

Interview for Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society  
Deputy Director Angi Bruce  
November 2020

### **Insights on the science-policy interface from Deputy Director Angi Bruce**

Rhiannon Jakopak

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The administrators of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department play a key role in helping to ensure that the laws and policies underlying wildlife management are based on evidence. Angi Bruce serves as the Deputy Director for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, where she collaborates with people and groups from across the state to work on issues at the interface of wildlife biology, legislation, and policy. I reached out to her to hear about what prepared her to work at this interface, what role the Wyoming Game and Fish Department plays at the legislature, how wildlife scientists can plug in, and more.

What is your background in wildlife, and what aspects of your previous work have prepared you for a position where you frequently integrate science, legislation, and policy?

*AB: I have worked in fish and wildlife management for county, state and federal governments for 23 years. I started my career in the field, working with private landowners as a wetland specialist and private lands biologist before entering a supervisory role and then administrative roles. Throughout my career, my positions all played a role working with partners, private landowners, industry and other state and federal agencies. These experiences have allowed me to understand what their goals and objectives are and how to work collaboratively to achieve the most for our fish and wildlife resources.*

In your experience, what role does science play in legislation and policy surrounding wildlife in Wyoming?

*AB: Science is the foundation for all wildlife legislation and policy. Science starts the conversation and without it legislation and policy may be random and less effective. By having a strong science basis for decision-making, you build the credibility and trust needed to work with others.*

As Deputy Director, how do you integrate science, legislation, and policy? How much of your time do you spend working at this interface?

*AB: As Deputy Director, integrating science with legislation and policy is where I spend the majority of my time. Using our staff's expertise to understand the science is where I like to start. Then I find myself always thinking 3 to 4 steps ahead. I ask myself: How will our science-based decisions be received by others? What groundwork is needed? When and how do we involve stakeholders? And most importantly, how will this decision or policy effect wildlife in the big picture?*

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What role does the Wyoming Game and Fish Department play at the Wyoming state legislature?

*AB: The Department is very engaged with the legislature during the legislative session and throughout the year. We make it a priority to keep legislators and committees informed on key topics the Department is working on. Examples include budgets, rule changes, major initiatives, and controversial topics. We respond to legislative requests by providing factual information and providing information in a public format. We also testify at committee meetings as requested and during the legislative session on bills that are related to the Department's mission. Rather than supporting or opposing a legislative bill, we provide information on the effects of the bill to the Department and express the Department's ability to carry it out. We can express our opinion, if it is within our field of expertise, about how the bill affects the State's interests, if there are objective facts that support the opinion.*

Do you think the integration of science into legislation and policy has evolved over the past 10-15 years? If so, in what ways? How do you see this integration evolving in the future?

*AB: The amount of information at your fingertips has grown enormously over the last 10 to 15 years. Being able to gather information on a topic quickly has allowed for individuals to become experts on a subject overnight. This is not necessarily a bad thing. However, when dealing with science based policy and decisions that have taken professionals years of research and personal experience to develop, this can prove challenging. It is essential for the future of fish and wildlife management that we continue to work with stakeholders, legislators and partners to increase their understanding of our work. Maintaining credibility and trust in the agency, and being transparent in our decisions, will allow us a seat at the table for future legislation and policy decisions.*

What recommendations do you have for wildlife professionals across the state who are interested in helping to integrate science with legislation and policy? How can professionals plug in and share their expertise?

*AB: My advice is to work to understand how wildlife policy may affect others. For example, asking a developer to change their operation after established can influence them in many ways, especially financially. Working with them as they are developing their operation and incorporating wildlife minimization efforts up front is often a better option and better received.*

*Consider the big picture. Often times we get focused on individual projects without considering impacts of our policies on a statewide or national scale. There are times when we need to prioritize large scale and long-term impacts over others.*