

Policy Approval Process, North America Section, Society for Conservation Biology
updated 14 December 2008

SCB's North America Section undertakes both proactive and reactive policy activities to advance (1) SCB's mission of advancing the science and practice of conserving Earth's biological diversity and (2) SCB's strategic goal of informing and improving policy decisions of major governments, international conventions, organizations, and foundations with the highest-quality scientific counsel, analysis, and recommendations.

Proactive policy efforts generally are initiated by the Section board in collaboration with SCB's Policy Director. Examples include development of a conservation agenda for North America and issuance, in collaboration with other scientific societies, of recommendations to the new U.S. Administration and Congress for ensuring scientific integrity. Reactive efforts typically are initiated by members of the Section or chapters in response to proposals for research, management, or regulation by resource agencies. An example is submission of scoping comments in response to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Climate Change Strategic Plan for Research, Education, and Extension. SCB's positions generally are based on the science underlying these issues rather than advocacy of alternatives or policy positions. SCB would have issued the same recommendations on scientific integrity regardless of which Administration had taken office.

Despite its decentralized functional emphasis, SCB operates as a single non-profit entity with respect to its mission, legal standing, and public perception. A position or statement from one chapter therefore represents and reflects the entire Society. The elected governors of the North America Section and the global Society must balance the needs of a broad, dynamic mission with the fundamental operations of the organization. This policy-approval process is intended to provide consistency and coordination of action and role for SCB in policy while enabling as much independent operation by chapters as possible. Many chapters are well-positioned to identify and recommend activities that will advance SCB's mission.

Proposals for development or endorsement of position statements and policy positions by the North America Section must be submitted to the President of the Section, Erica Fleishman (fleishman@nceas.ucsb.edu). Please send a copy of the submission to the Section's policy intern, Kristin Carden (carden@lifesci.ucsb.edu), and include "SCB" in the subject line.

The Section's policy advisory group will determine whether a proposal is consistent with the strategic priorities of the Section and therefore should be submitted under SCB's policy approval process (see below and <http://www.conbio.org/Activities/Policy/>). Preliminary decisions will be shared with the full board of the Section, who will be invited to comment on the decision or the proposal itself. Priority will be given to responses to published materials (e.g., petitions to list species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, draft recovery plans, or proposed changes to existing federal regulations) and to issues of national or continental relevance. With rare exception, the Section will not endorse or join positions or statements prepared by other organizations or individuals unless members of the Section have been involved directly in development of the position or statement and it has gone through SCB's policy approval process. The Section Board rarely will have the capacity to engage on issues proposed by members of the

Section. Members who request active involvement of the Section in policy issues should be prepared to assume primary responsibility for all work required.

If a policy proposal is consistent with the strategic priorities of the Section, we will forward the proposal to SCB's Rapid Policy Review Group (see below). The Section and Society reserve the right to request or condition all SCB involvement on revisions in content, format, or presentation.

Please contact Erica Fleishman with questions.

SCB Policy Approval Process

as approved by SCB's Policy Committee and Board of Governors in March 2008

When any Regional Section, working group, local chapter, or other subgroup or office of SCB proposes a new policy position or a significant revision to an existing position, the proponent will submit the proposal to SCB's Policy Director, SCB's Policy Committee Chair, and the Policy Chair and President of the relevant Regional Section, if any. These four individuals shall comprise a rapid policy review group (RPRG).

The RPRG shall give priority, without a requirement for further external review, to policy proposals that (1) are based on science published in *Conservation Biology*, other peer-reviewed journals, or white papers approved by SCB or its Regional Sections, and (2) are consistent with the strategic priorities of SCB or its Regional Sections. If these criteria are met, then the RPRG shall forward the proposal and their recommendation for acceptance, acceptance with revision, or rejection to the Policy Committee within two business days of submission.

If the criteria for expedited review are not met, then the Policy Committee Chair shall identify two or more experts (who may include members of the Policy Committee of SCB or the Section) to review the proposal. These reviews shall be completed within four business days. A decision shall be made by the RPRG to recommend acceptance, acceptance with revision, or rejection of the proposal within two business days following receipt of reviews. The Policy Committee Chair may waive the requirement for external review when necessary to meet external deadlines on matters important to SCB.

The RPRG shall forward the original proposal, any external reviews, and their recommendation to the Policy Committee. The RPRG and proponent shall incorporate revisions suggested by members of the Policy Committee provided that the revisions do not materially alter the content of the proposal.

The revised proposal shall be considered approved by SCB within three business days of its submission to the Policy Committee unless it is rejected by a majority of the Committee sooner. The period from initial submission of the proposal to final decision shall be no more than a total of 11 business days unless that limit is waived by consensus of the RPRG.

Members of the RPRG shall designate a proxy if they expect to be unavailable for more than two business days and shall send this information to other members of the group.

Please consult with SCB's Policy Director (jfitzgerald@conbio.org) if you have further questions.