

Condensed Minutes of ISTS Board Retreat

**12-16 August 2024, National Conservation Training Center (NCTC),
Shepherdstown, WV, USA**

Secretary's Minutes

Secretary's minutes from the Board Retreat held at NCTC in August 2023 and the Board Meeting held during the 42nd International Sea Turtle Symposium in Pattaya, Thailand in 2024 were discussed and approved.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented the Profit and Loss statement and Balance sheet and described a healthy financial status for the Society. The Bookkeeper reviewed the need for Society membership and Symposium registration to be separate for audits. The Bookkeeper described the legal advice provided to the Society about handling registration fees in the event a Symposium has to be cancelled. The Board discussed the requirement to retain documents for 7 years as required by the US Internal Revenue Service.

The Treasurer's report was approved.

Report from the Decolonisation Group

The Board reviewed the document from this group and discussed a response that recognised the issues raised, progress made, and steps being taken to ensure ongoing improvements. Some suggestions, such as regional meetings and remove technology etc, have been discussed in the past and are challenging to implement. The Board welcomes new ideas and will continue its efforts to make the Society and Symposium more inclusive, equitable, and affordable. A presentation on the report will be made at the symposium in Accra, Ghana, and the presentation and report shared on the Society website.

Fund Raising Officer's Report

The Fundraising Officer's report was discussed and passed.

Renewal of ISTS Positions

The position of Fundraising Officer was renewed until August 2025, with the plan to review the position as per the Board's Strategic Plan.

The position of Bookkeeper was renewed.

The position of Secretary was renewed with annual compensation that better reflected the current responsibilities of the position. The responsibilities and compensation will be reviewed again at the 2025 Board retreat.

The position of Treasurer was renewed with annual compensation that better reflected the current responsibilities of the position. The Terms of Reference for the position were revised and accepted. The responsibilities and compensation will be reviewed again at the 2025 Board retreat.

Review of Policy Documents

A subcommittee was formed to create Symposium sponsorship levels; these were passed following discussion about benefits of different levels of sponsorship and revision of the document. A gift policy is to be drafted.

The Board discussed the need for a brand guide to help distinguish between the Society and the Symposium. After considering different options, the Board determined to use the following format:

(Number) International Sea Turtle Society Symposium

Acronym: ISTS Symposium(number)

For social media: ISTS_Symposium(number)

Society Restructuring

The Board discussed the outcome of the recent vote by Society Members, the majority in favour of hiring an Executive Director. Members will be given an opportunity to vote again when the position is incorporated into the Society By-Laws and Constitution.

The next steps are planning the restructure, revising the By-Laws, voting by the Membership, and then searching for an Executive Director (ED). The Board passed a Motion to request a quote from Global Citizen to expand upon their previous work and coordinate with the Board to oversee the search for an ED and restructuring of the Society.

Subcommittees were formed to focus on 1) Restructuring, 2) Benefits for ISTS Members, and 3) Finances.

Community and Innovation Grants

The Board discussed concerns about people/projects outside a country submitting a proposal that locals were not comfortable with. The criteria for applying for an ISTS Community grant were revised so that, in future:

- only residents of the country in which the work will occur can apply for the grant, and that a Member can provide a letter of authorisation for an applicant who cannot afford ISTS membership fees;
- a registered organisation in the country can apply, and must provide two references to be included with the application.

Subcommittees for the 2024 Community Grants and Innovation Grants were formed.

Grassroots Awards

The Board discussed if presenters at the Symposium can nominate themselves for consideration for both the Grassroots Award and Archie Carr Student Award. While it is unlikely that many presenters will be eligible for both Awards, it was decided that the potential for someone to receive both Awards should not be limited. A pop-up box confirming eligibility for both Awards will be added to the Symposium registration page.

Career Awards Committee Report

The criteria for different career awards- Champions Award and Lifetime Achievement Award- were discussed. The Board agreed that strict deadlines are required to ensure a smooth process. The Career Awards Committee report was passed. Description about the award recipients will be posted on the ISTS website.

Nominations Committee Report

Here too, the Board agreed that strict submission deadlines are needed for complete nominations packages. There was discussion about how to recruit nominees with specific skill sets, such as legal and fundraising, and the need for Board members to actively encourage nominations. The Nominations Committee Report was passed.

President's Plan and Budget

The ISTS President reviewed his logo, theme, symposium dates, and draft program. The Board supported livestreaming of the Opening depending on cost. ISTS cash reserves were allocated the 2025 Symposium budget to support bed grants for 7 nights/grantee. Symposium registration will include a box to confirm that people selecting low-income earn <USD 50,000 per year. Students will be asked to provide their university name and advisor name and email to minimise non-students registering at this tier.

A bank made inquiries about ISTS membership, but there is currently no Corporate Membership fee; a suitable rate will be decided by the Finance Committee.

Workshops scheduling, costs, and rules were discussed to ensure minimal cost to participants and the ability to attend workshops and Regional Meetings.

Motion that the following registration fees would be adopted for the 2025 Symposium in Ghana were passed:

- Early, >USD 50K annual income – USD 460
- Early, <USD 50K annual income – USD 260
- Early, Students and African Nationals – USD 100
- Late, >USD 50K annual income – USD 510
- Late, <USD 50K annual income – USD 310
- Late, Students and African Nationals – USD 160
- Non-members- USD 660
- NFP and Local Vendors- USD 100
- For-profit vendors- USD 325

As usual, vendor fees will not give access to Symposium events, and vendors wishing to attend presentations must also register as a participant.

The President's budget of 14th August 2025 was passed, with a plan to review it 10 days after the end of early registration.

A Board member and the Bookkeeper will make inquiries about the services of a professional grant writer.

Auction Committee's Report

The Board requested clarification about some missing entries in tables within the report. The timing for higher-priced items during the auction and importance of maintaining momentum were discussed before the report was approved.

Director of IT's (DoIT) Report

The report was approved, with discussion about checking if a payment gateway will allow AmEX payments.

The position of DoIT was renewed for another year with the same compensation. A donation button should be added to the Symposium website, with revenue used for the following Symposium.

Travel Committee's Report

While reviewing the report, the Board considered comments from the membership about changing some Regional Chairs in the context of decolonisation. The Travel Chair will create an SOP document for Regional Chairs, and Chairs of some regions (Caribbean, Asia, Oceania/Polynesia, Middle East and North Africa, and Africa) will be asked to find Co-Chairs by the Ghana Symposium for capacity building from within the Travel Grant region. The ultimate goal is for a national of the Travel Grant region to

act as Regional Chair. Other Chairs will also be encouraged to look for Co-Chairs from their Travel Grant region for succession planning.

The Travel Committee Report was approved.

Board Attendance at In-Person Retreats

A motion that ISTS Board members who do not maintain their Membership and demonstrate a high level of commitment will be asked to resign from the Board. A high level of commitment is defined as physically attending a minimum of three midyear retreats during their 4-year Board term, attending online Board meetings consistently, serving annually on multiple Committees, completing assigned tasks, and being responsive to online communications and requests. This requirement will be added to the application form for Board nominations.

Carbon Survey of ISTS Symposia

The student thesis on this topic was only recently received, so the Board could only discuss the findings briefly. In summary, the study found the symposium at Charleston had a higher carbon footprint than that at Cartagena and online (Perth). More expensive hotels have a higher carbon footprint.

Social Media Committee

Four applications for the position of Social Media Coordinator were received, and three people were interviewed. The committee suggests that two people are appointed to the role, and post in a coordinated manner across all Society social media accounts. One will liaise with the President and Secretary to post content about the Society and Symposium. The second can post content about ISTS members, including small grant recipients and award winners (including Grassroots, Lifetime Achievement, Champions, Ed Drane Volunteerism, and Archie Carr Student Awards). An agreement will be drawn up for the Social Media Coordinators that outlines expectations and guidelines for ISTS social media posts.

Archie Carr Student Awards

The challenges of Student Award judges meeting with all students if they are only present at one poster session and if there are >2 concurrent oral sessions were discussed. Chairs of the Student Awards will continue to meet with the Program Organiser to ensure smooth planning.

ISTS Symposia Proceedings

Additional Symposia Proceedings will be published online soon. All required information is now stored in the conference program, so it is easier to acquire and format after the symposium. The Board will prepare an agreement for future Presidents and Program Organisers so that deliverables after the Symposium are met.

The Board is considering alternatives to publishing the Symposium Proceedings with NOAA. Alternative options include Creative Commons, Library of Congress, and our own ISSN # for publications. A Board representative will look into these options for future proceedings.

2026 Symposium

The President-Elect described the location, theme and dates for the 2026 Symposium, as well as the local benefits from holding the even in Hawai'i. Three days of workshops and Regional Meetings will be followed by four days of the Symposium. To guide the President during early decision-making before their first formal meeting with the Board, an updated President's manual is required.

Ethics Committee

Membership of the Ethics Committee was revised to have:

- Appointed positions that rotate
- Odd number of members
- Representatives of Global North and Global South
- 1-2 Board members
- Members with a mature and balanced approach
- 2-year membership with possibility of renewal

Introduction for New Board Members

New Board members need an onboarding package, to include the upcoming retreat dates, attendance requirements, governance training materials, Robert's Rules, ISTS By-Laws and Constitution, update on ongoing matters, review of condensed minutes etc. A subcommittee will prepare this package.

Public-facing Decision-making Positions

The Board discussed a document which proposes that people should not hold more than two such positions simultaneously.

Some positions are non-rotating, e.g., Chairs of Grassroots Awards, Archie Carr Student Awards, Travel Grant Regional Chairs. A new Chair of the Grassroots Awards will soon be appointed.

The biographies of ongoing Chairs and Fundraising Officer, DoIT etc should be added to the ISTS website.

One Board member felt they should resign from the Board as they were holding three official ISTS positions; this was determined to not be required.

The Board discussed if Board members should be able to participate in the retreat online due to the challenges in involving everyone in conversations due to time zone differences. Those who do have to attend online can highlight agenda times they would like to be present for, but the Board discussion sometimes follows non-linear paths.

The Board also needs to meet online every 4-6 weeks.

Past-President's Report

The Past-President presented his report on the Symposium in Pattaya, Thailand. The event received very good feedback.

Volunteer Agreement Form

A draft volunteer agreement form which outlines a position's term and responsibilities to the Society was discussed. A subcommittee will work on the document and determine how it will be implemented and which positions it applies to.

Other Business

Board members who lead discussion on a topic can draft emails to the Society about it. The President will send an email about the Retreat topics and a photo of the meeting to the Members.