



## Presidents Column

Andreas Zedrosser, Current IBA President  
Institute for Natural Sciences and Environmental Health  
University College of Southeast Norway  
Pb. 235, N-3603 Kongsberg, Norway  
Email: [andreas.zedrosser@bearbiology.org](mailto:andreas.zedrosser@bearbiology.org)

## Back to the Future

IBA has embarked on a process to play a bigger role in the conservation and management of bears on the global scale. The goal is to provide more training and funding opportunities for our members to enhance science-based bear management and conservation all over the world. In our internal communication, we refer to this process as “IBA transition”. The basis for this transition was a membership survey in 2015, with the goal to evaluate the current state and status as well as provide ideas about future development and evolution of IBA. The results of this survey have been presented at the IBA Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, in 2016, however, as a reminder I present below some of the most important results of this survey.

We asked the question: “What should be IBA’s 3-5 most important goals for the next 10 years?” The 6 most important goals ( $\geq 20\%$  support among respondents) were that IBA should provide more support for conservation oriented research and management projects (suggested by 46% of all respondents); IBA should provide more and better information and educational materials for the general public (31%); IBA should take a more proactive and stronger political role (31%); IBA should strive to increase its finances and grants program (24%); IBA should help improve the communication and cooperation amongst the membership (23%); and IBA should strive to increase student recruitment and involvement.

Respondents answered to the question “What are IBA’s greatest strengths or programs?” that the 6 most important strengths of IBA were the conferences (40%); the grants program (36%); Ursus and IBN (36%); IBA’s scientific expertise (26%); IBA’s organizational culture (25%); and IBA role in providing networking opportunities (25%).

Respondents were asked “What are 3 major challenges facing IBA in the next decade?”. The 4 major challenges facing IBA in the next decade as listed by the respondents were securing and improving of IBA’s financial situation (39%); ecological, conservation and management challenges to bears (34%); IBA’s role in terms of proactive leadership and authority in the conservation and management of bears (24%); an increase in membership (20%).

In summary, the most important suggestions (ranked according to support) were 1) that IBA should work on securing and improving its financial situation as an organization and for its grant program. 2) IBA should show more proactive authority and leadership in the science-based management and conservation of bears, i.e., respondents want IBA to be more visible



and more active with helping governments, agencies, etc. with scientific questions pertaining bears and their management. 3) Conferences are seen as one of the most important strengths of IBA. 4) Respondents want IBA to help improve the communication and cooperation among the membership, researchers and managers. 5) IBA should improve its public information and education efforts, in short “Take the science to the people”.

### **Teamwork for transition**

IBA Council has several *ad hoc* committees working on different and important aspects of the transition. Please note that these ad hoc committees should not be confused with other more permanent IBA committees; *ad hoc* committees work on a specific task and are dissolved after their work is finished. Here I would like to introduce two recently installed *ad hoc* committees, the Development Committee (DC) and the Communications Committee (CC). The DC is chaired by John Hechtel, and is working on preparing a sustainable medium- and long-term fundraising plan for IBA. The reality of the game is that additional money is needed for IBA to grow as organization and to provide more and larger grants for science-based bear conservation and management as well as more membership services. Importantly, this committee will also ensure that IBA grows at the right speed, not too fast but also not too slow, and it will provide important milestones and check points along this route.

The CC is chaired by Agnieszka (Aga) Sergiel and Alex Kopatz, and is responsible for breaking down the many things happening with the transition and pass on this information to IBA members. As a start, Aga and Alex have prepared a column in this issue of IBN (page 5). Regular information in eblasts, Facebook, as well as on the IBA website ([www.bearbiology.org](http://www.bearbiology.org)) will follow. Please do not hesitate to contact Aga or Alex, but also DT Jennapher or myself in case of any questions about the transition.

### **IBA’s first full time employee and a new IBA Secretary**

As part of the transition process, IBA recently completed the legal and financial requirement to hire our first employee for the position of Director of Transition (DT). The DT will work closely with Council and ad hoc committees and coordinate the transition process. Jennapher Teunissen van Manen was hired for this position and stepped down as IBA Secretary. Former IBA Council member and VP Eurasia Alex Kopatz has taken over as interim secretary for the remainder of 2019. Please contact Alex for all questions about the daily business of IBA.

### **Next IBA Conference**

It is my great pleasure to announce that the next IBA Conference will be held in September 2020 in Kalispell, Montana. Make sure to check out the IBA website for updates as they become available for conference information.