

The Wildlife Society Leadership Institute sponsored by AFWA and TWS

Background – In 2006, The Wildlife Society Initiated a National Leadership Institute. This was designed for ten young professionals that culminates annually with each participant graduating at the TWS Annual Conference. The Leadership Institute curricula, logistics, and training is organized and administered by the TWS Government Affairs Staff – Laura Bies and Terra Rents.

Issue - This is a great program, but a few of the challenges with this program are the limited number of participants (10 annually), expense associated with TWS funding travel to the Annual Conference, lack of direct agency support, and limited in-person interaction of the participants (they only meet in-person at annual conference at the conclusion of their leadership training).

Proposal – Develop an AFWA/TWS section level leadership institutes with a collaborative approach including TWS Government Affairs Staff, Section Leaders, State Chapters and AFWA. This would be an annual program engaging 10-20 young wildlife professionals recruited through state agencies across the Midwest (either across the North Central Section or the Midwest States that are part of MAFWA). Initial meetings amongst participants would take place at the annual section conference with a year long leadership program resulting in graduation and presentations a year later at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife conference. The regional level program could be in addition to the National Leadership Institute and could be a viable option for other sections to adopt. Instructors/mentors would be active TWS members focused on distinguished retirees, agency leaders, NCLI Fellows, and academic leaders within the region.

Draft Curriculum (much of this could come from the current TWS Leadership Institute)

Regional Conservation Issues – Development of small group leadership projects
360 Evaluation
Managing Change
Communications
Conflict
Professional Society Membership
Politics of leadership
Balancing action and observation
Conservation issues of the future
Lessons from current leaders

Benefits:

- 1) The “Graying of the Green” as described in The Wildlife Professional in 2007 is a major challenge facing natural resources agencies – this institute would provide an intensive leadership training program for our future natural resource professionals.**

- 2) State agencies are much more likely to support travel to regional meetings thus eliminating much of the expense associated with sending young biologists to national training programs.**
- 3) Development of regional relationships amongst young professionals from state and federal agencies (i.e. new farmland biologist in Ohio, IL, and Minnesota) increasing efficiencies and collaborations across state boundaries.**
- 4) TWS and AFWA could collaborate to support participation and funding for such a program.**
- 5) Increased number of participants – for example in the North Central Section of TWS there could be 2 participants from each state (16 participants).**
- 6) Instillation of the importance and relevance of leadership to young professionals increasing the ability of management agencies to the development of strategic conservation to address natural resource challenges over the next 20 years. support, life long members, agency support, scientific-based management and future mentors.**