

# MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## 53<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

### *Wildlife Disease: Challenges for Research & Management in the 21st Century*

FEBRUARY 24-27, 2015

HELENA, MONTANA

BRENT LONNER, PRESIDENT 2015-16

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#### INTRODUCTION

Wildlife disease management is arguably one of the greatest challenges of contemporary wildlife management. Wildlife disease has significant impacts not only on wildlife health and population status, but also with regard to human social and economic impacts. Additionally, zoonotic diseases have routinely played significant roles with respect to human health concerns for centuries. And alternatively, human and/or domestic livestock born pathogens can also have significant impacts on particular susceptible wildlife. Although occurrence of disease in wildlife can be a natural phenomenon, there appears to be increasing trends toward the appearance of novel or introduced diseases with severe consequences for wildlife populations. As is stated in a The Wildlife Society position statement from July, 2012:

“Understanding transmission, pathophysiology, epidemiology, and ecology of pathogens and how they interact with wildlife hosts is essential for developing effective strategies to prevent or manage disease in wildlife. Better understanding of these concepts will enable wildlife managers and scientists to address disease challenges.”

The 53rd annual meeting contained a total of 62 oral presentations, many of which focused on various aspects of local and national wildlife disease management and research. These presenters (wildlife managers, researchers, students, and others engaged in various forms of wildlife/habitat resource management) bettered our knowledge and understanding of how pathogens and disease events, large or small, impact living species at multiple levels. This year's banquet speaker was biologist and author Dr. Bruce Smith. Dr. Smith provided some valuable firsthand experience and perspectives related to working with diseases such as Brucellosis and Chronic Wasting Disease in the Greater Yellowstone Area. Just as important, Dr. Smith reminded us of the value of field biologists, wildlife managers and researchers having a working understanding of disease ecology along the way emphasizing the importance of good communication between wildlife professionals and the public on these topics

Hopefully the following presentation and poster abstracts will provide not only a better understanding of the importance and consequences of disease ecology and management, but wildlife research and management in general as we continue to progress into the 21st century.