
GROWING THE RELEVANCE OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

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Political unrest in the United States requires wildlife managers in Montana to consider the shifting context within which citizens engage wildlife and wildlife agencies. The state and national elections of 2016 gave voice to concerns about losses of trust, safety and security. The public seeks or is bracing for change, arguably and in part for the sake of change, with consequences that have yet to unfold. Historically, the wildlife profession has been seen by some as an obstacle to change. In today's social environment, the wildlife profession risks censure, with political consequences, if seen as a distraction from overarching public concerns. Conversely, the opportunity exists to redirect its focus on leadership toward a desired future. To lead, the wildlife profession in Montana must connect with the issues of trust, safety and security that seem elemental on the minds of Montanans today. Thus, the wildlife profession would do well to help reinforce the societal underpinnings upon which amenity values can be conserved. For example, now is the time for the wildlife profession in Montana to lead openly in addressing climate change and the advance of invasive species. It could be seen prescribing the innovative use of renewable resources to meet social and economic, as well as environmental needs. The wildlife profession in Montana could set a more obvious and intentional example for workforce diversity and human respect. Montana's model of habitat conservation could more visibly include a vision toward a future when wildlife and people are better integrated on the landscape.