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State Wildlife Policy and Management: The Scope and Bias of Political Conflict

State wildlife policy and management are often characterized by divisive political conflict among competing stakeholders. This conflict is increasingly being resolved through the ballot-initiative process. One important reason the process is being used so often is the way state wildlife policy and management decisions are often made by state wildlife commissions, boards, or councils (the dominant way these decisions are made in the United States). These bodies are often perceived by important stakeholders as biased, exclusive, or unrepresentative of nonconsumptive stakeholder values. As a result, unsatisfied interest groups often try to take decision-making authority away from these institutions and give it to the public through the ballot initiative. Cases and examples from Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho are examined in this context. The article finishes by outlining four broad alternatives that may be debated in the future: the no change alternative, the authoritative expert alternative, the structural change alternative, and the stakeholder-based collaborative conservation alternative(s).

The controversy surrounding state wildlife policy making and management is likely to become more prevalent in the future. The move toward ecosystem management, conservation biology, and large-mammal restoration will place state wildlife agencies in a more visible public position. Many endangered species and fish and wildlife programs throughout the country are already illustrating the challenges facing wildlife managers (Clark 1997; Clark, Reading, and Clarke 1994; Mangun 1992; Mangun and Mangun 1991). For example, once wolves are removed from the Endangered Species Act list, wolf management will seriously challenge the way that state wildlife agencies are funded and how they make policy and management decisions.

The goal of this article is to clarify issues and promote a more inclusive democratic debate among decision makers, stakeholders, and the public about the scope, structure, and process of state wildlife policy making and management. It uses the case of wildlife-centered political conflict to examine the important interactions among stakeholders, political institutions, decision-making processes, and approaches to conflict resolution. Specifically, it sheds light on the question of why important interest groups and stakeholders sometimes try to move wildlife issues from traditional decision-making institutions to the ballot-initiative process.

In doing so, it provides a macro-level look at the state wildlife policy-making process, including issues related to state wildlife commissions, wildlife-related ballot initiatives, and the use of stakeholder-based collaborative conservation.

A number of wildlife conflicts and cases are referred to throughout the article, with particular emphasis on wildlife conflict and the policy process in Alaska, a state that has wrestled with a number of controversial wildlife issues in recent years (Haggstrom et al. 1995; NRC 1997). Fieldwork and personal interviews were conducted in south-central and interior Alaska during June and July of 2001. Thirty-four semistructured interviews, lasting from one to three and a half hours, were conducted with key subsystem participants. Dozens of shorter and less formal interviews were also conducted. State and federal wildlife managers, biologists, planners, wildlife advocates, hunters, trappers, environmental interest group representatives, tribal representatives, journalists, academics, board of game appointees, state legislators, and others were interviewed.

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A special attempt was also made to hear from people outside Anchorage and Fairbanks, the two largest cities in the state. Therefore, fieldwork and interviews were also conducted in McGrath, Alaska, a small fly-in bush community in the south-central interior. These and other interviews focused on the relationship between predator politics and the state wildlife policy-making process. This research in Alaska is supplemented with a literature review documenting similar conflicts, themes, and trends in Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho.

Theoretical Framework

State wildlife agencies have witnessed a number of controversial political conflicts in recent years. Debate over the hunting of black bears, predator-control measures, hunting and trapping practices, and other issues have placed state wildlife agencies in a difficult political and managerial position. There are a number of reasons for this increase in wildlife-related political conflict, including population growth, sprawl and development trends, urbanization, and changing American values and ethics toward wildlife (Dunlap 1988; Kellert 1996; Mighetto 1991). This article argues there is another reason, and it is related to the scope of decision making.

Schattschneider (1960, 2) describes the basic pattern of politics by emphasizing the scope, bias, and contagiousness of conflict: "The first proposition is that the outcome of every conflict is determined by the *extent* to which the audience becomes involved in it. That is, the outcome of all conflict is determined by the *scope* of its contagion. The number of people involved in any conflict determines what happens; every change in the number of participants, every increase or reduction in the number of participants affects the result." The nub of politics, according to Schattschneider, is the definition, spread, and control of conflict. "Therefore the contagiousness of conflict, the elasticity of its scope and the fluidity of the involvement of people are the X factors in politics" (3). Furthermore, in political conflict, "every change in scope changes the equation" (5).

Schattschneider provides a useful theoretical framework for this study and other cases in natural resource-wildlife political conflict (Cawley 1993). While the causes of wildlife policy conflict are many, an important and often overlooked component is the scope of the wildlife policy-making process. Questions pertaining to the scope, structure, and process of wildlife policy must be asked: Who participates, who doesn't, and who cares? How do the institutions of wildlife policy making affect policy outcomes? Does the scope of decision making affect how wildlife policies are evaluated by key interest groups and stakeholders? And finally, what decision-making options and

alternatives exist? This article examines these issues by providing a macro-level look at the state wildlife policy-making process and the sort of political conflict this process often generates.

State Wildlife Management Paradigm

Ideas often become privileged when they are supported by key political state actors. These privileged ideas can become institutionalized, and, once in place, they are very difficult to dislodge. Klyza (1996), for instance, examines the privileged ideas and policy regimes of various public lands agencies. He finds that ideas such as technocratic-utilitarianism and interest-group liberalism often guide decisions made by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The privileged idea is also an important part of the state wildlife management paradigm. Before federal and state regulation, fish and wildlife was exploited by commercial and other interests in a system that was characteristic of Hardin's (1968) "tragedy of the commons." State wildlife commissions were created in the 1930s by sport hunters and conservationists as a way to protect wildlife from widespread market hunting. To institutionalize such protection and to safeguard wildlife, sport hunters were placed on commissions that were to adopt and enforce wildlife laws. This is only one example of how sport hunters have played an important part in America's conservation history (Reiger 1975).

Forty-seven states have some sort of formal citizen board, commission, or advisory council which either makes, recommends, or advises fish, wildlife, park, and natural resource management decisions. There are several ways this is done, but most states have either some sort of fish and wildlife commission/board/council or a commission/board/council of natural resources (Musgrave and Stein 1993). Members are typically appointed by the governor and subject to state legislative approval. Most states also have requirements for commission membership, such as a general knowledge of wildlife issues, and political and geographic balance (Musgrave and Stein 1993). Some go even further. Prior to a ballot initiative in 1996, Massachusetts had a statutory requirement that five of seven fisheries and wildlife board members hold a sporting license (Minnis 1998; Pacelle 1998). The policy and management responsibilities of state wildlife commissions and boards vary, from setting fish and game seasons and bag limits to charting broader management goals and objectives. In Alaska, for example, the Department of Fish and Game is responsible for implementing policies approved by the state's Board of Game, a seven-member body whose members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state legislature. While having no fiscal authority, the board has constitutional and statutory authority to set game poli-

cies, make harvest and management regulations, and regulate the subsistence use of wildlife on state and private lands (NRC 1997).

State wildlife agencies were also created as a way to protect wildlife and manage game species on a sustained-yield basis. A classic client-manager relationship has historically characterized state wildlife management (Decker et al. 1996). Wildlife managers have seen their primary responsibility as providing resources (fish and game) to their clients—anglers, hunters, and trappers. Agency capture also characterizes this management paradigm. A large percentage of funding for state wildlife management comes directly from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, or indirectly from federal assistance funds generated from excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment. In Alaska, for example, approximately 90 percent of the funding for the Division of Wildlife Conservation is provided by hunters and trappers through license and tag fees and through matching federal funds derived from hunting-related excise taxes (ADFG 2001). Consequently, agencies often direct their resources toward the management of game species. Mangun (1986), for instance, shows that state expenditures for nongame species amount to roughly 3 percent of the amount spent on game species.

A Paradigm Challenged

The state wildlife management paradigm characterized by clientism and agency capture was challenged in the 1970s. Changes in the political landscape brought environmental values to the forefront, and these interests had new laws and procedural opportunities to have their voices heard (Decker et al. 1996). An increasing number of Americans were expressing values toward wildlife that went beyond the utilitarian and consumptive. The more exclusive, traditional subgovernment that characterized state game management had been seriously challenged by nonconsumptive interests that did not hunt, fish, or trap (Klay and McElveen 1991; Mangun, O'Leary, and Mangun 1992; Tober 1989). The increasing number of contentious debates regarding wildlife is due partly to the multiplicity of values that Americans have toward wildlife (Kellert 1996).

Of course, the state wildlife management paradigm is not the only paradigm to be challenged in recent years. The principles of ecosystem management, conservation biology, and the emergence of stakeholder-based collaborative conservation, among other things, have forced a number of public lands and natural resource agencies to reassess their mission and role (Cortner and Moote 1999; Knight and Bates 1995; Mangun and Henning 1999). It should not be surprising that state wildlife agencies are not immune from these broader changes in natural resource management.

The most direct challenge to this paradigm has come from disgruntled interest groups that believe their values and perspectives do not receive serious consideration in the dominant wildlife commission decision-making framework. Many of these groups strike at what they see as the root of the problem: the wildlife policy-making *process*. The Humane Society of the United States, clearly prioritizing this issue, summarizes: "The 94 percent of Americans who do not hunt are effectively excluded from wildlife management decisions and policy development. Though non-hunters are increasingly knocking on the doors behind which these decisions are made, the states are fighting as never before to keep them closed" (Hagood 1997, 1). The Humane Society, among other critics, has a number of general complaints about the commission framework: (1) it runs counter to the idea of the public interest in wildlife because most Americans do not hunt, fish, or trap; (2) it favors consumptive values and interests; (3) commission members often have a conflict of interest because of their business interests in the consumptive use of wildlife, such as being guides, outfitters, and taxidermists; (4) nongame species and their habitat requirements are not prioritized; and (5) the public has the right to debate the values, ethics, and morality of hunting practices (Hagood 1997; Pacelle 1998).

A few interest groups are beginning to challenge the wildlife commission process. Many wildlife advocacy groups inside Alaska have been critical of the state's Board of Game. The Alaska Wildlife Alliance, together with other state-based groups, filed an unsuccessful lawsuit challenging the legality of the "all hunter-trapper monopoly on the [Board of Game]" (Alaska Wildlife Alliance 2000–01, 1). The lawsuit charged that the Board of Game failed to fulfill its statutory requirement to provide diversity of interest and points of view in its membership and that it violates the state's constitution, which mandates that the state manage wildlife in the public interest. According to the Alliance, "When it comes to deciding wildlife issues one might suppose that all sides would be represented in proportion to their occurrence among the Alaskan population. They are not. On state lands the consumptive interests dominate to the near exclusion of other wildlife values" (Joslin 1998, 8).

Criticism has also come from those inside the wildlife professional subculture. Gill (1996) believes that wildlife agencies have been slow to embrace the human dimensions of wildlife management. Like the professional history of American forestry, the wildlife profession has been characterized by a utilitarian, technorational philosophy, an emphasis on wise use, sustained yield, and scientific expert management. As such, it has been slow to respond to changing American values toward wildlife. Gill is also critical of the way most state wildlife agencies continue to

be funded: "Though perhaps unintentional, license fees effectively married public servants to special interests. It was an unholy marriage because it blurred the essential distinction between public interest and special interest and inevitably eroded both scientific credibility and public trust" (63).

Controversy in Idaho illustrates how criticism can come from myriad interests, including both consumptive and nonconsumptive users, and for very different reasons. In January 2002, Rod Sando, the director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, stepped down because of top-down political pressure (Barker and Phillips 2002a). Many interests in the state, from hunters to nonhunting environmentalists, believe the pressure came from ranchers and farmers who were upset with Sando's predator-control policies, among other issues. This pressure was channeled, they believe, through the governor and onto the state wildlife commission (a seven-member board appointed by the governor and approved by the state senate). Alarmed by what they saw as undue political meddling, the Idaho Wildlife Federation, along with other groups, drafted a ballot initiative that would reduce the number of commissioners to five and would require the governor to choose them from a list voted upon in public caucuses held around the state (Barker 2002; Barker and Phillips 2002b). (Given time and other constraints, not enough signatures were gathered to get on the ballot). The reasoning for such change is based partly on perceptions of a "hijacked" wildlife commission that is unnecessarily politicizing state wildlife management (Barker and Phillips 2002b).

Policy Implications

The state wildlife commission process is one important reason that so many groups are now using ballot initiatives to make wildlife policy and management decisions. Many states adopted the ballot initiative and referendum process between 1898 and 1918, partially due to perceptions of corrupt state legislatures dominated by corporate interests. Populists and progressives wanted more direct participation in the democratic process. The cure for the ills of representative democracy, they argued, was more democracy (Cronin 1989). Twenty-four states allow for some form of initiative (direct or indirect) whereby citizens can place issues on the ballot if they meet certain

criteria, such as petition requirements (IRI 2001b). A number of policy issues have been decided through the initiative process, ranging from three-strikes criminal justice laws to the use of medicinal marijuana. Supporters continue to see the process as an important check on unresponsive institutions (IRI 2001b).

An unprecedented number of wildlife-related citizen ballot initiatives have been voted on in recent years (table 1). The Initiative and Referendum Institute's database documents that 30 wildlife-related ballot measures have been voted on through 2001 (IRI 2001a). Minnis (1998) documents that 19 of these have happened since 1990. Pacelle (1998) finds that voters sided with animal protection advocates in 10 of 13 ballot initiatives addressing specific hunting and trapping practices since 1990. These initiatives have targeted a number of issues, including mountain lion hunting in California, Oregon, and Washington; bear hunting in Colorado, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington; trapping in Arizona, Colorado, and Massachusetts; gill nets in Florida; bobcat hunting with dogs in Massachusetts and Washington; lynx hunting with dogs in Washington; and aerial "land and shoot" hunting of wolves in Alaska (Williamson 1998, 57). Most wildlife ballot initiatives focus on specific hunting practices and have not sought to ban all hunting. Initiatives have also focused on the decision-making process (1996 Massachusetts initia-

Table 1 State Wildlife Policy Making and Management by Ballot and Board

States with initiative process available	History of wildlife-related ballot issues (years used)*	State wildlife commissions and boards
Alaska	1996, 1998, 2000, 2000	Board of Game
Arizona	1992, 1994	Game and Fish Commission
Arkansas		Game and Fish Commission
California	1990, 1996, 1998	Fish and Game Commission
Colorado	1992, 1996	Wildlife Commission
Florida		Game and Freshwater Fish Commission
Idaho	1996	Fish and Game Commission
Illinois		Conservation Advisory Board
Maine	1983	Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Advisory Council
Massachusetts	1930, 1996	Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Michigan	1996, 1996	Commission of Natural Resources
Mississippi		Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
Missouri		Conservation Commission
Montana	2000	Fish and Wildlife and Parks Commission
Nebraska		Game and Parks Commission
Nevada		Board of Wildlife Commissioners
North Dakota	2000	Game and Fish Advisory Board
Ohio	1977, 1998	Wildlife Council
Oklahoma		Wildlife Conservation Commission
Oregon	1980, 1994, 1996, 2000	Fish and Wildlife Commission
South Dakota	1972, 1980	Game, Fish and Parks Commission
Utah	1998	Wildlife Board
Washington	1996, 2000	Fish and Wildlife Commission
Wyoming		Game and Fish Commission

Sources: Hagood (1997); IRI (2001); Minnis (1998); Musgrave and Stein (1993).

*Includes all forms of direct democracy related to fish and wildlife management, including efforts to protect the right to hunt and fish. Does not include ballot measures dealing with funding.

tive) and funding issues whereby some portion of sales tax revenue is used for wildlife management (Arkansas and Missouri) (Williamson 1998, 57).

Alaskans have had to decide a number of controversial wildlife issues through ballot initiatives. Voters in 1996 used the initiative process to ban the controversial practice of same-day airborne land-and-shoot wolf hunting (the practice of flying over wolf habitat, landing a plane near a wolf pack, and shooting wolves once a hunter moves at least 100 yards from the plane). The initiative also prohibited the state from using aircraft in government wolf control programs except in the case of a biological emergency. In 1998, the group Alaskans Against Snaring Wolves was unsuccessful in passing a proposition that would have prohibited the use of snares in trapping wolves. And in 2000, Alaskans voted to reinstate the ban on public same-day airborne wolf hunting (after the state legislature brought the issue back on the agenda). A number of prominent wildlife advocates and interest groups in Alaska emphasize the Board of Game's decision-making process as an important reason why the state has had so many wolf-related ballot initiatives. These groups and individuals argue that their values, and the nonconsumptive values of most Alaskans, are not adequately represented on the state's Board of Game, and thus are not taken seriously. The alternative, they insist, is to take these issues to the public through the initiative process.

There is more than one reason that an increasing number of groups are using the ballot-initiative process to make wildlife policy or to influence wildlife management. One of the most contentious and analyzed wildlife initiatives in recent years is Amendment 10, passed in Colorado in 1992. Amendment 10 was designed to end three bear-hunting practices: hunting in the spring, using baits to lure bears, and hunting with the aid of dogs (Loker and Decker 1995). The amendment was passed by 70 percent of Colorado voters. In analyzing this vote, Loker and Decker (1995) emphasize the value-based and ethical dimensions involved in this issue. Supporters were quite concerned about the well-being of bears (at the individual and population levels), the ethical aspects of hunting practices (sportsmanship and fair chase), and the morality of bear hunting (Loker and Decker 1995). Only 10 percent of Amendment 10 supporters opposed hunting in general. The Colorado Wildlife Commission also played a role in the controversy. Stakeholders who opposed the bear hunting practices chose the ballot-initiative process only after the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the wildlife commission, using established decision-making procedures, decided to continue the practices with only a few modifications (Loker and Decker 1995).

Cockrell (1999) finds similar trends in assessing Colorado's Amendment 14. Passed in 1996, this constitutional amendment banned recreational and commercial

leghold trapping, snaring, and poisoning of wildlife and limited these methods when protecting agricultural produce and livestock. According to Cockrell, wildlife activists chose to use the ballot-initiative process only after efforts to ban trapping through legislation and by lobbying wildlife agency personnel and wildlife commissioners were unsuccessful. These activists had also participated in a furbearer management stakeholder process, which offered only incremental policy change options. In other words, says Cockrell, "These activists chose the transformational option of a ballot initiative only after efforts to change policies incrementally had failed" (71). Cockrell also points out that these "crusader activists" worked within the existing political system, thus belying the "radical" label they are so often given by their political opposition.

Not surprisingly, legislative inaction also helps to explain the increasing use of ballot initiatives as a way to make wildlife policy. Arizona has had three such initiatives since 1991, two focusing on public-lands trapping and the other on securing alternative sources of wildlife funding. In analyzing these cases, three Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel focus on the state legislature's refusal to act on these issues (DeVos, Shroufe, and Supplee 1998). The first public-lands trapping initiative (Proposition 200) was preceded by four legislative attempts to either ban leghold traps or take away the authority for management of trapping from the Arizona Game and Fish Commission (DeVos, Shroufe, and Supplee 1998). DeVos, Shroufe, and Supplee (1998, 61–62) explain why: "All of these efforts failed to gain legislative support as the Arizona legislature was lobbied extensively by the livestock industry. This industry argued that the ability to control predator and furbearer populations was essential to maintaining a viable sheep and cattle industry in the state. Therefore, all attempts to pass anti-trapping legislation were unsuccessful; often the proposed legislation never was passed from committee due to lobbying efforts from the livestock industry."

Proposition 200 was defeated for a number of reasons, including active opposition by the state wildlife commission (the state attorney general later concluded this type of active involvement in the ballot process by the commission was illegal). Illustrating the sort of politics the initiative process is prone to, proposition opponents aired humorous television ads showing a homemaker being overrun by mice, unable to trap them because of the anti-trapping initiative (DeVos, Shroufe, and Supplee 1998). A more precise anti-public-lands trapping proposition was passed in 1994. In Arizona at least, stakeholders used the initiative process after failing to achieve legislative solutions (DeVos, Shroufe, and Supplee 1998).

Frustration with state legislatures, perceived by many environmental and wildlife advocacy groups as beholden to

special (consumptive and commodity-oriented)) interests, is not unique to Arizona. This process has also played out in Colorado. Rob Edward (1999, 3), program director of Sinapu, a wildlife advocacy organization focusing on the Southern Rockies region, points his finger at ranching interests and their privileged position in the state legislature:

The 1996 anti-trapping measure in Colorado was one in a series of ballot initiatives reflecting widespread frustration with the ranching lobby. Citizens filed the initiative only after several frustrating years of negotiations aimed at significantly curtailing the use of leg hold traps, snares, and poisons. The work toward compromise failed because the trapping and livestock interests refused to give any quarter, which in turn hardened the position of the environmentalists. The only recourse left was to take a question to the ballot—not the best way to govern, but at least allowing the popular to be heard over the din of special interests.... The chasm between popular will and legislative action will continue to spawn ballot initiatives for years to come.

Similarly, Wayne Pacelle (1998, 47), senior vice president of the Humane Society, sees the initiative process as a last resort: "Wildlife protection initiatives have been a last resort for citizen activists who have failed to win reforms after appealing to fish and wildlife commissions or legislatures. State agencies are controlled by hunters—in effect, the regulators and the regulated are one in the same—and it is disappointing, though not surprising, that these self-regulating institutions have resisted even responsible calls for reform of particularly abusive hunting and trapping practices." Pacelle also argues that agencies must adapt to a changing social and political environment. The future is clear, he says, if they fail to do so: "To the extent that the states placate hunters and ignore the wishes of non-hunters, there will be increasing numbers of wildlife policy questions settled by politicians and voters" (49).

These cases shed some light on the issue of venue shopping, that is, whether critics of the status quo are simply trying to shift these issues to a friendlier venue. Like other political interests, they are certainly using different methods and institutions to gain advantage. But it is important to point out that, at least in Colorado and Arizona, the initiative process was utilized only after legislative and other efforts proved unsuccessful. It is also important to note that groups using the initiative process believe they—not consumptive-oriented commission or board members, captured wildlife agencies, and special-interest-dominated state legislatures—are the ones representing mainstream and majoritarian values toward wildlife. While the complexity of human values toward wildlife is not addressed here, research reveals that people have many values toward wildlife and the natural world, and they often go be-

yond the utilitarian and consumptive (Bright, Manfredo, and Fulton 2000; Kellert 1996).

Public confidence in state wildlife agencies is also at stake. Bear biologist Thomas Beck (1998, 24) of the Colorado Division of Wildlife sees the increase in citizen ballot initiatives as a failure of the wildlife management profession: "The failure to acknowledge and confront our own strong biases in wildlife management has been a major causative factor in the recent advent of citizen initiatives directed at wildlife policy. While we may say that our agency and commission doors are open to all, the truth is that all petitioners have not been listened to equally." The profession, says Beck, clings to an agricultural model of wildlife management that focuses on narrow scientific analysis and the maximization of harvests, with too little attention paid to the value and ethical issues of wildlife management:

We have permitted hunting methods for bears that we prohibit for nearly every other species (baiting, spring hunting, use of hounds, waste of meat). With no rational basis offered for this paradox in behavior, why are we then surprised that both anti-hunters and critics within our ranks have chosen this species to focus on? We can rail at our critics, we can scream in paranoia about an anti-hunting conspiracy, but the fault is ours. We are guilty of hubris: arrogance, overbearing pride, and a smug "Leave it to the Professionals" attitude. Such attitudes, throughout history, have met with both doom and damnation. (22)

Whatever their ultimate worth, Beck believes "the ballot initiatives in Colorado have served to improve the listening abilities of all in the agency and commission" (25).

A political backlash to "ballot box biology" is also evident. The spate of wildlife ballot measures is related to recent action by state legislatures and interest groups seeking to protect the right to hunt and fish in the form of state constitutional amendments. Six states have amended their state constitutions to do so since 1996, and hunters in at least 13 states are planning to do the same (Jonsson 2002). Minnesotans voted to preserve their "hunting and fishing heritage" in 1998, Virginians amended their state constitution by adding a provision concerning the right of the people to hunt, fish, and harvest game in 2000, and citizens of North Dakota agreed to a constitutional measure in 2000 that read, "Hunting, trapping, and fishing and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage and will be preserved for the people and managed by law and regulation for the public good" (IRI 2001a). In 1998, Utah voters passed an initiative (Proposition 5) requiring a two-thirds majority vote to pass any future initiatives that would alter existing laws on the taking of wildlife (Eliason 2001). The Alaska state legislature provides what is perhaps the

best example of the backlash against wildlife-related ballot measures. Quite frustrated with the wolf ballot issue, the state legislature put a measure on the 2000 ballot that would have changed the Alaska Constitution so that voters could not use the initiative process to make laws that permit, regulate, or prohibit the taking or transporting of wildlife, or to prescribe seasons or methods for taking wildlife. This ballot measure to end all ballot measures was handily defeated.

Several interest groups and other stakeholders oppose the use of the initiative process in making wildlife policy, for a number of reasons. First, many believe that trained wildlife biologists and experts should be making these decisions, not the general public. Second, they are fearful of the “tyranny of the majority,” in this case urban residents who vastly outnumber those living in rural places. Concerned about this trend and state wolf initiatives in particular, the Coalition for the Alaska Way of Life sought an Alaskan constitutional amendment to exempt fish and game issues from the initiative process (AP 2000). Coalition members such as the Alaska Trappers Association, Alaska Outdoor Council, Alaska Bowhunters Association, and the Association of Village Council (Tribal) Presidents are concerned about future opportunities to hunt, fish, and trap. Many are also reluctant to use the term “stakeholder” to describe urban residents, whom they believe are scarcely affected by most wildlife management decisions. Native cultures, considering their minority status and dependence on wild fish and game, are also concerned and disproportionately affected by such majoritarian and urban-dominated decision-making processes (Lyne 1992).

A number of wildlife professionals also fear the ballot-initiative trend. Prominent wolf biologist David Mech (1996), for example, is quite skeptical of majority-rule wildlife management. First, he says, urban residents who are unaffected by the negative impact of carnivores can simply outvote rural residents. But Mech is also concerned about the appropriate role of the public and expert in making wildlife management decisions. He believes the past sheds light on the future: “It is ironic that this simple majority-rule type of wildlife management is basically the same approach that extirpated carnivores many years ago. Although there were no actual referendums at that time, there were bureaucrats acting contrary to scientific opinion but bending to the public will.... The lesson to be learned is that public sentiment is fickle. If major carnivore management decisions are determined by public mood rather than by the knowledge of professionals, we could end up with California full of carnivores and North Dakota with none” (Mech 1996, 400).

A full review of the cases for and against direct democracy is beyond the scope of this article (Broder 2001; Cronin 1989; Zisk 1987). Nevertheless, it is important to review

the challenges and recognize the limitations of the initiative process as a way to make wildlife policy and management decisions. A number of factors should be considered here, including the following:

1. The deliberation, meaningful dialogue, common ground, and possible compromise that is precluded by this type of adversarial and dichotomous (yes/no, for/against) policy making. This type of zero-sum approach is not only divisive, it often leads to the oversimplification of issues and the vilification of those who refuse to fit into one of two sides.
2. The quality and stability of public opinion concerning wildlife-related issues, including the amount of knowledge that voters have about these issues (Manfredo, Fulton, and Pierce 1997).
3. The role that science, biology, and professional wildlife management does or does not play in the process.
4. The influence of special interest groups and large sums of money, including the ability of well-financed groups to use political advertising (fairly or unfairly) to frame issues (Broder 2001).
5. The possibility of a “tyranny of the majority” situation, in which urban residents dominate. This process can lead to intrastate conflict and division, pitting urban versus rural residents (Deblinger, Woytek, and Zwick 1999).
6. Not everyone is affected equally by wildlife policy and management decisions. Rural citizens are often more personally affected by wildlife decisions than those living in urban places.

Options, Alternatives, and Issues for Further Debate

This section explores some options and alternative approaches to state wildlife policy making and management. Four broad approaches are outlined in the hopes of promoting further discussion and debate: (1) the wildlife commission/no change alternative; (2) the authoritative expert alternative; (3) structural change alternatives; and (4) various stakeholder-based collaborative conservation alternatives. This alternatives framework is for organizational purposes only. There are a number of other approaches and combinations of these four alternatives that are possible as well.

Wildlife Commission/No Change

This status quo/no change alternative continues to use the state wildlife commission process as a way to make wildlife policy and management decisions. There are several defenders of this process, including consumptive users and nonconsumptive wildlife advocates. There are a number of reasons why groups support such a framework.

From a political standpoint, consumptive users of wildlife usually do quite well in this venue. Since wildlife commissions were first instituted, hunters, fishers and trappers have held a dominant position, and thus see no reason why they should be abandoned.

For many critics, it is not the commission as an institution, but the commissioners themselves that are the problem. In other words, critics of state wildlife commissions may simply be venue shopping, searching for a political venue that is more friendly to their interests. Critics may also be directing their criticism at the wrong source. After all, commission members are usually appointed by the governor and confirmed in some way by the state legislature. Therefore, these elected political representatives should receive their fair share of blame or credit for a commission's composition. Many of those interviewed in Alaska believe that nonconsumptive stakeholders would have no problems with the board of game framework if their values were just better represented.

A dangerous precedent may be set if institutions are tinkered with simply because some groups and interests are currently not very well represented. Which institution is next? Because of issue intensity, salience, and superior organizing on the part of consumptive users, perhaps nonconsumptive users and critics of the process are simply being outmobilized. In some states, opportunities for participation are clearly evident but are not being taken advantage of. Alaska's system provides one example. Defenders of the Board of Game argue there is a public and democratic process already in place. Not only is the board appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, but there is also an elaborate advisory committee system in place that is open and grassroots oriented (there are more than 80 advisory committees set up throughout the state, each with the ability to make proposals and recommendations to the Board of Game).

Authoritative Expert

This alternative emphasizes the importance of scientific knowledge and technical expertise in wildlife management. It would place biologists and wildlife managers in a pre-eminent decision-making position. In some states, wildlife commissions would be eliminated or play a more advisory role in making wildlife management decisions. Some biologists are uncomfortable with politicians, lay commission members, stakeholders, the public, or "barstool biologists" making wildlife management decisions, or they are uncomfortable with decisions that run counter to biological opinion. They would rather have a system in which wildlife biologists and professionals are given this responsibility.

This alternative will likely be interpreted in two ways. First, it will be attacked as being undemocratic and elitist.

Many critics will contend that the biologist-as-philosopher-kicking approach runs counter to the public interest in wildlife. Furthermore, many environmental and wildlife advocacy organizations believe biologists have their own consumptive values and agendas. These interests are suspicious of what they call "harvest biologists"—agency personnel who prioritize the manipulation and management of wildlife to favor consumptive users. Thus, they question the professional values of many wildlife biologists and the institutional values of many state wildlife agencies. They also point out there is often no such thing as one definitive biological opinion.

The other interpretation emphasizes accountability and the role of the biologist and wildlife manager in the larger democratic legislative process. Defenders of this alternative point to the relative lack of accountability inherent in other approaches to wildlife management (especially stakeholder-based approaches). With this alternative, it is clear who is responsible if wildlife is managed irresponsibly or out of step with prevailing public values. Furthermore, many biologists and managers emphasize the larger state constitutional and legislative context in which they work. In other words, they are simply implementing the will of the people as expressed in state constitutions and statutes. Thus, they are safeguarding and implementing—not threatening—the democratic process.

Structural Change

Two possible changes are discussed here: changes in departmental organization, and changes in state wildlife commissions. The departmental (re)organization alternative would structurally reconfigure state wildlife departments, placing them within larger environmental or natural resource agencies while at the same time providing with them a broader base of funding. The restructuring alternative assumes that, if they were embedded in larger natural resource or environmental protection agencies, once-autonomous fish and wildlife departments would have a broader (nonconsumptive) constituency, more ecosystem-based management responsibilities, and a wider base of funding. It also assumes that nonconsumptive stakeholders would be less critical and have more trust in an agency serving more than their traditional (consumptive) clientele.

Twelve states have a single, combined department with separate divisions for wildlife management and environmental protection (Cannamela and Warren 1999). In four of these 12 states (Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey), wildlife management and environmental protection fall under a common department of environmental protection or conservation (Cannamela and Warren 1999). "Superdepartments," such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources represent the umbrella concept

of resource management whereby forestry, fisheries, and game management are combined with environmental protection functions (Thomas 1990). The Wisconsin department is also put under the control of a citizen-led natural resources board that has a high degree of statutory authority (Thomas 1990). Minnesota provides another option: Its Department of Natural Resources is more limited in scope, managing the state's natural resources and wildlife, but not environmental pollution. Unlike Wisconsin, it does not have a natural resource or wildlife citizen commission or board. For our purposes, the critical question is what role a wildlife commission would play in such a superdepartment. Restructuring would not alleviate any conflict or perceptions of bias if a familiar-looking wildlife or natural resource commission has the same amount of discretion and decision-making authority it had before reorganizing.

Securing a wider base of funding, one that is (more) independent of fish and game funds, is a critical part of this alternative. The bulk of fish and wildlife agency funding comes from consumptive users from the sale of licenses and excise taxes on sport hunting and fishing equipment. Providing alternative mechanisms for funding nongame wildlife conservation has long been a priority (Hamilton 1992; Mangun 1986). Many nonconsumptive stakeholders want the ability to pay for some of the costs associated with wildlife management and believe agency priorities will shift along with these new sources of funding.

Another possibility is to change the way that state wildlife commissions are appointed. In Idaho, for instance, a coalition of consumptive and nonconsumptive interests put forth a ballot initiative "designed to restore the level of independence the Fish and Game Commission had after it was established by initiative in 1938" (Barker 2002). Supporters of the initiative wanted to shield the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the commission from what they saw as political meddling. To do so, they wanted to reduce the number of commissioners and require the governor to choose them from a list voted up in public caucuses held in five regions of the state. Two nominees would come from each regional caucus, and the governor would be required to choose one of the two. The state senate, moreover, would no longer have power over nominees (Barker and Phillips 2002b). Skeptics of this proposed (and ultimately unsuccessful) reform argue it is naive to believe wildlife policy making and management can somehow be depoliticized. Politics is inherent when managing a public resource, according to such a view. Another criticism is that such reform simply changes "the rules of political engagement" (*Idaho Statesman* 2002). Under the caucus proposal, for example, commission representation would be determined by turnout; thus, if ranching interests mobilize and environmental groups don't, the commission will be

dominated by ranching-friendly commissioners. As the *Idaho Statesman* (2002) put it, "It all depends on who show up in those meetings and who has the loudest voices. That's hardly a formula for taking politics out of the equation."

Stakeholder-Based Collaborative Conservation

An important change in environmental and natural resource policy making and management is the now-widespread use of stakeholder-based collaborative conservation (Conley 2001). A number of participatory models fall under this broad heading. Brick and Van de Wetering (quoted in Snow 2001, 2) summarize:

Often called "collaborative conservation," this new movement represents the new face of American conservation as we enter the twenty-first century. Although no single strategy, process, or institutional arrangement characterizes this movement, collaborative conservation emphasizes the importance of local participation, sustainable natural and human communities, inclusion of disempowered voices, and voluntary consent and compliance rather than enforcement by legal and regulatory coercion. In short, collaborative conservation reaches across the great divide connecting preservation advocates and developers, commodity producers and conservation biologists, local residents, and natural interest groups to find working solutions to intractable problems that will surely languish unresolved for decades in the existing policy system.

This philosophy and approach to conflict resolution has also been applied to state wildlife management. Several state wildlife agencies have begun to recognize the importance of the human dimensions of wildlife. They have tried to move beyond the traditional client-manager paradigm and embrace new constituencies and stakeholder-based approaches to conflict resolution.

There are a number of reasons and possible advantages to using stakeholder-based approaches in state wildlife management (Brick, Snow, and Van de Wetering 2001; Cestero 1999; Decker et al. 1996; Nie 2003; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). First, there is a public interest in wildlife. Stakeholding is one way the public's multiple values toward wildlife can be represented and expressed. Better information, open communication, increased understanding, and facilitated implementation is also possible. The process allows stakeholders to more effectively communicate their values, beliefs, and opinions to traditional adversaries and managing agencies. It also provides a venue in which nonscientific issues—often at the heart of wildlife-centered conflicts—can be communicated and worked through. It also provides a way to balance scientific understanding, technical expertise, and larger public democratic values. Citizen participation and local knowledge can be

used constructively to identify and resolve complex problems (Fischer 2000; Steelman 2001; Walters, Aydelotte, and Miller 2000). It can also be used as a way to avoid adversarial analysis and the “dueling scientists” approach in which each stakeholder uses their science to forward their vision of the public interest (Busenberg 1999). Additionally, the use of stakeholder approaches may reduce the number of wildlife-related ballot initiatives in the future. Loker, Decker, and Chase (1998, 10), for example, show how stakeholder approaches “may help create a management environment less prone to ballot initiatives in some cases and aid in better understanding of ballot initiatives and their consequences in others.”

There are a number of ways that collaborative approaches to state wildlife management could be used in the future. Some models would replace the commission process altogether, while others would complement it. The “wildlife policy committee” provides one example and possible compromise. This idea, being circulated in Alaska’s wildlife policy subsystem, is a framework in which the Board of Game would continue its role in setting seasons and bag limits for game species—the staple activity of most state wildlife commissions—while a wildlife policy committee would be created to handle controversial and other selected issues. This is a reasonable compromise, according to some nonconsumptive stakeholders in the state. Some of these interests believe that what the Board of Game does most often—seasons and bag limits—it does well. Rather, it is with the more controversial, policy-oriented cases that it fails to represent majority values and opinions. As with other stakeholder approaches, this wildlife policy committee would comprise different interests, including tribal representatives, hunters, trappers, animal rights and welfare interests, environmental representatives, and others.

Decker and Chase (1997) and Chase, Schusler, and Decker (2000) provide a helpful typology to better understand wildlife management approaches to stakeholder input and involvement. At one end of the continuum is the authoritative expert approach discussed previously. Next is the passive-receptive approach, in which agencies are open to input when stakeholders take the initiative to be heard, such as by writing letters, making telephone calls, or testifying at commission meetings. The inquisitive approach occurs when agencies invite input from stakeholders through public meetings, listening sessions, and surveys. Here, human-dimensions inquiry can augment an agency’s information base, informing them of stakeholder values, beliefs, and opinions. The transactional approach is a significant change in the way agencies interact with stakeholders. It allows stakeholders to become directly involved in making decisions, not just provide input. It also means that wildlife agencies must be willing to give up

some managerial control. At the other end of the continuum is the next innovation in stakeholding, comanagement. This model differs from the transactional approach in that stakeholders are involved in multiple stages of the management process, not just in decision making.

A distinction might be made here between authentic and unauthentic forms of public participation. For King, Feltey, and O’Neill Susel (1998, 320), “Authentic participation is deep and continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation ... [it] requires that administrators focus on both process and outcome ... [it] means that the public is part of the deliberation process from issue framing to decision making.” It is likely that the transactional and comanagerial forms of stakeholding will be the only models satisfactory to stakeholders who are tempted to use the ballot-initiative process to deal with these conflicts. After all, they are the only models with any real decision-making authority, and it is here that the real conflict and controversy surrounding collaborative conservation begins. Opposition will undoubtedly arise from all sides, including consumptive users, national environmental groups, and wildlife biologists and managers. Many claim this type of decision making is an abrogation of agency responsibility, and these decisions should be made by wildlife professionals and through existing agency, commission, and legislative procedures.

Wildlife advocates, including animal welfare and rights interests, will have serious decisions to make in the future. If they decide to collaborate, they must be willing to compromise with other stakeholders. They may have to settle for incremental policy change. If they refuse to collaborate, on the other hand, and stick to the ballot-initiative process, they risk not having their voices heard at all. Support may come from surprising places, including hunters, trappers, and native interests in states that have the initiative process available. Many are well aware of changing American values toward wildlife and urbanization trends, and thus fear direct democracy in the future. If constitutional efforts to protect their interests fail, we shouldn’t be surprised if these stakeholders endorse collaborative conservation processes in the future.

Conclusion

The use of state wildlife commissions, boards, or councils to make wildlife policy and management decisions is one reason the number of wildlife-related ballot initiatives has increased in recent years. At the very least, cases in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho suggest it is one part of the story. In Alaska, a number of stakeholders and nonconsumptive wildlife advocates have focused on the state’s Board of Game, which many perceive as unrepre-

sentative and biased, to explain recent ballot initiatives and the growing interest in stakeholding.

Schattschneider's (1960) scope and bias of the pressure system provides a useful way of understanding the relationship between wildlife-centered political conflict and the policy process. Schattschneider's first proposition "is that the outcome of every conflict is determined by the extent to which the audience becomes involved in it" (3). He asks, in what way does the public participate in the spread of conflict, and how is this conflict controlled? His second proposition is a consequence of the first: "the most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of conflict" (3).

The scope and bias of wildlife conflict is central here. Several disgruntled interest groups and stakeholders have tried to "socialize" wildlife conflict by attacking the way it is often made. These interests have attempted to diminish or remove decision-making power and authority from state wildlife commissioners—who are often seen as representing consumptive values only—and place it in the hands of the public or with a wider base of stakeholders. The use of ballot initiatives and stakeholder-based collaborative conservation is a result of this socialization of conflict. What does this mean for the future? First, new voices and values are likely to play a more important role in wildlife policy making and management. But as Schattschneider also points out, expanding the scope means the conflict may move in unanticipated directions (1960, 37). It is worth asking whether such an expansion of scope will lead to increased gridlock—but perhaps that is the cost of having more inclusive decision-making processes in place.

Ballot initiative and collaborative conservation have their strengths and weaknesses, and they have at least one thing in common: Both expand the scope and bias of wildlife-centered political conflict. It is now important for wildlife agencies, stakeholders, and the public to debate their strengths and weaknesses in terms of effectiveness, accountability, and ability to promote democratic values and safeguard the public interest in wildlife.

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