Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program Communication Guide

The following is a guide that details the appropriate chain of communication for AZA Animal Program Leaders who are encountering difficulties with an institution regarding SSP Breeding and Transfer recommendations following the 30-day comment period and publication of the final Breeding and Transfer Plan. This may include such things as:
- If animal transfers are not occurring
- If one institution has been told by another institution that they will not transfer an animal
- If an institution is acquiring specimens from outside the managed program against recommendations

Often there are answers or solutions that can be easily realized through basic communications that will resolve the issues quickly and efficiently.

The APM Committee recommends that all communications among parties be archived to document the situation.

**If an AZA Program Leader feels that they need additional guidance regarding AZA Animal Program policies and procedures, they are encouraged and welcome to contact their APM Committee Liaison or the AZA Conservation & Science Department at any time. The list of APM Committee Liaisons is on the AZA website (must be logged into the AZA website to view this link).**

Step 1. Contact the Institutional Representative (IR)
The IR is the primary point of contact for each SSP Program in which the institution participates, and is designated by the Institutional Liaison (IL). An IR is required to review and comment on recommendations for their institution for each SSP to which the IR is assigned during the 30-day comment period. Lack of comments assumes that the institution will abide by the recommendation.

- A SSP’s IR list is found on the SSP Program’s page in the Animal Program’s database. You must be logged into the AZA website to see the link to download the IR list.
- If the SSP Coordinator has a concern with an institution’s action, or lack of action, regarding their recommendation in the final, published Breeding and Transfer Plan then the first step is for the SSP Coordinator to email the IR and discuss their questions and/or concerns as soon as the concern develops. It is important to document the concern and chain of communication through email, if possible.
- If there is no response to the initial email within one week, the Program Leader should follow up with a phone call.
- Often, this phone call/email between the parties will resolve any misunderstandings or lead to alternative resolutions.

Step 2. Contact the Institutional Liaison (IL) and/or the AZA Population Management Center (PMC) or Adjunct Population Biologist
2a. Contacting the Institutional Liaison (IL)
The IL is responsible for designating and overseeing all the IRs at their institution, and ensuring that the IRs are fulfilling their program responsibilities.

- If Step 1 does not resolve the situation, or if the SSP Coordinator is unable to contact the IR, then the SSP Coordinator should contact the IL. A list of ILs and their contact information can be found on the AZA website (must be logged into the AZA website to view this link).
• At this time, the SSP Coordinator should communicate the issue via email with the IL, or with the IR if the IL was able to establish that connection to resolve the issue. (see Step 1)
• If there is no response to the initial email within one week, the Program Leader should follow up with a phone call to the IL.
• If the SSP Coordinator is apprehensive to speak to the IL initially, they should consider discussing the issue with their TAG Chair (see Step 3) at this time.
• Often this phone call/email between the parties will resolve any misunderstandings.

2b. Contacting the AZA Population Management Center (PMC) or Adjunct Population Biologist
The Population Biologist who worked to create the current Breeding and Transfer Plan may be able to offer solutions to issues that are discussed with the IR or IL.
• The Population Biologist may be able to suggest a different animal or pairing situation that would result in a positive solution.
• The Population Biologist may be able to offer guidance on ramifications in the population if the current issue is not resolved. This may facilitate understanding of the Animal Program’s needs among the parties.

Step 3. Discuss with and include your TAG Chair
The TAG Chair may be consulted at any point, but should certainly be informed if Steps 1 and 2 do not result in resolution.
• The SSP Coordinator should copy their TAG Chair on all future communications on this issue, to ensure that the issue is well documented and communicated to the relevant parties. Also see Step 4

Step 4. Talk with your TAG’s APM Committee Liaison
Each TAG has a designated APM Committee Liaison that can assist the TAG and all the Animal Programs within its purview. Program Leaders should feel comfortable to contact their APM Committee Liaisons at any time. APM Committee Liaison contact information can be found on the AZA website (must be logged into the AZA website to view this link).
• If the SSP Coordinator feels that the issue is sensitive and should involve the APM Committee early on, or if the SSP Coordinator feels that, after the conversations in Steps 1 - 3, they need additional guidance, they should contact their APM Committee Liaison.
• The APM Committee Liaison may provide advice, interpret Animal Program processes, and explain AZA policy to the Program Leader.
• The APM Committee Liaison may also help facilitate conversations between the institution and the SSP/TAG Program Leaders to discuss the issue.

Step 5. Discuss with the APM Committee and/or the AZA Conservation & Science Staff
5a. Discuss with the APM Committee Chair and/or Vice Chair of TAGs or SSPs/Studbooks
In addition to the Animal Program’s specific APM Committee Liaison, there are also APM Committee Officers that may be able to provide
more extensive and higher level guidance and oversight to the issue. The APM Committee Vice Chair of TAGs or SSPs/Studbooks and the APM Committee Chair are listed in the APM Committee Liaison contact list on the AZA website (must be logged into the AZA website to view this link).

- If Step 4 does not result in a resolution, then the APM Committee Liaison will assess whether the APM Committee Vice Chair of TAGs or SSPs/Studbooks or the APM Committee Chair should be brought into the conversation at this time.
- The APM Committee Chair or Vice Chair may offer additional advice, facilitate conversations among the parties, and determine whether informing AZA staff is needed.

5b. Discuss with the AZA Conservation & Science Staff
The AZA Conservation & Science Department and other staff are available for assistance and guidance to Animal Program Leaders at any time. The AZA’s Senior VP of Conservation, Management, & Welfare Sciences is the liaison for APM Committee and can be contacted at cdorsey@aza.org.

- As warranted, the APM Committee Liaison/Officer will inform AZA staff of the issue and bring them into the conversation.
- AZA staff may interpret Animal Program processes and explain AZA policy to the parties and help facilitate communication among the parties.
- AZA staff will also document and archive the issue, if necessary.

This SSP Communication Guide should allow issues, problems, and/or concerns to be addressed among the AZA Animal Program and all parties involved. While this guide cannot offer specific solutions to each and every individual situation that arises, resolution is only found through open communication.

For detailed job descriptions for the SSP Coordinator, TAG Chair, Institutional Liaison, Institutional Representative and APM Committee Liaison please review the TAG and/or SSP Program Handbooks. For Green SSP Programs, please also refer to the SSP Full Participation and Reconciliation policies in the SSP Program Handbook.