U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ecological Services, Southwest Region

U.S. Geological Survey & Auburn University
Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

Course Announcement (8/24/18)

Species Status Assessment 200 – Strategic use of data: describing population trends for Species Status Assessments

Course Description

This is a second course in the Species Status Assessment (SSA) instructional series to understand the basics of models to inform and enhance species status assessments under the Endangered Species Act. The purpose is to help students become comfortable assessing available data, predicting outcomes from mathematical trends, and communicating uncertainty related to those trends to a broader audience.

On day one, we will discuss statistical methods to evaluate the historical and current state of a species, including identifying the data types available and interpreting tables and figures in the scientific literature. On the second day, we will discuss projection models to predict the future population trends of species across alternative scenarios and how to communicate assumptions and outcomes effectively.

Dates & Location

October 23-24, 2018; 8 am to 5 pm

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Region IV HQ, Conference Room, 14200 Garrett Rd. **Houston, Texas**.
Next to Sheldon Lake State Park.

Local Contact

Nathan_Allan@fws.gov,
512-490-0057 ext. 237

Who Should Attend

Fish and Wildlife Service biologists involved in conducting SSAs.

Length

2 days, 8 am to 5 pm each day

College Credit

Not applicable.

Tuition

There is no tuition.

To Register

Email the local contact of the class and request a place in the course.

Availability

Limited to 35 participants.

Suggested Accommodations

Staybridge Suites Houston – Humble, 4819 Canyon Lakes Trace Drive Humble, Texas. 1-832-230-1401. Fed Rate $121. Use link (code UFW) to make reservation by Oct. 1. Free shuttle to GBI Airport.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- *Become familiar with common terminology and approaches used in population modeling including constraints, weaknesses, and underlying assumptions.*
- *Identify an appropriate analytical approach for assessing the status of a species given the available data.*
- *Communicate/understand relevant analytics and interpret population modeling results pertinent to an SSA.*
- *Communicate population modeling results to decision makers as part of SSA results.*

SSA 200 – Questions and Answers

Who is this course for? The material in this class is aimed at SSA practitioners, i.e. biologists who are involved in conducting SSAs for the Fish and Wildlife Service; particularly those who anticipate being involved in SSAs where rule sets and population models are appropriate to develop or where existing frameworks might be incorporated into the SSA.

Who are the instructors? Dr. Conor McGowan, U.S. Geological Survey, Acting Unit Leader; Dr. Nicole F. Angeli, Post-doctoral Fellow; Anna Tucker, doctoral student, all from the Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University.

Will I learn how to build population models? No. This is a course to help you know what you don't know by understanding the different types of population models, their applications and limitations, and the terminology and basic structure of different models in published literature, reports, and conversation. For an introductory course on direct modeling, check out NCTC's *Modeling for Endangered Species Management*, CSP2304; next offering is October 29-November 2, 2018.

Is this an NCTC-sanctioned training course? No, not yet, but we're working on it. The course format will be structured and formal, like an NCTC course, but we have not made this an NCTC course. We might do that in the future, but this is the pilot offering, and we want to see how the course is received.

What's the difference in the *SSA 200* course and the *Modeling for Endangered Species Management* coure? The *Modeling for Endangered Species Management* course by NCTC is intended to teach biologists how to build population models. Our *SSA 200* is an overview of the basics of population modeling so you can communicate better with modelers and better understand when to apply a model. We recommend the *Modeling for Endangered Species Management* course if you are planning to actually create population models. The *SSA 200* course is aimed at everyone else who is involved in SSAs and needs to have a basic knowledge about population models.

Who's paying for this? There is no tuition for the course. The course development and the instructors' travel have been paid by FWS, Region 2, Ecological Services. Travel costs for students participating in the course will need to be paid by their home office.

Is this course only for Region 2? This inaugural offering of the course is aimed at biologists in Region 2 where the course development was initially funded. However, we will also invite a limited number of representatives from other Regions that might be interested in taking the course back to their regions and who might serve as instructors in future course offerings in other Regions.

Will there be other opportunities to take the course? Presumably yes, but other courses have not yet been scheduled. We are anticipating offering the course for the national Species Assessment Team (RO/HQ Listing people) and SSA Framework Implementation Team. Future course offerings will depend on the interest from other Regions and the availability of qualified instructors to lead the course.

Do I need to have taken the *Introduction to Species Status Assessment* course from NCTC before taking this course? Yes, it would be best if students had already taken the Intro to SSA course before this course. Exceptions could be made for students who have not taken the Intro to SSA course but have experience in conducting SSAs.