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Anything But Science

By Jim Slinsky

(Jim Slinsky is a sportsman, conservationist and defender of our right to hunt, fish, trap, and shoot. He is also a staunch advocate of the individual interpretation of the Second Amendment. Jim is the Founder, Producer and Host of the "Outdoor Talk Network", a nationally, syndicated, outdoor-talk radio show program.

The Outdoor Talk Network is an educational and entertaining program with the focus on fishing, hunting, trapping, shooting and related environmental and legislative issues. He has interviewed the most important and influential people in the outdoor industry. His radio show is syndicated nationwide by Salem Radio Network.

For a station near you or to contact Jim, visit his website at www.outdoortalknetwork.com. - ED)

If one takes the time to look around the country and investigate the myriad of wildlife and fisheries management controversies in all states, one should get deeply concerned. To the casual and uninformed the heated debates appear to be nothing more than business as usual. Wildlife resource management always was and always will be, controversial.

However, close examination reveals we may have actually transcended a new era. You've read the stories. Ban all trapping in Maine and Minnesota because of a possible incidental take of an endangered Canada lynx. Ban all bear hunting in New Jersey because the Governor hates hunting. Ban all bear hunting in Florida because Florida bear are a newly discovered subspecies. Stop all trout stocking in California because trout are predators and may impact the frog population. Poison out rainbow and brown trout because they are invasive species. Kill the deer in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin and Missouri because they are destroying forest regeneration. (I may have missed a few states)

State and federal experts are always on hand to tell us predators have no impact on wildlife populations. Really? The national press and their continuous condemnation of Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska for culling their wolves fill the news doldrums. In New York coyote season actually closes so coyotes can give birth and raise their young. Huh?

Out West as in Alaska and Canada, it is the wolf programs that are destroying our wildlife, our hunting and our ranching industry. Those western state wildlife agencies supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (or maybe controlled would be a better word) argue vehemently (except Wyoming) that wolves are beneficial as elk, deer, wild sheep, livestock and pet dogs and cats rapidly disappear. These are just a few examples of the madness; I could go on and on.

Behind each of these stories and controversies we hear voices proclaiming that we must follow the path of science and science says we must go down this road. It is extremely difficult for some not to conclude that all of this is really the Wildlands Project unfolding right before our eyes. Others have said war has been declared on our rural residents and their way of life. And still others conclude the origins of these agendas are the International Association of Game and Fish Agencies and even the United Nations. That conclusion will have eyes rolling and you will be branded a conspiracy theorist for certain.

In reality the origins of the anti-hunting and anti-fishing agendas over the past ten years really don't matter. They are real and they are happening. What is new is our state wildlife agencies are running out of money. Their programs have decimated sportsmen retention and recruitment. The traditional "customer" of these state agencies is realizing hunted species and his and her voices have been completely removed from the table and the environmental voice has usurped their interests.

In desperation the state agencies have appealed to their legislators for general tax fund financing, which has fallen on totally deaf ears. Legislators don't want wildlife management as another line item within state budgets subject to economic down-turns and stimulus packages.

On the upside all the nonsense may be drawing to a conclusion. State wildlife agencies are now being forced to make a choice. They can rebuild their bridges with our sporting community or they can bank on the environmentalists getting them general tax fund revenue. Our national economic crisis will probably force the agencies to see the light, sooner rather than later.

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but wildlife
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 management as we once knew it is dead. We are currently in an era of total political management. It is not about science, it is about politics. The truth is politics now controls the science.

Yours truly has hosted and produced one thousand radio interviews in the last thirteen years. I believe I have a handle on this one. Ironically, after one hundred years of financing the total recovery of our game and non-game species across this nation, our sportsmen are being pushed aside as an insignificant voice in the discussion of management.

So, the next time you go to battle with your state agency over a management issue, don't waste your time arguing science.

Wildlife management across this country has evolved into anything but science.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Harriet M. Hageman

(Hageman & Brighton, P.C., is a water and natural resources law firm in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Co-founders Harriet Hageman and Kara Brighton are also the Executive Directors of the Wyoming Conservation Alliance, which helps businesses, ranchers, industry groups, sportsmen groups, and local governmental entities deal with the federal regulatory process. Hageman & Brighton's diverse clients include the State of Wyoming, and a coalition of 27 organizations challenging the Fish and Wildlife Service management of the grey wolf population.

During an informal internet discussion of Jim Slinisky's Feb. 7, 2009 editorial (see page 1) a group of wildlife scientists, legislators and concerned outdoorsmen generally agreed with the need for States to make a stand. Ms. Hageman responded with the following insightful observations which she has graciously given permission to share with Outdoorsman readers. – ED)

My father was a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives for 24 years. He always fought against granting general fund moneys to the Game & Fish Department, arguing that the moment any State does so, it would destroy our game and fish populations.

He explained that if their funding was dependent upon the hunting and fishing industries, they would manage and protect our wildlife. If, on the other hand, the Game & Fish Departments received general funding, they would immediately turn towards the radical "enviro" anti-hunting, anti-management, anti-protection, pro-predator mentality.

He also said that we should never compromise our food supply by inserting it into our energy chain. He also said that the only way to protect our environment is to protect the caretakers, not the absentee owners that live (and govern) thousands of miles away.

My father passed away in 2006. He was right on many counts. My contribution is this.

The people in the resource management and use industries have created a utopia for the people who have never lifted a finger to do anything other than file lawsuits and send money to the Sierra Club.

We have provided food and water resources for the wildlife. We have created and protected magnificent open spaces. We have provided food and water resources to our citizens. We have been the foundation of the prosperity in this Country for the last century (and before). We have created a standard of living that is unrivaled in the world. We have made life easy for many, many, many folks and, to my chagrin, made it possible for people to believe that you could continue to take from the producers, and give to the non-producers.

We are now on the brink of disaster, and I do not mean the economic situation. We are on the brink of disaster because, under the false pretense of addressing our economic situation, there are people who are crafting a spending package in Washington, D.C., that is designed to take all of that away (through regulations, taxes, introduction of predators, global warming hysteria, lawsuits, federally-controlled health care, etc.).

While I am worried about the future, I also believe that the only way to restore some common sense to our government and to our society is for this disaster to play itself out. We have always provided a buffer between the rhetoric ("a chicken in every pot," "universal health care is a constitutional right," "we can solve the world's problems by spreading the wealth around") and reality.

As a result, we have been blamed, vilified, hung in effigy, hated, attacked, regulated beyond rational thought, and ridiculed. As Ayn Rand said, "You can ignore reality, but you cannot ignore the consequences of reality."

By our sheer productivity and determination, even in the face of being regulated and lawsuited to death, we have made it possible for the citizens of our Country to not only ignore reality, but to ignore its consequences. Perhaps more dangerously, we have allowed our judicial, legislative, and executive branches to do so as well.

I believe that the current situation will be difficult (that is probably an understatement). It has become obvious to me, however, that we will never fix this problem, until the masses understand what the problem is.

We have given them easy scapegoats (with the press failing miserably to tell the truth). We have made it easy for our educators to shovel misinformation to our students, because there have been no consequences for doing so.

An example are the teachers in Wyoming who teach global warming propaganda, while ignoring the fact that coal pays their salaries. We have made it easy for people to wonder at the "beauty" of a wolf as it frolics in the meadow, because we have provided a steady, sustainable, healthy and safe food supply not only for our citizens, but for the wolves as well.

We have made it easy for people to believe that government is the savior, because we have been able to succeed despite their intervention, bureaucracy, and inefficiency. We have made it easy to yell at oil and gas companies, because when the latest political rally and rock concert is over, everyone can go home to a heated home or unlimited air conditioning.

In short, we have to stop protecting the nitwits from the consequences of their decisions. We have to let them learn what it means to bow down to the god of global warming (a five-fold increase in heating and air conditioning bills -- for a start); what it means to allow predators to decimate our ungulate population, and eventually our livestock industries (substantial increases in food costs); and what it means to allow the government to control everything from your health care decisions to what kind of a car you can drive.

I am, for the first time in a long time, optimistic about our future. I see a light at the end of the tunnel. I see that those of us out here in the hinterlands will not be bearing their bad decisions on our own. I see a Country of people that are far too spoiled, too satisfied, too safe, too prosperous, and too independent to allow our government to go the way of Europe.

Now is the time to push back. Force the federal government to take responsibility for this mess. Do not let them foist this onto the States. We can win this battle if we turn our backs on Washington, D.C., and force them to do our bidding rather than the other way around. The States have the power, not the feds. We have forgotten this for far too long.

Three Basic Problems, One 3-Part Solution

By George Dovel

Problem #1 – Beneficiaries of Expanding Non-Hunting Programs Will Not Support Them Financially.

For more than 100 years, North American hunters and fishermen have been footing the bill for wildlife conservation. But for the past 29 years the lobbying group for North American wildlife agencies has been trying to get taxpayers to fund separate management of species that are not normally harvested and used as food by hunters and fishermen.

The term "management" is hardly appropriate as the limited nongame funding that has been made available has been spent to catalog the species and help provide facilities for people to view them, while claiming they are managed. With game and non-game species increasing during the 1980s, wildlife agencies sought funding to hire nongame biologists "to help all citizens enjoy the species that were not sought by hunters and fishermen."

Back then, everyone recognized that enhancing habitat for deer, ducks, pheasants and rainbow trout provided similar benefits to non-game species. Although Congress passed the "Nongame Act" in 1980, authorizing \$5 million in total annual funding, it failed to appropriate any money to fund it.

Bird Watching Usurped Hunting, Fishing

In 1990 the (International) Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies hired bird watcher Naomi Edelson as its "Biodiversity Director" to sell bird watching and other non-game activities to the American people and their elected officials. In the USFS 2005 technical publication, "Finding Our Wings: The Payoff of a Decade of Determination," (originally presented to a group of bird watchers in 2002) she details how bird watchers have gotten their "agenda to become someone else's agenda."

Edelson explained that in 1990, "The States, through IAFWA, made nongame their biggest priority, as it has remained through the decade." Since 1990 "Partners in Flight" (PIF), with help from high profile bird watchers (including former TNC Chairman - Goldman Sachs Chair - Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson), has substituted its agenda for the "sustained yield of wild game" agenda at every level of government.

Edelson continued, "Now Audubon is back in the bird business in a big way through their Important Bird Areas program (IBA), in part because of all of this bird conservation activity (by [I]AFWA and PIF). If there is one thing we should have learned from our duck friends in all of these years: be part of the movement that gets the money, then you can be part of spending of the money."

By 1998 IAFWA's "Teaming With Wildlife" (TWW) biodiversity funding group claimed 3,000 member organizations. Yet its proposal to have Congress fund nongame with a federal excise tax on recreation equipment failed to generate even lukewarm support from either manufacturers or the bird watchers it would have benefited.

TWW then joined forces with parks, historical preservation groups and coastal states' interests in an intense lobbying campaign for Congress to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). Finally the 2000 version, which passed the House but failed in the Senate, would have provided ~\$3.1 billion in annual funding – with \$350 million of that going to FWS for state nongame wildlife conservation, and up to \$900 million appropriated to condemn and acquire private lands.

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Three Basic Problems – *continued from page 3*

This massive “pork” bill, which would have used oil and natural gas royalties and monies from offshore oil exploration for funding, had numerous flaws. According to opponents, these included violation of 5th Amendment Property Rights and using money needed to maintain existing federal lands to instead condemn and acquire new lands from private citizens.

The highly watered-down version (substitute) that finally passed as “State Wildlife Grants” allowed the non-governmental wildlife lobby, including bird watchers and an anti-hunting advisor (i.e. Defenders of Wildlife), to determine the criteria for each state to receive a share of the money. Virtually the only federal government criteria is that sportsman dollars, as in P-R and D-J excise taxes, may not lawfully be used as any part of the mandatory 100% state match for the federal SWG funds for nongame and “at risk” species.

Non-Consumptive Wildlife Programs/Activities

Nongame programs and “non-consumptive wildlife related recreation” activities supervised by mid-level Idaho F&G employees include: **1. Partners in Flight (PIF)** and its assorted regional and international bird activities; **2. Watchable Wildlife (WW)** refers to any activity in which people are enjoying – but not consuming – wildlife, but also includes photographing plants and landscapes, wildflower walks, plant or mushroom identification and watching fish (newsletter is “Windows to Wildlife”); **3. Important Bird Areas (IBA)** including site identification, site selection and site monitoring of both state and global (international) IBA sites and also including the **Idaho Bird Inventory Survey (IBIS)** which hires a few temporary employees, providing housing and vehicles, for the annual bird survey (newsletter is “Idaho IBA News”); **4. Project WILD (PW)** produced by the Council For Environmental Education with multiple workshops for teachers and children from pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade, including Wet, Wild, Learning Tree (LT) and Early Learners projects and classes, plus dozens of “Wild” workshops at Nature Centers and other locations (newsletter is “Wildlife Express”); **5. Idaho Master Naturalist Program;** **6. the Idaho Conservation Data Center (ICDC)** (Idaho Natural Heritage Program) established by The Nature Conservancy, now part of its NatureServe network with more than 75 comparable Heritage programs in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Its Mission: “The ICDC collects, analyzes, maintains, and disseminates scientific information (to individuals, groups and government entities) necessary for the management and conservation of Idaho's biological diversity.” With 28 field research projects in 2008 ranging from Bat Surveys in abandoned Idaho mines to the Giant Palouse Earthworm survey, ICDC provides information in 723 publications totaling a few thousand pages; **7. Nongame Program**, although

considered part of the Wildlife Bureau, with both Headquarters staff and nongame employees in the seven Regions and McCall Sub Region, the nongame employees are involved in multiple programs and multiple elaborate publications. These include a few birding and wildlife viewing guides that are sold, plus a larger number of free booklets with up to 45 pages of color photographs.

Obvious NonGame Funding by Sportsmen

In its Jan. 28, 2009 F&G Commission and Idaho Legislative briefings of its Nongame Trust Account Program, IDFG itemized \$220,000 of nongame expenses that were charged to sportsman license income because nongame expenditures exceeded nongame income by that amount. But, as mentioned in the Jan. 2009 *Outdoorsman*, published expenditures are only the tip of the iceberg.

In its IDFG FY 2008 Actual Expenditures Report sent to me on January 14, 2009 by the Department's legal counsel, several hundred thousand additional dollars of nongame activities were paid for with sportsman excise tax dollars. This included Pittman-Robertson tax dollars that F&G had said were used to make up 12% of nongame employees' wages – along with a media explanation that these nongame employees spent time manning check stations or performing other duties involving game species “to offset the subsidy.”

My Jan. 30, 2009 request for the total amount of nongame employee wages and benefits resulted in IDFG immediately removing \$427,534 in P-R/D-J funding of Nongame from the FY 2008 Report and adding exactly \$427,534 in unidentified “federal grants.” Using P-R/D-J sportsman taxes to fund nongame programs deprives game species of the dollars that are intended to be used solely for game and sport fish restoration.

Another example of Idaho hunters and fishermen subsidizing nongame in FY 2008 is the use of \$7.8 million in sportsman license fees and taxes to pay Administration Bureau expenses – yet the use of only one dollar from the Nongame Set-aside Account! If the \$11.6 million total Administration expenditures had been properly prorated based on the amount of expenditures in each Bureau, state Nongame revenue sources would have paid \$578,435 (see page 5 of Jan. 2009 *Outdoorsman*).

Wolf Management Depletes Game Species Funding

In 2008 Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Wolf Management Specialist Kent Laudon explained that there was insufficient federal funding to pay for the expanded wolf radio-collaring and monitoring necessary to record new packs and expanding pack sizes. Although Idaho gets more federal money for wolf management than Montana, it is divided among IDFG, the Nez Perce Tribe and the Governor's Office of Species Conservation.

The federal allocation is not sufficient to pay the massive cost of GPS-collaring and closely monitoring enough prey species to determine the statewide impact of wolves on elk or deer. Although IDFG reported spending

about \$1.1 million of sportsmen license fees for aerial flights in FY 2008 (see Feb. 5, 2009 report to the Legislative Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee [JFAC] page 4), most of it was apparently spent to monitor only a small sample of radio-collared elk and deer to see how many were killed by wolves (pages 19 and 29).

Using any sportsman fees for this purpose violates the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan approved by the Legislature (see Plan pages 23-24). In addition to the extreme financial loss from wolves killing elk (F&G now estimates that loss is up to \$24 million annually), using sportsmen funds for wolf management deprives game species of costly management tools needed to sustain wild game harvests.

Public Wildlife Management Areas and Boating, Camping or Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

On page 19 of the aforementioned report to JFAC, F&G reports it manages 32 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and 325 boating and fishing access sites. It provided visitor use days for the Boise River WMA, where *three out of four users* do not purchase any kind of sport license!

Several years ago a visitor-use survey at Horsethief Reservoir, a popular trout fishing reservoir owned and operated by IDFG, revealed that only *one out of five users* purchased any type of F&G license. Yet F&G employees built and maintained roads, campsites, and potable water and restroom facilities to serve campers, canoeists and assorted other non-fishing visitors.

In FY 2008, in addition to paying their share of the \$1,089,112 in D-J taxes that helped fund fishing access, Idaho fishing license purchasers were charged an additional \$594,358 in matching funds while other boaters got a free ride. On WMAs, hunting license purchasers paid both the license fees and the entire D-J excise taxes while other users paid nothing.

To put that cost in perspective, until the IDFG Stockholder's Report was discontinued, reported WMA maintenance averaged about \$4.5 million each year. That information is no longer provided to the public but IDFG is still fighting an expensive losing battle with noxious weeds – and hunters are still paying all of the costs for public use.

What Has Happened to F&G Costs?

The following chart compares Actual IDFG Expenditures in FY 1980 with what the expenditures would have been in FY 2008 based on the U.S. Dollar Inflation Calculator, and with the Actual Expenditures in FY 2008:

IDFG Actual Budget Expenditures

<u>FY 1980</u> <u>Actual Ttl</u>	<u>FY 2008</u> <u>Inflation Index</u>	<u>FY 2008</u> <u>Actual Ttl</u>
10,335,300	27,005,100	75,773,368
Amount (%) increase	16,669,800 (161%)	65,438,068 (633%)

In other words, IDFG has increased its total spending by almost *four times* the rate of inflation during the past 28 years, while populations and harvest of almost every game species is presently declining. Yet in FY1980, the population and harvest of every game species in Idaho had been increasing for the preceding five years, with reduced season lengths and no antlerless elk or mule deer harvest allowed.

What Caused the Dramatic Increase in Expenditures?

The short answer to what caused the dramatic increase in expenditures is that none of the programs discussed on the preceding page existed in FY 1980 when Director Greenley retired and Director Conley took over. In his dual role as F&G Director and IAFWA President, Conley implemented every non-consumptive wildlife program dreamed up by the bird watchers and anti-hunters.

When Greenley retired, IDFG had added only 77 full time employees during the preceding 24 years from 1956-1980. But when Conley resigned 16 years later in FY 1996 he had added **240** more. In FY 2008, 12 years later, by using so-called “eight-month permanent benefited employees,” the full time equivalent number of benefited employees with job titles had increased to 800 in mid-winter – an additional increase of nearly **300***.

(*This does not include non-benefited part-time employees classified as “Temps” or “Temporary.”)

Sportsman Fees Subsidize Nongame Agendas

Like its counterparts in some other states, IDFG basically ignores its lawful mandate to provide continued supplies of wild animals, wild birds and fish for hunters, fishermen and trappers to harvest. Following the changing agendas dictated by FWS and AFWA, it now professes expertise of all of Idaho's flora and fauna; environmental stewardship; forest, range, and aquatic sciences; energy development; global warming; and environmental education of our youngsters and their teachers. F&G is also a self-proclaimed provider of assorted “wildlife-related” outdoor recreation and enjoyment for everyone.

Yet every one of these agendas is subsidized to some extent with fees and/or excise taxes paid by licensed hunters and fishermen because the beneficiaries won't pay.

During the 1990s, the AFWA Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) Coalition, including nongame employees in state wildlife management agencies, lobbied Congress for CARA's nongame funding from offshore oil fees. When SWG funding passed as a substitute in 2000, they continued to lobby for increased SWG funding.

Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act

But by 2007 the state nongame action plans had been approved and many states could no longer come up with the new 100% required match to receive the Grants. With no source other than sportsman fees to make up the difference, they hitched their wagon to the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act (S. 2191).

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Three Basic Problems – *continued from page 5*

That proposed Act included a promise to use receipts from a carbon offset scheme to “mitigate the negative impacts of any unavoidable global warming on low- and middle-income Americans and wildlife.” AFWA and its TWW Coalition included the following claims in their testimony urging Sen. Barbara Boxer’s Committee to provide mitigation funds to state wildlife agencies.

“In response to a charge from Congress, the state fish and wildlife agencies and their many conservation partners have worked together to complete wildlife action plans for every state and territory...we’ve seen the tangible benefits of these plans in the communities where we live and work. Unfortunately, the landscape-level effects of climate change, including alteration of habitat, disruption to migratory patterns, changes in predator-prey interactions and the spread of invasive species are already placing greater stresses on fish and wildlife, eroding some of these recent gains.”

The alleged fear of catastrophic carbon-caused global warming (which scientists tell us has changed to global cooling for the past nine years) is the justification used for the massive network of wildlife corridors created by nongame biologists in the state agencies. And the use of projected funds from carbon penalties and/or carbon trading by 2012 is their current “plan” for future funding.

Meanwhile, some states with inadequate nongame funding, including Idaho, continue to create excuses to charge sportsmen for non-game activities such as publication of Idaho’s Project Wild newsletter “Wildlife Express.”

Problem #2 – Nongame Education Causes Youngsters and Teachers to Question Ethics of Hunting

During a Feb. 3, 2009 meeting with five IDFG officials, I pointed out to Communications Bureau Chief Mike Keckler that the February 2009 issue of Wildlife Express sent the wrong message to potential young hunters and their teachers. That issue highlights bighorn sheep and says that Native Americans depended on them for food and killed very few but when pioneers, settlers and miners came to Idaho they killed them all in southern Idaho and almost wiped them out in central Idaho.

The article continues, “So why are there bighorn sheep in these places now? Fish and Game put them there.” Some of those statements are true and some are false. Yet the theme that comes through to the youngsters and their teachers is the Hollywood myth that the noble Red Man conserved his wild game while white hunters destroyed it.

I applaud Mr. Keckler for correcting this false image in the March issue of *Wildlife Express*. An article entitled, “Wildlife and Hunting,” explained that hunters were the conservationists who got market hunting banned and rebuilt our wildlife populations during the 20th century.

But that does not alter the disturbing image of non-Native American hunters that Project WILD has taught to the Nation’s teachers and youngsters. Project WILD (PW) is a joint project of the Council for Environmental Education (CEE) and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – WAFWA (see PW website).

Since 1980 when WAFWA first contracted with CEE to provide environmental education to school children in the 12 Western states (with the first workshops taking place in 1983) PW was accepted by an increasing number of wildlife agencies. In 1991 it finally included all 50 state agencies plus 11 national or international agencies.

Project WILD Teaches Hunting is Controversial

Its basic message to young fishermen is that if they promote clean air and water they will have abundant fish. But in its 537-page “Project Wild K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide,” the chapter titled “The Hunter” presents hunting as a controversial subject and uses material from primarily non-hunting and anti-hunting sources to leave youngsters with mixed emotions about killing any animal.

It begins with students reading “The Twins,” a fictional account of a Depression-era youngster who passed up a shot at a doe with twin fawns on his first deer hunt and was later happy he had done so because they survived a severe winter when half of the deer herd died. The story ends abruptly the next year while he has one of the yearlings in his sights and is asking himself, “He made it through the winter, who am I to kill him now?”

As he takes the safety off he tells himself not to look at the deer’s head and says, “I just have to think of him as meat for the family,” and the story stops.

After reading the story, or having it read to them, the students are asked to write an ending to it. Then they are asked a series of questions about whether or not hunting should be allowed and, if so, under what conditions.

This is comparable to having the students watch “Bambi” at the movies and then asking the students those questions. But “The Hunter” lesson plan generates even more doubts about whether present-day hunting is ethical by publishing opinions from seven selected organizations – none of whose members are all hunters.

PW Provides Forum for Anti-Hunting Radicals

Two of the groups, the National Rifle Association and Ducks Unlimited, supported “the concept of sport hunting as a management tool” and as either “a healthy experience” or “a wise use of a renewable resource.” The other five groups have been involved in litigation to prevent predator control and/or wolf delisting and their opinions ranged from “we do not promote hunting” to “we strongly oppose the hunting of any living creature for fun, trophy or for sport because of the trauma, suffering and death to the animal that results.”

Several of the groups were adamantly opposed to wildlife managers providing a sustained yield of wild game

as is required by some state laws and/or Constitutions. For example: "Defenders (of Wildlife) opposes the utilitarian notion that wildlife is most important for human consumption; opposes claims that wildlife, plants and animals are 'renewable resources' to be managed or harvested like crops; and opposes single species management plans where the primary goal is the production of more 'game' for hunters."

With Project Wild providing access for the anti-hunting radicals to propagandize our children through their teachers, and to our state and federal wildlife managers as well, they have managed to instill the idea that controlling predators to restore healthy populations of both prey and predator is pandering to greedy hunters.

As growing numbers of teachers and youngsters are encouraged to touch and pet wild animals and birds by F&G personnel in what amounts to classroom petting zoos, and then required to list reasons why hunting and other killing of wildlife should not be allowed, a new generation of anti-hunting activists has emerged. The new Project Wild program for high school students, teaching them how to become environmental activists with their state legislatures rather than wildlife conservationists, says it all.

The number of teachers, even in rural areas, who are telling our children that "killing our beautiful wild creatures is cruel and inhumane" is alarming. For the past three days an Oregon college student – a product of ~16 years of Project Wild indoctrination – has been exchanging emails with me in an effort to find a way to ban citizen input into the legislative process concerning wildlife management.

Problem #3 – Nongame Theory/Agenda Conflicts With Scientific Wildlife Management.

For several decades extensive research by the top wildlife scientists in North America has demonstrated that the so-called "balance of nature" is a myth. Historically the wildlife manager's job is, and always has been, to maintain a healthy balance by regulating populations of prey species when necessary so they do not exceed the normal forage carrying capacity, and regulating populations of predators when necessary to maintain healthy viable populations of both prey and predator.

The nongame biologists' claim that restoring large predators and native vegetation to vast areas will conserve wildlife and enhance biodiversity is not supported by either recorded history or scientific research. The term "Conservation Science" was originated by a former "Earth First!" radical to lend legitimacy to a preservationist agenda that ignores both conservation and science.

The 25-Year Pygmy Rabbit Fiasco

In 1979 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists began trying to halt the decline in pygmy rabbit populations in the five counties in

central Washington where they were known to exist. For the next 25 years WDFW, The Nature Conservancy and the federal government spent millions of dollars buying and restoring sagebrush habitat, destroying fences and other potential perches for avian predators, using assorted buried fencing and other devices in unsuccessful attempts to deter mammalian predators, and transplanting pygmy rabbits from Idaho in an effort to restore genetic diversity.

The rabbits were listed by ODFW as "Threatened" in 1990, "Endangered" in 1993, and placed on the federal list as an "Endangered Distinct Population Segment" in 2001. In 2004 no more rabbits could be found and the Washington rabbits were declared "extirpated" (destroyed).

This complete report, published on pages 11-12 of the Oct-Dec 2007 *Outdoorsman*, is one of several examples we have published of the total failure of the nongame management agenda to restore populations of declining species in the various states. Yet this same destructive philosophy now drives big game and upland bird management in Idaho and many other states.

The vague promise that trying to manipulate ecosystems by restoring native plants and protecting large carnivores will eventually achieve the desired result once ecosystem "equilibrium" is achieved implies that a natural balance will exist in time. When we ask why that did not happen after 15 years with Yellowstone elk or 25 years with pygmy rabbits in central Washington, we are told that it may take much longer to reach "equilibrium."

A few biologists admit that "equilibrium" will not mean the high populations of game species we have enjoyed in the past. They point to the "Low Density Dynamic Equilibrium" that exists in Denali Park and a growing number of other locations in Alaska where wolves kill each other once they have depleted their available prey.

During a private February 3, 2009 meeting requested by IDFG Director Groen and Deputy Director Unsworth, Groen told me that 40 of the Idaho wolves found dead in 2008 were killed by other wolves. Then he loudly added, "It's habitat," and the meeting ended.

The 3-Part Solution

Part 1 – Redefine "Wildlife."

In 1976 when IDFG convinced the Idaho Legislature to change the definition of "Wildlife" (I.C. Sec. 36-202[g]) to "Any form of animal life living in a state of nature," it created a requirement that every animal life form must be preserved, protected, perpetuated and managed.

Thousands of assorted invertebrates, parasites, microorganisms, etc. cannot be managed or even identified, and should be deleted by changing that definition to read:

(g) "Wildlife" means all wild mammals, wild birds and fish living in a state of nature.

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Or, the definition could more properly be changed back to what it meant prior to 1976 as follows:

g) "Wildlife" means all wild mammals, wild birds and fish legally taken by licensed hunters, fishermen and trappers in Idaho and certain species classified as protected.

Part 2 – Restore IDFG and Fish and Game Commission Allegiance to Idaho, and Restore Adherence to the Idaho Code and Idaho Wildlife Policy.

Neither the agency name, "Idaho Department of Fish and Game," nor Idaho's "Wildlife Policy" defined in Idaho Code Section 36-103 have been changed since adoption of that Policy in 1938 and there is nothing in Fish and Game Code Title 36 that requires or suggests the Idaho Fish and Game Commission may take its direction from any entity other than the Idaho Legislature.

Yet the 1990 change from "manage wildlife to provide continued supplies of wild game for hunters, fishermen and trappers to harvest" – to its new number one priority of "nongame, biodiversity and non-consumptive wildlife recreation" – was ordered, facilitated and accomplished by the (international) Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies staff operating in Washington, D.C. Working with environmental activists in other organizations and in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this group infiltrated and hijacked western state fish and game agencies without Legislators and sportsmen even knowing anything had happened.

In virtually all of the fee increase promotion F&G has published during the past five months, it emphasizes that its **Mission** is to carry out Idaho Wildlife Policy – "Preserve, Protect, Perpetuate and Manage to Provide Continued Supplies for Hunting Fishing and Trapping".

It fails to include the rest of 36-103 ("It shall be the authority, power and duty of the fish and game commission to administer and carry out the policy of the state in accordance with the provisions of the Idaho fish and game code. The commission is not authorized to change such policy but only to administer it." (emphasis added)

Yet on Page 3 of the "Conservation Sciences" issue of *Idaho Fish and Game News*, Commissioner Randy Budge announced creation of the new Conservation Sciences division in the agency with a very different mission that is not found in the Fish and Game Code. He repeated its published mission statement:

"To preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Idaho's biological diversity for all generations."

I.C. Sec. 36-104 "General Powers and Duties of the Commission, subparagraph (d) Organization of Work" states: "The commission shall organize the department... into administrative units as may be necessary to efficiently

administer said department." But nowhere in the Code is the Commission authorized to change its *mission* from "providing wildlife" to "preserving biodiversity."

The Idaho Conservation Data Center has maintained its autonomy and its "Biodiversity" Mission Statement as part of the International NatureServe Network for several years (see Page 4). Now the F&G Commission has brazenly adopted its agenda and Mission Statement, both of which violate Idaho law.

To the average citizen this means the Idaho Legislature, which is solely responsible for the management of the natural resources owned by Idaho, must tell the F&G Commission to stop violating the F&G Code and Idaho Wildlife Policy. Yet Legislators claim the only "hammer" they have to force bureaucrats to stop breaking the law is to withhold funding.

The State's chief law enforcement officer, the Attorney General, is required to represent (defend) the agencies – even when that conflicts with citizen interests. And the major news media in most urban areas print only the self-serving news releases provided by well-funded agency communicators.

A few carefully cultivated legislators promote the bureaucratic requests for funding – especially when that funding is not being paid for by the average taxpayer in their district. But despite these formidable obstacles, legislators with the integrity to represent the citizens must find the courage to draw the line and demand restoration of allegiance to the citizens and the law. If drastic budget cuts are the only hammer that works that tool must be used.

Part 3 – Either Eliminate, or Transfer to the appropriate Agencies, All Functions That Do Not Restore Populations of Wild Mammals, Wild Birds, and Wild Fish For Hunting, Fishing and Trapping.

Natural resource conservation is "*the protection, planned management and wise use of natural resources.*" All so-called wildlife conservation programs that teach or advocate environmental activism as a substitute for wildlife conservation must be eliminated.

Habitat is only one leg of the three-legged milk stool that is wildlife management. Regulation of predator-to-prey ratios and adjustment of seasons to regulate vulnerability to hunters – especially when needed to mitigate extreme weather – are both equally vital.

IDFG is not an air, land or water quality manager, a manager of habitat including grass, timber and riparian areas, a bureau of parks and outdoor recreation or an office of species conservation. Its sole mandate is found in its name and spelled out in Idaho Wildlife Policy.

From 1989-2008 recorded Idaho deer, elk, and small game harvests declined from record highs to 20-year record lows. The fate of this once valuable renewable public resource rests with the Legislature.

Alaskans Feed Themselves from Nature's Abundance

By Craig L. Fleenor

Craig Fleenor is Director of the Subsistence Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Once again Alaska predator management is in the national spotlight. With all of the hype, a very important perspective is often overlooked during this heated debate – that of the subsistence family.

As a young Gwich'in man I grew up in Fort Yukon, depending on wild resources for survival. This life was not a choice but an inter-generational way of life practiced by my family for thousands of years. Like many Alaskans, I was taught that we must manage wolves and bears to protect the local food supply, for safety and to meet other subsistence needs.

Most Alaskans know politics and clever ad campaigns are not what is important. For the subsistence family, acquiring enough food from the land is paramount.

Take the Fort Yukon fisherman who faithfully checks his fish-wheel twice daily, the Anaktuvuk caribou hunter who hopes the herd comes close to the village this year and the Haines moose hunter who spends 12 days hunting. Call it food security, subsistence or even barbarism, but to thousands of Alaskans who live subsistence, it's about survival.

It's the fundamental human right of access to high quality, renewable, locally grown, sustainable, affordable food. These needs can only be met if that food is managed for abundance.

In remote Alaska villages, where few roads and stores exist, are the highest commodity prices in the Americas. This country is home to thousands of the hardiest self-sustaining people in some of the harshest climates in North America, where temperatures can drop to minus 70, night can last for three months, and access to fresh food is limited by one's ability to withstand nature's conditions.

These people do not ask for handouts; they just want the opportunity to live on the land and provide for their families. All they ask is that we honor our mandate to manage our wild natural resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans.

Our push for statehood 50 years ago was rooted in the need for sustainable resource management. According to Article VIII of Alaska's Constitution, that means managing our resources "for maximum use," "for the maximum benefit of its people," and "on the sustained yield principle." Once the U.S. Congress agreed to allow our entry into the union, it was with the express condition that we manage our resources to provide for ourselves.

Alaska is one of the few remaining places in America where subsistence hunting and fishing is still

practiced by a large percentage of its population and is protected by law. While many thousands of Alaskans were born into the subsistence lifestyle, many more have adopted it because of the benefits it provides.

This is why subsistence is the priority use in Alaska. This priority can only be fully realized if there are abundant resources for Alaskans to harvest.

The mandate to manage moose, caribou, fish and waterfowl in abundance comes directly from the people of Alaska. This is not an idea that was dreamed up in a faraway smoke-filled room by the good-old-gang. Alaskan managers and representatives are addressing the needs of subsistence communities by providing more wild food and creating more opportunity to harvest.

The rural subsistence family can't buy fresh ground, grass-fed buffalo meat from the grocery store. Nor do they have access to freshly delivered vine-ripened tomatoes from the farmer's market. With fuel prices exceeding \$10 per gallon and frozen hamburger at \$8 per pound, the subsistence family must rely heavily on the diversity of resources that nature provides.

Those who would prevent active management in our state demonstrate a preference for wolves and bears at the expense of subsistence and abundant natural diversity. Many of those at odds with the idea of abundance management have not lived the subsistence life in rural Alaska.

It is easy for them to stand outside and cast stones at Alaska's wildlife managers or try to divide Alaskans in another battle over depleted resources. Platitudes regarding the hands-off approach to "natural balance" management sound very eco-friendly, but they fail miserably at providing the resources that tens of thousands of Alaskans need for survival.

(NOTE: Beginning the last week in February, 2009, the Alaska Board of Game met for more than a week to consider about 250 new proposals for wolf and bear control in various locations across Alaska. Representatives of local area Fish and Game Advisory Committees reported ongoing declines in both caribou and moose populations in spite of limited or closed hunting seasons in their areas for several years.

Many also reported human safety concerns with wolves invading their villages at night and cow moose moving into the villages to have their calves in an effort to escape the wolves. They also report excessive bear populations are adding to personal safety concerns.

The private land and shoot permits have not met wolf reduction goals and ADFG employees began shooting wolves from helicopters as this issue goes to press. – ED)

A Ride to Avoid

By John L. Runft

John L. Runft is an attorney with Runft & Steele Law Offices, PLLC, in Boise, Idaho. He has long been involved with legal and legislative aspects of wolf management.

Enacting a “delisted” wolf management plan under the direction of the USFWS is another ride that Idaho should avoid. The appeals will roll on, so will the delay. There will be the “bevy of the incredulous” who will always say we should again wait. When do the incredulous become suckers? Idaho must act now to extract itself from this federally created disaster.

In so doing, one must ask the hard question: What is delisting? What really changes under “delisting”? Why does the federal government want to turn this mess over to the states? Is there any doubt that it is a mess? The feds have not “controlled” the wolves. The number of wolves has increased approximately 10 fold beyond the original delisting goal, and they continue to increase and expand as the elk herds go into free fall. The feds have done nothing but monitor — not control — the wolves. Any program to truly manage and control the wolves at this stage without the use of poison will be very expensive and most likely not successful. (The Idaho Fish and Game dithers, tries to limit hunting while requesting the construction of a new building headquarters in Boise.)

The fecundity of wolves renders hunting an inadequate tool and the enviros know this. Hunting could wipe out 30% of the wolves every year, and those numbers would be easily replaced by the next crop of pups. The expense of exterminating a meaningful number of wolves without poison would be very costly, especially given Idaho’s terrain. What kind of political outcry would attend the extermination of, say, 500 wolves? Why should Idaho pay for this cost and take the blame; not only from the wolf advocates for the slaughtering of wolves, but also from Idaho citizens for failing to be able to control the numbers and the immense cost?

“Delisting” is nothing but a label attached to a federal program to shift the federally created problem to the states, get the states to foot the bill of trying to overcome a federal disaster AND to incur the blame for the consequences. Is there really any doubt but that federal funding will dry up, and that the states will end up footing the bill? Is there any doubt about the huge expense that will be involved in trying to control the wolves under the federally mandated limitations and bureaucratic conditions?

So what is wrong about telling the federal government to spend its own money and incur the blame for its own malfeasance? What is wrong with telling the

feds to get this matter under control before shifting it off to the states?

The claim that we must delist or otherwise the wolves will continue to expand is to submit to federal blackmail on the belief that the federal government will actually allow this disaster to continue indefinitely. The feds know that something must be done — and soon. They want to hand the hot potato off to the states. The feds cannot do nothing much longer. It is too late for the states to assume this now hugely expensive disaster, and pay for it, and get blamed for the results. The disaster should be clearly left on the feds’ doorstep. Let the feds clean up the mess before considering delisting.

Another very important fact here: by not involving the states in this mess, the focus will clearly be on the feds. The more focus on the feds, the less ability to blame the states. The more focus on the feds, the greater pressure to use fed dollars for control. Let the feds find out how much it will REALLY take to control the wolves — THEN in any consideration of delisting, demand fully appropriated federal funding in that amount to the state before agreeing to any “delisting” proposal. Also, the actual cost and experience that the feds will have in their efforts to really control wolves might well cause a change in the methods available for control, possibly even allowing the use of poison.

In summary, it is too late for “delisting” to even be considered by the State of Idaho. To accept “delisting” as it is now contemplated would be an unmitigated disaster. The feds must get this disaster under control before any delisting is considered by the states and then only on the condition of assured appropriated federal funding. Our job is to make our legislators knowledgeable and therefore responsible for their actions in this regard.

New Wolf Control Facts

By George Dovel

Before I present the current Idaho wolf population data, the following highlights from the Alaska Board of Game wolf and bear control program approved in early March 2009 are very interesting. Because Alaska DFG Biologists are the undisputed experts in North American wolf research and in state control of wolves adversely impacting big game populations, this information should be read and discussed by every legislator and biologist involved in the wolf delisting process.

In early February, 2009, before the AK Game Board even met to consider requests for wolf control, Defenders of Wildlife (DOW) mounted a television

campaign in opposition to aerial wolf control, using Hollywood actress Ashley Judd as its spokesperson. Judd called aerial killing of wolves “senseless savagery,” and attacked Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin for approving the practice (ID and MT take note).

The Board admitted that its wolf reduction programs, which included allowing hunters to locate wolves from the air and land and shoot the wolves, have been unable to remove enough wolves to meet the necessary quotas for the past two years or so. It implemented the following new programs to increase both wolf and bear removal (ID and MT take note):

- Allowing hunters to place black bear snares on the ground or in buckets attached to trees and including the snaring of brown bears in the McGrath area.
- Letting hunters fly in to hard-to-reach bear-baiting and snaring camps in the same region using private helicopters.
- Authorizing state employees to use poison gas to kill orphaned wolf pups in dens.
- Renewing existing wolf-kill programs for five years.

Although the board rejected ADFG Biologists’ proposal to allow private hunters to shoot wolves from helicopters to prevent potential lawsuits, it allowed state employees to kill wolves from helicopters in areas where a reduction quota was not being met. It also authorized private pilots to use helicopters to pick up wolves killed by private hunters in fixed-wing planes – approved by a new citizen initiative last year (ID and MT take note).

On Saturday, March 16, 2009 ADFG employees began shooting wolves from helicopters in order to boost caribou numbers in the Fortymile herd that ranges from the Steese highway to the Canadian border. The goal is to shoot up to 150 wolves before they get too many caribou calves and before the snow and the wolf tracks disappear.

But when U.S. Park Service officials learned of the plans they objected with the comment, “We don’t want to see the wolf population, or those packs that frequent the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, be eliminated or reduced significantly.” ADFG reminded them the caribou calving grounds were on state land and suggested that’s why National Preserves and Parks have boundaries.

The state finally agreed not to shoot any collared wolves on the calving grounds that might be part of a federal research effort and continued the helicopter gunning (ID and MT take note).

If you are a legislator in Idaho or Montana who is concerned about reducing wolf numbers, what do you think is going to happen when your F&G wolf experts try to let hunters reduce wolf numbers enough to rebuild elk and deer herds that are already in a predator pit? Are you confident sport hunters can kill enough wolves in the rugged terrain in our two states to even stabilize offending wolf populations – much less reduce them by 70 percent?

If expert Alaska hunters, trappers and aerial gunners in relatively open patches of Alaska can’t control several hundred wolves in 4-6 areas do you believe our inexperienced sportsmen can accomplish that feat? And who is going to foot the bill when Wildlife Services is called on to get the job done?

State WS Director Mark Collinge says it will probably require some capturing and radio-collaring of “Judas” wolves to locate the 80 wolves proposed for removal in just the Lolo Zone. And who is going to pay the legal fees when Defenders sues to halt the killing?

This of course assumes that Defenders et al will not sue to stop the delisting – knowing that the feds have much deeper pockets to pay lawyers than a couple of sparsely populated states.

If you were an Idaho Legislator one year ago, you may recall that F&G Commissioner Gary Power and IDFG Director Cal Groen told your Resource Committees they had no intention of reducing wolf numbers (when the minimum 2007 Idaho wolf population was estimated to be 732). The number of dead wolves doubled since then but livestock losses also doubled and the current estimate is a minimum of 846 wolves in 88 packs with 39 breeding pairs.

Nobody knows how many wolves there are in either state but there may well be 1,500-2,000 in Idaho when the pups are born. If Director Groen’s statement (that 40 wolves were found that were killed by other wolves last year) is accurate, they are running out of wild prey and livestock losses will continue the dramatic increase.

The Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan ratified by the Legislature and approved by FWS provides that Idaho need not be involved in wolf recovery if adequate federal funds to monitor wolf and prey and manage wolves are not provided. Under the terms of this plan (NOT the so-called Population Plan by F&G that was never approved) you can decline to manage them – and demand the feds control or remove them.

That may not succeed initially but at least Idaho won’t be responsible for the continuing carnage that is inevitable and your constituents won’t be suing you for the potential human tragedy that could occur.

If you follow Lawyer Runft’s advice you won’t have to argue with the Forest Service when they refuse to let you kill wolves from the air in Wilderness Areas. You’ll still be entitled to seek Wildlife Services protection from livestock and other property losses and you’ll be in a position to call the shots rather than ask “How High” when FWS tells you to jump.

Fortunately for me and unfortunately for you, I don’t have to make the choice, but you do. Doing nothing means you accept responsibility for what lies ahead. Taking a stand is also a gamble but you still have the 2002 Wolf Plan to fall back on.

The F&G Fee Increase

Opinion By George Dovel

During the few times I have been closely involved with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game when it was seeking a general sportsman license fee increase I don't recall ever seeing a more costly, carefully planned or executed program with virtually all of the bases covered. Every employee was involved at least in a briefing process, and many, including the Director and his deputies and assistant, spent all of part of many days or weeks during the past four months lobbying local organizations for support.

Nearly two months ago the Director told me how many sportsman, conservation and civic organizations he had convinced to support the fee increase. Thousands of copies of the form letter of support were passed out with the instruction to sign it and hand it to any Fish and Game employee.

I received forwarded copies of emails sent by Conservation Officers and others to people they knew in their district soliciting support and heard about meetings with non-hunting organizations where support for the fee increased was reportedly unanimous. I do not doubt that a fee increase is necessary to support the status quo.

However I and many other hunters and fishermen I know do not support the Department's abandonment of scientific wildlife management and the implementation of agendas that cannot be defended with science or logic. And we are looking for positive changes – not more empty promises.

My freedom of information request more than two months ago was stonewalled. Although I did receive some information, it was not what I requested or what I was told would be provided. In my opinion, there is a lack of transparency in any organization that provides facts only when it is forced to.

During the Senate Resources and Conservation Committee hearing on the fee increase this past week the Committee reportedly voted to send the fee increase bill to the Amending Order for a slight amendment to benefit Veterans. Only one Committee member, Senator Dean Cameron voted against the action.

One Senator reportedly asked how he could explain to his constituents forcing every other state agency to take severe budget cuts yet cutting nothing from the Fish and Game budget and instead rewarding them with a massive increase.

As someone who will be forced to pay for that increase when money is hard to come by, my response is, "You can't explain it Senator, don't try."

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