



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

*Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation*

DATE: 1 May 2018

TO: All TWS Members in good standing

FROM: Keith Norris, AWB®, Director of Wildlife Policy & Programs

RE: Draft Position Statement for Member Review – *Incorporating Wildlife Needs in Land Management Plans*

Dear fellow TWS members,

The Wildlife Society's Council approved the enclosed draft position statement for a 60-day member review and comment period. Finalized statements reflect the official position of your professional society. As such, your input into the process is a critical element to creating a robust statement, founded in scientific information and reflecting the best we have to offer as wildlife professionals.

Please review the attached document and provide your comments and suggested edits on the content, wording, and policies outlined. **All comments are due by 29 June 2018 to Laura Bies, Government Affairs Consultant, [laura@wildlife.org](mailto:laura@wildlife.org).**

This statement consolidates the policies and perspectives of five existing TWS position statements that discuss various elements of land and management of wildlife habitats. These existing statements are available at [wildlife.org/position-statements](http://wildlife.org/position-statements) and include:

- Alterations of Stream, Riparian, and Wetland Habitats in the U.S.
- Conservation and Management of Old-growth Forest on the Pacific Coast of North America
- Recognition of Wildlife Needs in Watershed Planning
- The Antarctic
- The Impact of Border Security Measures on Wildlife

These statements were consolidated by a Council Subcommittee to allow for a simpler, more streamlined approach to related issues and to provide a clearer expression of TWS' positions. Each of the topics listed above, or other specific topics as appropriate, may be addressed in an [Issue Statement](#) to further specify TWS' positions on these topics related to land management.

Thank you for lending your scientific expertise to this important process of directing the Society's policy engagement activities in support of wildlife professionals.

Sincerely,

Keith Norris, AWB®  
Director of Wildlife Policy & Programs



## **DRAFT Position Statement**

### **Incorporating Wildlife Needs in Land Management Plans**

Land management activities and decisions can have significant effects on wildlife species and populations by influencing the amount, quality, extent, and connectivity of available habitat. Decisions about land management can alter the carrying capacity of a region and influence population dynamics of wildlife species in a variety of ways. Given that society needs natural resources and will continue to extract those resources from public and private lands, this use should be conducted with the intent of minimizing negative effects on wildlife.

Some environments support highly specialized indigenous flora and fauna that are sensitive to human disturbance. Alteration of riparian zones, wetlands, old-growth forests, and other distinctive systems without careful planning could result in widespread disruption to natural systems and loss of species. Many of these environments and the wildlife they support have already experienced declines in quality as human development has increased.

Land management activities can enhance habitat conditions for a wide variety of species; however, some activities can have an overall negative effect on that area's biodiversity and species richness. In areas where human activities have disrupted natural processes (e.g., fire suppression, fragmentation), land management can play an essential role in supporting biodiversity by mimicking natural disturbance regimes. In many regions, public agencies are the only landowner with a sufficient land area to provide these type of disturbance activities at a suitable scale. In other regions, private forest landowners, agricultural producers, and other resource extraction owners may be able to manage their properties to provide beneficial disturbance as part of their actions.

Integrating wildlife needs from a broad group of native species into land management decision-making can increase the positive effects of ecosystem services and maintain biodiversity while mitigating the possible negative effects of human use. However, mitigation procedures to improve habitat conditions typically require time to become successful, possibly even community succession to achieve desired goals.

National, provincial, and state agencies have the authority and mandate to require reasonable planning and mitigation measures that will minimize or avoid deterioration of public trust wildlife and wildlife habitat. Responsible land management on public lands includes activities that sustain fish and wildlife habitat, protect environmental and ecological values, maintain biodiversity, and provide for recreational use and aesthetic considerations.

Addressing wildlife needs in land management plans can result in a readily integrated set of management objectives coordinated among planning units, with each scale providing its assigned portion of desired wildlife populations, wildlife habitat, and the conditions and processes upon which they are controlled.

The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding incorporation of wildlife needs in land management plans is to:

1. Support comprehensive land management plans that address wildlife needs and include:
  - a) a broad range of indigenous or naturalized, noninvasive species and important ecological processes within the region; b) specific objectives for the conservation and management of wildlife within the area that considers the relationships among the biological, physical, and socio-economic factors operating within the region; c) expectations for public and private lands; d) sufficient monitoring and research to provide a basis for adaptive management; and e) attention to biological resources, the management of which may not be limited to typical landscape planning units (i.e., watersheds or other hydrological units).
2. Recognize the multiple values of rare and unique environments for both wildlife habitat and for use in scientific research. Whenever possible, recommend the conservation of these settings in land management plans.
3. Promote the coordination of resource management activities to maximize retention of species diversity across multiple spatial scales so that wildlife habitat requirements and anticipated consequences of land management are assessed in a scientifically sound manner. Encourage cooperation and collaboration by professionals that specialize in forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and other natural resource disciplines.
4. Promote research to understand and mitigate adverse effects on wildlife habitat resulting from alteration, resource extraction, and other forms of management of terrestrial and aquatic systems. Support development of collaborative research and monitoring to evaluate the status of terrestrial and aquatic systems across multiple spatial scales.
5. Promote education about the ecological and economic values of terrestrial and aquatic environments that retain native species diversity.
6. Promote the use of Certified Wildlife Biologists® to represent wildlife values and evaluate habitat requirements in land use planning and decision making.