



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

16 October 2020

Russell Vought, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D.C. 20503

Michael J. Rigas, Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20415

Re: Executive action and guidance on combating race and sex stereotyping

Dear Mr. Vought and Mr. Rigas:

The Wildlife Society is concerned about the effect the recent Memorandums for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (Sept. 4, 28, & Oct. 2, 2020) and Executive Order 13950 on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping (Sept. 22, 2020) will have for federal agencies concerned with wildlife and natural resource conservation.

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society (wildlife.org) and our network of affiliated chapters and sections represent over 15,000 wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and their habitat through science-based management and conservation.

The recent guidance and orders from the Administration is having a chilling effect on federal agencies' efforts to promote and encourage diversity among their professional workforce. The effect of the orders is preventing them from taking full advantage of training opportunities that will contribute to the professional development and awareness of their employees.

The Wildlife Society urges the Administration to reinforce its support for diversity, equity, and inclusion among the federal workforce and lift these restrictions for federal employees, contractors, and grant recipients from engagement in diversity and inclusion training. We ask that you alleviate the threat of disciplinary action for those that wish to improve their skills and understanding related to racism and sexism – such professional development is critical to ensuring all federal agency employees, contractors and others are welcome, included, and empowered to contribute to agency missions.

The future of biological diversity requires the conscious engagement of all people, regardless of their nationality, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, spiritual views, or social status. Promoting a professional culture that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds

fosters a richness of perspectives, values, and contributions necessary for strengthening and improving our approaches to research, education, management, and policy making.

The Wildlife Society is committed to the recruitment, effective mentoring, and retention of a diverse wildlife conservation workforce, and to communicating with a diverse array of conservation stakeholders. Enhancing human diversity in the workforce is integral to achieving this mission.

We recognize that human diversity in the wildlife profession is not representative of the diverse array of people affected by wildlife or wildlife management decisions. A first step to enhancing workforce human diversity is building a common understanding of the challenges and barriers to diversity. Continued engagement in diversity and inclusion training will help enable our profession to meet the current and emerging challenges of sustaining wildlife populations.

Federal employees, contractors, and grant recipients – many of whom are members of The Wildlife Society – make meaningful and significant contributions to the wildlife profession. A welcoming, diverse, and inclusive work environment enables wildlife professionals to live full lives where they are respected for who they are as well as what they contribute.

As such, diversity and inclusion training is beneficial for them – and all employees. This training is integral to expanding knowledge and understanding barriers, challenges, and opportunities to create and sustain a welcoming professional culture. Improving awareness of historic racial and gender relations and current workforce conditions enhances professionals' ability to engage meaningfully in the conservation workforce and with the public to advance science-based conservation. Creating and supporting safe, diverse, and inclusive work environments lead to opportunities for more creative, innovative, and sustainable solutions.

We hope the Administration will lift the recent restrictions on diversity and inclusion training, and enable wildlife professionals to broaden their skills and understanding.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions regarding these recommendations or would like more information, please contact Jamila Blake, AWB®, professional development manager (jblake@wildlife.org; 301.897.9770 x307), and Caroline Murphy, AWB®, government relations manager (cmurphy@wildlife.org; 301.897.9770 x308).

Sincerely,



Carol Chambers, PhD
President