

**THE
MONTANA
CHAPTER OF
THE WILDLIFE
SOCIETY**

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**STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2018**



MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

STRATEGIC PLAN (2015 – 2018)

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society is an international organization committed to addressing national and international issues that affect the current and future status of wildlife in North America and throughout the world. The Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society (MTTWS) was chartered in 1962 and formally organized with the election of the first officers in 1963. Adoption of Chapter bylaws occurred in 1964 and the 71 dues paying members at that time are considered to be the charter members of MTTWS. As of October 2015, there are 254 current MTTWS dues-paying chapter members. The Chapter's membership constitutes wildlife enthusiasts from various government natural resource agencies, universities, non-profit and for-profit non-government organizations, tribal entities, students and retirees.

The Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society serves its membership by supporting and promoting sound stewardship of wildlife and their habitats, supporting education and professional development through the dissemination of scientific information, and increasing public awareness and appreciation of wildlife. Over the years, MTTWS has completed numerous position and issue statements along with other correspondence related to Montana natural resource issues. The Chapter is also committed to organizing and sponsoring an annual conference that provides a forum for invited speakers and members to share information and foster interagency and interdisciplinary relationships.

In order to uphold our current accomplishments and be even more effective as a group, a new MTTWS Strategic Plan is necessary. The previous Strategic Plan was completed in 1999 and although this document has served its membership well, MTTWS would benefit from a more time-bound plan with a structured calendar of objectives and activities. During the 2015 MTTWS annual conference, our membership voted to use special project funds to begin development of this new Plan. Additional grant money was secured through a generous Brainerd Foundation grant. On June 5-7, 2015, the Executive Board, several other past board members, and key current members of MTTWS convened at the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to begin development of this new Strategic Plan. With significant assistance and guidance from our facilitator, Terra Rentz, we were able to evaluate our chapter's vision, mission, core values, main strategies, goals, objectives, and priority activities.

This new Strategic Plan will serve to give our membership further direction and focused, time-bound goals and objectives. In addition to providing MTTWS a vision, a new mission statement, and core values, this Plan focuses on four main strategies to concentrate on for the 2015-2018 period: 1) Professional Development, 2) Public Engagement, 3) Member Recruitment and Retention, and 4) Capacity Building and Administrative Growth. Strategic Plan implementation will rely heavily on the MTTWS executive board for direction as well as other MTTWS committee members and general membership depending on interest and/or availability. This Plan is scheduled to be reviewed and revised at the end of 2018, in order to set forth new goals and objectives for the next 3-4 year period. By accomplishing these strategies, goals, objectives and activities outlined in this Strategic Plan, MTTWS will become a more effective and relevant organization to both wildlife professionals and the public who value the resources we manage.

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MT TWS VISION

We envision a future for Montana where wildlife and habitat biodiversity and the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society are a source of state pride; where wildlife professionals find common ground, are supported, diverse in knowledge, and viewed as credible leaders in conservation; and where conservation and management of wildlife and their habitats are driven by ongoing research and science-based decision making supported by a well-informed public.

MT TWS MISSION

To encourage and support effective wildlife management in Montana by fostering development of current and future wildlife professionals, providing science-based information for policy and education, and communicating and collaborating with conservation organizations and the public.

MT TWS CORE VALUES

The Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society embodies a curiosity for the natural world and encourages and supports life-long learning, research, and science based management. We believe wildlife and wild places are vital to a healthy society. Therefore, we value and respect:

1. Sound stewardship of wildlife and habitat including the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation;
2. Dedicated, passionate, and responsible wildlife professionals;
3. A diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and individuals unified behind our core mission;
4. Integrity and ethical conduct; and
5. A land ethic influenced by informed public input

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STRATEGY 1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY GOAL - Promote the continued education and growth of established professionals while cultivating the development of the next generation of wildlife professionals.

OBJECTIVE 1. Increase opportunities for specialized training throughout the year.

Activity 1. Beginning in 2016, the Executive Board will annually identify special training needs, suitable locations, and times through an electronic membership survey of up to 10 training ideas or opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 2. Increase mentorship opportunities for members.

Activity 1. Beginning at the 2016 conference, the President-elect will identify a team to develop a more effective student mentoring program that occurs during, and continues after, each conference. Additional emphasis will be placed on engaging retired biologists or other natural resource professionals to mentor younger professionals and join committees. The President will participate on the team to provide feedback and support to the President-elect.

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STRATEGY 2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGY GOAL - Communicate scientific information to the public and policy makers to promote greater involvement, awareness, identification of wildlife issues in Montana.

OBJECTIVE 1. Develop an outreach program to engage and inform policy makers in order to provide the best available scientific information during the public processes that establish policies and laws that affect conservation and stewardship of wildlife in Montana.

Activity 1. By the end of 2016, the Executive Board will engage 5 MTTWS members to form the core of the Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC), who will build CAC capacity to create policy statements and engage in legislative affairs.

Activity 2. By beginning of 2017, the CAC will develop an outreach program to policy makers by identifying appropriate individuals and knowledge gaps.

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STRATEGY 3. MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

STRATEGY GOAL - *Identify, recruit, and retain a diverse, inclusive, and active membership.*

OBJECTIVE 1. Recruit a diverse membership in the Chapter among professionals, educators, and students.

Activity 1. By early 2017, the Membership Committee (with student chapter(s) assistance) will develop a comprehensive directory of natural resource agencies and organizations for the purpose of distributing information, inviting attendees to annual meetings, soliciting membership, and gathering updates on current events/issues. Updates will occur every other year.

Activity 2. By mid 2016, the Executive Board will develop a standard chapter outreach presentation about the benefits of MTTWS membership. Executive Board members or volunteer MTTWS members will deliver the outreach presentation at colleges, universities, natural resource agencies, conservation organizations or other pertinent functions in Montana annually.

OBJECTIVE 2. Maintain a unified membership that remains active and involved throughout their careers and into retirement.

Activity 1. By February 28, 2016, the Executive Board will create better descriptions of committees and the activities expected of committee members. The Executive Board will distribute this information to members annually before and at the conference to help members make informed decisions about serving the chapter.

Activity 2. By the end of 2016, the Executive Board will identify key contacts in upper leadership of the USFWS, NPS, USFS, BLM, DNRC, MFWP, and related conservation nonprofits and provide contacts with explanations of MTTWS, membership benefits, and the roles of leadership positions.

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STRATEGY 4. CAPACITY BUILDING AND ADMINISTRATIVE GROWTH

STRATEGY GOAL - Evaluate and secure physical, human, and financial resources needed for sustainable growth and success of the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

OBJECTIVE 1. Increase administrative infrastructure.

Activity 1. By early 2018, the Executive Board will define the role of an administrative support position and create a position description.

OBJECTIVE 2. Create a stable and resilient financial structure.

Activity 1. By the end of 2018, the Executive Board will create a financial plan that identifies and maximizes current sources of revenue.

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ACTIVITY TIMELINE

2015	Strategic Plan drafted Strategic Plan finalized Membership review and comment on Strategic Plan
2016	Mentoring program development; Committee descriptions and outreach Membership outreach presentation created; Annual membership training survey Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC) launched; Agency and nonprofit outreach
2017	MT conservation organization directory developed by Membership Committee Annual membership training survey Policy maker outreach program developed by CAC
2018	Administrative support position description created Annual membership training survey Financial Plan created

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We would like to give a big thanks to Terra Rentz, a graduate student and Program Coordinator at the SUNY-ESF Roosevelt Wild Life Station, Vice-President of the Northeast Section of TWS, and former Deputy Director of Government Affairs at The Wildlife Society who helped facilitate our retreat at the Beartooth WMA. Thanks to President/Past-President Kris Boyd for leading the charge in getting us organized to update our Plan. Also, another big thanks to The Brainerd Foundation for their

\$3,000 grant to help fund this effort and process. And finally, thanks to those dedicated members that participated in the initial brainstorming and discussion at the Beartooth WMA retreat along with additional input and review of the Plan as it was developed and finalized. Pictured from left to right are Terra Rentz, Mike Mitchell, Sonja Smith, Sarah Sells, Kris Boyd, John Waller (lying on ground), Joe Weigand, Ken Plourde, Steve Gniadek, Jason Hanlon, Taylor King, Brent Lonner and Julie Cunningham.

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