SCB will issue a check to the Chapter and send out appropriate receipts to donors by email attachment or mail. These can be sent to the Chapter for distribution if requested by the Chapter Representative. All necessary forms are available from the Executive Office.

- a) Executive Office Monetary Donations Procedure:** All donations must be given in the name of the Society for Conservation Biology, not the chapter or section or event. The reason is that funds must come into the parent SCB account in order to come under our tax accounting; otherwise SCB will not be able to certify them to IRS.

Checks: Please have your donors draft their checks to the Society for Conservation Biology. All checks should have the Chapter name on them at the least, and if room, the reason for donation. The Chapter Representative must fill out the Donations Worksheet (and submit it to the Membership Coordinator. Once all information and payments have been processed a check will be issued to the Chapter. Checks can be sent by donors or by the Chapter Representative to:

Alan D. Thornhill, Executive Director
Society for Conservation Biology
4245 N Fairfax Dr, Suite 400
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1651

United States

Cash: If cash donations are accepted, make note of the donation in compliance with the Donations Worksheet and deposit this into your Chapter Account. Then send payment via check from the Chapter to SCB with documentation of who the original donor was. SCB will then deposit the check and issue payment to the Chapter as well as process any necessary receipts.

b) Non-monetary Donations: Chapters can accept non-monetary donations for the Chapter for its activities. Whatever this may be is entirely up to the Chapter. Should non-monetary donations require acknowledgement of their donation to SCB as a non-profit with 501c3 status, please contact the Executive Office for proper procedure. A letter of recognition will be sent to the donor (or Chapter if requested) and they can fill out the value of the donated item upon its arrival.

c) Follow-up Documentation: Because SCB is liable to the IRS for donations received, *all chapters receiving monies through this mechanism must provide a detailed accounting (with receipts to back it up) of how the money was spent.* Paying for a disc jockey for a "Conservation Biology social event" is fine so long as we have a paper trail! These reports will be *due no later than 15 February of the year following the monies donated.* These reports must be signed by all elected officers of the Chapter.

Section VI: Resources

Chapters Supporting Each Other

Chapters are often willing to offer assistance and advice to new (or established) Chapters. The following chapters have offered support to other chapters on the following topics in which they have expertise or materials:

- New Orleans, Missouri, UC Davis, and Bolivia offer advice and curricula for Education Outreach Programs.
- Missouri offers advice on running Poster Competitions and Publishing a Newsletter.
- Bolivia would like to share information about On-line Forums, Bulletin Boards, and Courses developed by chapters.
- New England, UC Davis, and Bolivia offer their expertise on Conference and Seminar Planning and Management; Berkeley offers excellent documentation on how to set up a conference.
- New Orleans chairpersons are willing to share advice on starting a chapter.
- New England offers guidance for organizational establishment (legal and financial issues).
- UC Davis offers advice on How to be Productive Board Members.
- New England, Minnesota, and Missouri offer advice on website development.
- New England offers advice on on-line journals and Email Distribution System.
- Bolivia offers books and magazines about biodiversity in Bolivia.

Support from SCB-Main

These fall into 3 main categories: Financial, Material, and Networking. More resources are in development (particularly in the Networking category), and will be posted as they become available. Please let the Chapter Advisors know if there's anything else that would be useful to add to this list. Please contact a Chapter Advisor or the person designated below for help with obtaining these.

Financial

- Grants
- Discounts to student chapter members on SCB membership
- Access to travel assistance to the annual SCB conference

Material

- Various promotional materials regarding SCB for use at chapter meetings, fundraisers, events, etc (Examples are brochures, newsletters, a sample issue of *Conservation Biology*, sample issues of *Conservation in Practice*, T-shirts. Please note the journals can only be sent once per year; the other materials can be sent as needed on a first-come first-served as-available basis. Posters can be borrowed, but must be returned in a timely manner, and a data file with the official SCB logo can be requested for promotions. Contact Kat Powers at kpm@conbio.org for a full list of available materials and to make your requests.
- Donated prizes for competitions or fundraisers (eg, a subscription to a journal)

Networking

- Webhosting for your chapter site on the main SCB website
- A private monitored listserv for officers of all chapters for the exchange of information and requests (chapters@list.conbio.org)
- Chapter exclusive list serves are offered for a nominal fee, however other services such as Google Groups are free. Contact the Executive Office for more details on the advantages/disadvantages of this
- Articles and announcements in the quarterly SCB Newsletter by and about chapters (send these to Erica Fleishman at efleish@stanford.edu)
- A designated Chapters table at the annual SCB conference for your brochures and announcements

The SCB Chapter Advisors Committee

The committee's mission is to support, facilitate, and advocate local chapter growth, inter-chapter communication, and increased support for local chapters from SCB's central office. In other words, they help local chapters establish and grow; enable chapters to exchange ideas and information; create a more visible presence for chapters within the larger SCB organization; and facilitate a network of chapters across the globe. Please contact the either the Liaison or one of the Advisors listed on the Chapters website (www.conbio.org/chapters) for assistance, questions, or concerns.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How do new chapters avoid getting hung up on figuring out the wording of the bylaws?

“For example, right now we're too small a group to consider having as many committees as are included in the draft bylaws. Should we take out clauses that don't apply to us? Do we leave them there and amend them later when they do apply to us? What is the best way to bring up the bylaws for discussion and potential amendment in a meeting? Does there have to be a vote on every adjustment to the wording?”

A1: Don't lose momentum by getting hung up on the bylaws! Use the charter and bylaws template that are on the SCB website (under “local chapters”) to get started. Establish committees and chairs specific to your chapter, to develop and oversee your various projects and goals. In your chapter's bylaws you can list other committees as “Suggested Committees”, like in the template, if you're comfortable with that. It is okay to include committees that do or will apply to your group, even if you can't focus on them right now. You can also make changes to clauses that do not apply to your group, and add clauses that do apply. (For example, UC Davis had to add a clause about ratio of student to non-student members to fulfill the requirements of University affiliation.)

Submit your chapter's charter and bylaws, with your names and the blanks filled in and any changes your group made, to the SCB Chapters-BOG Liaison for ratification by the SCB president. You can also submit copies to the relevant member of the SCB Chapter Advisors Committee (see “Section VI: Resources” for contact information).

If you are concerned that you may want to change the bylaws once they have been ratified, you can establish a committee to draft changes to bylaws and the charter if needed. Any changes can be discussed and decided by this committee, and then approved by your board. Once this is done, present the new bylaws/charter to your membership

for voting approval on the entire document (as opposed to change by change). Majority rules of those voting. Submit the new documents, with changes noted, to the SCB Liaison for re-ratification.

Q2: How do we approach length and continuity in our Board's terms of office?

“How long should executive office terms be when chapters start out? Is two years too long for students to commit to an executive position? What kind of opt-out clause is recommended? What should be the maximum time in office?”

A2: Do what works for your group! Each group does things a bit differently, some with 1-year terms, and some with 2-year terms. For example, the Minnesota chapter has 2-year overlapping terms. At the chapter's inception, however, they found that it was better for their group's continuity to hold elections for half of the officers in year 2, while the other half will be in for 3 years before re-election. These initial 3-year positions will revert back to 2-year terms following this one-time, initial exception. The group amended their by-laws to reflect this change. The Minnesota chapter also found that, since most grad students are in for the long-haul, the 2-year terms don't seem to be a problem. On the other hand, the UC Davis chapter uses 1-year terms and has found this to be successful.

Some involvement of non-students can help maintain continuity, as student leaders tend to move away over time. The Chief Financial Officer is perhaps an ideal Board position for a non-student wanting to make a meaningful but limited contribution to the chapter. For example, a long-serving CFO avoids the need for annual trips to the bank to add and drop authorized signers to your account, and ensures that someone remembers the cost of various activities from year to year. The CFO job also is rather more limited in scope than other Board positions, generally demanding no more time than balancing your monthly personal bank statement.

If someone must step down from office before the end of his/her term, someone else can be appointed to an interim position until regular or special elections can be held. There is no real need for an opt-out clause, as long as the bylaws have general provisions for filling board vacancies when they occur.

Maximum term limits are an issue to be resolved when the bylaws are written. No maximum time in office has been specified by SCB. We can't imagine that anyone would want to serve more than, say, two decades!

Q3: What kind of info about our chapter must be posted on the parent SCB website?

A3: At the very least the SCB parent website requires your chapter name, contact information, and a link to your chapter website (if you have one). You can also write up a short description of your chapter to be linked to the SCB Chapters page.

Q4: What kind of conservation advocacy is our chapter allowed to do? Are there any limitations imposed by the parent SCB?

A4: Chapters are basically allowed to advocate as they see fit. However, the SCB bylaw template specifies requirements regarding public advocacy by a chapter. Chapters are asked adopt a disclaimer policy which says something like “The _____ Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology shall claim responsibility for all Resolutions and Public Advocacy enacted by its membership. All public documents or actions shall include the statement: Resolutions (or Advocacy) of the _____ Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society for Conservation Biology as a whole.”

Chapters can also take a look at SCB's policy guidelines and modify them as appropriate to help the chapter define what it might want to do in terms of advocacy. (<http://conbio.org/SCB/Activities/Policy/>) Any activities specifically related to policy issues should be brought up in consultation with the Executive Office to maintain consistency of messaging – and to bring local issues to attention of the parent Society.

Q5: Can the SCB Executive Office assist us when donors cannot give us (as a Chapter) a check?

A5: Yes! Have the donor make the check out to SCB, indicate the chapter name in the comments area on the check, and send a letter of explanation with the check to the SCB office. Keep in mind that turn-around will take some time.

Q6: When seeking funding from non-members (e.g., businesses) are we limited in who we ask?

A6: No!

Q7: How do we find SCB members in our area?

A7: If you wish to contact all current SCB members in your geographic region, our Executive Office would be happy to broadcast a message on your behalf. You can check out who your local members are yourself, online, as explained below. Because we have promised members not to share our mailing list, contact with these local members should be generated from the Washington office, with responses directed to you.

To search for potential SCB members in your region, designate a member of SCB to login on www.conbio.org. Once you are logged in, you should be able to go to the “Search Expertise Database” part of the site, which takes you to the form for searching the database.