



ADVANCING CONSERVATION THROUGH
EMPATHY FOR WILDLIFE

March Committee Updates

Communications Committee

Chairs: Amber Reger (ZooMontana), Natalie Stier (Utah's Hogle Zoo)

Representatives: Meagan Ashton (Seattle Aquarium), Delanie Jellison (Santa Barbara Zoo)

We discussed adding a quarterly addition to the Empathy Matters Newsletter and will be launching our first deep dive into an effective empathy practice in the May edition of the newsletter. We also started the process for creating an empathy in social media toolkit, a resource that's been requested by Network Members and Affiliates. [View our agenda here.](#)

Conservation Action Committee

Chairs: Erica Carnes (Blank Park Zoo), Kelsey Raffel (Como Park Zoo & Conservatory)

Representatives: Bethanie West (Idaho Falls Zoo), Brooke Tucker (ZooMontana), Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo), Toby Seegert (Zoological Society of Milwaukee)

We reviewed resources submitted for the 2024 Conservation Action Toolkit and determined the future cadence for toolkit updates. We also began discussing our committee workplan through February 2025, including potential new joint conservation initiatives for the Network. [Let us know what joint initiative you'd like to see!](#) [View our agenda here.](#)

DEAI Committee

Chair: Shanna Hillard (Zoological Society of Milwaukee)

Representatives: Adam Winegarden (Racine Zoo), Andrea Tronson (Roosevelt Park Zoo), Crystal Fox (Lake Superior Zoo), Fernanda Mora (ZooMontana), Alejandra Medina (Minnesota Zoo)

We began incorporating feedback received from our DEAI Definitions survey and met with James Flores, the Tribal Liaison at the Milwaukee Public Museum, to discuss how to create a meaningful land or tribal acknowledgement. Learnings from this meeting will inform the committee's next steps with the current Network acknowledgement. [View our agenda here.](#)



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Membership Committee

Chair: Heather Harelson Nutick (Red River Zoo)

Representatives: Chris Berg (Shedd Aquarium), Tierney Ball (Zoo Boise)

This was our open meeting. We discussed and welcome input on our new quarterly Network onboarding meetings, the first of which will be [occurring on April 22nd](#). We also talked with meeting guests about the kinds of leadership opportunities in the Network they would like to see to inform the building out of those opportunities. [View our agenda here](#).

Steering Committee

Chair: Shana Kent (Alaska SeaLife Center)

Representatives: Aszya Summers (Lincoln Park Zoo), Hannah Tilden (Woodland Park Zoo), Liz Gilles (Minnesota Zoo), Liz Hines (Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium)

To ensure Network event experiences are the same for all attendees, we created a disclaimer statement for all virtual Network events. This ensures that everyone who attends has the same access to shared resources and as equal an event experience as possible. We also created a plan for our [open meeting in April](#) in which we will discuss revisions to the Network mission, vision, values and purpose. If you're unable to attend, we welcome input on [this Google Form](#). We hope you see you there! [View our March agenda here](#).

Strategic Learning Committee

Chair: Melia Paguirigan (Woodland Park Zoo)

Representatives: Cam Whitley (Western Washington University), Isabelle Bieser (Zoological Society of Milwaukee), Jessica Schellhorn (Blank Park Zoo), Ryann Stacy (Racine Zoo)

We identified multiple ways to begin addressing our [first new learning question](#). These include the creation of a toolkit that includes examples of empathy in action with accompanying evaluations (when applicable) and coding the mission statements of our 27 Partner Organizations to highlight where/how/when empathy best practices align to create recommendations on how to cultivate empathy buy-in. We will continue this conversation for this learning question and the second one in April. [View our agenda here](#).



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Interested in joining a committee?

Reach out to us at empathy@zoo.org and let us know which committee you are interested in being a part of. In addition to an hourly meeting once a month, committee representatives can expect to spend 30 minutes-1 hour outside of meetings on committee tasks per month. Terms are 2 years.

We currently have open seats on the Communications, Membership, Steering, and Strategic Learning committees.