

IDAHO CHAPTER

## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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February 14, 1989

Mr. William Penn-Mott, Jr., Director  
U.S.D.I. National Park Service  
18 & C Street N.W., Room 3117  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Penn-Mott Jr.,

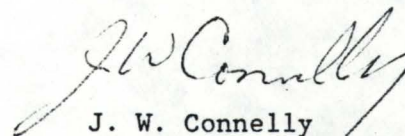
The extensive forest and range wildfires of 1988 and the media coverage which resulted have led to criticism of the 'Let Burn' policy. The Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society fully supports the policy of limited fire suppression.

Because much of the burning occurred in areas of high public use there was considerable publicity of an ominous nature. This has led to outcry from private individuals and political figures to modify or abandon what we believe is sound management policy. The Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society is made up of 190 professional wildlife biologists employed by academic institutions, private industry, and governmental agencies. As biologists we recognize the importance of diverse ecosystems to animal and plant communities and the role that periodic fire plays in achieving that diversity. Total fire suppression not only leads to less productive monotypic communities but also allows build up of fuels which can lead to more destructive burns, as witnessed in the Yellowstone ecosystem in 1988.

Realizing that there may be a need for immediate suppression under some circumstances where property or critical resources are threatened, we feel that the use of wildfire to meet wildland management objectives is appropriate. The fact that many of the fires in 1988 occurred in high profile areas should be used to advantage and the opportunity taken to educate the general public and officials on the benefits of natural fires and the limited suppression policy.

The adoption of the limited suppression policy was a progressive step in wildland resource management and should not be modified due to politics or misinformed opinion. We would like to be involved in any discussion of the fate of the 'Let Burn' policy and ask that we be notified of public hearings or other opportunities.

Sincerely,

  
J. W. Connelly  
President, ICTWS

JC/PW/ch