



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

5410 Grosvenor Lane • Bethesda, MD 20814 • Tel. (301) 897-9770

Idaho Chapter of The
Wildlife Society
c/o Fish & Wildlife Dept.
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho 83844
February 10, 1995

Senator Dirk Kempthorne
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1204

Dear Senator Kempthorne:

I appreciate very much your response to my letter of concern over the future of the National Biological Survey (now the National Biological Service, NBS). When the NBS was being proposed by the Department of Interior there was much concern among the fish and wildlife community nationally over the future of Interior's research mission. Those of us in the universities were particularly nervous about the future of the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units and their potential new role as components of the NBS. These Units have been in existence since 1938 and have been crucial in developing the scientific knowledge base for management of our fish and wildlife resources and in educating and training professional fish and wildlife managers.

The Cooperative Unit at the University of Idaho has been in existence since September 1947 and has been the corner stone of both our fish and wildlife research and graduate programs since its creation. In fact, during most of our Unit's existence it has contributed approximately 40 percent of departmental faculty numbers and has at times supported the critical mass necessary for continual functioning of our fish and wildlife graduate programs. Unit personnel are university faculty members and teach graduate level classes along with supervising students pursuing advanced degrees in fish and wildlife. Graduates of the Unit program have assumed leadership roles in the state and region, including two present regional supervisors for the Idaho Fish and Game Department plus the present Director of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Therefore, relative to your request for contributions of the NBS to Idaho in the past two years I will confine my comments to the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit since it is the unit within NBS with which I am most familiar. Other units of the NBS in Idaho



include the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho and the Raptor Research and Technical Assistance Center of the BLM, located in Boise and affiliated with Boise State University.

The Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Idaho is composed of a leader, Dr. J. Michael Scott (Wildlife) and two assistant leaders, Dr. Ted Bjornn and Dr. Jim Congleton (both fisheries), plus several research associates and assistants. Dr. Scott has conducted research on a wide variety of subjects related to endangered species and has focused on finding ways to proactively address these issues and avoid the conflicts and controversies that surround so many endangered species recovery efforts. He is a national leader in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to plot habitats, species distributions and management patterns as a way of identifying areas for potential management changes (the GAP Analysis approach) that will hopefully reduce the need for endangered species designations in the future.

Dr. Bjornn's contributions to the State and university have been exceptional. He has directed to completion degree programs of more than 50 graduate students during his rich and productive career. His research on trout, steelhead and salmon has been unsurpassed in this state. His early work on the impacts of sedimentation in trout producing streams led to better management practices on the watersheds and enhanced fish productivity. His work on Kelly Creek resulted in restoration of the cutthroat trout fishery of that stream, one of the highest quality trout streams in the West. During the past two years Dr. Bjornn has provided leadership for the salmon recovery efforts on the Snake River drainage and his previous research on salmon has provided the factual foundation for much of the current discussion on salmon recovery. His recovery team recommendations were for continued transport of fish past the dams and did not recommend drawdown of reservoirs as useful solutions to salmon passage problems. He also assists the Idaho Fish and Game Department with research on supplementation of wild salmon and steelhead stocks with hatchery reared fish. As an aside, Dr. Bjornn's spouse brought to the department the largest research project in college history, a \$2.4 million grant from BPA to develop treatment methods for BKD (bacterial kidney disease).

Dr. Jim Congleton has been researching better techniques for collecting and barging salmonids past the Snake and Columbia River dams since 1983. He is also heavily involved in developing methods for controlling and treating IHN, the number one disease problem in commercial trout hatcheries in Idaho, and BKD the main disease problem of sport hatcheries that produce salmon. His work on IHN is jointly conducted in cooperation with Clear Springs Foods,



Inc., the state's largest private trout producer, with funds from the Western Regional Aquaculture Consortium of the USDA.

During the 1994 federal fiscal year Cooperative Unit scientists brought in \$2,122,545 in grants and contracts to the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at the University of Idaho. Eighty-nine percent of this amount came from outside the State and part of the overhead returns were used to support undergraduate teaching programs through supplementing an inadequate state teaching budget.

In summary, National Biological Service biologists are extremely important contributors to the university, to the State and to its fish and wildlife resources. Perhaps the most important long term contribution is the development of a scientific knowledge base necessary for proper management of our unsurpassed fish and wildlife resources. Research conducted by the Unit over the years in Idaho is used regularly by private, state and federal groups and agencies to more effectively manage our state's resources. Emphasis is on solving present day problems and in preventing future problems and conflicts for our natural resource agencies and industries in the State and region.

Senator Kempthorne, thanks for allowing me the opportunity to expand on the Cooperative Unit of the NBS at the University of Idaho and its contributions to the State. I would like the opportunity to meet with you personally and to respond to any other questions you might have. I also would like to furnish our other congressional delegates the information in this letter but will not do so without your permission. Let me know how I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ernest D. Ables, President,
Idaho Chapter of TWS

