



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY ALASKA CHAPTER

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society strives 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.



Chancellor Dr. White, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Prakash, and Acting Dean of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics Dr. Hueffer

*3rd floor Signers' Hall
P.O. Box 757500
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, AK, 99775*

Dear Chancellor Dr. White, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Prakash, and Acting Dean of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics Dr. Hueffer:

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Wildlife Program is important to the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Our members are becoming highly concerned about the shrinking faculty capacity and about recruiting the next generation of wildlife professionals. We appreciate and recognize the important leadership role UAF has historically filled in wildlife education and research in the State of Alaska since the early 1950s. We strongly encourage you to maintain that tradition by refilling faculty vacancies in the UAF Wildlife Program.

The Wildlife Society (TWS) is a non-profit scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our Alaska Chapter of TWS has about 250 members including wildlife scientists, resource managers, educators, students, and administrators in Alaska. Our members have experience working in state and federal agencies, Native organizations, universities, non-profit groups, and consulting firms; many are UAF alumni themselves.

The UAF Wildlife Program used to be one of the preeminent wildlife programs in the nation, however, that standing has been diminished over the past decade to the point of wildlife education and research being hampered in Alaska.

Specifically:

- Nearly 50% of the wildlife biology faculty positions have been lost in the last decade.

- Teaching the core curriculum of the Wildlife Program now relies heavily on affiliate and adjunct faculty each year, or recruitment of graduate students with limited experience.
- It appears that it is no longer possible to attain the classes needed to meet TWS Wildlife Biologist accreditation within four years. At the current trajectory, we are concerned that UAF students will soon no longer be able to qualify for this important accreditation for wildlife professionals.
- There is inadequate capacity within the Wildlife Program to conduct the wildlife research being requested by state and federal agencies, with existing faculty turning down projects with funding that address issues of wildlife management, responsible resource development, ecosystem resilience, and climate change.
- The current small group of faculty lacks diversity; all are white mid-aged males. A diverse faculty within a program is one of the keys to effective recruitment and retention of diverse students at the undergraduate and graduate level.
- To our understanding, the remaining faculty are becoming spread so thin that the long-term success of both faculty and students, and that of the entire program, is undermined.

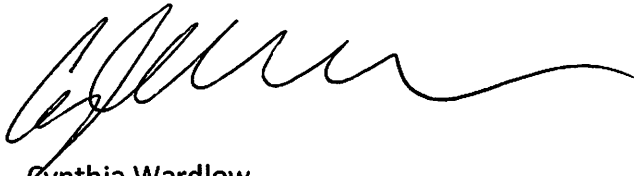
A strong Wildlife Program in Alaska is needed because of the important role of wildlife populations to Alaskans and to educate the next generation of Alaska wildlife professionals. The state has healthy, well managed wildlife populations that are the envy of the world. Wildlife in Alaska is an important part of the culture, the economy, and people's sustenance and enjoyment of the outdoors. State, federal, tribal, and borough agencies along with industry, environmental consultants, and non-governmental organizations employ hundreds of wildlife biologists across the state whose work informs policy and management decisions. In hiring wildlife professionals, these agencies and organizations look for candidates who have knowledge of and experience with Alaska's environmental and cultural diversity, of working with Alaska's wildlife and peoples, and lived experience in the state. Newly hired wildlife professionals trained and used to living here are more likely to be vested in Alaska wildlife management, have learned important nuances of wildlife management in Alaska, and are more prone to thrive and stay in Alaska-based positions.

Given the importance of wildlife to Alaskans and the need for wildlife professionals and faculty with Alaska experience and knowledge, we strongly encourage UAF to rebuild its Wildlife Program so that it is once again able to fully serve the needs of Alaska institutions that hire biologists. We recommend rebuilding the capacity that the wildlife program once had by:

- Refilling faculty positions, specifically in conservation genetics, wildlife nutrition, and population dynamics of mammals and birds.
- Hires should not be considered independently and the onus for solving these issues should not be placed on the two incoming coop unit positions; we rather recommend that regular faculty hires be done strategically along with the coop unit hires.
- Focus on hiring diverse wildlife faculty members.
- Funding generated by faculty in the UAF Wildlife Program should be used primarily to bolster the program and reinvest in it.

Our Chapter is motivated to help where we can in the process of rebuilding the UAF Wildlife Program. We would be happy to facilitate a meeting, if desired, between the Alaska Chapter of TWS Executive Board and the University to provide more information or answer questions about how the UAF program contributes to our professional field. The continuation of the wildlife program is invaluable to many of our agencies and for the conservation of wildlife in our state.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society Executive Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Wardlow', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Cynthia Wardlow
Alaska Chapter President

Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society Executive Board officers:

Cynthia Wardlow (President), Dr. Kim Jochum (Past President), Amanda Droghini (Secretary-Treasurer), Kaiti Ott (Northern Representative), Max Goldman (Southcentral Representative), Dr. Roy Churchwell (Southeast Representative).