

2006 – 03 Scientific Management of Natural Resources

Natural resource management is a complex endeavor, requiring knowledge and extensive training in a diverse range of subjects, including but not limited to biology, ecology, botany, chemistry, geology, soil science, public policy, economics, statistics, and the scientific method. The scientific method has been developed to allow the development of a consistent, unbiased, accurate view of the world. Changes in scientific thought occur when data supports such change.

Ownership of most natural resources in the United States, such as public waters, fisheries, wildlife, and public lands, is held in trust for the benefit of all the people, and as such should be conserved for the benefit of both today's citizens and for future generations. When there is doubt or disagreement as to the sustainability of a particular use or activity, the health of the resource must always be given priority and the burden of proof must be on those who would use or degrade the resource, to prove that their activities are sustainable.

Many of the public's natural resources provide services to society over and above the value that they hold as individual entities. For example, existing functional wetlands filter and treat storm-water runoff and mitigate flooding at no additional cost to society, as well as producing ducks and other wildlife.

Increasingly, natural resource management decisions are being made by legislative bodies and elected officials, often acting on behalf of specific interest groups, rather than by trained resource management professionals with the best interest of the resource in mind. At both the State and National level, scientists report cases where special interests have induced the reversal or withdrawal of scientific conclusions or decisions through political intervention.*

Public input is important to any government process. Agencies should continue to consider the wishes of the people when making decisions and legislative bodies should continue to monitor the public input process and legislate changes to that process when necessary. However, when a conflict arises between an interest group's wish to use or alter a public resource, and the long-term health and vitality of that resource, managers should be empowered to make scientifically based decisions on behalf of the resource.

Now therefore be it resolved, that the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America in Annual convention April 29, 2006, supports the scientific management of the State of Minnesota's natural resources by trained professionals, and encourages the State Legislature and Governor to support scientifically valid decisions of professional staff in the DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES and other Agencies charged with management and protection of the State's natural resources.

*source: Union of Concerned Scientists survey
http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/interference/survey-summaries.html ;
Minnesota Fish & Wildlife Employees Association <http://mfwea.org/pages/3/index.htm>

Submitted by the Prairie Woods Chapter