

SOUTH ATLANTIC CHAPTER REPORT FOR 2009 SWS ANNUAL BOARD MEETING

June 4, 2009

South Atlantic Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists

Kimberli J. Ponzio, Chair
Dianna M. Hogan, Vice Chair
William Conner, Secretary/Treasurer

Prepared by Kimberli J. Ponzio

Abstract:

In the past year, the South Atlantic Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists held its first regional chapter meeting together with the South Central Chapter in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in October 2008. We supported three \$200 travel grants for students to travel to the chapter meeting. We awarded the Best Student Paper with a \$600 travel award to the Annual SWS Conference. We made the UMEB (Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Biology, NSF) student travel grant a permanent part of our student grant program (amount not to exceed \$2000). We continued to offer a number of travel and research grants to students: Four, \$750 grants for student research; two, \$500 travel grants to the Annual SWS Conference; five, \$100 travel awards for students to attend the Association of Southeastern Biologists conference. We fostered the development of a new, student wetland group affiliation at Duke University, with *Curtis Richardson* as the Faculty Advisor. We continued our fundraising by selling merchandise with the chapter logo and ran our third annual calendar photo contest. We donated SAC merchandise to improve outreach to other like-minded organizations and to increase visibility of the SAC and SWS. We proposed a change in SAC by-laws to (1) change the election cycle of the Chair and Vice Chair to be held concurrently, rather than in alternating years; (2) specify that the Past Chair will be responsible for officer nominations; and (3) broaden criteria for the timing of chapter meetings to occur at "other times and places as appropriate", rather than to specifically state that these meetings shall be held in conjunction with ASB (Association of Southeastern Biologists) meetings. In June 2009, we held elections for Chair and Vice-Chair. Secretary/Treasurer elections are held on a 3-year cycle and will be held spring 2010.

Chapter /Committee Roster:

Kimberli J. Ponzio, Chair
Gregory B. Noe, Past Chair
Dianna M. Hogan, Vice Chair
William Conner, Secretary/Treasurer
Shanin Speas-Frost, Webmaster
David Bailey, Awards Chair



SWS South Atlantic Chapter

Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia,
Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands

1. Chapter mission

The objective of the South Atlantic Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists is to encourage communication of wetland issues and research activities in the South Atlantic region (from Virginia down to Florida as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). The Chapter also sponsors meetings and other activities as well, and sponsors students to attend such meetings, which foster interaction of wetland scientists and managers in the region.

2. Activities, actions, and accomplishments

The SAC implemented a new Student Research Grant program in 2006, annually awarding four \$500 grants to students that are conducting wetland research within the regional boundaries of the SAC. In 2008-09, we increased the award amount to \$750 each. SAC applicants followed the guidelines and application deadlines of the SWS program. Research awards for 2009 will be announced at the Annual SWS Conference in Madison, W.I. This activity supported the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 1.1 - Action 1.1.1, Objective 2.2, Objective 6.3, and Objective 7.6.

The SAC will sponsor one UMEB (Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Biology, NSF) student within the South Atlantic Chapter with a fully funded travel award (not to exceed \$2,000) to the 2009 Annual SWS Conference in Madison, WI. This award has been made a permanent installment in our student awards program. This year this scholarship will be awarded to *Jenaidy Benitez* from the University of Puerto Rico. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 1.1 - Actions 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, Objective 2.2 - Actions 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, Objective 6.3, Objective 7.6 – Action 7.6.1.

The SAC also offered Student Travel Awards to the Annual SWS Meeting for \$500 each. These were awarded to *Michael Osland* from Duke University for his research on “Plant and Avian Community Response to Cattail (*Typha* spp.) Removal via Fungus in a Tropical Dry Wetland: Implications for Restoration and Invasive Plant Management” and *Rachel Michaels* from the University of Virginia for her research on “Interactions Between Hydrogen Sulfide and Reduced Iron in Intertidal Salt Marsh Sediments”. The SAC awarded the Best Student Paper at the chapter meeting a \$600 travel grant to the Annual SWS Conference in Madison, WI. This grant was awarded to *Jamie Duberstein* from Clemson University for his paper entitled “Use of hummocks and hollows by trees in tidal freshwater forested wetlands in streamside and backswamp settings of Savannah NWR”. Three students (*William deGravelles*, *Jamie Duberstein*, and *Masamichi Ogasawara*) were awarded \$200 grants to travel to and present their research at the SAC/SCC Combined Chapter meeting in Tuscaloosa, AL in Oct 2008. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 1.1 - Actions 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, Objective 2.2 – Action 2.2.2, Objective 6.3, and Objective 7.6.

The SAC continued its commitment to encourage the involvement of students and future generations of wetland scientists. We fostered the development of a new, student wetland group at Duke University, with *Dr. Curtis Richardson* as the Faculty Sponsor. The group, called Duke SAWS (Student Association of Wetland Scientists), went through the newly updated process for becoming an official student affiliation with the SWS. *Joshua Unghire*, SAWS Chair and *Kristin Vaughan*, SAWS Vice-Chair are the founding officers of the organization. New officers were installed in May 2009 and they are: *Alicia*

Burtner – Chair, *Maura Nowalk* - Vice-Chair, and *Catherine Carter* - Secretary/Treasurer. In addition, the ‘Wetlands Club’ at the University of Florida continues to support a variety of activities to involve students in wetland related events. The faculty sponsor for this group is *Dr. Mark Brown* and the student officers are: President - *Julie Sorenson*, Vice president - *Alex Cheesman*, Secretary - *Jacob Diamond*, and Treasurer - *Lisa Gardner*. These activities supported the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objectives 1.1, 2.1, and 2.2, Objective 4.3 – Action 4.3.1, Objective 7.1, and Objective 7.6 - Action 7.6.1.

In spring 2009, the SAC solicited nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice-chair. An electronic election was held in June 2009 and new officers will be announced at the SAC Chapter Meeting at the Annual SWS Conference in Madison, WI. Our current Vice-Chair, *Dianna Hogan*, ran for the Chair position. Candidates for the Vice-Chair position were *Kelly Chinnere Reiss* from the University of Florida and *Michael Piehler* from the University of North Carolina. Secretary/Treasurer elections are held on a 3-year cycle and will be held spring 2010. This activity supported the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 7.5 – Action 7.5.2, and Objective 7.9.

The SAC did not hold its annual business luncheon during the Annual Meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists (ASB) in April 2009 since members of the SAC Executive Committee were unable to travel to the ASB meeting. Cuts in travel budgets for the Executive Committee’s employers (academic and government institutions) were responsible for the inability of students and associated faculty to travel to the meeting. No students applied for the five travel awards of \$100 each. While the SAC would like to continue its relationship with ASB, we will be discussing the possibility of broadening our scope to hold these meetings at other venues (SAC workshops, other SWS Chapter Meetings, other like-minded organizational meetings such as ESA, SER, etc). Wherever the meeting is held, it will provide an opportunity to recruit new SWS members and involve existing SAC members in chapter activities. This activity will support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Action 1.4.1, Objective 7.1, and Objective 7.3.

The SAC held its third annual photo competition with winning photos being published in a 2009 wetland calendar that is being sold online. SAC members were allowed to submit three photos of southeastern wetlands. The top twelve photos were chosen by our judges, printed in a calendar, and sold with the rest of our merchandise at CafePress.com. SWS asked permission to use the SAC calendar images as covers of the Wetlands Journal in coming issues. Images of the 2007 calendar were used to produce a new SWS promotional brochure. One image from the 2009 calendar will be used on the cover of the October issue of ‘Wetlands’ and another from the SAC 2008 calendar will be used on the cover of the first issue of ‘Wetland Science and Practice’. In addition, another non-profit organization has requested the use of calendar photos for the cover of ‘American Rivers’ – a publication that focuses on adaptation strategies that communities can take to better cope with climate change and is set to be published mid-May. These efforts have increased the visibility of SWS and SAC and will increase revenue to support SAC programs. This activity directly supported the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Action 7.7.2, Objective 7.1, Objective 7.5 – Action 7.5.1, and will indirectly support Objective 1.1 - Action 1.1.1, Objective 2.2 – Action 2.2.2, and Objective 6.3.

The SAC is continuing to sell merchandise with our chapter logo in order to increase revenue and visibility of the chapter. We are selling merchandise with our new logo through an online company, CafePress.com. Color or black and white logos (designed by Florida artist Robert Ponzio) are available on apparel, posters, cards, housewares, and bags. The SAC has earned \$360 to date. The revenue from this program has been used to donate merchandise for silent auctions held by other like-minded organizations. The merchandise can be viewed and purchased online at <http://www.cafepress.com/swssac>. This activity directly supported the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Action 7.7.2 and Objective 7.1, and will indirectly support Action 1.1.1, Objective 2.2.2, and Objective 6.3

We continued our interactions with other scientific and conservation societies. We co-hosted the combined regional chapter meeting held with the South Central Chapter of SWS in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in Oct. 2008. We provided our SAC Wetland Calendars for sale and for a student paper prize. We sponsored the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society in hosting their national meeting in Nov 2008 by donating our chapter merchandise. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 1.4 - Action 1.4.1, Action 4.1.1., and Action 4.3.1.

The SAC website has been updated with easy to find chapter information, keeping chapter members well informed with news of Chapter and wetland happenings. Information on all of the Chapter's various grants and awards programs is available online, including current year's application guidelines, deadlines, and past recipient awards. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 1.2 –Action 1.2.4 and Objective 2.4.

The SAC Chair will serve as co-chair for the organization of a scientific symposium for the Annual SWS Conference in Madison, WI. The symposium is entitled “Genetics & Ecology of Cattail Invasions: Implications for Wetland Management”. In addition, the SAC Chair will serve as a panelist on the SWS Undergraduate Mentoring Program, Career Development Mini-Workshops. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objective 2.2 - Actions 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, Objective 3.2 – Action 3.2.3, Objective 3.3, Objective 4.1 – Action 4.1.1, Objective 4.3 – Action 4.3.1, Objective 7.6 – Action 7.6.1.

SAC Executive Committee members brought the issue of cypress mulch sales, sustainable forestry practices, and the mission of the ‘Save Our Cypress’ organization to the attention of the SWS President and the Executive Board. Together with the scientific expertise of SWS members, the SWS President fashioned a letter stating the SWS position on this issue. This information may be disseminated through multiple SWS venues. These activities support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objectives 4.2 and 5.3.

3. Planned activities and actions

We plan to amend the SAC by-laws by asking members to vote to (1) change the election cycle of the Chair and Vice-Chair to be held concurrently, rather than in alternating years; (2) specify that the Past-Chair will be responsible for officer nominations; and (3) broaden criteria for the timing of chapter meetings to occur at “other times and places as appropriate”, rather than to specifically state that these meetings shall be held in conjunction with ASB (Association of Southeastern Biologists) meetings. We plan to hold an election for the Secretary/Treasurer in spring 2010. We plan to revitalize our affiliation with the University of Florida student Wetlands Club and encourage other Universities to affiliate themselves with the SWS-SAC. These activities will support the following items in the SWS Strategic Plan: Objectives 1.1, 2.1, and 2.2, Objective 4.3 – Action 4.3.1, Objective 7.1, and Objective 7.6 - Action 7.6.1.

4. Recommendations for activities or action

Request that SWS provide complimentary exhibition space in the Exhibit Hall at annual meetings to support chapter visibility and outreach which may include merchandise sales, distribution of chapter information, and a base for chapter networking.

5. Background information

The South Atlantic Chapter has 481 members as of May 27, 2009 (compared to 807 in Dec 2008 and 676 in May 2008). Currently we have \$8,356.35 in our checking account (with an outstanding amount of no

more than \$2,000 to be paid to the 2008 UMEB student, \$600 for best student paper at SCC/SAC joint meeting, \$3,000 for student research grants, \$1,000 in travel awards to SWS '09 meeting, and up to \$2,000 for the 2009 UMEB student) and \$17,087.09 in a CD for a total balance of \$25,443.44.