

TWS Council Candidate Biographic Sketch Vice President Position – 2021

Robert P. Lanka

I. Education

- June 1979; Associate in Arts (Wildlife); Fullerton College; Fullerton, CA
- June 1982; Bachelor of Science – Range Management; Humboldt State University; Arcata, CA
- June 1982; Bachelor of Science – Wildlife Management; Humboldt State University; Arcata, CA
- August 1985; Master of Science – Zoology and Physiology (Fisheries); University of Wyoming; Laramie, WY

II. Professional Background

Current position – (Include major duties and major accomplishments.)

- 5/17/2018 – Present, Retired Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD)

Additional positions pertinent to TWS president position (Include major duties and major accomplishments.)

- 7/2010 – 5/16/2018; Supervisor Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management Section, WGFD. Supervise five statewide programs and personnel involved including: 1) Greater Sage-grouse, 2) Nongame Bird and Mammal, 3) Migratory Game Bird, 4) Terrestrial Habitat, and 5) Harvest Survey. Develop and monitor all associated budgets. Serve as wildlife subject matter expert for Wildlife Division Administration, the WGFD Director's Office and occasionally for the Governor's Office.
- 4/2007 – 6/2010; Supervisor Statewide Regional Information and Education Section, WGFD. Supervise six Regional I&E personnel plus serve as Laramie Region I&E specialist. Work with Regional Personnel and Statewide Administration to coordinate and implement outreach and education efforts for the WGFD. Develop and monitor the Regional I&E annual budget.
- 12/1995 – 3/2007; Laramie Region Wildlife Management Coordinator, WGFD. Major duties included: Supervise three wildlife biologists, coordinate terrestrial wildlife management activities such as setting regional hunting and trapping seasons, collection of field data, oversight of big game population models, review and approval of annual PR Reports, review and submission of Regional comments related to the impact of proposed development on wildlife; development and monitoring of the Regional Biologist annual budget.
- 7/1/1986 – 10/1992; Wildlife Biologist, WGFD. Collect field data on game and nongame, develop big game population models; work with local Game Wardens to develop local hunting season proposals, discuss those proposals with Federal agency personnel, landowners and the general public and take their comments, develop

annual PR Reports and comments related to the impact of proposed development on wildlife.

- 0/1983 – 8/1985 – Graduate Assistant, University of Wyoming and Wyoming Cooperative Fisheries and Wildlife Research Unit. Design and conduct fisheries related field work, analyze data and write thesis.
- Major Accomplishments:
 - Chaired WGFD committee that developed a report with recommendations on WGFD Biological Staff Continuing Education – 2018.
 - Chaired WGFD Committee that moved the Department away from Spreadsheet based big game population modeling to a Bayesian based model called PopR – 2018.
 - Member USFWS Region 6 WAFWA/USFWS Informing Endangered Species Working Group 2015 – 2018 where the states in USFWS Region 6 worked with USFWS personnel to bring state issues and expertise to the table and to advance conservation and management of both T&E species and for those being considered for T&E status.
 - Member Western States Wolverine Conservation Project 2014 – 2018. Worked with many others from WY, MT, ID and WA to plan, design, fund and conduct the first ever range-wide survey for wolverines in the lower 48 States.
 - Chaired a WGFD and WY Coop Unit Committee that moved the Department away from the Pop-II big game population model to a spreadsheet based model modified from the one used by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Parks and Wildlife) and developed the first ever detailed user's manual for this model – 2011.
 - Field Supervisor Snowy Range Moose Study – 2005, 2006.
 - Worked with WY Geographic Information and Science Center to develop a map of potential wild turkey habitat for Wyoming – 2005.
 - WGFD Technical Committee Representative to the National Wild Turkey Federation 2002 – 2009.
 - Field Supervisor Temple Peak Bighorn Sheep Study – 1994, 1995.
 - Organized then conducted the first ever test of the Idaho Elk Sightability Model in WY – 1993. Helped conduct the first ever Elk Sightability flight in WY – 1994.
 - Member of the Three Quarter Circle Land and Cattle Company, Split Rock Ranch and Beaver Creek Land and Cattle Company Coordinated Resource Management Teams as well as the Sun Stewardship. These groups brought together ranch owners, federal and state agency personnel and others to develop and promote sustainable livestock grazing and improvement of wildlife habitat.
 - Member IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group on Sustainable Use of Wild Species – 1992 – 1995.
 - Assisted many others in developing strategies, generating witness lists and developing questions used by the WY Attorney General's Office to

defend the WY Game and Fish Commission's decision to deny all applications to import and possess native and exotic wildlife by a private individual. Cases on the various issues were held in Wyoming Court, Federal Court and in front of a Hearing Officer on behalf of the State Court. Each of these cases had implications for the Public Trust Doctrine – 1991 & 1992.

- Chaired the WGFD Game Farm Committee and coauthored the Committee's report: Analysis and recommendations on the applications by Mr. John T. Dorrance III to import and possess native and exotic species – 1990.
- Field Supervisor of the Black Hills White-tailed Deer/Logging Study.
- Awards
 - 35 Year Certificate of Service, State of Wyoming – January 2018.
 - WAFWA Special Recognition Award, Western States Wolverine Conservation Project – 2017.
 - Wildlife Management Commendation, WGFD Wildlife Division – 1994.
 - Wildlife Conservationist of the Year, Wyoming Wildlife Federation – 1992.
 - Employee of the Year, WGFD Game Division – 1990.

III. *Memberships and involvement with TWS at the Chapter, Section, and National levels Involvement* (include major contributions, officer or chair positions held, and committee involvement at each level.)

- Wyoming Chapter TWS – Member since 1986.
 - President-elect, President, Past-President – 1995 – 1997.
 - Professional Wildlifer of the Year – 1991.
- Colorado Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2020, 2018, 2017, & 2015, Attended CO-TWS Annual Meeting and Business Meeting.
- Kansas Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2020, 2019, 2017, & 2016, Attended Kansas Natural Resource Conference and KS-TWS Business Meeting.
- Nebraska Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2019, 2018, 2016, & 2015, Attended NE-TWS Annual Meeting and Business Meeting.
- North Dakota Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2020, 2019, 2017, & 2016, Attended ND-TWS Annual Meeting and Business Meeting.
- South Dakota Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2018, 2017, 2016, & 2015, Attended SD-TWS Annual Meeting and Business Meeting.
- Utah Chapter TWS – Member 2015-2020.
 - 2019, 2018, 2017, & 2015, Attended UT-TWS Annual Meeting and Business Meeting.

- Central Mountains and Plains Section (CMPS) – Member since 1995.
 - President-elect, President, Past-President – August 2007 – August 2011.
 - Vice President – August 2004 – August 2006.
 - Board Member at Large – August 2001 – August 2003.
 - Annual Summer Conference Arrangements Committee Chair – 2006.
 - Chair Bylaws Committee – 2005 – 2006.
 - Chair Awards Committee – 2006.
 - Co-Chair Nominations Committee – 1999, 2000, 2005.
 - Co-Chair ad hoc Section Representative Nominations Committee – 1998, 2001, 2004.
 - CMPS Professional Award – 2019.
- The Wildlife Society – Member since 1986.
 - Central Mountains and Plains Section Representative to TWS Council – 2014 – 2020.
 - Bylaws Subcommittee, 2014 – Present, Chair 2018 – Present
 - Policy Priorities Ad Hoc Committee, Chair 2015 – 2020.
 - Member of 11 other Council Committees.
 - Student Activities Sub-committee Chair and Member of the Arrangements Committee – 1997 TWS Annual Conference.
 - TWS Fellow – 2013.
 - Jim McDonough Award – 2011.
 - Certified Wildlife Biologist – 2009. Renewed 2014 and 2019.

IV. *Membership with other professional organizations* (Include major contributions, officer or chair positions held, and committee involvement.)

- Member IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group on Sustainable Use of Wild Species – 1992 – 1995.

V. Please provide an 300-word (Limit) answer to the following question: Why are you interested in running for the office of TWS Vice President and what is your vision for The Wildlife Society?

My journey as a wildlife professional would not have been possible, may not have ever been considered, if my high school biology teacher hadn't taken me aside and told me she believed I had real potential in the biological sciences. Simple words, just a single sentence really, but the impact that sentence had on my life is impossible to calculate. I have been fortunate to always have those that encouraged me to stretch beyond what I could do, to push on in good times and bad, to try to be better than I was.

The Wildlife Society has been part of my life since 1986. To me, TWS is our Medical Association, our Bar Association; it is the professional society for those of us who are students of or who work on behalf of wildlife and people. With the encouragement of others, I have held Chapter, Section, and TWS leadership positions. There really is no higher honor than being asked to serve. If elected TWS Vice President, I hope to work

with you to increase the capacity of our Wildlife Policy program, to make TWS the go-to organization for bringing science to wildlife related policy decisions, and to enhance our services to members whose only outlet to bring science to local policy decisions is through a professional society like TWS.

One of the best benefits of being a member of TWS is that you get to meet many different people. People, each one different from the next, but united in their passion for wildlife and wild places are what makes TWS special. I hope you never miss an opportunity to say a kind word, to make one who in some way is different than you feel welcome. You never know, you might just change their life. Thanks for all you do.

VI. Other Information

I had the privilege of working with the amazing men and women of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for 32 years. I began my career as a wildlife biologist and ended it supervising an incredibly diverse set of programs, including Nongame Birds and Mammals, Greater Sage-Grouse, Migratory Game Birds, Statewide Habitat, and Harvest Surveys. We worked closely with the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to develop, fund, and implement applied research projects designed to meet the needs of Wyoming's terrestrial wildlife, from big game and harvest management to species in Wyoming's State Wildlife Action Plan.

In a career filled with challenges, four opportunities really stand out. Early on, I had the opportunity to work with a small Department team to evaluate and present recommendations for action to the Department and Commission on an application to open a commercial game farm in Wyoming. We were given the professional freedom to explore the topic and make science-based recommendations. Based in large part on our work, that application was denied. As a result, Wyoming has not had to deal with the multitude of issues other states with game farms have. Later I was asked to lead a team of Department and Coop Unit people to evaluate Colorado's big game population spreadsheet model, modify it for use in Wyoming, and train Department staff in its use. Within a few years, I led another group that moved the Department from that model to the Bayesian-based PopR model developed at the University of Montana. Finally, I was part of a multi-state team that developed, funded, and implemented a coordinated, systematic, and repeatable monitoring program for wolverines in Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming. Four challenges that allowed me to work with teams of professionals, from within and outside my own agency, to address the questions: what do we need to do for wildlife, and how can we do what we are doing better?

One of the benefits of working for the Department was their tremendous support of my involvement in TWS. I have been a member of the Wyoming Chapter-TWS since 1986,

serving as Chapter President in 1996. I have been a member of the Central Mountains and Plains Section of TWS since 1995, serving as President from 2008 – 2010. And I have been a member of TWS since 1986, recently completing my sixth year as CMPS Representative to TWS Council. I have been a Certified Wildlife Biologist® since 2009, received the Jim McDonough Award in 2011, and became a TWS Fellow in 2013.

While on Council, my involvement with three committees helped bring into focus three topics I believe I could contribute to, if elected, using my skill set. First, we worked to focus TWS' Policy Program on a subset of priorities members told us were important, where TWS had the expertise and opportunity to take a leading role, and where TWS could make a meaningful contribution via a program with less than two FTEs. Second, work on the Publications Subcommittee gave me a better understanding of the business side of publications, how that business is rapidly changing, and how those changes may impact the ability of TWS to bring programs and services to members. TWS' contract with Wiley will be expiring soon and Council will need to make important decisions about the next contract, likely including a decision about open access. Third, for the past two plus years the Bylaws Subcommittee has conducted the first comprehensive review of TWS' Bylaws in many years. We proposed, and Council agreed to forward to membership for their vote, a revision of Bylaws that will, if approved, serve TWS today and in the foreseeable future. While governance documents are not the things that generate passion for most wildlife professionals, they are incredibly important to TWS and its future as a professional society.

The topics I would focus on include a complete understanding that TWS' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are far from complete and must continue. According to TWS Bylaws, all that agree to, "conduct their professional and membership-related activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics," are welcome in TWS. Period. Those in leadership must work to ensure that TWS actions align with our words. That is an important responsibility. I am humbled being asked to stand for election and to possibly take on that work. Thanks for your consideration.