

Idaho Chapter of TWS Activity Update to NW Section of TWS
19 July 1994, Ernest D. Ables, President

The Idaho Chapter of TWS solicited support from the Northwest Section and from the parent Society in questioning the proposed bombing range in Owyhee County, Idaho. We are pleased that both the Section and the parent Society went on record in publicly questioning weaknesses in the draft EIS for expanding the military bombing range. Hopefully our support along with that of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission will result in more careful evaluation of possible negative impacts on wildlife by military training exercises.

The Idaho Chapter also had a representative at a recent meeting concerning the status and management of the Rocky Mountain population of the trumpeter swan. In the past the Idaho Chapter had requested threatened status listing of this population, a request that was denied by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At present we believe the best course of action is to carefully assess both the biological situation and management directions for this population. It is a complex problem that involves both wildlife and fisheries interests.

The Idaho Chapter also contributed \$100 to the parent Society for support of student travel to TWS meeting in Albuquerque.



FISH & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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7 April 1994

TO: Northwest Section Board

FROM: Lynn R. Irby

I. 1994 Annual meeting

The 1994 annual meeting of the Northwest Section of the Wildlife Society was held in conjunction with the Montana Chapter annual meeting in Kalispell, Montana on March 9-12, 1994. Approximately 170 people registered for the meetings. Workshops were held on negotiation and preparation of biological assessments. Papers presented spanned a wide range of topics from control of fleas on prairie dogs to designing a strategy for statewide wetland protection.

Hal Salwasser, president of the Wildlife Society, gave the keynote address. Dick Mackie, a faculty member in the Fish and Wildlife Management Program at Montana State University nationally recognized for his work with deer, was presented with the Einarsen Award. Dale Toweill, our current newsletter editor, was elected president-elect.

At the executive board meeting, we cleared up some errors in the by-laws, decided on a meeting date for 1995 (Portland, Oregon, in September in conjunction with the National Technical Meeting), and decided to change our by-laws to make the newsletter editor a non-voting member of the executive board. We also appointed Wayne Kasworm, past president of the Montana Chapter, as chair of an ad hoc committee to explore possible inclusion of student chapter representatives on the board. Greg Green, vice-president of the NW Section, is working on a symposium to be sponsored by the NW Section at Portland. Please give him your input. We are also trying to set up a bison symposium in Bozeman for early 1996. I would like your input on this effort.

II. Idaho Training Range Opposition (decision needed by mid April)

The Idaho Chapter has requested that we send a letter to the U.S. Air Force opposing the designation of BLM and state lands in the Owyhee Mountains of southwestern Idaho as a new bombing range for the U.S. Air Force. Idaho has based its opposition on 3 points:

- 1) This is the first time the armed forces have attempted to take public land for military use without Congressional review (required under the Engle Act).*
- 2) Disturbance from bombing would have negative effects on wildlife populations of national importance (California bighorns, pronghorns, peregrines) and 6 rare plant species.*
- 3) Disturbance would directly impact the solitude of most of the BLM recommended wilderness areas in southern Idaho.*

Please let me know whether you approve or disapprove of a letter opposing the range by 15 April 1994. If you have recently been overthrown as president of your chapter and cannot get this letter to the newly elected president quickly, please cast a "post-official vote". We need to act fairly soon.

III. New board members

This is the time of year when new chapter presidents take up their duties. I would appreciate your help in updating the executive board address list. Having mailing addresses, phone numbers, and FAX numbers is very helpful in communicating with you. I have information on new officers from Montana (Dennis Flath) and Idaho (Ernie Ables) but not for other chapters.

I hope the affiliate representatives (non-voting liaison positions for British Columbia [Dan Eastman], the Northwest Territories [Bob Bromley], and Yukon Territory [Jim Hawkings] will agree to continue serving. Greg Shroer has agreed to serve as Nominations Committee chairman. We are searching for people to fill positions for newsletter editor and chair of the Nominations Committee.

Thank you for your help in the past year.

1993-94 NORTHWEST SECTION, THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
(Officer List - Prepared 6 May 1993)

Officers

- Past President:* Chuck Blair, CH2M HILL, P.O. Box 8748, Boise ID 83707.
(208) 345-5310, FAX 345-5315
- President:* Lynn Irby, Biology Department, Montana State University,
Bozeman MT 59717. (406) 994-3252, FAX 994-3190
- Vice-President:* Greg Green, EBASCO Environmental, 10900 NE 8th Street,
Bellevue WA 98004. (206) 451-4296, FAX 451-4691
- Secretary-Treasurer:* Jerome Hansen, Idaho Dep. Fish & Game, 600 S. Walnut,
Box 25, Boise ID 83707. (208) 334-3098, FAX 334-2114
- President-elect:* Dale Toweill, Idaho Dep. Fish & Game, 600 S. Walnut, Box
25, Boise ID 83707. (208) 334-2599, FAX 334-2114
- Newsletter Editor:** Dale Toweill, Idaho Dep. Fish & Game, 600 S. Walnut, Box
25, Boise ID 83707. (208) 334-2599, FAX 334-2114

*** Dale's last issue will be May 1994. We need a replacement.**

Chapter Presidents (end of term)

- Alaska (Mar 94):* Dick Shideler, Division of Habitat, Alaska Dept. Fish &
Game, 1300 College Rd., Fairbanks, AK 99701.
(907) 451-6192
- Alberta (Apr 94):* Ken Crutchfield, Northern River Basin Study, Rm 690,
Standard Life Center, 10405 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3N4. (403) 427-1742
- Idaho (Mar 95)*:* Ernie Ables, Fish and Wildlife Dept., Univ. Idaho, Moscow,
ID 83844. (208) 885-7608, FAX 885-6226
- Montana (Mar 95)*:* Dennis Flath, Montana Dep. Fish, Wildl. Parks, FWP
Building, Bozeman, MT 59717. (406) 994-6354, FAX
- Oregon (Mar 94):* Mike Wisdom, Forest and Range Sci. Lab, 1401 Gekeler
Lane, LaGrande, OR 97850. (503) 962-6532
- Washington (Mar 95):* Greg Shroer, Resources Northwest, 1800 112th Ave. N.E.,
Suite 100, Bellevue, WA 98004. (206) 454-3408, FAX 454-
3459

*** New officers**

Affiliate Representatives (informal liaison for affiliates with no chapter):

British Columbia: Dan Eastman, Wildlife Branch; Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks; 780 Blanchard St., Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4. (604) 387-9796, FAX 356-9145

Northwest Territories: Bob Bromley, Department of Renewable Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories, Box 21, Scotia Center - 600, 5102 50th Ave., Yellowknife, NWT, X1A 3S8. (403) 920-6328, FAX 873-0293

Yukon Territory: Jim Hawkings, Canadian Wildl. Service, Box 6010, 100 Hamilton Blvd., Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Y1A 5L7. (403) 668-2285, FAX 667-7962

Northwest Section Representative to TWS

Jim Peek, Dep. Forestry, Wildlife, and Range, University of Idaho, Moscow ID 83843. (208) 885-7120

Northwest Section Committee Chairs

Awards: Steve Knick, Bureau of Land Management, 3948 Development Ave., Boise, ID 83705. (208) 384-3483, FAX 384-3493

Nominations*: Greg Shroer, Resources Northwest, 1800 112th Ave. N.E., Suite 100, Bellevue, WA 98004. (206) 454-3408, FAX 454-3459

Student Chapter

Representation (ad hoc): Wayne Kasworm, USFWS, 475 Fish Hatchery Rd., Libby, MT 59923. (406) 293-4162

Program Director, The Wildlife Society

Sandra Staples-Bortner, TWS, 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda MD 20814-2197. (301) 897-9770, FAX 530-2471

IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY TESTIMONY
regarding the
IDAHO TRAINING RANGE
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society is comprised of approximately 200 professional wildlife biologists working in Idaho. We are the state affiliate of The Wildlife Society which is an international organization. As part of their professional responsibilities, our members review hundreds of proposals state-wide that can potentially affect wildlife resources in Idaho. Some proposals are considered relatively benign in their potential to affect wildlife populations or wildlife habitats, while others pose serious threats to wildlife resources. The Idaho Chapter has reviewed the Idaho Training Range (ITR) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Let there be no question that the proposed action for the Idaho Training Range falls within the category of proposals that may have severe affects upon wildlife resources in south-west Idaho.

The DEIS identifies many of the Chapter's concerns regarding potential impacts to wildlife, including:

- stress effects from low-altitude flights upon wildlife - these include pronghorn antelope, mule deer and California bighorn sheep, raptors, waterbirds and upland game birds,
- disturbance to wildlife from increased human access, particularly during the breeding seasons - especially upon bighorn sheep, pronghorns, sage grouse and raptors,
- reduction in habitat from fire resulting from ordnance and flare use,
- reduction in habitat from construction of firebreaks intended to limit wildfire spread,
- potential bird-aircraft collisions,
- degradation or loss of riparian habitat within target areas,
- grass and sagebrush habitat degradation within the target areas, especially affecting small mammals, reptiles, gallinaceous birds and passerine birds (including neotropical migrant birds),
- introduction of noxious weeds within target areas and other disturbed sites, and
- cumulative effects of these impacts with adjacent actions and other proposals.

While the Idaho Chapter finds these issues identified in the DEIS, most of the discussions are inconclusive, understated or dismissed on lack of knowledge. Such statements as found on page 4-118 of the DEIS serve as examples of the

insufficient disclosure of impacts; "Species composition and abundance of small animal populations are LIKELY TO CHANGE within and adjacent to targets and other cleared areas". Such statements offer little information to the public regarding magnitude, direction or duration of change. In the same paragraph, positive impacts to raptors within target areas are implied by the statement: An example of a positive impact to raptors from ordnance delivery is described in Jackson et al. (1977), wherein it was SURMISED that a harrier continuing to hunt through ordnance delivery was PROBABLY taking small mammals and birds flushed from cover". This observation does not offer conclusive evidence of short- or long-term benefits to raptors from ordnance delivery. Finally, this paragraph concludes with the statement: "Due to the abundance of similar habitat in the combined restricted areas, loss of some habitat in the target areas is not expected to adversely affect raptor populations". The Idaho Chapter does not agree that impact areas spanning 13,000 acres under Option 1, and 11,800 acres under Option 2 of the proposed action can be accurately described as "some habitat". These citations serve as examples of poor scientific rationale and weak conclusions commonly found within the DEIS regarding impacts to wildlife.

The Idaho Chapter suggests more extensive presentation of cumulative effects regarding biological resources within the DEIS. Just two pages of text spanning pages 4-176 through 4-178 do not adequately address the cumulative impacts with other actions that may take place within and adjacent to the proposed training range. MORE IMPORTANT, the Idaho Chapter encourages greater disclosure of cumulative effects that will likely result from the individual impacts described separately for biological resources in the DEIS, including (but not limited to) low-elevation flights (in future years) occurring over degraded habitats (resulting from ordnance use, fires, firebreaks, etc.) and greater human access and activity.

The Idaho Chapter has reviewed the appendix material including Appendix M - State of Idaho Range Development Recommendations. It is our understanding that the contents of Appendix M were offered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as options to mitigate the potential effects of the proposed training range expansion in Idaho. While this information is provided in the appendices, it is not apparent that these recommendations were incorporated into the proposed action or alternatives. Of particular concern is the minimal consideration given to alternative sites that would provide for Air Force training needs while involving less critical wildlife habitats. Because these recommendations have not been incorporated into the proposed action, it is unclear to the Idaho Chapter whether these recommendations were ignored, dismissed as not having merit, or consciously decided against during development of the proposed action. The Idaho Chapter suggests that these recommendations be included as part of the proposed action and that the final EIS show greater disclosure in the handling of recommendations offered in Appendix M.

The Idaho Chapter will submit more detailed comments to the DEIS in writing. We remain deeply concerned for the potential impacts of the proposed action upon wildlife resources, and offer our full endorsement of the No Action alternative.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our remarks today.