

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES – TERRESTRIAL

ABSTRACTS OF THE 2007 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

DEVELOPING ENERGY, SUSTAINING NATURAL SYSTEMS:

How Do We Do It?

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INTRODUCTION

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The Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society is the professional association of biologist active in wildlife research, management, education, and administration within the State of Montana. The goal of the Chapter is scientific management of Montana's wildlife resources and their habitats. The principle objectives of the Society are: (1) to develop and promote sound stewardship of wildlife resources and of the environment upon which wildlife and humans depend; (2) to actively participate in programs designed to diminish human-induced environmental degradation; (3) to increase awareness and appreciation of wildlife values; and (4) to seek the highest standards in all activities of the wildlife profession. Society members are dedicated to sustainable management of wildlife resources and their habitats and ecology is the primary scientific discipline of the wildlife profession. The Society also believes that wildlife, in its myriad forms, is basic to the maintenance of human culture and quality of life.

To further explore the public trust in our times, the 2007 conference theme was Developing Energy, Sustaining Natural Systems: How Do We Do It? We toured the energy scene, including various types of energy development, the regulatory framework, wildlife/habitat impacts, and the long term forecast. What started as a pre-conference training workshop, Energy 101, continued into a series of special energy sessions throughout the main conference in unprecedented fashion, reflecting the importance of the topic and implications for Montana's wildlife. Featured speakers included professionals from Alberta and Wyoming who clearly demonstrated the challenges of balancing wildlife conservation and energy development. Other speakers working at the wildlife – energy interface covered topics including energy transmission corridors, wind development, coal development potential, sage grouse, bats, mule deer, and habitat mitigation strategies. The Plenary Session was a lively series of presentations that touched on a wide array of perspectives about energy development in Montana.

A second workshop entitled Building Connections between Wildlife Populations and People: The Application of Wildlife Linkage Across the Northern Rockies Landscape addressed the critical issue of how to assure movement opportunities for wildlife as human development proceeds, human populations increase, and energy resources are developed. A third workshop brought people together for a dialogue on children and nature: No Child Left Inside, Reconnecting Montana's Youth to Nature. Children today spend less time outdoors than

in past generations and that has important implications for ensuring conservation successes and instilling stewardship values in future Americans.

One of the featured speakers was Dr. Steve Running from the University of Montana, whose participation on the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change would garner the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize. His presentation was titled "Climate Trends and Ecosystem Responses in Montana." While science is a phenomenally slow process and uncertainty remains, Dr. Running challenged us to really think about climate change and its implications for Montana wildlife as we design protocols and collect data, make management decisions, and plan habitat conservation projects, among other things.

The Montana Chapter herein provides the abstracts of its 2007 Annual Meeting. Many reference ongoing research and management projects, and may include data that are not comprehensive or fully analyzed. Thus, abstracts should not be cited in other works without permission of the author(s), whose contact information is provided. Our next annual meeting will be held 26-29 February 2008: Northwest Connections: Sustaining our Wildlife Populations in the Face of Climate Change, Human Population Growth, and Energy Development.