

IDAHO CHAPTER
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
SUITE 611
7101 WISCONSIN AVE. N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20014

May 26, 1983

Mr. Richard L. Barrett
State Personnel Director
Idaho Personnel Commission
700 W. State
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Mr. Barrett:

On behalf of the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society, I want to make a few comments regarding the recent changes in the educational requirements for conservation officer, fisheries research biologist, and wildlife research biologist positions with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The original requirement was a Bachelor's Degree for the conservation officer position and a Master's Degree for the fisheries and wildlife research biologist positions. Under the present system, the degree requirements have been replaced with "any combination of education, training, and experience that demonstrates competence."

The fisheries and wildlife professions are two of the most demanding and competition is extreme. Over the years, universities have improved their curricula, thereby providing a better education for students. This combination of better available training and the severe competition among students for jobs has been of great help to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Only the best students are hired, resulting in a noticeable overall increase in quality of employees. That trend will probably continue, and future employees will be even more competitive and well trained.

Entrance requirements are used to insure minimal competence. At a time when the quality of students (potential employees) is increasing and entry-level requirements should be made more stringent, it is sad to see Idaho drop its degree requirements.

October 3, 1983

Mr. Charles A. Roberts, Chief
Classification and Compensation Bureau
Idaho Personnel Commission
700 West State Street
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Mr. Roberts:

I want to personally thank you for providing additional details regarding the changes in the classification system as they relate to fish and wildlife positions. We are all interested in the same objectives - a fair system for selecting the most qualified individuals.

The next step will be to analyze how well the applicants with degrees do on the examinations as opposed to those without degrees. I'll be looking forward to the results. Perhaps on one of my trips to Boise I can arrange a meeting with Dale Tankersley to get acquainted and at the same time, discuss the analysis and future plans.

Again, I appreciate the details you sent. Best regards.

Sincerely,

Lewis Nelson, Jr., President
Idaho Chapter - The Wildlife Society

LN:jp



JUN 17 1983

IDAHO PERSONNEL COMMISSION

700 WEST STATE, BOISE, IDAHO 83720

RICHARD L. BARRETT
State Personnel Director

JOHN V. EVANS, Governor

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

EMILY McDERMOTT, Chairman
RICHARD M. CHASTAIN, Vice-Chairman
ANNE PASLEY-STUART
FERD KOCH
ANNE SOLOMON

RICHARD J. HUTCHISON
Deputy Director

June 15, 1983

Mr. Lewis Nelson, Jr.
President
Idaho Chapter
The Wildlife Society
Box 25
Boise, ID 83707

Dear Mr. Nelson:

Mr. Barrett asked me to respond to your letter of May 26, 1983 since your inquiry deals with my area of responsibility--the management of our classification system, its practices and procedures. I apologize for taking this long to get back to you, but your letter arrived at one of our busiest times, it seems, and I had several priorities for which I was already committed.

Let me tell you a little history of why we dropped college degrees as requirements (except where required by law) from our job specifications. In 1977, we of the classification staff began a vigorous job-analysis procedure for all new and revised classifications of work. The purpose of these analyses was to determine the bona-fide occupational requirements (BFOQ) of each job and to frame the minimum qualifications of the class in that context. For too long we and other jurisdictions had written minimum qualifications something like this: "a degree in business or public administration or a closely related field and six years of progressively responsible experience, three of which must have been supervisory in nature." Quite frankly, it is an embarrassment for me to look back at minimum qualifications like this on our older specifications.

In this example, it would not require much analysis to show it isn't the degree that is a BFOQ nor the six years of experience; they are substitute minimum qualifications for something else. What actually may be required in this example is a knowledge of management principles and practices; perhaps an ability to develop and administer a budget; an ability to manage (direct and control) staff and to develop training programs; and an ability to communicate well and to develop effective working relationships.

I
P
M
A

MEMBER

**INTERNATIONAL PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

This example is typical of what we've discovered time and time again: it is not the degree per se that is required, and it is not experience that is required; instead, it is certain job-related knowledges and abilities hopefully provided by that education and experience.

My judgment is that this procedure has worked very well for us. It complies with the Uniform Selection Guidelines that require applicants be measured only against BFOQ's and not against artificial requirements that are in reality not a prerequisite for the job. It causes us a great deal more work in conducting extensive job analysis and developing the minimum qualifications for knowledges and abilities required to do the job. It would be far simpler to require some kind of a degree or a certain number of years' experience. However, we believe our efforts are well expended and our resultant classifications far superior to the old approach of establishing minimum qualifications.

With that background, let's discuss the Fishery Research Biologist. You state that "Under the present system, the degree requirements have been replaced with 'any combination of education, training, and experience that demonstrates competence.'" I really wished you'd gone on and quoted the rest of the minimum qualifications; therein lies the essential requirements for this job based on analysis of duties performed. Let me quote it verbatim:

"Any combination of education, training, and experience that demonstrates competence in each of the following: Considerable knowledge of: life histories, population dynamics, anatomy, and ecology of fish; principles of fish management; fish biology and habitat; limnology; fishery sampling techniques. Good knowledge of: statistical analysis; laboratory procedures and equipment. Some knowledge of: parasites and diseases of fish; fish physiology; computer capability for use in research projects; first aid. Ability to: identify various fish species, aquatic insects, and plankton; interpret and apply technical information; write technical reports summarizing research projects; give oral presentations; establish and maintain effective working relationships; diagnose and repair minor mechanical problems. Physical ability to: perform the physically demanding duties required in the responsibilities listed above."

These are the essential requirements requisite for the Fishery Research Biologist. If they are obtained via a degree, fine! If they are derived by advanced course work and experience, fine! The point is, someone without a degree may well have these knowledges and abilities; and conversely, one with a degree may not have them. The degree is not the arbiter--it is whether the applicant possesses the knowledges and abilities considered as minimum preparation to do the job.

The practical matter of the situation for the professional Fish and Game personnel is the knowledges and abilities required are typically obtained through higher education and degrees in wildlife management. I suspect extremely few applicants meeting minimum qualifications are without degrees, but it could happen. Someone may have completed all major course work, but not a thesis; or for whatever reason did not satisfy a physical education or language requirement necessary for graduation. I would not want to exclude these people from competing for a vacancy in the class if they possess the minimum knowledges and abilities.

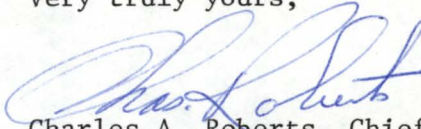
Mr. Lewis Nelson, Jr.

Page 3

Dale Tankersley in our Examination Bureau is keeping data on applicants for Conservation Officer. He is comparing how well the applicants with degrees do on our examinations as opposed to those without. We'll be most happy to share this with you as soon as we have enough data to be meaningful.

I thank you for your thoughtful letter; please call me at 334-3894 if my letter has raised new issues you wish to discuss.

Very truly yours,



Charles A. Roberts, Chief
Classification and Compensation Bureau

CR/rh

cc: Bob Dick
Jerry Conley