

TERMS OF REFERENCE

IUCN/SSC POLAR BEAR SPECIALIST GROUP (PBSG)

Agreed upon in Fort Collins, USA, June 9-13, 2014

Mission

To coordinate, synthesize and distribute scientific information necessary to guide the long-term viability of polar bears and their habitats.

Objectives

1. Communicate scientific findings on polar bear conservation.
2. Promote inter-jurisdictional research, monitoring, and management of polar bears and their habitats.
3. Coordinate distribution of scientific information necessary to manage harvests of polar bears.
4. Identify threats to polar bears and define possible solutions.
5. Provide scientific advice regarding policies and actions concerning polar bears.
6. Assure actions of the PBSG are consistent with the tenets of the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears.
7. To build capacity within the PBSG through the exchange of ideas, information, and technical expertise.

Roles and activities

To fulfill its mission and meet its objectives, the PBSG will:

Technical

- Compile, review, evaluate and synthesize science-based information on the status and trends of polar bears throughout their range.
- Communicate scientific information about polar bears and the ecosystems of which they are a part.
- Provide technical information for assessments of the impacts of human activities on polar bear subpopulations.
- Provide scientific information for the development and implementation of regional, national, and international conservation plans/strategies.
- Facilitate co-ordination and co-operation in basic and applied research on polar bears.
- Establish sub-committees, as required, to examine technical issues in detail.
- Hold working meetings of the members at regular intervals to facilitate information exchange, collaboration, and any other necessary business of the PBSG.
- Lead on the IUCN Red List status updates for the polar bear.

Advisory

- Provide independent scientific advice to the polar bear Range States in support of the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears.
- Identify research, management, and conservation priorities for polar bears and their habitats, and disseminate these in regularly updated publications and through the PBSG website.
- Liaise with the IUCN, the Bear Specialist Group and other Specialist Groups to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices.
- Provide independent scientific information with regard to CITES, CMS, and other international and national conventions, agreements and frameworks as requested.

Membership

The PBSG is focused on having an active, widely skilled, and a range wide representative group of members fully supportive of the mission and activities of the SG based on their relevant and direct expertise in polar bear research, management, conservation, or education.

Chair

The Chair of the PBSG is nominated and approved by the members by consensus and subsequently confirmed by the IUCN. If consensus can't be reached, then there will be a vote, decided by simple majority. The chairmanship follows the IUCN quadrennial cycle, and the Chair formally reports to the IUCN as representative of the group. The Chair is the only member of the PBSG that formally answers to the IUCN and speaks on behalf of the PBSG.

If for any reason the Chair is unable to complete their term of office, the PBSG shall elect a new Chair through a postal election until a new Chair can be elected at the next regular meeting.

The Chair may choose to appoint a co-Chair.

Members

The PBSG Chair appoints members based on their direct and relevant scientific knowledge. Members are appointed for one IUCN quadrennial. Consistent with the IUCN procedures, the PBSG membership will be dissolved and members appointed at the end of each cycle. For example, members that no longer support the mission and objectives of the PBSG, or those that have been inactive, may not have their membership renewed, and their membership could be ended upon decision by the Chair. This renewal allows for a regular assessment and balancing of the required expertise by the Chair. The Chair will seek to keep a balanced membership based on geographic representation. The group has agreed on a minimum number of members to be 15 and a maximum to be 35. Membership in the PBSG is personal. If a member cannot attend a PBSG meeting, alternates are not allowed.

Responsibilities

Chair

The Chair has the responsibility to ensure the scientific integrity of the PBSG, to guide the group in accordance with the statutes of the IUCN and, where necessary, to guide the group towards consensus or general agreement on issues relevant to the conservation of polar bears and their habitat.

Members

Members will provide independent expertise while serving in the capacity of a PBSG member. Members are expected to respond in a timely manner to reasonable requests from the Chair. Members will strive for the fulfilment of the Mission, to contribute to the scientific integrity and quality of the group's output, and to work in confidence with the group's members.

Email, meeting minutes, and other official communication of the group are considered confidential amongst members unless expressly stated otherwise to encourage an open environment for the sharing of ideas.

Decisions

The PBSG strives towards consensus.

In issues where the group needs to make a decision, the final decision needs a majority of over 50% of voting members. Votes are either made in meetings of the group (by hand sign or written) or by email (written).

Members with views that are not supported by the majority will not make statements promoting or suggesting that their views represent the majority.

Written statements that reflect the decision could carry a minority statement.

Rules of procedure

Meetings

The PBSG's internal operations will be flexible, allowing for the convening of regular and ad hoc national, regional or international consultations, to appoint new members, or to address specific conservation issues or techniques.

The PBSG will meet at least once every four years, if possible hosted in rotation among countries representing membership, and should facilitate maximum participation.,

Minutes

The PBSG subcommittees and working groups will report their findings according to the PBSG Terms of Reference.

Working language

The working language of the PBSG will be English, including all official reports and publications of the PBSG and its working groups.

IUCN Secretariat and SSC Chair

The IUCN Secretariat and the SSC Chair have permanent specialist status to all regular PBSG meetings.

Invited Specialists

Members can recommend or request participation and / or presentations by invited specialists whose work is relevant to the agenda items and content of PBSG meetings. The Chair will decide whether to approve inclusion of the invited specialist. Suggestions should be submitted to the Chair no less than 90 days prior to a regular meeting. Some parts of the PBSG meeting may be closed to invited specialists and observers. The combination of invited specialists and observers will not exceed the number of PBSG members at a meeting.

SSC Bear Specialist Group

The Chair / Co-Chairs of the IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group have a standing invitation to participate as specialists at PBSG meetings.

Observers

A limited number of observers might be allowed to attend regular meetings of the group at the discretion of the PBSG Chair. Observers could be individuals or organizations. Observers have access to regular meetings upon notification by the PBSG Chair. Some parts of the PBSG meeting may be closed to observers and invited specialists. Any member might propose observers. Suggestions should be submitted to the Chair no less than 90 days prior to a regular meeting. The combination of invited specialists and observers will not exceed the number of PBSG members at a meeting.

An observer is not entitled to speak during the meeting, or contribute to the discussions or the business of the PBSG, unless explicitly invited by the Chair.

Media

Media will not be permitted to attend PBSG meetings as they are technical discussions. Results from the meetings will be communicated via a press release or other agreed-upon means.

Sub-committees

Sub-committees and working groups may be formed at the request of the membership or by designation of the chair to focus on specific issues or tasks. The PBSG subcommittees and working groups will report their findings according to the PBSG Terms of Reference. The Chair has the authority to delegate tasks to individuals or groups of members and to establish timelines aiming for a balanced distribution of workload.

The Chair shall a) have the full power and authority subject to the supervision of the group b) make full arrangements for the meetings c) develop the draft agenda d) receive the credentials of observers.

Website

The Website Working Group of the PBSG is responsible for the content of the PBSG website under supervision of the Chair.

Expenses

Each member is responsible for their own travel coordination and expenses to attend the PBSG meetings. Range countries are responsible for hosting regular meetings.