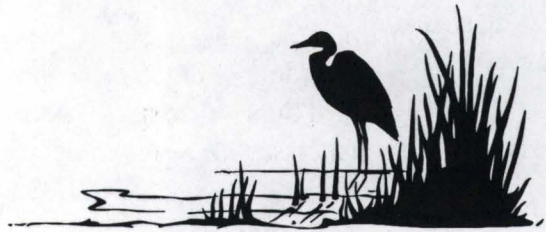


From The Desk Of:

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Addressee:

Jim Unsworth and Dave Cross, Presidents,
Idaho Chapters of the Wildlife/American Fisheries Societies

Date: April 17, 1996

Hello:

As a member in good standing of the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society (ICTWS) and the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (ICAFS), I am writing to request that the Board of Directors (Board) of both Societies consider a proposal to collectively increase our effectiveness in communicating with the public, political representatives, and other non-scientists. This is the same proposal we have discussed on the phone recently.

The Problem:

As a participant in the activities of both Societies for the last several years here in Idaho, I have heard frequent cries at meetings and in newsletters about how ineffective we are as professional fisheries and wildlife scientists at communicating effectively in public forums. The problem appears to be so bad, that (1) most of the public does not even know we exist, and (2) those that do hear from us or about us tend to think we are an environmental group with a politically oriented agenda. Although we would like to think of ourselves as organizations of professional fish and wildlife scientists, we are too often not viewed that way outside of our profession. The result is that many fish and wildlife species and habitats are disappearing or being less than properly managed because of a lack of understanding of the facts by the public. Some examples of this include Idaho's declining salmon and steelhead runs, threats to wetland protection, threats to endangered species protection, and a lack of attention paid by us professionals to many potentially threatened non-game wildlife species because of a lack of support by the public to learn more about them.

The Solution:

The solution is, of course, to communicate what we as fish and wildlife professionals know more effectively, so that this information can be better considered in decision-making processes. The solution includes many things that both Societies are already doing. For example, the ICAFS released an excellent editorial entitled: "Why Science Isn't Saving Salmon: The Truth About Science and Salmon." And ICTWS past president Dr. Ernie Ables worked very hard many times

to submit thoughtful, insightful comments to elected representatives regarding issues of importance (i.e. pending legislation, etc.). These are the kinds of efforts we need to continue to support. The only difference is, we need to be HEARD!

My feeling is that we can be heard more effectively if we do two things:

- (1) both Societies should join forces and speak as one united body of fish and wildlife professionals, and
- (2) this united group should seek to exploit all possible channels for communication with maximum effectiveness, including most importantly the media here in Idaho.

The Proposal:

- o I propose that both Societies agree to unite for communications purposes as the "Idaho Chapters of the American Fisheries and Wildlife Societies - the Fish and Wildlife Professionals of Idaho."
- o I propose that an agreement be reached by both Boards on how to organize to react *quickly* and *effectively* when good scientific information is needed. Some communications needs will be very fast in coming, and some we can anticipate and react less quickly.
- o I propose that both Societies agree to aggressively support the use of all tools available for serving and using the media. The purpose would be to obtain maximum coverage on all issues addressed by the Societies, and to promote both Societies as the pre-eminent source of credible, objective information in the state of Idaho. Use of the media is perhaps the fastest, most effective vehicle to be heard by "the public."

The first of the three proposals should be relatively easy to achieve, given a willingness of both Societies to communicate more effectively. I believe both Societies have common goals in protecting and promoting the use of fish and wildlife resources. One major advantage is that there is "strength in numbers," and another is that some issues naturally overlap anyway (see examples listed below).

The second of the three proposals provides what I suspect will prove to be the greatest challenge to fulfilling this proposal: the ability to react quickly and effectively is of paramount importance, and is very difficult for a groups of scientists accustomed to being mired in lengthy peer review processes and whatever else. To accomplish the goal of reacting quickly and effectively, both Boards will need significant autonomy in developing policy statements on a variety of issues. I am aware of the current structure of both organizations, and I understand that on many issues, committees within each Society should develop policy on certain issues. I do not see this as a problem, as long as, (1) the appropriate person on each Board is able to direct that board to react as quickly as possible in developing information, and (2) the Board and elected representatives of both Societies are willing to act courageously in providing leadership on difficult issues.

The biggest concern I have heard voiced in both Societies over the last several years is that perhaps not all of the members of a Society will agree on certain issues. This, in my opinion, is why elections are held. If members do not like the kind of leadership provided by the current president or other Board members, then they are free to vote in someone else whose positions they are more inclined to agree with. A side benefit of this strategy is that it may motivate more people to actively compete for leadership positions within each Society, knowing that such a position would hold responsibility for directing policy on many issues that are ultimately consumed by the public. For example, as president of the ICTWS, Ernie Ables took the initiative to ask our political leaders to consider his input on a variety of issues of importance to the ICTWS, without always going to committees or the entire membership for approval beforehand. I support Ernie's courageous and aggressive efforts, and would vote into office another person just like him again.

The third proposal is an area I am somewhat familiar with, and I would like to help influence. As Wolf Recovery Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the last three years in Idaho, and as the office's outreach consultant, I have had ample opportunity to serve and use the media to promote the position of the Service on a variety of issues under a variety of circumstances. Through my various successes and failures I have developed experience that I would like to use to its greatest potential through the two Societies I belong to, support, and believe in greatly.

Examples:

One example of the kind of work the Societies might engage in would be if a reporter called a representative of the Societies regarding the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative (WDFI), wanting to know if such a proposal would have any meaningful influence on managing or protecting non-game fish and wildlife resources, and if so, how. The Societies could make the appropriate contacts within each Society, if necessary, to obtain actual data, or at least some opinions, and then share that information with the reporter jointly as the Societies. Even better, if the president, another Board member, or another leader within a Society is confident that the Society supports the WDFI and has enough knowledge to contribute without calling for more information, that individual could immediately provide that information.

Another example of the kind of work the Societies might engage includes reviewing proposals such as the Endangered Species Act reauthorization bill by Senator Kempthorne, Clean Water Act reauthorization, Farm Bill reauthorization, the bull trout management proposal by Governor Batt, various salmon recovery issues, or the grizzly bear reintroduction Environmental Impact Statement soon to be issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. By joining forces on these types of issues we speak with one louder and hopefully more professional voice than speaking apart, and we can share perspectives and information with each other about how each Society has handled similar issues in the past. I imagine that in the bull trout example, the ICAFS would have the lead in developing a position that the ICTWS leadership could then review, comment on, and request changes in, and in the grizzly bear example the roles would be reversed.

Action Items:

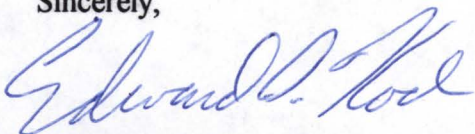
- o The presidents of both Societies should do whatever may be required within their respective Societies to meet in person soon to negotiate, write, and sign a brief cooperative agreement under which this proposal would be implemented.
- o As a starting point for working jointly, we should agree to begin addressing a long-term type of an issue in which both Societies have a relatively equal stake: the presidents of both Societies should appoint a member to begin developing a joint position for the Societies on reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Keep in mind that our very own state of Idaho has the lead Senator on ESA reauthorization. The position should be specific to Idaho. We should (1) identify why it should be important to Idahoans to care about endangered species, (2) list what the ESA has meant here in Idaho (number of species listed, consultation completed, projects stopped, acres of land set aside specifically to protect listed species, etc.), (3) what it has not meant, (4) what we would recommend for changes to the current law in order to protect and manage fish and wildlife more effectively, (5) what we believe to be biologically real or appropriate about Senator Kempthorne's proposed bill, (6) what we do not believe to be biologically real or appropriate about Senator Kempthorne's bill. Consider that when Senator Kempthorne held hearings on the ESA in Idaho last year, it is my understanding that he did not even think to invite representatives of either the ICTWS or the ICAFS. We must make him aware of our interest in and support for a good ESA, and of our interest in working with him to achieve it.

From this starting point the Societies can then hopefully figure out how to make future cooperation occur successfully on a variety of issues, and under a variety of time frames. I do not support either organization to which I belong becoming an advocacy group akin to other "environmental groups." Instead, I propose we unite to simply communicate more effectively. There are other examples of groups of professionals that are highly organized and communicate effectively. I would cautiously suggest (because I am not too familiar with them) that we consider using the American Medical Association as a model of a group of highly trained professionals who seem to work effectively to influence decision-making in many forums. In other words, not only is it okay for us professionals to speak up, I believe we should view it as our *obligation* to do so.

Thank you for considering my proposal. Please let me know what your determination is regarding its merits, and if I can help implement a program along these lines.

Sincerely,



Edward "Ted" D. Koch