



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Clait E. Braun
President

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TO: Chapter and Section Presidents
FROM: Clait E. Braun, President *Clait*

Council of The Wildlife Society, after considerable discussion, adopted a proposal from the Professional Development Committee at the October meeting in Cincinnati. This proposal will require Certified Wildlife Biologists to renew certification every 5 years. This action was not taken lightly as the proposal has been under committee development and discussion for the last decade.

Council believes the proposal will enhance the credibility of the profession and TWS without placing a hardship on those presently certified. Further, certification renewal will provide an opportunity for Chapters and Sections to have an important role in professional development by encouraging career-long learning and exposure of biologists/managers/researchers/etc. to new knowledge and technologies.

Why certification renewal? To answer, we first need to consider why certification? Anyone with an interest in wildlife can become a member of The Wildlife Society. Certification is available to those individuals who have the professional qualifications and experience required to practice as a professional wildlife biologist. Today, we are in the midst of an information age characterized by rapid generation of new knowledge, development of new technologies, and rapidly changing social values. Wildlife professionals must keep up with these new developments by participating in professional development activities. One time certification for life is not appropriate nor meaningful. Certified Wildlife Biologists must demonstrate continued learning that can be documented through certification renewal.

All of the details have not been finalized but certification renewal will use a modified and shortened version of our existing Professional Development Program and require completion of only 80 hours of organized activity over a 5-year period. Organized activity will be broadly defined to include seminars, symposia, short courses, correspondence courses, training sessions, technical sessions at professional meetings, as well as regular college courses. Subject areas also will be broad and include those directly related to wildlife, in related resource disciplines such as forestry, range, and watersheds, as well as professionally enriching subjects such as computer science, managerial and leadership skills, communications, marketing, and problem solving.

Cost of certification renewal will be same as our current Professional Development Program (\$25 for TWS members).

Council envisions that Sections and Chapters will have a key role in certification renewal by encouraging participation and providing additional opportunities for professional development. Most programs at Chapter and Section meetings already provide some of the organized activities needed for renewal and we encourage you to consider providing more opportunities; we believe this will benefit all members, not just those who are certified, as well as increase your meeting attendance and membership.

In the coming months we will be providing you with additional details and asking you to appoint a Professional Development Coordinator. We envision this individual (or perhaps a committee) will help promote professional development activities in your area, keep your members aware of upcoming opportunities, and gathering advice from members as to desired future professional development activities that your Section or Chapter might develop. The Wildlife Society's Professional Development Committee will work with each coordinator (or committee chair) on implementation plans.

Certification renewal should generate new enthusiasm in The Wildlife Society at the local level by involving the membership in training. Wildlife professionals have a thirst for knowledge and seek new methods and techniques; our new Annual Conference is a clear testament to that! We can think of no greater service The Wildlife Society can make to its members and the public than actively promoting life-long learning opportunities and enhancing the qualifications of our certified professionals. With your leadership and active involvement it can happen!