



The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is a professional society founded in 1971. With over 200 members, the Alaska Chapter is one of the largest chapters of The Wildlife Society, an international organization representing wildlife biologists and managers employed by state, federal, and borough resource agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental conservation organizations, and private industry. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve biological diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources in Alaska for the benefit of society.

18 January 2012

Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
1255 W. 8th Street
Juneau, AK 99802

Dear Commissioner Campbell,

As the sole professional organization of wildlife biologists in Alaska, The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society would like to offer its views on important qualifications for the Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC). We hope you will consider these views as you select an appointee for that position.

Management of Alaska's wild resources must be based in science to be successful. Although we recognize that social and economic considerations can influence management of wildlife, it is imperative that understanding gained through scientific effort also be used to make informed management decisions. Failure to do so results in wasted effort by staff and diminished credibility of the management agency. Moreover, failure to include relevant scientific findings in the deliberative process may result in ineffective management programs. Therefore, we think it is critical that the person selected to lead the DWC be dedicated to science-based management of wildlife. That individual should be willing to accept staff recommendations that are supported by science, encourage scientific collaboration between ADF&G employees and biologists in other agencies and academic institutions, and ensure that staff be able to freely communicate science-based recommendations to the Board of Game and other entities. In our view, the Director of the DWC must be committed to the open, collaborative, and objective science necessary to ensure the health of Alaska's diverse wildlife resources.

Technical expertise is also an important qualification for the Director. Management of wildlife is increasingly based on an array of sciences including genetics, ecology, mathematics, physiology, computer modeling, etc. Integration of information across scientific disciplines is often needed to address complex resource management issues. The Director should have sufficient training to understand technical recommendations made by staff. We recommend that the Director of the DWC be capable of meeting the minimum qualifications required to be a Certified Wildlife

Biologist (criteria available at <http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/certbook.pdf>). Those criteria include completion of a Bachelor of Science or equivalent degree in the biological sciences or resource management, and at least five years professional experience as a wildlife biologist. The Director of DWC serves as a critical link between the agency's technical staff and you, the Board of Game, the public, and other agencies. We think it important that the Director have adequate training to understand and accurately communicate the technical findings of staff.

Demonstrated leadership abilities, professional integrity, and organizational competence are important qualities for the Director. Biologists within the DWC are highly dedicated and widely respected in professional circles due to their competence. We hope that the future Director will recognize the unique skills of the biological staff and exhibit a professional commitment to ethical conduct and maintenance of departmental integrity. These are critical to morale of the workforce and to ensure the agency continues to enjoy a high level of professional respect. Maintenance of a supportive workplace is also critical to recruit the brightest of the young biologists that will be needed to fill positions in the future.

Alaskans deeply value the diversity and abundance of our wildlife resources. Those resources also provide vitally important and sustainable economic inputs to Alaska's economy. In order to maintain those resources it is important that the Director of DWC value the workforce, acknowledge the importance of science-based management, and have the technical competence to understand and implement staff recommendations.

Thank you very much for considering our views on your appointment of a Director of DWC.

Sincerely,



Kris Hundertmark, PhD
President

Copies to: Governor Sean Parnell