



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Ref: DO355-10
October 14, 2010

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
Montana State University

Dr. Waded Cruzado, President
Montana State University
211 Montana Hall
P.O. Box 172420
Bozeman, MT 59717-2420

Dear Dr. Cruzado:

The relationship between the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) and Montana State University (MSU) began when our staff worked together to form the first wildlife management curriculum on the Bozeman campus in 1948. In keeping with the land grant mission of the Montana State University System, the people and wildlife resources of Montana have benefited from this relationship ever since. It is our desire that this beneficial relationship will continue well into the future.

Unfortunately, in recent years our relationship has been marred by a pattern of conflict specific to an individual faculty member. The pattern began with our collaboration with MSU Ecology Department faculty on wolf-ungulate research beginning in 2001. Several conflicts on this project eventually led to the permanent severing of our collaborative relationship with Dr. Scott Creel in 2006. Earlier this year, another conflict arose between Dr. Creel and FWP staff. Dr. Creel accused FWP staff of unethical conduct for conducting research with data in which FWP had substantial financial, labor, and intellectual investment. We attempted to work with the Ecology Department to resolve both of these issues, but received no response from our February 26 letter to Dr. Roberts.

In the last two years, Ecology Department faculty have also published two manuscripts based on analysis of data collected by FWP scientists and field technicians, for studies designed by FWP staff for other purposes. These include Dr. Creel's analysis of aerial survey data for elk in Montana, and most recently Dr. Creel and Dr. Jay Rotella's analyses of gray wolf population monitoring data to make inference about the impact of human-caused mortality on wolf populations. In both cases, the work did not involve input or collaboration from FWP staff. In both cases, the analyses suffer from basic flaws that could easily have been corrected, had the Ecology professors worked with or simply contacted the FWP staff involved in collecting the data or designing the studies. That communication could have substantively increased the accuracy and merit of these publications.

Instead, FWP was notified of both of these manuscripts upon their publication. The most recent manuscript dealt with an extremely controversial topic in Montana, wolf harvest, for which sound science and critical review is imperative in the on-going dialog and litigation relative to effective state management of a high profile wildlife species. Instead Creel and Rotella notified FWP of their analysis concurrent with a public press release, generating headlines across the country to the effect that "hunt would halve Montana wolf population." This conclusion is a stark contrast to our models which were relatively accurate in predicting the results of last year's hunt.

As an agency charged with responsibility for the stewardship of wildlife in Montana, FWP values and depends on quality science and scientific discourse. That discourse often includes different perspectives on management actions and outcomes. Recognizing the significant controversy associated with wolf recovery and

conservation and the very polarized positions of different interests groups, the use of good science supports the most reasoned debate. That approach has been compromised by the methods and manner in which the latest publication was developed and released for public review. This recurring pattern continues to undermine a very effective working relationship with both the Ecology Department and MSU

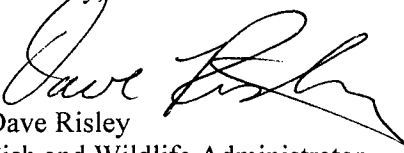
We note many positive aspects to the relationship between FWP and MSU, including our Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit and our extremely productive and mutually beneficial research relationship with Dr. Bob Garrott. The substantial involvement of FWP staff in field and classroom exercises in courses taught by Ecology and Range Science faculty is of great benefit to the education of undergraduate and graduate students. MSU has also been a tremendous source of qualified graduates that have subsequently entered professional-level positions in FWP.

The recurring pattern of conflicts highlight that the costs of our relationship with MSU may be beginning to outweigh the benefits, from our standpoint. By writing this letter, we hope to make you aware of this situation before the only recourse is to permanently and completely dissolve the financial and intellectual relationship between FWP and MSU. We do not wish to pursue this route because it will come at the cost of the many beneficial aspects of the relationship between FWP and MSU.

FWP and MSU have a lot to gain from a strongly collaborative working relationship. One individual's disregard for that relationship should not jeopardize the larger relationship. A very simple solution to prevent this is to ensure staff from both organizations are at least attempting to collaborate with one another on issues that potentially impact either organization.

We ask for your assistance with any action you can take to help with this issue and ensure the now fragile relationship between our organizations doesn't further erode, and in fact rebuilds to its former strength. I am willing to meet with you toward the goal of moving past this pattern of unnecessary difficulties toward maintenance of a productive long-term relationship between FWP and MSU. Please let me know if and when you are available to meet and discuss this issue before our staff feels it necessary to abandon this long-term and fruitful partnership.

Sincerely,


Dave Risley
Fish and Wildlife Administrator

c: Joe Fedock, Interim Provost
Paula Lutz, Dean of Letters and Science
Dave Roberts, Ecology Department Head
Joe Maurier, FWP Director
Ken McDonald, Chief, FWP Wildlife Bureau
Justin Guede, FWP Research Chief



SCANNED

November 22, 2010

Mr. David Risley
Fish and Wildlife Administrator
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Mr. Risley:

Thank you for your letter of October 14 bringing to my attention your concerns about ongoing relations with Montana State University. I concur with your strong desire to maintain our mutually beneficial relationship well into the future. The interests of Montana State University (MSU) and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are strongly aligned, and our dedication to the betterment of the future of the State of Montana is clearly shared.

While noting the breadth of positive and productive relations between numerous faculty at MSU and scientists and managers at FWP, your letter expresses strong concern about the actions of an individual professor. In particular, you note that Professor Creel published two papers which employed previously published data collected in part by FWP biologists without consulting with the FWP biologists who collected the data, and reached conclusions differing from what you believe are warranted by the data. I agree that better communication or collaboration may have alleviated misunderstanding with respect to the data and led to a better outcome for both parties.

While giving full consideration to your specific concerns, I would like to propose a broader scope to resolving the issues expressed in your letter. In recognition of the longstanding productive relations between MSU and FWP, MSU would like to take the opportunity to reinvigorate the relationship with a facilitated one-day workshop between MSU faculty and administrators and FWP scientists, managers, and administrators hosted by my office. Jointly, we could develop a stronger relationship based on better understanding of the objectives and constraints under which FWP operates, as well as a better understanding of the role of academic scientists at a land-grant university. MSU would welcome the FWP participants you deem most relevant to the workshop, and MSU would contribute research scientists and administrators from the Ecology Department as well as other interested faculty. I have requested that Professor David Roberts, Head of the Ecology Department, work with you and your staff on the logistics of the meeting. We will work with you to identify the list of participants and a mutually respected facilitator, and make all necessary arrangements to host the meeting at MSU. Please let Dr. Roberts know of the earliest available times when you and your staff could travel to Bozeman for such a meeting.

MSU greatly values the long and productive relationship between MSU and FWP, and we look forward to the improved relations resulting from this meeting.

Sincerely,

Waded Cruzado
President

Office of the President

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cc: Joe Fedock, Interim Provost
Paula Lutz, Dean, College of Letters and Science
David Roberts, Department Head, Ecology

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