



## SUMMARY OF TWS STANDING POSITIONS

This document expresses positions of The Wildlife Society on a variety of policy issues that impact the management of wildlife populations, wildlife habitats, and the wildlife profession. Each summary statement represents a longstanding perspective of the Society which has remained constant over time.

The Wildlife Society is an international non-profit association founded in 1937 and 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 wildlife habitat through science-based management and conservation.

### THE USE OF SCIENCE IN POLICY AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The Wildlife Society recognizes science as a cornerstone for establishing wildlife policies and making management decisions. We believe the role of science in policy and decision-making is to inform the decision process, rather than prescribe a particular outcome. We adhere to the highest standards in providing science input to policy and management decisions and acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in science while noting that such uncertainty is not a reason to ignore or censure scientific findings. The Wildlife Society opposes misuse of science by policy and decision makers, including attempts to censor researchers or managers, distort or misuse results and conclusions, or ignore science that contradicts a desired outcome. We encourage, recognize, and advocate appropriate use of wildlife, ecological, and conservation science in policy determination and decision-making processes and we are committed to identifying and supporting actions to correct inappropriate uses or abuses of science.

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

#### THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The Wildlife Society recognizes the principles of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation as an essential foundation of state, provincial, and federal management of wildlife resources in the United States and Canada. These principles include: (1) wildlife as a public trust resource; (2) elimination of unregulated markets for wildlife and wildlife products (3) allocation of wildlife by law; (4) wildlife should only be killed for legitimate purposes; (5) wildlife is an international resource; (6) science is the proper tool for discharge of wildlife policy; and (7) the democracy of hunting and other consumptive uses. We promote and support adherence to these seven principles as the bedrock of the Model, and we are committed to increasing understanding of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation among students, wildlife professionals, and the public.

## **HUNTING**

The Wildlife Society supports the principle that scientifically regulated hunting of wildlife is an appropriate component of wildlife management. We recognize the economic, social, and biological benefits of consumptive uses of wildlife resources. Hunting is part of our cultural heritage, provide outdoor recreation that positively connects people with nature, and foster stewardship values of the landscape. Revenue from the sale of hunting licenses, stamps, and permits, and excises taxes on hunting and fishing equipment provide a primary source of funding for wildlife conservation, including research, management, and habitat acquisition and maintenance. Hunting is an effective tool that can assist wildlife professionals charged with responsibly managing wildlife populations and wildlife habitat in a scientific, sustainable, and socially acceptable manner. We support hunter education programs that increase knowledge of wildlife ecology and management and promote ethical and responsible behavior. We strive to increase the public's understanding of hunting's role in wildlife conservation and management.

## **TRAPPING FURBEARERS**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that furbearer trapping, when properly regulated following biological principles for sustainable harvest of wildlife species, is an appropriate public use of wildlife resources and an effective method of sustainably managing and studying wildlife populations. Lethal and non-lethal trapping is a key technique in wildlife research and management. Regulated trapping by licensed members of the public also provides an important connection to nature and increased understanding of wildlife. When consistent with the Best Management Practices developed under the auspices of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards in Canada, the practice meets strict performance and animal welfare criteria. We support the appropriate regulation and enforcement of trapping laws by public and indigenous agencies and oppose unregulated trapping. We encourage trapper education programs and programs that inform the public, including trappers, about Best Management Practices, regulated trapping, and the values and benefits of properly regulated, sustained use of wildlife resources. We support global efforts to improve furbearer conservation and management, including the use and adoption of the trapping Best Management Practices.

## **WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that prevention or control of wildlife damage is an essential and responsible component of wildlife management. Wildlife sometimes cause significant damage to private and public property, other wildlife and their habitats, agricultural crops, livestock, forests, pastures, and urban and rural structures. Some species of wildlife may threaten human health and safety or be a nuisance. We support wildlife damage prevention and/or management programs and techniques that are biologically, socially, environmentally, and economically valid, effective, practical and based on the best available science. We support research and continuous improvement in wildlife damage management, and encourage educational programs to ensure that those in need of wildlife damage management information have access to approved techniques and methodologies.

## **OVERABUNDANT WILDLIFE & FERTILITY CONTROL**

The Wildlife Society recognizes overabundant wildlife populations can be managed through a variety of conventional methods including lethal control, regulated hunting seasons, habitat modifications, or other legal, practical, and cost effective means. Overabundant wildlife species on a local scale may have the potential to adversely affect wildlife and wildlife habitat, damage ecosystems, and/or cause conflict with humans. In instances where conventional management methods are infeasible or opposed by the public, fertility control may be considered. We encourage further research and development on fertility control methods to better understand their potential and limitations, in addition to seeking alternative safe, humane, and effective methods for resolving human-wildlife conflicts associated with overabundant species.

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY**

### **THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that rapid modification of ecosystems by human activities is causing wild flora and fauna to become extinct at an unprecedented rate. Premature and induced extinction of wild flora and fauna degrades the environment of which humans are an inseparable part. Conservation of threatened and endangered species presents one of the most formidable challenges to society. These conservation efforts require both biological expertise in research and management and effectiveness in public relations. The Wildlife Society supports enactment and enforcement of laws and regulations that safeguard wildlife populations and opposes activities that jeopardize threatened and endangered species populations. We also encourage effective partnerships and collaboration among all levels of government, industries, private landowners, academic institutions, conservation organizations, and other entities engaged in these issues to prevent species from becoming endangered or extinct.

### **CONSERVING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

The Wildlife Society recognizes the importance of biological diversity, which is the full range of variety and variability within and among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur, encompassing ecosystems or community diversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity. Human quality of life and survival depend on conservation of biological diversity. We believe that conservation of biological diversity should begin with actions to protect, restore, and sustain the integrity of native flora and fauna and associated ecosystems. We support and promote policies and programs to conserve biological diversity that are ecologically, socially, environmentally, and economically valid and effective.

### **WILDLIFE DISEASE**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that many pathogens are an intrinsic part of biological diversity and ecological complexity of natural, healthy ecosystems. However, The Wildlife Society is concerned about the spread of extant zoonoses and the increasing appearance of novel or introduced diseases with severe consequences for wildlife populations. Preventing introduction of disease into susceptible populations is both the most effective method of disease management and a responsibility of wildlife professionals. The Wildlife Society is committed to working collaboratively with other scientific and professional societies in solving disease-related problems involving wildlife.

## **URBAN WILDLIFE**

The Wildlife Society accepts the basic premise that urban areas containing wildlife habitat constitute a better environment for people. We also recognize that urban wildlife programs are useful in educating people about the basic principles and values of wildlife management, and stimulating greater support for regional, national, and global wildlife programs. Wildlife is an important component of the environment, even in highly modified areas such as towns, villages, suburbs, and cities where it influences the quality of human life. We strive to foster awareness among the public, wildlife professionals, and urban land managers of the aesthetic, educational, recreational, economic, physical/mental health values, and possible conflicts of wildlife to urban residents and seek opportunities to use urban wildlife interactions to expose residents to broader wildlife issues.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY THROUGH RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that humankind's increasing use of lands and resources may degrade natural environments. We also recognize that environmental degradation may be reduced if areas used by humans are also managed to maintain their biological diversity, productivity, and aesthetic values. Few areas on earth have escaped the influence of humans in meeting their needs and demands for natural resources. The Wildlife Society encourages developing and applying scientific management techniques to reduce environmental degradation and to reclaim and restore degraded ecosystems. We support scientific management to minimize loss, maintain or enhance biological systems and resources, and disseminate information that will improve public understanding of the importance of environmental quality.

### **TOXIC CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS**

The Wildlife Society is concerned that some chemical compounds may have significant negative effects on non-target wildlife and the quality of wildlife habitat. Rapid technological development in synthesis and production of chemical compounds and their widespread agricultural, industrial, and household uses have resulted in contamination of the earth's biosphere, which can pose serious hazards to public and environmental health. Both intentional, targeted applications and inadvertent spills have spread these compounds globally in air, water, soil, and organisms, which may accumulate in food chains. We advocate for a life-cycle approach to develop and use chemical compounds that trace them from synthesis to recycling or disposal, reduces contamination of the environment, and minimizes or eliminates negative effects to non-target wildlife.

## **HUMAN DIMENSIONS & IMPACT**

### **RESPONSIBLE HUMAN USE OF WILDLIFE**

The Wildlife Society recognizes the future of wildlife and diverse ecosystems depend on human stewardship. Such stewardship must consider the growing human population and its impact on wildlife populations and wildlife habitat. The Wildlife Society acknowledges the multiple values

of wildlife and supports management of wildlife populations for sustained human use and enjoyment in economically, socially, and environmentally acceptable ways. Humans are part of a functioning environment and legitimately derive livelihoods and cultural values from natural resources and sustained wildlife populations. However, unbridled growth in human numbers and resource consumption are major factors in ecosystem disruption worldwide. The wildlife-related activities of people should enhance the overall value of wildlife resources.

## **CONSERVATION EDUCATION**

The Wildlife Society endorses the principle that conservation education should emphasize experiential learning that fosters admiration and respect for nature and understanding of the interconnectedness among all living things. We are committed to developing and promoting educational programs that disseminate ecologically sound scientific knowledge that advances sustainable management of wildlife and other natural resources. We encourage access to conservation education for all age and social groups and support efforts to increase conservation education in urban populations that may be most disconnected from natural areas. The Wildlife Society calls upon all its members to (1) interpret and make readily available results of wildlife research that citizens require for decision-making, (2) actively participate in implementation of sound, publicly-oriented programs in conservation education, and (3) encourage agencies and organizations to use the most effective technologies and techniques to disseminate conservation education.

## **CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that perpetuation and sustained use of natural resources requires a sound legal system that combines equitable laws and judicious law enforcement. Regulating activities of the public is a major element in management of natural resources, particularly wildlife. We recognize, support, and commend the often difficult and dangerous work of conservation law enforcement officers. The Wildlife Society encourages public agencies to recruit, fund, and equip an adequate law enforcement staff and to support their continuous professional development. We believe the best enforcement personnel are broadly trained professionals, preferably university graduates with formal education in wildlife biology and management, ecology, conservation education, and law enforcement who are Certified Wildlife Biologists®.

## **WORKFORCE DIVERSITY WITHIN THE WILDLIFE PROFESSION**

The Wildlife Society supports policies, programs, and practices that recruit, develop, retain, and advance professionals from the broad spectrum of human society. The conservation of native species, communities, and populations of flora and fauna is affected by actions of all people, acting individually and collectively. The future of biological diversity, therefore, requires conscious engagement of all people. We promote a professional culture that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds and value the resultant richness of perspectives and contributions.

## **ANIMAL RIGHTS PHILOSOPHY AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

The Wildlife Society rejects the animal rights philosophy as conflicting with science-based

wildlife management and research activities. The animal rights philosophy states (1) each individual animal should be afforded the same basic rights as humans, (2) every animal should live free from human-induced pain and suffering, (3) animals should not be exploited for any human purposes, and (4) every individual animal has equal status regardless of commonality or rarity, or status as native, exotic, invasive, or feral. The Wildlife Society recognizes that science-based wildlife management and research may involve necessary activities that result in pain or death of individual animals. However, we also believe preventing and minimizing animal suffering is an ethical and professional responsibility and support the concept of animal welfare.

## **HUMAN POPULATIONS**

The Wildlife Society recognizes that burgeoning human populations, increasing per capita consumption, and changes in land use place an increasing demand on the world's limited natural resources. Degradation of terrestrial and aquatic communities due to human population growth and increasing consumption is biologically detrimental to the natural systems on which humans and wildlife depend. The capacity of biological systems will continue to decline if human population growth is not restrained and per capita consumption of resources not reduced. We support a policy of voluntary population management to encourage conservation of natural resources and enhance the quality of human life. We also support policies that encourage sustainable use of natural resources.

## **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The Wildlife Society accepts the premise that environmental quality and biological diversity are not appropriately or adequately assessed in conventional economic models. In our view, current economic policies fail to adequately account for the value of natural resources in supporting biological processes and providing essential services such as flood control, nutrient cycling, clean water, climate amelioration, and quality of life. In the process of economic growth, natural resources important to biological systems are converted into manufactured capital and consumer goods. Thus, economic growth entails a reallocation of natural resources from nature to the human economy, potentially having negative consequences for wildlife, wildlife habitat, and human society. We believe measures of economic strength should include the conditions and sustainability of natural resources and their impact on quality of human life.

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