



**The Wildlife Society  
Western Section  
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March 23, 2000

Robert Hight, Director  
California Department of Fish and Game  
1416 9th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director Hight,

The Wildlife Society is an international, nonprofit scientific and educational organization serving professionals in all areas of wildlife conservation and resource management. For over 60 years our membership of dedicated men and women has sought to enhance the capability of wildlife professionals in conserving diversity, sustaining productivity, and ensuring responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society.

The Western Section of The Wildlife Society thanks you for speaking at our annual meeting in Riverside. We appreciate your taking the time from your busy schedule to talk to our members.

Our members, and our Conservation Affairs Committee, were particularly excited with your statement that the Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) and the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) data base may be made available at no cost or at a reduced cost once the California Continuing Resource Investment Strategy Program (CCRISP) is funded. We know little about CCRISP, but we do support the concept if it leads to better conservation of wildlife.

TWS-Western Section really appreciates the support of NDDDB, CWHR and other wildlife data systems that you and the Department of Fish and Game have provided. Twenty years of hard work has gone into NDDDB and CWHR, involving many scientists in the Department of Fish and Game, as well as scientists at universities and elsewhere. Many of our members have worked on these important data bases, and many others regularly use them. The Department's investments in these systems have proven to be worthwhile.

Despite their proven value to wildlife conservation in California, the Conservation Affairs Committee of TWS-Western Section has been concerned about the high subscription costs of NDDDB and CWHR. (The Committee's concern over the cost of CWHR has lessened now that it is available for \$105-140 on CDROM.) The high costs of these data bases have prohibited their use by many individuals, small consulting firms, and non-governmental organizations, which sometimes has inadvertently resulted in inequitable use between project proponents and project critics. That is, biologists working for project proponents usually

have more funds available to subscribe to and use these data bases, whereas many other biologists have no access due to lack of funds.

TWS-Western Section believes that increased access to the NDDB and CWHR will improve these data bases, as well as how they are used. With more biologists participating, more location records of special status species will likely be submitted to NDDB and more inaccuracies in data and model parameters of CWHR will be identified and corrected. Also, greater participation will foster greater scrutiny in how these data bases are used for project impact assessments and other applications, thereby improving the scientific basis and interpretation of NDDB and CWHR contents, as well as their effectiveness as wildlife conservation tools.

Please be aware that our TWS-Western Section is available to assist you in your efforts to reduce the cost of NDDB and CWHR. Should CCRISP not be funded, or should its funding be inadequate to enable the Department of Fish and Game to provide free access to NDDB and CWHR, then our Conservation Affairs Committee is prepared to share its ideas about how the Department can use other means to follow through on your promise of free access to these systems.

TWS-Western Section recognizes that easier access to NDDB and CWHR will also require greater resources to handle the demand for data. More staff and more funding will be needed to maintain and enhance these data bases as biologists submit more records to NDDB and identify and correct inaccuracies in CWHR. We request that, along with easier access, the Department of Fish and Game also allocates the funding to NDDB and CWHR that will be necessary for the benefits of easier access to be realized.

Wildlife Society-Western Section appreciates the opportunity to interact with the Department of Fish and Game. Many of our members are Department employees. We look forward to a close relationship during your tenure, and to easier access to NDDB and CWHR. These data bases are some of the most comprehensive sources of data on California's flora and fauna. Their significance in conservation will increase with easier access.

Best regards,

Michael Morrison, President  
The Wildlife Society - Western Section

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